

## SIXTH REPORT OF THE CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

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This is the sixth report of the Western Field Ornithologists' California Bird Records Committee. It contains 165 records divided as follows: 138 records (of 47 species) accepted; 25 (19) unaccepted, identification questionable; 1 unaccepted, origin questionable (i.e., possible escapee; identification accepted); and 1 unresolved. These figures represent a rejection rate of only 15.9%.

Included among the accepted records in the present report are two species new to California: Gray-tailed Tattler (*Heteroscelus brevipes*) and Least Auklet (*Aethia pusilla*). The Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) was added to the state list by Jones et al. (1981) on the basis of a record previously accepted by the Committee but now being reviewed because of new information; hence this species should be removed at least temporarily from the list. Because the "White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*" of Jones et al. (1981) has recently been split into two species, the White Wagtail (*M. alba*) and the Black-backed Wagtail (*M. lugens*) (AOU 1982), the Committee has decided to review all past records of white wagtails; hence, "White Wagtail, *M. alba*" should be removed from the state list; probably it will be replaced by the Black-backed Wagtail (see Morlan 1981). With two species added and two subtracted, the state list remains at 541 species.

The review list—those species for which the Committee solicits documentation—stands at 117 species after the addition of Gray-tailed Tattler, Least Auklet and (by Committee decision) Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*) and the deletion of Yellow and white wagtails since the last published list (Jones et al. 1981). Of course, records of species previously unrecorded in the state should also be submitted. At its 1982 meeting, the Committee reaffirmed its desire to review all past records of species currently on the review list, including specimen records (which should be submitted with both written and photographic documentation).

The documents and photographs forming the basis for records published in Committee reports, as well as all Committee comments and votes, are now housed at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, courtesy of Ed N. Harrison. Parties interested in these records may make an appointment to visit the Foundation or may contact Curator Lloyd F. Kiff (1100 Glendon Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024; phone 213-477-2001). The Committee is greatly indebted to the Foundation and to Messrs. Harrison and Kiff for their generosity. Unpublished records are on file with Secretary B.D. (Mike) Parmeter (2500 Emerson Street, Napa, CA 94558; home phone 707-255-6757), to whom all new reports should be submitted.

At its annual meeting of 7 March 1981, the Committee amended the bylaws that it adopted on 14 January 1978 (see Binford 1977). The most important change was the addition to the state list of an "unresolved category," defined as follows: If, at a meeting of the Committee, a record of a species not on the main state list is neither accepted (all or all but one "accept" votes) nor

rejected ("reject" votes from a majority of those members present), the case shall be considered "unresolved" and the species shall be added to the unresolved category; members may vote "unresolved." Persons desiring a list of bylaw emendations may write Vice-Secretary Binford.

The following Committee members voted on some or all of the records in this report: Laurence C. Binford (Vice-Secretary), David DeSante, Jon L. Dunn, Richard A. Erickson, Kimball L. Garrett, Lee Jones, Paul Lehman, John S. Luther, Guy McCaskie, Joseph Morlan, B. D. Parmeter (Secretary), Arnold Small, Richard Stallcup and Philip Unitt.

Although Committee members devote a great deal of their time in the name of science, the real heroes of this report are the contributors. Their records will be used for years to come in determining the status and distribution of many bird species and will aid in understanding the role of vagrants in nature.

The taxonomy and nomenclature employed in this paper are those of the American Ornithologists' Union (1982). Within each species account, records are listed chronologically according to the first known date of occurrence. Usually, information for each record includes, in order, the following: number of birds recorded (sometimes with age and/or sex), official Committee file number (in parentheses), dates, locality, initials of those persons submitting written descriptions or photographs (see list of Contributors), and pertinent comments. Those species marked with an asterisk (\*) are no longer on the review list. For the age of shorebirds in their first fall, I have, for the most part, used the term "immature" rather than "juvenal." Although in the field such young birds appear to be in full juvenal plumage, by September or October they might well have commenced their first prebasic molt into first basic (first-winter) plumage (Bent 1927: 248). All records are sight records unless the bird is noted as collected or photographed. As requested by the Committee, I have attempted to determine the entire period when the bird(s) was present, gleaned these data from the documentation submitted to the Committee, the published accounts and unpublished files of the regional editors of *American Birds*, and the notes of Committee members. All hyphenated dates are inclusive; they may or may not embrace other dates of observation or be the dates submitted by reporters.

