

Report of the Nevada Bird Records Committee for 2004

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Nevada Bird Records Committee

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This report of the Nevada Bird Records Committee (NBRC) details the evaluation of 41 records covering the years of 2000-2002. Last year, no report was submitted to Great Basin Birds due to transitions occurring on the Committee, including the appointment of a new Secretary, and resignations or expiring terms of other members. The formidable task of organizing the records and attempting to find new Committee members continues to cause delays in review/decision of records. The conscious decision of the Secretary to have decisions reached on all outstanding records currently on file prior to reviewing new records means that there were no decisions reached on reports submitted in 2003. Hopefully the breadth of this report will ease the concerns of those in the Nevada birding committee who have been disappointed in the apparent lack of Committee action, and will encourage them to continue to submit their valuable sightings to NBRC.

All records on file from 1994-2003 now have many of their details (e.g. observers, date, location, photos received?) and their decisions entered into Excel spreadsheets for archival purposes. Instead of filing them in hanging folders, all submitted records and reviews are now located in three-ring binders according to year. Photographs are in the process of being archived in a systematic fashion, and those of adequate quality will eventually be placed on the Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) web site.

Due to the backlog of records still under consideration, documentation will only be accepted for birds on the Nevada Review List, or for other compelling reasons (e.g. birds noticeably out of season). Observers should note that the Nevada Review List contains exemptions based on state subdivision into three regions, northwest, northeast, and south, and they should consider this prior to making a submission. The list is located on the GBBO web site at (www.gbbo.org). Follow the link from "Nevada Birding" to "Documenting Rarities". A "Documentation of Significant Sighting Form" can also be retrieved from this area. This form is only meant to be a helpful guide, contrary to the current published language on the web site, as many accepted records were not authored in that format.

As noted by the previous Secretary in the 2002 Great Basin Birds, observers who submitted reports should not be concerned if the NBRC votes not to accept a bird record. Even if a record is not accepted, it is archived and could provide valuable context for future sightings. Reports that are accompanied by photographs and sketches have a higher likelihood of acceptance.

The Committee is currently composed of the following members (and is seeking a sixth person): Chris Elphick, John Klicka, Mike San Miguel, Greg Scyphers, and Dennis Serdehely. Former members Peter Bradley, Dorothy Crowe, Ted Floyd, and Gary Voelker contributed to some of the decisions listed below and are gratefully acknowledged for their service to NBRC.

A major difficulty in having a successful bird records committee in Nevada, where the overall population of birders is relatively small (in comparison say to Arizona or California), is that current members or potential members are largely responsible for documenting sightings. In fact, several reports have been submitted where multiple NBRC members have been the observers. Since an NBRC member is prohibited from voting on a bird that he/she observed, in those cases it is impossible to render a positive decision on the record until at least one (or more) of those members has left the Committee. This causes decisions on some records to lag for years.

Currently, records are accepted if they have received votes of 6-0, 5-0, or 5-1. 4-2 votes on the first round are recirculated. Any record receiving three or more negative votes is not accepted. The exact vote for a record is not included in the details listed below.

Initials are listed only for observers who submitted documentation for positive records. At this time it is outside the scope of the Committee to list all observers, even those who may have first located a bird. The year and the record number assigned are listed after observers' initials, or alone, in absence of initials. If photographs were included in documentation, it is noted as "Ph" after the record number. Records are listed in taxonomic order. The county name is shown in **bold-face type** after the specific location of the sighting.

Analysis of records as to previous sightings, especially when first state records are proclaimed, has become controversial based on the perceived weakness of Alcorn, the lack of referral to American Birds, and numerous "old" documented sightings that have yet to be either: submitted to, or reviewed by the Committee. Analysis that includes these comments will be deferred until a historical review of sightings can be conducted by the Committee. Due to space and time limitations, "analysis" of records is mainly given over to the brief reporting of a record's decision, in the interest of publishing as many records as possible in this article.

Numerous records in this report represent circulations of records that, strictly speaking, were unnecessary based on the Nevada Review List. As mentioned above, in the future no records will be circulated for birds that are not on the review list.

Finally, it is possible that due to ongoing organization some records still under review are not listed in this report. The Secretary apologizes for any oversight, and assures reporters that all submissions will be addressed in the future.

2002 RECORDS ACCEPTED

MEW GULL *Larus canus* (MR; 2002-08, Ph) A bird described as a near adult was at a McDonald's (outside, not inside) 28 Mar 2002 in Reno, **Washoe**. The lone dissenting reviewer felt that even after seeing three different photos, Ring-billed Gull could not be ruled out. Photo quality was deemed poor by this reviewer, who apparently only received three of 19 different submitted photos. Additionally, this member suggested that the description better fit Common (or European) Mew Gull rather than American. Three other members placed most of the weight of the accepted record on the accompanying photographs.

