

Recent Actions of the Ohio Bird Records Committee

Bill Whan

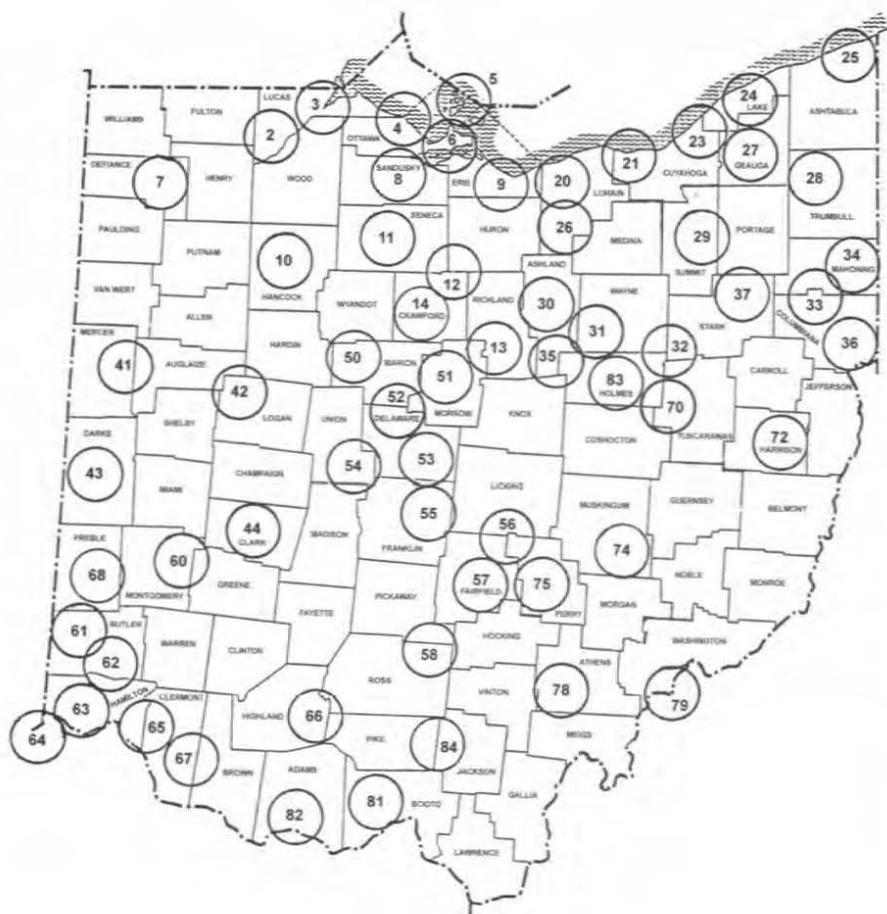
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The Ohio Bird Records Committee exists to increase knowledge of Ohio's birdlife by validating records, maintaining public records of occurrences of rare birds in the state, and establishing the official state list of species. Observers are asked to send in documentation of sightings of birds on the OBRC Review List, published here each spring, and indicated on OBRC checklists and on its website at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/dnap/OhioBirding/ohiobirding2.htm>; reports of these species are not published in *The Ohio Cardinal* in the absence of such documentation. In its reviews, the OBRC does not judge sightings, but documentations of sightings; the issue at stake is not whether the bird in question was actually present, but whether the record as documented serves to verify the species. The current membership of the Committee, with counties of residence, follows: Dave Dister (Montgomery), Micki Dunakin (Paulding), Ned Keller (Hamilton), Cal Keppler (Mahoning), Jay Lehman (Hamilton), Greg Links (Monroe, MI), Bernard Master (Franklin), Secretary Jim McCormac (Franklin), Kevin Metcalf (Geauga), Larry Rosche (Portage), and Sean Zadar (Cuyahoga). Members serve three-year terms. Each year replacement members are nominated by the Editor and Publisher of *The Ohio Cardinal*. In addition, any other person may be nominated, having given his or her permission, by any subscriber of *The Ohio Cardinal* by submitting a timely nomination in writing to the Editor; in such a case an election is held among the subscribers. We are indebted to OBRC Secretary Jim McCormac for extensive material used in the following report.