For the first time in Committee reports, the unaccepted records are annotated. The purpose of these comments is not to alibi Committee decisions; the complete discussions and votes are available to anyone upon request. Neither is the purpose in any way to criticize the reporters, who are to be commended for their efforts; in fact, nearly half (12 of 25) of the records judged unacceptable because of questionable identification were submitted by past or present members of this Committee, including two secretaries! Rather, these comments are intended to be both instructive and entertaining in that they reveal information on field identification, Committee policies, and members' validation techniques. Annotations of both unaccepted and accepted records are mine, although they are largely a distillation of information in the Committee files and have been reviewed by each member of the Committee. These remarks may include reference to records that are "generally" accepted but have not yet been reviewed by the Committee. Some of the unaccepted records may represent correct identifications that were supported by insufficient descriptions. Observers reporting rare birds

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may write the Secretary for a free copy (or as many as desired) of the Committee's official report form. Although this form need not be used, it will aid description-writers in deciding what information is desired in a thorough report.

### ACCEPTED RECORDS

YELLOW-BILLED LOON (*Gavia adamsii*). One immature female (128-1980) 23 Jan-6 Mar 1971, Moss Landing, Monterey Co. (LCB, JLD, GMcC); found dead on 6 Mar and now study skin 162350 in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley (Remsen and Binford 1975). One (129-1980) 13 Nov-1 Dec 1974, Tomales Bay near Inverness, Marin Co. (LCB, JLD, RAE, JM, GMcC). One (18-1980) 17 Feb-1 Mar 1980 (last date from *American Birds* files, fide R. LeValley), Pt. Richmond, Contra Costa Co. (RAE, JL, SW); photos on file.

COOK'S PETREL (*Pterodroma cookii*). Two (71-1979) 24 Nov 1979, vicinity of Davidson Seamount (35°44'N, 122°43'W), offshore from Cambria, San Luis Obispo Co. (AS). One (71-1979) 1 Dec 1979, same locality (RAE, GMcC). See Unaccepted Records, identification questionable.

\*SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER (*Puffinus tenuirostris*). One (38-1977) 10 Jan 1976, in Monterey Bay off Moss Landing, Monterey Co. (DDeS, RH).

\*REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*). One immature (29-1980) 11 Feb-3 Mar 1979, Imperial Dam, Colorado River, Imperial Co. (JLD, GMcC). One immature (153-1980) 19 Aug-26 Sep 1979, San Diego River mouth, San Diego Co. (GMcC).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax violaceus*). One adult (154-1980) 15 Apr - 2 May 1979, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (GMcC). One adult (91-1980) 20-26 Apr 1980, Ventura, Ventura Co. (JLD, JMG, PL, RW); photos on file. One adult (123-1980) 18-26 Jul 1980, Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC, JO); photo on file.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*). One adult (131-1980) 1 Jan-17 Feb 1975, Legg Lake, near El Monte, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, PU). According to McCaskie (1975d) and Garrett and Dunn (1981), one in nearby Covina, Los Angeles Co., 13-15 March 1975, was probably the same bird; this is the second definite record for southern California (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

KING EIDER (*Somateria spectabilis*). One female (92-1978) 6-7 May 1978 (rumored present since February), Año Nuevo State Reserve, San Mateo Co. (LH).

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*). One (84-1980) 10 May 1970 (not 9 May as published by McCaskie 1970), Morongo Valley, San Bernardino Co. (KLG). One adult (50-1980) 21-22 Apr 1978, Morongo Valley, San Bernardino Co. (flew south into Riverside Co.) (JLD, RAE, GMcC). One adult (146-1980) 17 Jun 1978, upper end of the Fort Piute Gorge, San Bernardino Co. (GMcC). Two adults at a nest, 7 July-early Aug 1979 (nesting believed to have failed), two adults plus nest with at least two young (which died before fledging), 21 Jun into Jul 1980, two adults last seen near failed nest, 21 Jun 1981, and one adult with no evidence of nesting, 19 Jun-17 Jul 1982 (33-1980), Santa Rosa Mountain, Riverside Co. (JLD, GMcC).

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AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*). One (92-1980) 15 Apr 1973, Fraser Point, Santa Cruz Island (PL, DS); photo on file. One or two "pure" *H. palliatus* have been recorded here every year since 1968, having first been recorded 11 Nov 1966; one and sometimes two other birds, exhibiting apparent hybrid characters with the American Black Oystercatcher (*H. bachmani*), have been recorded since Feb 1973 (fide L. Jones).

