

## 2016 MINUTES OF THE MONTANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

**Date:** 7 October 2016

**Location:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office, Great Falls

**Members present:** Chuck Carlson, John Carlson, Coburn Currier, Ed Harper, Craig Hohenberger, Nate Kohler, Rose Leach (Chair), Jeff Marks (Secretary), Bob Martinka, Ted Nordhagen, Forrest Rowland.

**Members absent:** Harriet Marble, Fritz Prellwitz

**Non-members present:** Paul Hendricks

**Approval of 2015 Minutes:** 10:30

**Action Items from 2015:** The report for MBRC 2015-003 (**Little Gull**) needed work on the last two sections. Jeff worked with observer Mike Schwitters to craft a suitable revision. The report for 2015-017 (**Sagebrush Sparrow**) needed additional information to support a "B" status. Jeff added the information to the report on the basis of observer Mike Lesnik's mob posts. Jeff posted the revised reports for each of these records on our Yahoo site, and sent electronic versions of the reports to Janet Ellis, who printed and deposited them in the archives at the Montana Audubon office in Helena.

**Introductions:** Welcome to new Committee members **Ed Harper** and **Craig Hohenberger**, and a big THANK YOU to retiring members **Chuck Carlson**, **Harriet Marble**, and **Dan Sullivan** (the latter two in absentia). Committee members in attendance gave brief information on what they'd been up to since we last met.

**Evaluation of records:** Reports and photos were posted on our Yahoo site, and Committee members evaluated reports in two rounds of voting that were submitted to the Secretary in advance of the annual meeting. We reviewed **36 reports** that included **24 species**; all but **six reports** were accompanied by photographs. We accepted all but **three reports**. Highlights included first state records for **Purple Sandpiper** and **Fieldfare**, the first well-documented record for **Virginia's Warbler**, and the third record for **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**. The State List now stands at 433 species (not counting **Bell's Vireo**, which was included as a State List species in *Birds of Montana* but remains on the Supplemental List officially).

**Supplemental List:** We moved **Virginia's Warbler** from the Supplemental List to the State List after accepting a photographic record (MBRC 2016-027). The sight report by Jim Brown (MBRC 2005-048) became the first state record.

**Membership:** After voting via email in December 2015, **Ed Harper** was elected to the Committee to fill Dan Casey's seat. **Craig Hohenberger** was elected via email vote in September 2016 to fill the seat vacated by **Dan Sullivan**, who resigned in the summer of 2016. **Chuck Carlson** and **Harriet Marble** retired at the close of this meeting. After much deliberation, we voted to elect **Josh Covill** and **Kate Stone** to the Committee to replace Chuck and Harriet. We discussed the notion of having term limits for Committee

membership but tabled that notion for now. Adding term limits for membership would entail changing our Bylaws. **Elections of Chair and Secretary will occur in 2017.**

We revisited expectations for Committee members with regard to meeting attendance and participation in discussions via email and at the annual meeting (see Bylaws section IV(E)(b)). We now have a pool of several highly qualified people who are eager to serve on the Committee, which should make it easy to fill future vacancies.

**Review List:** The number of accepted records for de-listing (20) a species is arbitrary and thus should be applied on a case-by-case basis. As noted previously, eBird reviewers may request a rare bird report for species that are off the Review List, but for which we may want further details (e.g., recent Ruby-throated Hummingbird reports from well west of the known breeding range).

We now have 21 accepted records for **Green Heron**, which has occurred sporadically across the state in spring and summer going back to 1952. This easily identified but shy species probably has been overlooked in the state many times. Jeff motioned to remove it from the review list, seconded by Forrest. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

We now have 25 accepted records for **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, all of them since the first fully documented record in 2008. Clearly, occurrences of this species are growing in the United States. Jeff motioned to remove it from the review list, seconded by Bob. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

We now have 21 accepted records for **Parasitic Jaeger**. Given the difficulty of distinguishing the three jaeger species (especially juveniles), we opted to keep the Parasitic on the Review List for now.

The **Gray Flycatcher** has now been documented multiple times at several locations from the Bear Canyon area. Jeff motioned to add **QLL 41C** to the geographic exception area, seconded by John. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

**Old reports reconsidered:** None.

**Bylaws discussion:** Section VII(B)(b) incorrectly states that the Review List includes "Species with fewer than 20 accepted records for the state;" (it's correct elsewhere in the Bylaws). Jeff proposed that section VII(B)(b) reads "Species with 20 or fewer accepted records for the state;" seconded by John. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

Section IX(D) states "Committee members shall not render a decision on their own submissions." This stipulation was enacted to remove any appearance to the general public of bias among Committee members. Given our procedures for evaluating reports, a non-vote or an "A" vote by Committee members on their own submissions can have no outcome on the final decision. Thus, it makes no sense to have this stipulation.

Moreover, the possibility exists (albeit remote) that the entire Committee could see the same rare bird, which would result in **no one** being able to vote on the report! Jeff proposed deleting section IX(D), seconded by Chuck. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**MBRC Web pages:** We are grateful to Montana Audubon for hosting our Web site but believe we should have full control of it. Jeff has offered to host our Web site when his new NGO, *Montana Bird Advocacy*, is up and running in 2017. All agreed that Jeff can host our Web site pending successful formation of the *Montana Bird Advocacy*.

**eBird discussion:** We have a new Yahoo site dedicated to eBird reviewers. We will discuss on that site guidelines for validating Review species on eBird before the MBRC has voted on the reports.

**Action items: Jeff** will contact each observer from the second round of voting to inform them of the outcome of our voting.

**Jeff** will also invite **Janet Ellis** of Montana Audubon to join our Yahoo site to download the reports and photos for the archives, and will remove her access to the site after she has archived all material.

**Jeff** will send an edited version of the final spreadsheet of the 2016 results to **Bryce Maxell** at the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) so that accepted records can appear in the MNHP's MapViewer database; the spreadsheet will include information for the Virginia's Warbler reported by **Jim Brown** in 2005 (MBRC 2005-048) so that the record also will appear in MapViewer.

**Jeff** will contact **Josh Covill** and **Kate Stone** to confirm that they wish to accept our offer to join the Committee. He will then invite them to our Yahoo listserv and add their names to the list of contact information for Committee members (and circulate the new list to the entire Committee).

**Coburn** will speak with **Brian Shovers** about the possibility of having the Montana Historical Society house our archives.

**Rose** will request that **Ed, Craig, Kate,** and **Josh** become eBird reviewers for Montana.

**Adjournment:** 14:05

**Our next meeting is scheduled for Great Falls on Friday 6 October 2017**

**Submitted by:** Jeff Marks, Secretary, 13 October 2016