Accepted Records

***Plegadis ibis* sp.**—Van Wert County, 28 October 2001, observer J. Perchalski. This record of the glossy/white-faced type was of course in non-breeding plumage, and separation of these two species in this plumage is one of the most vexing problems the Committee—and birders in general—consistently face. Ultimately, both the observers and the OBRC felt that this bird was best left identified only to genus, although several members did suspect it may have actually been the rarer—for Ohio—white-faced ibis *P. chihi*, based in part on the apparent lack of pale lines around the base of the bill.

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudis*—Lake County, 27 October 2001, observer K. Metcalf. There are Ohio records of this species from the third week of October, but this is the first from the fourth week. While the bird was a juvenile, and great care must be taken in separating this species from subadult parasitic jaeger *S. parasiticus*, it was well seen and impeccably documented, including supporting field sketches.



The 2001-02 Christmas Bird Count areas. Numbers within circles correspond to count numbers in the preceding article. 

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*—Crawford County, 1 September 2001, specimen OSU Museum of Biological Diversity. **First state record.** Hunters reportedly shot two birds, and one was saved and sent to the OBRC Secretary. The specimen was in very poor condition, having had the breast meat removed, and then left in a field during warm weather for several days. Consequently, definitive photos were difficult to obtain, and the carcass itself was examined by the Committee at the annual meeting on 24 March 2002. At that time, after noting critical plumage details such as the dark outer webs beneath the outer rectrices, dark undertail coverts, etc., differentiation from other species in *Streptopelia* was agreed upon. Questions of captive origin were satisfactorily resolved after discussion of nearby records, known habits, lack of marks indicative of such origin, etc. This acceptance brings the total Ohio list to 410 species.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*—Adams County, 6 November 2001, observer C. Bedel. Exact dates of this occurrence are uncertain, as the owners of the property and feeder the bird frequented did not want visitors, and directly contributed no details. Bedel was allowed to observe and photograph the bird in question. Property owners apparently told Bedel that as many as three birds were present earlier, but no evidence was presented to document this assertion. The record reviewed, of a subadult male, was unanimously judged to be in the genus *Selasphorus*, but two members did not feel it could be identified as to species. Nine members felt that considerable rufous feathering emerging on the upper back eliminated Allen's hummingbird *S. sasin* and broad-tailed hummingbird *S. platycercus*, which always show a green upper back.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*—Lucas and Ottawa Counties, 4 November 2001-12 December 2001, observers S. Cummings and B. Zwiebel. A third state record.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*—Geauga County, 21 November 2001-15 January 2002, observer Linda Gilbert, m obs. **First state record**; see account by Gilbert in *The Ohio Cardinal* 25(1):42.

Oporornis warbler sp.—Lucas County, 21 May 2001, observer I. Karafiath. Accepted only to genus. The sole evidence is a single photo (see previous OBRC report), which the observer proposed might show a Macgillivray's warbler *O. tolmei* on the basis of what appear to be prominent white eye-arcs. Though remarkably good considering the skulking habits of the genus, the photo does not show all characters, and there was no supporting written description. Advice was sought from Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett, who along with the entire committee felt the available evidence would not support positive identification. The bird may well have been an atypical first-year female mourning warbler *O. philadelphia*.

Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus lecontei*—Cuyahoga County, 18 October 2001, observer S. Zadar.

Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus lecontei*—Butler County, 20 October 2001, observer M. Busam.

Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus lecontei*—Cuyahoga County, 24 October 2001, observer S. Zadar.