GRAY-TAILED TATTLER (*Heteroscelus brevipes*). One adult (43-1981) 23 Jul 1981, Lancaster Sewage Ponds, near Lancaster, Los Angeles Co. (HC, JLD); photos on file. This is the only North American record outside Alaska. This species apparently breeds only in eastern Siberia and winters in the western Pacific. It is a rare spring and fall migrant on the islands in the Bering Sea and on the Aleutians and a casual spring migrant and summer visitant on the coast of northern Alaska (Kessel and Gibson 1978). Identification was based primarily on call, described by JLD as a two-noted upslurred whistle, "chu-wheeeet." The bird also exhibited the clear white belly, sparsely barred crissum (sides only) and narrowly barred breast and sides typical of alternate plumage, and a bold white superciliary, wider before the eye, which may prove to be a useful field mark. The shorter nasal grooves and white tips to the upper tail coverts, of little value in the field, were not noted.

UPLAND SANDPIPER (*Bartramia longicauda*). One (1-1980) 23 May 1975, Santa Barbara Island (LJ). One (79-1980) 23-24 May 1980, Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo Co. (JLD, DEG, PL).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*). One (82-1980) 9-19 May 1980 (not 9-11 May as in Roberson 1980), Lancaster Sewage Ponds near Lancaster and adjacent marsh on Edwards Air Force Base, Los Angeles Co. (HC, JLD, RAE, JL, GMcC, LS, NS); photos on file. This is the second record for southern California and the third for the state.

\*SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*). One (49-1977) 28 Aug 1966, Carmel River mouth, Carmel, Monterey Co. (AB, RLB, WR); photo on file. One (132-1980) 20 May 1976, Wister Unit, south end of Salton Sea, Imperial Co. (JLD). One immature (93-1980) 10-11 Aug 1977, Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. (PL). One adult (52-1980) 13 May 1978, Whitewater River mouth, north end of Salton Sea, Riverside Co. (JLD, GMcC). Up to three immatures (51-1980) 9-15 Sep 1978, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (JLD, PL, GMcC). One (155-1980) 21-24 Apr 1979, near New River mouth, south end of Salton Sea, Imperial Co. (GMcC). One (45-1980) 18 May 1979, South Wilber Flood Area, Kings Co. (RW). One immature (34-1980) 31 July-2 Aug 1979 (not 31 Jul-3 Aug as in Garrett and Dunn 1981), Lancaster Sewage Ponds, north of Lancaster, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, KLG). Two immatures (35-1980) 6-11 Aug 1979, Edwards Air Force Base, Los Angeles Co. (JLD). Two immatures (36-1980) 2-3 Sep, with "one or two" present 30 Aug-6 Sep 1979, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (JLD, PL); photo on file. One (83-1980) 6-8 May 1980, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (JLD, PL, LS); photo on file. One immature (126-1980) 3-9 Aug 1980, Edwards Air Force Base, Los Angeles Co. (JLD). Six immatures (125-1980) 10 Aug 1980, Tijuana River bed south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC).

\*SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER (*Calidris acuminata*). One (47-1977) banded (USFWS 731-30499) 4 Oct 1972, Bolinas Lagoon, Marin Co. (GP); photos on file. One (2-1980) 5 Oct 1976, Thompson Reservoir, Santa Catalina Island (LJ). One (94-1980) 5 Oct 1977, Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. (PL). One (95-1980) 24-30 Oct 1977, Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. (PL). One (96-1980) 13 Dec 1977, Goleta, Santa

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Barbara Co. (PL). One (97-1980) 1 Oct 1978, Santa Maria River mouth, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe). Two (98-1980) on 15 Oct, with one remaining until 17 Oct 1978, Santa Maria River mouth, both Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Cos. (PL). One (53-1980) 21-29 Oct 1978, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (LRBe, JLD, PL, LS); photo on file. One (99-1980) 22-27 Oct 1978, near Santa Maria, Santa Barbara Co. (PL). One (100-1980) 19 Sep 1979 (not 9 Sep as in Roberson 1980), Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe, JMG, PL); photo on file. One (37-1980) 19 Jan-2 Mar 1980, Point Mugu, Ventura Co. (JLD, GMcC); this is the only wintering record for North America, the date span demonstrating that the bird was not simply a late fall migrant.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*). One immature (56-1980) 27-28 Sep 1979, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (KLG, PL, RW). This is the second record for southern California and fifth for the state.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER (*Tryngites subruficollis*). One (55-1980) 27 Aug-1 Sep 1978, San Jacinto Lake, near Lakeview, Riverside Co. (JLD, KLG, GMcC, PU). Two (147-1980) 2-3 Sep 1978, Lake Hodges, San Diego Co. (GMcC, PU). One (54-1980) 10-18 Sep 1978, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC). Flock of four (38-1980) 6 Sep 1979, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (JLD, PL).

