

REPORT OF THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CHECKLIST AND RECORDS COMMITTEE

JANUARY THROUGH DECEMBER 2009

Committee Members (Reviewed records 2009-01 through 2009-35.)

Giff Beaton (Chairman), Jim Flynn (Secretary), Steve Barlow,
Walt Chambers, Pierre Howard, and Ty Ivey

Review Species Report Summary

Thirty-seven reports representing 27 species were received by the GCRC for review in 2009. Of these reports, 32 were accepted, 4 were not accepted, and one was deferred to a second round of review. No new species were added to the Official Checklist, which remained at 422 species, subdivided into 414 species on the Regular List (includes 3 species considered to be extinct: Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet and Bachman's Warbler) and 8 species on the Provisional List.

Conventions used in this report include:

- GCRC Record Identifier: Year of the report submission (not the year of the observation) followed by a hyphen and a unique sequential identifier (e.g., 2009-25). If more than one report was submitted by different individuals for the same observation event, a letter is attached to the sequential identifier (e.g., 2009-15A, 2009-15B, etc.).
- Species Name: Follows The American Ornithologists' Union's (AOU) *Checklist of North American Birds, Seventh Edition* (AOU 1998) and incorporates changes in subsequent supplements through the *Fiftieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds* (AOU 2009).
- Location of observation.
- Date(s) of observation.
- Only observers authoring reports or providing supplementary materials (such as photographs) are mentioned in this summary. Other sources, such as "From the Field" (published in *The Oriole*), should be consulted for proper credit of initial discovery.

- Where applicable, the Committee voting results are included with the record in the form of “accept votes – not accept votes.” For example, a vote of 5-1 signifies 5 accept votes and 1 not accept vote.

2009-01 Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*): Oxbow Meadows, Muscogee Co., 6 and 13 January 2007. Walt Chambers submitted a belated report with a photograph of 6 individuals of this species mixed with a flock of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), which was accepted 5-0, with Committee member Walt Chambers abstaining.

2009-02 Ross’s Goose (*Chen rossii*): West Point Lake, Troup Co., 1 December 2006. A belated report, including photographs of the bird at fairly close range and in the company of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), was submitted by Walt Chambers. Ross’s Goose remains a difficult taxon to identify because of the increasing occurrence of small white geese in Georgia, many of which possess a mix of Ross’s Goose and Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) characteristics due to hybridization between the species. The written report described, and the photos showed, a small white goose that each Committee member agreed had the appropriate head and bill structure and proportions, as well as proper relative size compared to the adjacent Canada Geese, so the record was accepted 5-0. Walt Chambers abstained from the voting.

2009-03 Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*): US Navy Communications Tower R6, 14 September 2008. Committee member Pierre Howard submitted a report with photographs of an adult of this species perched and in flight. The record was accepted 5-0, with Pierre abstaining.

2009-04 Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*): Eufaula NWR, Stewart Co., 21 October 2008. A sight-only report of an adult of this species was authored by Walt Chambers. Though photographs of the bird were not obtained, the requisite characteristics associated with the distinctive appearance of an adult Northern Goshawk were observed and noted by the author. The timing of the sighting coincides within the fall migration window that is typical of the species. The Committee accepted the report 5-0, with Walt Chambers abstaining.

2009-05 Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*): Darien, McIntosh Co., 27 May 2007. Bob Churi submitted a belated report with 2 photographs of a male

of this species that appeared in his backyard. The Committee unanimously accepted this report.

2009-06 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*): Altamaha WMA, McIntosh Co., 28 May 2007. A belated report including 2 diagnostic photographs of multiple adults of this species in flight was authored by Bob Churi. The report was unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-07 Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*): Buford Dam, Gwinnett/Forsyth Co., 25 January 2009. Karen and Luke Theodorou submitted a report with several photographs of a first cycle individual of this species that frequented the boom in front of Buford Dam and adjacent Lake Lanier. The overall pale plumage and white primaries, the long primary extension, rounded head and small, mostly dark bill convinced the Committee to unanimously accept this report.

2009-08 Unused tracking number.

2009-09 Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*): Georgia Veterans SP, Crisp Co., 26 December 2007. Jerry Amerson authored a belated report that included a photograph by Phil Hardy taken 5 days prior to the date the bird was observed by Jerry. Though the report did not include a description of the bird, the accompanying photograph showed enough diagnostic characteristics of this species to assist most Committee members with accepting this report, 5-1.

