

Documentation of Extraordinary Sight Records

by Jim Fry

In an effort to better verify extraordinary sight records, contributors to The Cardinal will be required to submit documentation forms for certain birds. The documentation forms will be mailed to contributors along with the seasonal report forms.

A good habit for birders to acquire is to always carry a note pad and pen or pencil while in the field. When a bird which requires documentation is seen, all pertinent information should be written on the note pad while you are in the field observing the bird. This is a requirement for documentation. You must write the information at the time of observation. Another requirement is that the entire documentation form must be filled out the same day you see the bird. You don't need to fill out the form while in the field, but the notes written in the field must be transferred to the documentation the same day. These requirements are the same as those for submitting documentation forms for American Birds to Vernon Kleen, Editor for the Middlewestern Prairie Region of that publication.

All of this might seem like a nuisance, maybe even an insult, to you, especially if you are a veteran birder who knows a very rare bird when you see one. But if The Cardinal is to maintain high ornithological standards and gain the respect hoped for, certain procedures must be followed. There will be no exceptions to the documentation requirement.

Whether you are one of the most highly respected ornithologists in the state, or a beginner, you must submit documentation forms when required. If you don't, your report of the rare bird will not be accepted. Local friends who know you might regard you as a most competent birder, one of the highest integrity, but other subscribers to The Cardinal may never have heard of you. The same might apply to a top-notch birder from another part of the state whom you don't know. Therefore, all of us must submit documentation forms for certain birds.

Although the documentation form might seem complicated. at first, you will probably find, as I did, that it really is not a difficult thing to complete. You will probably also find that you will become a much more careful birder. You will probably be surprised at how much more aware of just what to look for to confirm the identification. You will probably be surprised at how much more you see in a bird when you are taking notes on the bird, to fill out a documentation. Written notes are much better than trying to remember whether a bird had light or dark legs, stripes or spots on the breast, etc.

Please remember these five points concerning the documentation of extraordinary sight records:

- 1) Every contributor to The Cardinal must fill out documentation forms on required birds, no exceptions.
- 2) Notes from which the form is written must be taken in the field while observing the bird.
- 3) The documentation form must be completed the same day the bird is observed.

- 4) The form must be filled out completely and properly.
- 5) Documentation forms are not required for all birds, only for extraordinary sight records.

Editors Note: Although not required, the submitting of a photograph of the documented bird, taken while writing field notes for the documentation form, is encouraged.

Birds Requiring Documentation:

- 1) Those not listed on the report form for the season being reported on. Each of the four seasons has a separate report form for birds regularly seen in that specific season. A bird that is common in one season but extremely rare when seen in another season, requires documentation when seen in the season when the bird is extremely rare to be seen.
- 2) Shorebirds requiring documentation when seen in in counties other than Lucas, Ottawa, Sandusky, Erie, Lorain, Cuyahoga, Lake, and Ashtabula: whimbrel, red knot, white-rumped sandpiper, baird's sandpiper, stilt sandpiper, western sandpiper, buff-breasted sandpiper, marbled godwit, hudsonian godwit, sanderling, wilson's phalarope, and northern phalarope. Dowitcher(Species ?) does not require documentation. However, short-billed dowitcher and long-billed dowitcher specifically, require documentation.
- 3) Lark sparrow when seen and reported from other than Lucas county.