\*RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*). One immature (57-1980) 17-24 Sep 1978, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (LRBe, JLD, PL). One (6-1979) 24 Sep 1978, 5 miles northwest of Orcutt, Santa Barbara Co. (JAJ). One (101-1980) 7-8 Oct 1978, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (LRBe, PL, LS); photo on file. One (11-1979) 18 Dec 1978, Bodega Bay, Sonoma Co. (LS). One (102-1980) 24 Dec 1978, Santa Maria River mouth, Santa Barbara Co. (PL). One immature (39-1980) 2-7 Sep 1979, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (JLD, PL); photo on file. One (103-1980) 14-18 Sep 1979, Santa Maria River mouth, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe, PL); photo on file. One (104-1980) 30 Sep-2 Oct 1979, near Santa Maria, Santa Barbara Co. (LRB, PL). One (127-1980) 4-8 Oct 1979, Harbor Lake, Long Beach, Los Angeles Co. (CM); photo on file. One adult in alternate (breeding) plumage (124-1980) 10 Aug 1980, Tijuana River bed south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC).

LITTLE GULL (*Larus minutus*). One first-winter bird (16-1980) 1-5 Mar 1980, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co. (JMo).

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*). One adult (105-1980) 30 Dec 1978, ocean  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile off Montecito, Santa Barbara Co. (RW). This is the first record for southern California.

LEAST AUKLET (*Aethia pusilla*). One adult (73-1981) 15 Jun 1981, Thornton State Beach, Daly City, San Mateo Co. (SFB); photos of specimen (Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, 168469) on file. This bird was found alive on the ocean beach by a park ranger and died the same night. Its breeding plumage and summer occurrence are in accord with the pattern established by other north Pacific alcids, notably the Horned Puffin (*Fratercula corniculata*), and thus suggest natural occurrence. The Least Auklet nests on islands in the Bering Sea and on the Aleutians and has been recorded in winter as far south as northern Japan and Kodiak, Alaska. The Daly City bird is the first to be recorded in the eastern Pacific south of Kodiak.

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BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD (*Cyananthus latirostris*). One male (58-1980) 1 Nov-30 Dec 1978, West Los Angeles, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, KLG). One male (40-1980) 12-29 Jan 1979, Riverside, Riverside Co. (JLD, GMcC). One male (41-1980) 9-14 Oct 1979, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe, JLD, JMG, PL); photo on file. One female (42-1980) 10 Oct 1979-3 Feb 1980, Gaviota State Beach, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe, JLD, JMG, PL); photos on file. One male (43-1980) 28 Nov 1979-29 Feb 1980, Balboa Park, San Diego, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC). One male (44-1980) 21 Dec 1979-17 Feb 1980, Harmon Barranca, Ventura, Ventura Co. (JLD).

GREATER PEWEE (*Contopus pertinax*). One (136-1980) 9-23 Feb 1976, Balboa Park, San Diego, San Diego Co. (JLD). One (19-1980) 7 Nov 1979-30 Jan 1980, 3 Nov 1980-23 Feb 1981, and 13 Jan-20 Feb 1982, Griffith Park, Los Angeles, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, GMcC, DR). One (20-1980) 9 Jan-19 Mar 1980 (not 16 Jan-11 Feb as published by McCaskie 1980b), Leo Carillo State Beach, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, GMcC).