Records Not Accepted

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*—Hocking County, 16 June 2001. The OBRC holds records of Bewick's wren to a very high standard, as the local Appalachian subspecies *T. b. altus* seems to be plummeting towards extinction. There are very few left in our region, and the Ohio population is, if not gone, below detectable numbers. Although the two observers are experienced, looks at the bird were somewhat fleeting and obscured, as if often the case with wrens. Some diagnostic characters, like the chronic tail-wagging of Bewick's, and the gray hindneck area, apparently could not be seen. After two rounds of voting, the majority of members felt that the details provided just were not conclusive enough to support a record of a subspecies that may quickly become extinct.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*—Lucas County, 5 May 2001. This intriguing report from four very skilled birders took three circulations through the committee before a resolution could be reached. If accepted, it would have been a first state record, and one far from its known range at present. The OBRC has a very high standard for acceptance of new state records, and state birds must be supported by evidence that conclusively establishes their identification both now and to future ornithologists via photos or sound recordings, unequivocal written descriptions, or specimens. This bird was photographed through a telescope at a distance of approximately 100 yards, but the images are not diagnostic, only suggestive. Also, the distance involved did not permit critical study of all diagnostic field marks, and while the written descriptions were as thorough as could be expected under the circumstances, certain details apparently could not be seen. This record was sent to cowbird expert Bill Pranty for an opinion. Pranty felt that while the bird was intriguing and perhaps suggestive of a *Molothrus* cowbird other than brown-headed, the available evidence just was not conclusive to establish a first state record. The majority of the OBRC members ultimately came to the same conclusion. Of course, like all non-accepted records, this decision does not mean the identification was incorrect, only that the level of documentary evidence fell short of being unequivocal. Like all other records, all information pertinent to this sighting is archived in the OBRC database and is available for researchers to study.

Record in Recirculation

Bicknell's Thrush *Catharus bicknelli*—Ottawa County, 28 October 2001.

New Circulations

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

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*—Hancock County, 27 June-11 July 1966.

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii*—Licking County, 28 December 2001-7 January 2002.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*—Lorain County, 20 & 22 December 2001.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*—Lake County, 30 December 2001.

California Gull *Larus californicus*—Lorain County, 20 December 2001.

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*—Erie County, 26 & 29 January 2002.

Selasphorus hummingbird sp.—Hamilton County, December 2001.

Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla*—Summit County, 29 December 2001.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*—Lorain County, 8 January 2002.

While not Review Species, the tanager and waterthrush are being reviewed to document their occurrence well out of season.

Other Information

At the OBRC Annual Meeting on 24 March, retiring members Bob Conlon, Rob Harlan, and Craig Holt were thanked for valued service, and new members Micki Dunakin, Kevin Metcalf, and Sean Zadar were welcomed. OBRC Secretary Jim McCormac reported that during 2001 the Committee reviewed 47 records, accepting 32, not accepting 13, and continuing to circulate two more. One new state record—brown-headed nuthatch—was accepted, and three were not: dovekie, chestnut-collared longspur, and shiny cowbird. Two potential new state records—Eurasian collared-dove and Bicknell's thrush—remained in recirculation at the end of the year.

Two changes were made in the Review List. Le Conte's sparrow *Ammodramus lecontei* was removed from the Review List. This elusive species, while probably often overlooked, has a well-established migratory pattern through Ohio, particularly in the fall, and in recent years there are sufficient records to pass the threshold for removal from the list. Loggerhead shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*, however, has become increasingly scarce in Ohio, and having fallen below the numerical threshold for reliable records, was added to the Review List.

The new OBRC publication, assisted in the costs of production by a grant from the Master Family Fund, is scheduled for release by 11 May, and will undergo final editing following member comments. This durable booklet of 36 pages will feature seasonal bar-graphs or records notes, and annotations for all 410 species on the Ohio list. 🐦



These three black scoters were photographed off South Bass Island in Ottawa County on 1 December 2001. Photo by Stan Wulkowicz.



Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in Wyandot County hosted a number of red-headed woodpeckers this season. This stunning individual was photographed there in December 2001 by Bob Royse.