TENNESSEE WARBLER *Vermivora peregrina* (DS; 2002-07, Ph) One bird was at

Parker Ranch, **Nye**, on 26 May 2002.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER *Vermivora pinus* (CP; 2002-10) A bird seen by one observer was at Sunset Park, Las Vegas, **Clark**, on 12 Jun 2002. The record was accepted on the basis of the accurate, physical description of the bird, and the occasional upside-down-in-foliage foraging habit that is common to this species. A dissenting reviewer thought the description “fair”, but based rejection on thinking erroneously that the bird had been at the location for nine days in poor habitat (nine days was only the period of time from the sighting to the construction of the record).

PAINTED REDSTART *Myioborus pictus* (RSt; 2002-02) As many as three (!) birds observed on 9 Apr 2002, with two seen at any one time at Thomas Dudley Leavitt, Jr. County Park, Bunkerville, **Clark**. Even as they voted to accept the record, two Committee members expressed reservations about multiple-bird sightings during the short viewing period.

OVENBIRD *Seiurus aurocapillus* (JB; 2002-01) One bird was at a residence in west Las Vegas, **Clark**, on 17 Dec 2001. This species is currently exempt from documentation when seen in southern Nevada.

OVENBIRD *Seiurus aurocapillus* (MP; 2002-09) One bird was seen at Miller’s Rest Stop near Tonopah, **Nye**. The late date of 10 Jun 2002 surprised one reviewer, who nevertheless accepted the record based on the detailed description.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (JP; 2002-06) An adult male was at Queen Canyon, **Mineral** on 26 May 2002.

PAINTED BUNTING *Passerina ciris* (CT; 2002-05, Ph) Seen by multiple observers at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**, from 8-17 May 2002, the identification (supported by the photograph) of this adult male was not questioned by the Committee. Concern was expressed over origin (wild versus captive), leading one member to suggest the Committee could adopt an “Accept record – origin unknown” category to avoid the dilemma. (A “Do not accept – origin questionable” vote is already available.)

BALTIMORE ORIOLE *Icterus galbula* (CT; 2002-04, Ph) An apparent adult male was at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**, on 9 May 2002.

2002 RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION NOT ESTABLISHED

REDDISH EGRET *Egretta rufescens* (2002-12) A report of a sub-adult bird described at Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Henderson, **Clark** from 24 Jul 2002 was rejected due to lack of details in the description.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER *Mniotilta varia* (2002-11) Most reviewers felt that a bird seen at Cave Lake State Park, **White Pine**, 14 Jun 2002, was a Black-throated Gray

Warbler.

2002 RECORDS STILL UNDER REVIEW

ACORN WOODPECKER *Melanerpes formicivorus* (2002-17) Old Mill Town, Kyle Canyon Road, Mount Charleston, **Clark**

LECONTE'S THRASHER *Toxostoma lecontei* (2002-16) Torrance Ranch, Oasis Valley, **Nye**

PRAIRIE WARBLER *Dendroica discolor* (2002-15) Miller's Rest Stop, Tonopah, **Nye**

HEPATIC TANAGER *Piranga flava* (2002-18) Miller's Rest Stop, Tonopah, **Nye**

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW *Ammodramus savannarum* (2002-20) Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**

EASTERN MEADOWLARK *Sturnella magna* (2002-21) Miller's Rest Stop, Tonopah, **Nye**

LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH *Carduelis lawrencei* (2002-19) Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**

2001 RECORDS ACCEPTED

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (RS, CT; 2001-02, Ph) Documented by two observers, a bird described as first-winter was at Las Vegas Bay, Lake Mead, **Clark** from at least 26 Jan to 10 Feb 2001. One reviewer felt the accompanying photograph more closely depicted an adult bird in non-breeding plumage.

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope* (CT; 2001-01) One adult male was seen by multiple observers at an aeration basin, Clark County Sanitation District, **Clark**.

MISSISSIPPI KITE *Ictinia mississippiensis* (JW; 2001-20, Ph) An adult bird was at Muddy River, Warm Springs Ranch, Moapa National Wildlife Refuge, **Clark** on 6 Jun 2001.

MISSISSIPPI KITE *Ictinia mississippiensis* (MC; 2001-14, Ph) A sub-adult bird was photographed at Las Vegas Wash, Henderson, **Clark** on 5 Aug 2001.

COMMON BLACK-HAWK *Buteogallus anthracinus* (RS, CT, DT; 2001-05) A bird was at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark** from 12 Apr to at least 14 Apr 2001. Apparently there were even later sightings of this bird reported on the internet, but

documentation submitted indicated that a dark morph Rough-legged Hawk was released at Corn Creek on 16 Apr by a raptor rehabilitator.