2009-10 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*): Savannah, Chatham Co., 7 May 2009. Jim Jackson submitted a report with a photograph of several of the 17 adults of this species that appeared at a residential lake. The report was unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-11 Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*): Pelagic Trip off Tybee Island, 9 December 2007. Ken Blankenship authored a belated report that included multiple photographs of this species taken by Rachel Cass. Unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-12 Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*): Cumberland Island, Camden Co., 24 May 2009. Patrick Leary submitted a report with a single photograph of an adult of this species perched on the beach. The all red bill, short red legs and grayish underparts noted in the report were corroborated by the photograph. The Committee unanimously accepted the report.

2009-13 Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*): Cumberland Island, Camden Co., 24 May 2009. A deceased individual of this species was photographed by Patrick Leary on the beach. Though the accompanying report did not include a description of the bird, the single photograph showed the prone dark brown shearwater with silvery-white underwing coverts visible on the outstretched wings. The specimen was subsequently given to Cumberland Island National Seashore personnel. Unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-14 Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*): Private residence, Dunwoody, DeKalb Co., 16 February 2008. Darlene Moore authored a belated report that included several diagnostic photographs of an adult male of this species that frequented a feeder in a suburban backyard. The Committee unanimously accepted the report.

2009-15A, 2009-15B Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*): Dekle Lake, Clarke Co., 15 November 2008. James Neves and Joel McNeal submitted reports accompanied by several photographs taken by Joel. Most Committee members agreed that the written descriptions and photographs eliminated the possibility of a hybrid Ross's Goose x Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*), and accepted the record, 5-1.

2009-16 Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*): Decatur Co., 23 April 2009. A sight-only written report of this species was submitted to the Committee for consideration. Though some of the pertinent identifying characteristics were noted in the report, the Committee felt that the brevity of the sighting without the benefit of optics did not provide enough detail for most members to accept the report, 1-5.

2009-17 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*): Reed Bingham SP, Cook/Colquitt Co., 7 June 2009. A sight-only report of a single individual of this species observed in flight was submitted to the Committee. Some details were either vague or conflicting, forcing the evaluation to undergo a second round of voting.

2009-18 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*): Lily Pond Rd., Dougherty Co., 14 June 2009. Melissa Martin submitted a report with several diagnostic photographs of this species at a grassy pond in a cattle pasture. The Committee accepted the report unanimously.

2009-19 Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*): Crawfish Springs, Walker Co., 7 December 2008. Mark McShane submitted a belated report with several photographs of this species accompanied by Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). The small size, blocky head shape, short neck, and stubby bill described in the report reinforced the characteristics noted in the photographs. The Committee unanimously accepted the report.

2009-20 Cuban Black-Hawk (*Buteogallus gundlachi*): Callaway Gardens, Harris Co., 10 April 2009. A puzzling occurrence of this sedentary species normally restricted to the coastal mangrove swamps of Cuba was documented and diagnostically photographed by several observers fortunate enough to see the bird at the Discovery Center Backyard Habitat. The photographs were provided to raptor authority William S. Clark to confirm the identity of the hawk, with which he concurred. Though correctly identified, considerable debate ensued as to how this species could have appeared in Pine Mountain. Most Committee members questioned the provenance of the bird since there appeared to be no causal weather event, and various theories of origin ranging from the illegal bird trade to falconry seemed unlikely, too. The Committee conservatively voted not to accept the record, 1-5.

2009-21 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*): Private property, Baker Co., 24-25 July 2009. Wayne Schaffner authored a report and included diagnostic photographs of 2 adults of this species that frequented a seasonally wet area featuring grasses, scattered tall weeds, and shrubs. Unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-22 Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*): Private residence, Forsyth Co., 3 February - 20 March 2009. Rusty Trump submitted a report with photographs of a second-year male of this species that frequented his yard and feeders for many weeks. The Committee unanimously accepted the report.

2009-23 Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*): US Navy Communications Towers R3 and R6, 14 September 2008. Darlene Moore authored a belated report with several photographs of juveniles of this species observed around the towers during a pelagic trip. Unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-24 MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*): Jekyll Island, Glynn Co., 13 October 2007. Chris Pitman submitted a belated report with several

photographs of a hatch-year male of this species in the hand after capturing the bird at the Jekyll Island Banding Station. The Committee unanimously accepted the report.