\*LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*). One (109-1980) 18 Sep 1977, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Co. (JLD, PL). One (60-1980) 19-25 Sep 1978, Big Sycamore Canyon (Pt. Mugu State Park), Ventura Co. (JLD, RAE, KLG). One (61-1980) 5 Nov 1978-3 Mar 1979, Fillmore State Fish Hatchery, Ventura Co. (LRBe, JLD, PL); this and the next record represent California's first truly wintering birds. One (62-1980) 26 Nov 1978-17 Feb 1979, Brock Ranch, Imperial Co. (JLD, GMcC). One (151-1980) 16 Sep 1979, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC). One (27-1980) 7 Oct 1979, Santa Maria River mouth, San Luis Obispo Co. (LRBe, JLD, PL). One (152-1980) 21 Oct 1979, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC).

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*). One (28-1980) 30 Dec 1979-10 Feb 1980, Irvine, Orange Co. (JLD, PL, GMcC); photo on file.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*). One (75-1980) 6 Oct 1978, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC, PU). One (107-1980) 13-14 Oct 1979, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe, JMG, PL); photo on file.

SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*). One (159-1980) 7 Oct 1979, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC). This is the third record for the state.

THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus crassirostris*). One (59-1980) 5-16 Aug 1978, along Colorado River about 13 miles north of Blythe, Riverside Co. (JLD, GMcC).

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*). One (137-1980) 26 Oct-2 Nov 1974, Scotty's Castle, Inyo Co. (JLD, GMcC). One (4-1980) 2-3 Nov 1974, San Nicolas Island (LJ). One (5-1980) 2 Jun 1978, Panamint Springs, Inyo Co. (LJ). One (63-1980) 27 Mar-17 Apr 1980 (found dead on 18 Apr), Northridge, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, CS).

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*). One (138-1980) 28 Dec 1973-9 Mar 1974, along Colorado River near Bard, Imperial Co. (JLD, GMcC). One (21-1980) 12 Dec 1978-19 Jan 1979, along Colorado River above Laguna Dam, Imperial Co. (JLD).

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RED-THROATED PIPIT (*Anthus cervinus*). One (86-1980) 17 Oct 1970, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (KLG). Two together (6-1980) 20-21 Oct 1974, San Nicolas Island (KLG, LJ). One (7-1980) 10 Nov 1974, Santa Cruz Island (LJ). One (64-1980) 4-9 Oct 1978, Oxnard Plain, near Oxnard, Ventura Co. (JLD, PL, GMcC). One (65-1980) on 13 Oct and 3+ on 15 Oct 1978, Oxnard Plain, near Oxnard, Ventura Co. (JLD, RW). One on 26 Oct and two on 27 Oct 1978 (113-1980), Goleta, Santa Barbara Co. (LRBe, PL).

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT (*Anthus spragueii*). Three (47-1980) on 19 Oct 1974, with one or two remaining through 27 Oct, and one adult female collected (San Diego Natural History Museum 38980) by GMcC on 24 Oct, Tijuana River Valley just south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JSL); photos on file; this was the first acceptable record for California (see McCaskie 1975a). One (139-1980) 23 Oct 1975, near Carson, Los Angeles Co. (JLD). One (30-1980) 23 Oct 1979, Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo Co. (JLD).

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*). One (89-1980) 5 Dec 1969-19 Mar 1970, Fairmount Park, Riverside, Riverside Co. (KLG, GMcC); this is the only winter record for California. One (8-1980) 27 Oct 1974, Santa Catalina Island (LJ).

PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*). One (142-1980), 17-21 Oct 1974 (not 17-20 as published by McCaskie 1975b), Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, LJ, GMcC). One (150-1980) 12-14 Oct 1979, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (GMcC). One (31-1980) 23-24 Oct 1979, Shoshone, Inyo Co. (JLD).

\*RED-EYED (YELLOW-GREEN) VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus flavoviridis*). One (141-1980) 19-20 Sep 1974, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC). One (74-1980) 13 Sep 1978, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (PU). This form is now considered by the AOU (1982) to be a race of the Red-eyed Vireo and therefore is no longer on the Committee's review list.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera*). One male (9-1980) 29 May 1974, Deep Springs College, Inyo Co. (JLD, LJ). One male (10-1980) 4 Jun 1977, San Nicolas Island (LJ).

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Dendroica dominica*). One (148-1980) 28 Oct-4 Nov 1978, Deep Springs College, Inyo Co. (GMcC). One (24-1980) 18 Apr 1979, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC). One (66-1980) 12 May 1979, Santa Monica, Los Angeles Co. (KLG). One (25-1980) 4-7 Jun 1979 (not 4-6 Jun as published by McCaskie 1979b), Point Loma, San Diego Co. (JLD, GMcC). One (118-1980) 24-25 Oct 1979, Gaviota State Beach, Santa Barbara Co. (JMG, PL); photos on file. One male (78-1980) 29 May-1 June 1980, Oasis, Mono Co. (JLD, JL); photos on file.