COMMON BLACK-HAWK *Buteogallus anthracinus* (JW; 2001-17) This bird was located perched in a cottonwood near a perennial stream at Kyle Siding, Meadow Valley Wash, **Lincoln** on 5 May 2001.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK *Buteo albonotatus* (JW; 2001-21) A record of a bird at Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge, **Lincoln** on 4 Apr 2001 garnered acceptance, but reviewers, including a lone dissenter, would have appreciated a more rigorous elimination of other dark hawks.

CLAPPER RAIL *Rallus longirostris* (JW; 2001-24, Ph) Two birds were seen, with one of those heard calling at Overton Wildlife Management Area, **Clark** on 12 May 2002. Amazingly, one bird came out of vegetation to parade in front of two observers, and was nicely photographed. Although the bird was submitted as the subspecies *yumanensis*, only one reviewer commented on the difficulties posed in the taxonomy of this species.

RED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicaria* (SH; 2001-29) A bird described as first-year was swimming with eight Red-necked Phalaropes at Pyramid Lake, **Washoe** on 27 Sep 2001. Detailed sketches of both Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, including illustration of the relative size differences in each species, were submitted.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO *Coccyzus americanus* (JW; 2001-19, Ph) This bird located on 30 May 2001 was apparently documented (subsequently circulated for review) to record early arrival date for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, where numerous pairs are known to breed near the Muddy River, Warm Springs Ranch, Moapa National Wildlife Refuge, **Clark**. This species is exempt from documentation in the southern part of the state.

ACORN WOODPECKER *Melanerpes formicivorus* (RS, RSc; 2001-32) Multiple observers saw this bird at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark** from at least 19-23 Oct 2001. One reporter described it as silent, while feeding in sapsucker holes in the trees, while another reporter used its call to locate it initially.

LEAST FLYCATCHER *Empidonax minimus* (TF; 2001-27) A bird seen by multiple observers at Torrance Ranch, Oasis Valley, **Nye** on 20 Sep 2001 was painstakingly described. Details that aided acceptance included strong contrast of the wing coverts with dark and white, slight tail, and "whit!" call.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO *Vireo flavifrons* (CT, DT, RS; 2001-04) This adult bird was located on 8 Apr 2001 and seen by multiple observers until at least 14 Apr 2001 at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**. The description of its song on two days of its sighting helped eliminate any possible confusion with the visually similar Pine Warbler.

VARIED THRUSH *Ixoreus naevius* (KV; 2001-08, Ph) An adult male was captured and banded at Torrance Ranch, Oasis Valley, **Nye**, being seen from 10-16 May 2001. The reporter had previously seen Varied Thrush at the same location on 29 Sep 1999. Strangely, there is no obvious reason why this record was circulated as this species is not on the Nevada review list.

PALM WARBLER *Dendroica palmarum* (SG; 2001-07) One bird was at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark** on 5 May 2001.

PALM WARBLER *Dendroica palmarum* (NM-C, AC; 2001-30) One bird of 1 Oct 2001, portrayed as after-hatch-year from the Western race, was at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**. Extremely artistic sketches (of bird profile and tail details) accompanied written documentation.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER *Dendroica striata* (JW; 2001-22) A thorough description of a fall bird seen at Lida, **Esmeralda** on 9 Sep 2001 eliminated the possibility of look-alike Pine or Bay-breasted Warbler.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER *Mniotilta varia* (TF, KM; 2001-15) A bird seen at Big Canyon, Pyramid Lake, **Washoe** on 19 Aug 2001 had its record secured by good descriptions not only of appearance, but of its distinctive behavior (hanging upside down on tree branches).

HOODED WARBLER *Wilsonia citrina* (SG; 2001-06) An adult male was at a residence in Boulder City, **Clark** on 29 Apr 2001.

HOODED WARBLER *Wilsonia citrina* (KV; 2001-09, Ph) An adult male present from 14-16 May 2001 was captured and banded at Torrance Ranch, Oasis Valley, **Nye**.

BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW *Spizella atrogularis* (JD; 2001-16) Although this species is not on the Nevada Review List, the record for a bird seen on the Ophir Trail, **Washoe**, 20 Aug 2001, was circulated because: the experienced observer had only seen one previous fall migrant, and had never seen one in the Sierra range.

COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea* (MP, LP; 2001-34) Two birds, a female (16 Dec 2001) and a male (17 Dec 2001), came to a feeder at a residence in Elko, **Elko**. Although it is not clear from the documentation, both birds must have also been seen together on 30 Dec 2001, as a photo of two birds together at a thistle feeder was received later.

COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea* (JA; 2001-35, Ph) This record of a bird described as a female in Reno, **Washoe** on 17 Dec 2001 was accepted as a redpoll species, but two reviewers felt that Hoary could not be ruled out unequivocally. Even the recorder was not sure. One member stated though that the overall dark appearance of the bird and the unlikely appearance of Hoary were enough to certify Common. The winter of

2001-2002, the season for which this bird and the above birds appeared, was described as an invasion year for redpolls.

2001 RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION NOT ESTABLISHED

YELLOW RAIL *Coturnicops noveboracensis* (2001-36) A bird seen from 22 Sep to 5 Oct 2001 at Comins Lake, **White Pine** was suggested by most reviewers to be a juvenile Sora.

LEAST FLYCATCHER *Empidonax minimus* (2001-26) A silent Empid was seen briefly at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark** on 2 Sep 2001. All members felt the description was inadequate for this difficult identification.

ORCHARD ORIOLE *Icterus spurius* (2001-10) A purported female at Miller's Rest Stop, **Nye** on 19 May 2001 was described. Lacking details to eliminate Hooded and Bullock's Orioles, including discussion of wing pattern, this report could not be accepted.

2001 RECORDS STILL UNDER REVIEW

COMMON BLACK-HAWK *Buteogallus anthracinus* (2001-03) Warm Springs Ranch, Moapa National Wildlife Refuge, **Clark**

EASTERN PHOEBE *Sayornis phoebe* (2001-33) Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**

VEERY *Catharus fuscescens* (2001-12) Sierra Vista Apartments, Tonopah, **Nye**

TENNESSEE WARBLER *Vermivora peregrina* (2001-31) Washoe Lake State Park, **Washoe**

MAGNOLIA WARBLER *Dendroica magnolia* (2002-14) Sierra Vista Apartments, Tonopah, **Nye**

BLACKPOLL WARBLER *Dendroica striata* (2001-28) Oxbow Park, **Washoe**

MOURNING WARBLER *Oporornis philadelphia* (2001-23) Porter Springs, Seventroughs Ranch, **Pershing**

RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW *Aimophila ruficeps* (2001-18) Nickel Canyon, Virgin Range, **Clark**. This bird is exempt from documentation for southern Nevada.

2000 RECORDS ACCEPTED

MISSISSIPPI KITE *Ictinia mississippiensis* (NM-C, AC; 2000-39) One bird described as a first-summer kite was seen in the evening on 18 May 2000 (wheeling in a flock of Turkey Vultures) and spotted again the following morning of 19 May 2000 at Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge, **Lincoln**. One reviewer commented that accepted records of this species from California ranged from 17 May to 18 Jun, and that many of these birds were reported from desert oases like Pahranaagat.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK *Buteo albonotatus* (NM-C, AC; 2000-40) One adult was observed at Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge, **Lincoln** on 18 May 2000. A description including the Turkey Vulture-like flight, yellow cere/legs, tail pattern, and elimination of other dark-phase hawks was enough for the reviewers. The documenters remarked that they were expecting to see a Common Black-Hawk since one had recently been reported at Pahranaagat. A 16 July 2000 submission (not from the reporters here) of a Common Black-Hawk at Pahranaagat was not accepted.

WHITE-EYED VIREO *Ixoreus naevius* (NM-C, AC; 2000-38) A single bird seen by two observers on 18 May 2000 was described from Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**. Even though all votes were “accept record”, interestingly, two Committee members felt the description lacked details, while two others felt the description was good.

2000 RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED, IDENTIFICATION NOT ESTABLISHED

BROAD-WINGED HAWK *Buteo platypterus* (2000-41) Lack of discussion of the key differences between Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks was mentioned by two members as they rejected this record of a bird at Corn Creek, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark** on 3 Nov 2000. Coincidentally, another record describing a Broad-winged Hawk in the same area on 10 Oct 2000 was also denied by the Committee.

2000 RECORDS STILL UNDER REVIEW

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER *Empidonax flaviventris* (2000-21) Torrance Ranch, Oasis Valley, **Nye**

EASTERN PHOEBE *Sayornis phoebe* (2000-22) Floyd Lamb State Park, Las Vegas, **Clark**

SPRAGUE’S PIPIT *Anthus spragueii* (2000-10) Corn Creek Road, Desert National Wildlife Range, **Clark**

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER *Dendroica fusca* (2000-11) Sunset Park, Las Vegas, **Clark**

ORCHARD ORIOLE *Icterus spurius* (2000-06) Muddy River, Moapa National Wildlife Refuge, **Clark**

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