2009-25 Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*): Jekyll Island, Glynn Co., 5 October 2009. A report with several photographs of this species in-hand was submitted by Chris Pitman after it was captured at the Jekyll Island Banding Station. The report was unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-26A, 2009-26B Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*): St. Simons Island, Glynn Co., 6 September 2009. Joel McNeal and Ken Blankenship submitted detailed sight-only reports of an adult of this species observed on the beach in the company of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*). The Committee unanimously accepted both reports.

2009-27 Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*): Merry Brothers Ponds, Richmond Co., 24 October 2009. A report with 2 photographs of an adult of this species perched on a wire with Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) was submitted by Lois Stacey. Unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-28A, 2009-28B Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*): Lake Richard B Russell Dam, Elbert Co., 19 April and 24 May 2009. Jim Flynn submitted a report with photographs of 2 basic-plumaged individuals of this species in the company of Common Loons (*Gavia immer*), and Lois Stacey authored a report including a photograph of this species in alternate plumage. Jim Flynn's report (2009-28A) was accepted 5-0, with Jim abstaining, and Lois Stacey's report (2009-28B) was unanimously accepted.

2009-29 Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*): Glennville, Tattnall Co., 19 October 2009. A report with few details and several photographs was submitted for consideration. The photographs depicted a pale *Myiarchus* flycatcher that all Committee members agreed was not a Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*), and most likely was an ash-throated. However, the lack of description or photographs of the undertail pattern needed to definitively eliminate Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) caused most Committee members to conservatively decide that the identification remained unresolved, 1-5.

2009-30 Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*): Private residence, Gilmer Co., 9 November 2009. Roy Brown submitted a report with a single photograph of an adult male of this species. Though the report did not contain a description of the bird, the Committee easily concluded that the photograph clearly depicted this distinctive warbler, and therefore accepted the report unanimously.

2009-31 Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*): Lake Oconee, Putnam Co., 6 November 2009. Joan Knapp submitted a report with one photograph, taken by Walter Knapp, of this species. The Committee accepted the report unanimously, noting the extent of gray below the eye and the yellow-green bill with dark culmen and mandibular ridge, safely eliminating Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) and Western Grebe X Clark's Grebe hybrid.

2009-32 Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*): Private residence, Lamar Co., 5 December 2009. Charlie Muise authored a report that included several photographs taken by Tracey Muise. The bird was captured and banded by Charlie in his backyard. Unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-33 Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*): Glennville Wastewater Treatment Facility, Tattnall Co., 21 November 2009. A report with several photographs of this species was submitted for review. The report did not contain much of a description, but the photographs were diagnostic enough that all members concurred with the stated identification. This species, though not considered officially established in the US, can be found in areas of south Florida. The Florida population predominately consists of the gray-headed subspecies, *P. p. polionotus*, with some blue-headed subspecies resembling the individual photographed at the Glennville Wastewater Treatment Facility occasionally being observed. Ultimately, the Committee members concluded that the provenance of the bird could not be determined and voted to not accept the record, 0-6. Most members noted that it was likely a stray from the introduced Florida population, although some acknowledged that a wild vagrant from the Eastern Hemisphere could not be eliminated.

2009-34 Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*): Sea Island, Glynn Co., 27 November 2009. Ken Blankenship submitted a report that included photographs taken by Rachel Cass of one sub-adult male and 3 females of this species. The report was unanimously accepted by the Committee.

2009-35 Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*): Sam Smith Park, Bartow Co., 12 December 2009. Patty McLean submitted a detailed report with several diagnostic photographs taken by Rachel Cass of this species. The Committee unanimously accepted the report.

Changes to the Georgia Checklist

During 2009, the AOU published the *Fiftieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds*. The following changes affected the taxonomic sequence or nomenclature of the official GOS Checklist:

Taxonomy

- Family Odontophoridae (includes Northern Bobwhite) was placed ahead of Phasianidae (includes Ruffed Grouse and Wild Turkey).
- Genus *Piranga* (includes Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, and Western Tanager) was moved to beginning of Family Cardinalinidae (Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Allies, now including *Piranga* Tanagers).

Nomenclature

The scientific names of the following species were changed:

- Common Redpoll, from *Carduelis flammea* to *Acanthis flammea*;
- Pine Siskin, from *Carduelis pinus* to *Spinus pinus*;
- American Goldfinch, from *Carduelis tristis* to *Spinus tristis*.

The English names of the following species were changed:

- *Ammodramus nelsoni*, from Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow to Nelson's Sparrow;
- *Ammodramus caudacutus*, from Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow to Saltmarsh Sparrow.

Literature Cited

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