GRACE'S WARBLER (*Dendroica graciae*). One (23-1980) 6 Jan-2 Apr 1980, 4 Nov 1980-28 Mar 1981 (not 4 Nov-8 Mar as in Garrett and Dunn 1981: 389), 10 Oct 1981-10 Mar 1982, and 11 Oct 1982 into winter, Montecito, Santa Barbara Co. (JLD, WF, PL, GMcC); photo on file. One (119-1980) 24 Feb-11 Apr 1980, 22 Feb-21 Mar 1982, and 24 Oct 1982 into winter, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara Co. (JMG, PL); not seen during winter 1980-1981, probably because of incomplete coverage (fide PL); photos on file.

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PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*). One (143-1980) 9 Jun 1974, San Nicolas Island (JLD, LJ, GMcC). One (72-1980) 19 May 1978, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (GMcC, PU). One (76-1980) 6 Oct 1978, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC, PU). One (158-1980) 1 Jun 1979, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC). One (117-1980) 20-28 Sep 1979, Gaviota State Beach, Santa Barbara Co. (PL); photo on file. One (22-1980) 23 Oct 1979, Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo Co. (JLD).

CONNECTICUT WARBLER (*Oporornis agilis*). One (144-1980) 29-30 Sep 1974, San Nicolas Island (JLD, LJ, GMcC).

\*HOODED WARBLER (*Wilsonia citrina*). One immature male (70-1978) collected (San Bernardino County Museum) by S. Cardiff, 22 Oct 1977, about ¼ mile east of Fort Piute, East Mojave Desert, San Bernardino Co. (DDeS, JVR).

RED-FACED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubrifrons*). One (116-1977) 4 June 1977, Morongo Valley, San Bernardino Co. (CB, DM).

SCARLET Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*). One female (13-1980) 1 Jun 1973, San Nicolas Island (LJ). One immature male (14-1980) 1-3 Nov 1974, San Nicolas Island (LJ). One male (145-1980) 20-24 Jun 1976, San Pedro, Los Angeles Co. (JLD, KLG, PL). One male (15-1980) 21 Jun 1977, Santa Catalina Island (LJ). One male (156-1980) 26-28 May 1979, Point Loma, San Diego Co. (GMcC, PU).

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*). One (87-1980) 21-24 Sep 1974, Tijuana River Valley south of Imperial Beach, San Diego Co. (JLD, KLG, GMcC).

CASSIN'S SPARROW (*Aimophila cassinii*). One male (68-1980) 8-16 May 1978, 19 miles north of Lucerne Valley on CA 247, San Bernardino Co. (JLD, RAE, GMcC). One male (73-1980) 10-12 Jun 1978, 1 mile east of El Cajon, San Diego Co. (GMcC, PU); see Garrett and Dunn (1981) for occurrences in other years at this locality.

LE CONTE'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus leconteii*). One (90-1980) 27 Oct-1 Nov 1974, with two 28 Oct, Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo Co. (JLD, KLG). See McCaskie (1975b, 1975c) for a summary of records.

\*SNOW BUNTING (*Plectrophenax nivalis*). Flock of three (7-1978) 6 Nov 1977, with singles, perhaps the same birds, on 9, 10 and 11 Nov, Lake Talawa, Del Norte Co. (RSW).

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*). One (121-1980) 22 May 1979, Scotty's Castle, Inyo Co. (PL); photo on file. One (77-1980) 24-26 May 1980 (not 24-25 May as published by Roberson 1980), Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley National Monument, Inyo Co. (JLD, PL).

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### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable

**BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS** (*Diomedea melanophris*). One (158-1977) 24 Mar 1977, from Pigeon Point, San Mateo Co.

