

## 2021 MINUTES OF THE MONTANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

**Date:** 24 September 2021

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

**Members present:** Dan Casey, Josh Covill, Coburn Currier, Tom Forwood, Andrew Guttenberg, Craig Hohenberger, Nate Kohler, Rose Leach (Chair), Jeff Marks (Secretary), John Parker, Kate Stone, Hilary Turner

**Members absent:** Ed Harper, Ted Nordhagen, Forrest Rowland

**Non-members present:** Allison Begley, Harriet Marble, Bob Martinka

**Approval of 2020 Minutes:** Motioned by **Rose**, seconded by **Jeff**, all approved.

**Introductions:** Committee members gave brief accounts of their activities since we last met. We also welcomed new members **Hilary Turner** and **Andrew Guttenberg**, and returning member **Dan Casey**, who previously served from 1991 until 2015.

### Action Items from 2020:

By 10 October 2020, **Jeff** had contacted each observer who submitted a report and informed them of the voting outcome. He also made sure that all reports and photos were posted on our Groups.io site and posted the **Annual Report, Minutes**, and the updated **Review List** on our Web site hosted by the Montana Bird Advocacy. **Rose** sent an edited version of the 2020 spreadsheet to **Bryce Maxell** so that accepted records can appear in the Montana Natural Heritage Program's MapViewer (= Montana Bird Distribution) database.

**Jeff** submitted a proposal to the Committee to update the **Bylaws** to accurately state where the archives are housed and to incorporate the new changes in committee makeup. Said proposal was accepted, and the revised Bylaws were posted on our Web site on 20 October 2020.

**Coburn** delivered reports, photos, and the spreadsheet of votes from 2020 to the Montana Historical Society in Helena in October, following our meeting.

**Forrest** will develop a list of species for which we prefer vocal information in addition to a photo. He was unable to attend the meeting to present this information, however.

On 9 October 2020, **Jeff** received information from **Justin Bosler** for his **Ash-throated Flycatcher** (2020-001) report that ruled out Brown-crested and Dusky-capped flycatchers, thus completing his report that we had accepted provisionally at the meeting. **Jeff** also modified the rare bird report form to note that hybrids should be considered in the section about ruling out similar species.

### Evaluation of records:

Reports and supporting documentation were posted on our Groups.io site, and we

evaluated reports in two rounds of voting during the year. We reviewed **34 new reports** that involved **20 species; 26 reports** (76%) were accompanied by photographs or videos. We rejected **three reports**, one of which was accompanied by multiple photos; this bird was reported as immature male **Costa's Hummingbird**, but was determined to be a likely hybrid between a Calliope Hummingbird and Black-chinned Hummingbird.

**Neotropic Cormorant** was new for the state list. Birds discovered only two days apart at Billings and Great Falls were seen well by many observers and lingered into late August and late September, respectively. Other highlights included the state's **2nd Heermann's Gull, 4th Eastern Wood-Pewee, 8th and 9th Yellow-throated Vireo,** and **4th Hooded Oriole**. We also accepted Montana's first record of a **Gray Flycatcher** from west of the divide, a bird that was captured in the Bitterroot Valley and its identification confirmed from measurements and DNA analysis.

### **MBRC membership:**

The Committee is at the maximum size of 15 members, including new members **Hilary Turner** and **Andrew Guttenberg**, and **Dan Casey**, who was a charter member of the MBRC and who retired temporarily in 2015. The vacancy filled by **Dan** was created by the retirement of **John Carlson** at the end of the 2020 meeting.

By unanimous vote, **Rose** and **Jeff** were re-elected **Chair** and **Secretary**, respectively.

### **Official State List:**

The **State List** now stands at **442 species** with the addition of **Neotropic Cormorant**. The current **State List, Review List, Supplemental List**, and other MBRC material are at <https://www.montanabirdadvocacy.org/mbrc/>.

### **Review Species:**

With the acceptance of two reports in 2020, we now have 21 records for **Red Phalarope**. Jeff did not notice this until 12 October 2020, at which time he called for a vote via email to remove **Red Phalarope** from the **Review List**. ***Motion passed unanimously by email vote less than 48 hours later, with all 15 committee members voting.***

We now have 20 accepted records of **Summer Tanager** and anticipate removing this species from the **Review List** when another sighting is reported and accepted.

### **Old reports reconsidered:**

Photos that accompanied the eBird checklist for an out-of-range **Black-throated Green Warbler** accepted by the Committee last year (MCRC 2020-022) have been identified by outside observers as depicting a possible **Black-throated Green × Townsend's warbler**. Thus, **Jeff** will send photos of this bird to warbler expert **Kimball Garrett** at the LA County Natural History Museum for his input.

### **Changes to Rare Bird Report and Spreadsheet:**

**Dan** proposed the following with regard to how the **Secretary** modifies rare bird reports submitted by observers: (1) the list of "Other observers" should distinguish observers present at the time the bird was found from those who subsequently saw the bird after it was discovered; (2) the URL for eBird checklists should be a hyperlink; and (3) anything added by the **Secretary** in the "Notes" section should be clearly identified with the **Secretary's** name, and placed in bold font.

**Hilary** proposed that initial lowercase votes listed on the voting spreadsheet (which signify that members want to discuss the report in question) should not be changed after voting is finalized, because a plethora of lowercase votes can be informative in indicating that committee members may have had difficulty coming to a decision on a particular report. All agreed with this idea, and from now on final spreadsheets will include a footnote that explains the meaning of a lowercase vote.

### **Bylaws discussion:**

As noted above, in October 2020 we approved a revised version of the **Bylaws** that reflected an increase in the number of committee members and change in the number of votes required to reject a report on the basis of the larger committee.

The **Bylaws** also state that "At least one month prior to the selected annual meeting date, the **Secretary** will make sure that copies of all reports and supporting material to be reviewed by committee members have been uploaded to the Committee's private listserv" (Part VI(A), page 4). In practice, the **Secretary** often calls for voting on reports that arrive within a week or two of the annual meeting. **Jeff** will draft a revision of this part of the **Bylaws** and submit it to the Committee for a vote by email in October 2021.

### **eBird discussion:**

None. We may hold a meeting of eBird reviewers later this fall, via Zoom.

### **New action items:**

**Jeff** will contact each observer who submitted a report to inform them of the voting outcome and will make sure that hard copies of reports and photos will be archived. He will also post the **Annual Report, Minutes**, and revised **Review List** on our Web site. **Rose** will send an edited version of the 2021 spreadsheet to **Bryce Maxell** so that accepted records can appear in the MNHP's database.

**Coburn** will deliver reports, photos, and the spreadsheet of votes from 2021 to the Montana Historical Society in Helena in October, following this meeting.

**Forrest** will develop a list of species for which we prefer vocal information in addition to a photo.

**Jeff** and **Rose** will prepare a summary of duties routinely carried out by the **Chair** and **Secretary** and post it to our Groups.io site for use by future **Chairs** and **Secretaries**.

As noted above, **Jeff** will send photos of the potential hybrid warbler to **Kimball Garrett** for outside review and will draft a revision to Part VI(A) of the **Bylaws** and submit it to the Committee for a vote via email by early October 2021. He also will obtain comments from hummingbird expert **Ned Batchelder** to be added to the report (MBRC 2021-024) of a **Costa's Hummingbird** that we concluded was a hybrid.

**Adjournment:** 14:00.

**Our next meeting is proposed for Great Falls on Saturday, 8 October 2022**  
**Submitted by: Jeff Marks**, Secretary, 14 October 2021