

Although tapes can help you learn the call, the best way is to learn with experience, in the field, hearing the birds while making a positive sight identification. Often hearing the bird's distinctive and diagnostic (with experience) call will be your first clue as to its presence. Although many less experienced birders tell me they cannot distinguish between the two species' rattle calls, those who have learned the calls over several years of looking and finding say it is easy to tell Smith's calls from those of the more common Lapland.

Although I find it rather difficult to get much use out of verbal or written descriptions of bird songs or calls, here is my take on the differences between the two species' calls. To me, the Smith's longspur rattle sounds more metallic, or more like a clicking sound, whereas the Lapland has a much "drier" sound to the rattle. Smith's call is usually longer or more drawn-out, likely with more clicks or rattle notes to a series. One description I read in a book some time ago concerning the Smith's rattles seems the most apropos—"like the winding of a cheap (or child's) watch."

The Smith's longspur occasionally does sing on migration, usually only on clear, sunny, windless, and often warm days—not a frequent occurrence in March and April in the Midwest. It would be good to learn the song. The species is also very responsive to recordings of its rattling call, although that will often cause the birds to become airborne.

The main attributes I find easiest to observe on a bird in flight at almost any distance is the much buffier overall coloration compared with a Lapland, more extensive white edging to the outer tail feathers, and the presence of at least a small white or whitish shoulder patch, present on both males and (much more restricted) on females, even in full basic plumage on first arriving from the wintering grounds. Any of these is diagnostic to this species, although I would advise the inexperienced to use the amount of white in the tail cautiously. The only other species one is likely to encounter in the same time of year and habitat in the Midwest that could possibly be confused with Smith's longspur is the basic-plumaged Lapland longspur and perhaps the vesper sparrow. Of course, chestnut-collared and McCown's longspurs are a distinct possibility as vagrants, but would be extremely rare. The few other species I regularly encounter when looking for Smith's longspurs are savannah and song sparrows, horned lark, common snipe, killdeer, and American golden-plover.

References

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Recent Actions of the Ohio Bird Records Committee

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Accepted Records

In order to be accepted, records require a minimum of nine accept votes from the eleven-member committee.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*—Lake County, 28 December 2001, observer Ben Fambrough.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*—Hancock County, 27 June to 11 July 1966. A fascinating historical record, complete with diagnostic photographs, just brought to our attention after having been discovered among historical documents at Bowling Green University.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*—Portage County, 9 September 2001, observers Brad Stemen, Jennifer Hillmer. The first Ohio record since 1966.

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii*—Licking County, 28 December 2001 to at least 7 January 2002, observers Jason Estep, Aimee Morrison, Tammera Nickerson, Dan Sanders, et al.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*—Lorain County, 20 December 2001, observer Sean Zadar.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*—Lake County, 30 December 2001, observers Larry Rosche, Ray Hannikman, Emil Bacik.

California Gull *Larus californicus*—Lake County, 11 March 2002, observers Ben Fambrough, Sandy Wagner, Rob Harlan.

Selasphorus hummingbird sp.—Hamilton County, December 2001. A female, probably an adult and either rufous or Allen's, that was visiting a feeder. Despite good photographs, no one felt that it could be identified with certainty to species. Statistically, rufous hummingbird would certainly be the most likely.

Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla*—Summit County, 29 December 2001, observers Larry Rosche, Carl Johnson, Judy Semroc, et al. An amazing and indisputable record. Excellent photographs were obtained. This species is very rare in North America in the winter, and practically unknown in winter in the Midwest. Most depart Ohio by the end of August, and there are few records past early September.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*—Lorain County, 4-25 January 2002, observers Larry Rosche, Ron Lang. Like the aforementioned waterthrush, a spectacular and unexpected winter record of a neotropical species. Also a good lesson in why not to assume that late or winter tanagers/orioles/warblers will be the most common species found during the breeding season. It was thought by some that this bird was a scarlet tanager, but photos and excellent descriptions by observers clearly document the bird as a summer tanager. To my knowledge, the latest previous record was 10 November.

Record Not Accepted

This report received fewer than six votes to accept, therefore it was not accepted.

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*—Erie County, 26 January to at least 29 January 2002. This was a very puzzling bird, and one whose parental lineage may never be known with certainty. It must be said that it is a credit to all the observers' field skills that they recognized this gull as something out of the ordinary right away, and took steps to obtain excellent documentation in the form of video, drawings, and written details. In our view—and that of almost all of the outside gull experts who offered opinions—there is no question that glaucous-winged gull genetics make up part or most of this bird. However, this is a species that forms a large mongrel population—better termed a hybrid swarm—in the Pacific Northwest. There, it interbreeds freely with western gulls, and to a lesser extent, herring gulls. Without going into the numerous points as to why we felt this was a hybrid, suffice to say that there were a number of quantifiable reasons as to why almost all felt it was not a “pure” glaucous-winged gull. The outcome of this decision is a bit frustrating, admittedly, as we cannot definitely say what generation hybrid this bird represents, or even what species the other parent was. In essence, with gulls such as this, we are dealing with the outer limits of field ID regarding hybrids, and we felt it was best to take the conservative tack and not accept this individual as a first state record.

Record in Recirculation

Having received between six and eight votes to accept, the following record goes into its third round of circulation.

Bicknell's Thrush *Catharus bicknelli*—Ottawa County, 28 October 2001. Even though this bird was captured, banded, and photographed in the hand, certain important details were not documented, making it a troubling and difficult record. Bicknell's thrush was split from gray-cheeked thrush in 1993, and it is very similar to that species, and certain subspecies of hermit thrush.

New Circulations

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*—Butler County, 7 May 2002.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*—Lucas County, 19-25 May 2002.

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*—Franklin County, 2 May 2002.

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*—Lucas County, 3 June 2002.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*—Cuyahoga County, 15 March 2002.

Black-throated Gray Warbler *Dendroica nigrescens*—Licking County, 17 April 2002.

Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii*—Lucas County, 6 May 2002.

Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii*—Erie County, 14 May 2002.

Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula*—Greene County, 6 April 2002. 🐦



Showing its propensity for swimming amongst dense vegetation, this garganey both delighted and frustrated many observers during its one-week stay at Mallard Club Marsh Wildlife Area in Lucas County. If accepted by the OBRC, this will become Ohio's first record. Digiscoped photo by Joe Hammond on 25 May 2002.