This record was submitted as only a "probable sighting of a Black-browed Albatross." The Committee normally will not review such records, but in this special case—a possible state record—decided to make an exception. The final vote at the Committee meeting of 13 February 1982 was accept 0, reject 8, unresolved 2. The Committee agreed with the observer's own assessment that immature Gray-headed Albatross (*D. chrysostoma*), while much less likely on geographical grounds, could not be ruled out, because distance (1/4 mile) precluded detection of the critical field marks. While the described characters—narrow white stripe running the length of the underwing, grayish crown and throat, white belly, dark mantle, and dark bill—eliminate all normal "white" albatrosses previously recorded in California, they might not eliminate an aberrant Black-footed Albatross (*D. nigripes*) or hybrid Black-footed × Laysan (*D. immutabilis*). Two members felt that distance and lighting may not have been sufficient to rule out even a typical Laysan by underwing pattern alone. Field observers should prepare themselves to separate Black-browed from Gray-headed, while being aware of hybrids and aberrant plumages in regularly occurring species (see Roberson 1980).

**COOK'S PETREL** (*Pterodroma cookii*). Three individuals (71-1979, individuals #2, #3 and #5) 17 Nov 1979, vicinity of Davidson Seamount (35°44'N, 122°43'W), offshore from Cambria, San Luis Obispo Co. (JLD, RAE, GMcC, DR, RS).

Seven *Pterodroma* petrels were seen on 17 November. One (#4 = fourth bird seen) was validated as a Stejneger's Petrel (*P. longirostris*) and published in the Committee's fifth report (Luther et al. 1983). Birds #1 and #6 were accepted as Cook's Petrels in the same report. Bird #7 is still under review. The remaining three, treated herein, probably were Cook's but the views and hence descriptions did not provide sufficient evidence for acceptance, and each was rejected, 1-9.

Because these six Cook's Petrels were among the first for California and a valid Stejneger's was seen on the same pelagic trip, the Committee decided to treat each individual separately. Had the species been known previously to be regular, all six might have been handled as a single record, as was the case with record 71-1979 (24 November) accepted above. Reporters, especially on pelagic trips, should be aware that individual birds of any species might be treated separately and take notes accordingly.

**WEDGE-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** (*Oceanodroma tethys*). One (46-1980) 1 Dec 1979, vicinity of Davidson Seamount (35°44'N, 122°43'W), offshore from Cambria, San Luis Obispo Co.

Many of the participants on this pelagic trip were unaware that a possible Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel had been seen until the record was published in *American Birds* (McCaskie 1980a) and by Roberson (1980). Only some of those people on the top deck of the boat saw the bird. Of the three who submitted descriptions, one was not convinced of the identification. Although one observer described the diagnostic rump pattern well—"clear white rump, white going almost to end of center of tail, leaving dark corners"—he and another reporter felt that the bird did not have as much white as some birds they had seen in the Galapagos Islands. Committee members voting against the record noted that the period of observation was very brief. Two members thought it best "to consider the bird a possible Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel that got away." The record was judged unacceptable on the first round, 4-6.

Inexperienced observers should be aware that imagination can play tricks on even the most careful observer, and the shorter the glimpse the more likely that the mind will fill in the missing details. Even experienced observers cannot identify every bird seen;

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

distance, lighting, brevity of sighting, etc., preclude many identifications. When a rare bird is concerned, it is doubly hard to "let it go," but go it must if the diagnostic field marks cannot be ascertained.

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula sula*). One (17-1980) 6 Sep 1979, Cibola National Wildlife Refuge on the Colorado River about 5 miles south of Palo Verde, Imperial Co.

The Committee felt confident that the observer did not see a booby (record rejected 0-10 on the first round) but could not agree on what might have been seen. The description included reference to a black cap, which should never adorn a Red-footed Booby.

**TRUMPETER SWAN** (*Cygnus buccinator*). One (125-1978) 11 Nov 1978, Lake Merced, San Francisco, San Francisco Co.

This record was rejected on the second round, 4-6, after a first round vote of 6-4. It was accepted by Winter and Laymon (1979). The bird was with nine Tundra Swans (*C. columbianus*), seen only in flight, and identified by size alone. Dissenters pointed out that the bill characteristics of a Trumpeter (large size, straighter profile, and all black color) could not be seen from below and that Mute Swan (*C. olor*) and Whooper Swan (*C. cygnus*), which are both larger than the Tundra Swan and are distinct possibilities for occurrence in California, could not be eliminated.

Perhaps the most interesting point here is that the Committee, in reviewing records, considers as possibilities even species unrecorded in the state, believing that many unrecorded migratory species could arrive naturally and any species could occur as an escapee.

**BLACK VULTURE** (*Coragyps atratus*). One (35-1978) 5 Sep 1977, 2 miles south of Parker Dam, San Bernardino Co. (not "north" of Parker Dam as stated by Garrett and Dunn 1981).

This controversial record was previously published as rejected, origin uncertain, in the Committee's third report (Luther et al. 1979). After submission of additional descriptive material, it was recirculated and accepted, 9-1. It was also accepted by McCaskie (1978a) and Roberson (1980). However, the dissenting Committee member requested that the record be discussed at the meeting of 13 February 1982, a safeguard measure provided by the bylaws. At that time, after much discussion, the record was rejected, identification questionable, by a vote of 3 accept, 6 reject, and 1 unresolved. Acceptance would have added this species to the state list. Dissenters believed that the descriptive details necessary for conclusive identification were not given, noting that an immature Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), which has a blackish or brownish head well into fall, could not be ruled out; that the flight mannerisms of the bird were described as "a few slow flaps and then glide" and "a few deep flaps . . . and then gliding," rather than the Black Vulture's characteristic, rapid shallow flaps alternating with short glides; and that the white patches seen in the primaries were not only depicted in the wrong place but also might have been the distal parts of the pale gray remiges of a Turkey Vulture as viewed from directly behind.

Most Committee members require a more thorough and accurate description for a new state bird than for a previously recorded rarity. If the Committee is to err in its judgment, it would rather do so on the conservative side, rejecting a valid record rather than accepting an invalid one.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

**ZONE-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo albonotatus*). One (73-1978) 10 Oct 1977, Paso Picacho, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, San Diego Co.

This record circulated through the Committee for the maximum three times and was finally rejected, 8-2, at the meeting of 13 February 1982. It was accepted by McCaskie (1978a) and Garrett and Dunn (1981). This record of an immature was supported by a detailed drawing of the underparts in flight but very little written description. Dissenters felt that dark phase Swainson's (*B. swainsoni*) and immature Red-tailed (*B. jamaicensis*) hawks were not eliminated, pointing out that an immature Red-tailed is slimmer-bodied, narrower-winged, and proportionately longer-tailed than an adult, thus approaching the shape of a Zone-tailed. Also, a Swainson's could fit the description "soaring and balancing on slightly tilted wings." Proponents argued that a melanistic Swainson's would show light-barred undertail coverts, while the drawing of the bird in question has an all-dark crissum; dissenters countered that a written description corroborating the drawing was needed before emphasis could be placed on such an obscure field mark.

Reporters should note that a drawing may not be enough; it should accompany a thorough written description, which should include a discussion of how all similar species are eliminated.

**YELLOW RAIL** (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*). One (15-1979) 7 Oct 1973, Crespi Pond, Pt. Pinos, Pacific Grove, Monterey Co.

This record was judged unacceptable on the second round, 1-9. At the time of observation, the reporters were unaware of the rarity of this species and did not write a description until 5½ years later, when time may have unconsciously distorted their memories. The sketchy description stressed the "light buff" overall color and white wing patches of the observed bird. The Committee pointed out that Yellow Rails are quite dark above (the feathers having broad black centers) and dark buff below, while an immature Sora (*Porzana carolina*) is more likely to be described as "light buff." One Committee member has seen a young Sora with apparent white wing patches on the leading edge of the wing, possibly a result of the displacement of the white underwing coverts; the position of the white in the wings of the Crespi Pond bird was not described. Finally, the bird in question fed in the open in short grass, a behavior better befitting a Sora than the shy Yellow Rail.

**\*SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*). Two (53-1977) 3-14 Sep 1975, location not given. One (65-1979) 3 Jun 1979, Point Mugu, Ventura Co.

A letter from the Secretary of the Committee failed to elicit additional description or the purported photographs for record 53-1977. Probably these birds were correctly identified (as published by Stallcup and Winter 1976), but in the absence of locality, additional description, and especially the photos (if any exist), the Committee had no choice but to reject the record, which it did on the second round, 3-7.

Record 65-1979 is a classic case that demonstrates the variation in approach by different members of the Committee. This bird was seen by a member of the Committee who is fully qualified to identify this species. Further, this species is no longer thought to be very rare in California and has been removed from the review list. The record was accepted by McCaskie (1979b) and Garrett and Dunn (1981). The entire description of the bird itself was as follows: "short bill, dark brown coloration giving general appearance of Least Sandpiper [*C. minutilla*] in comparison to Western [*C. mauri*]; size and leg color of Western; no call; breast less heavily and more finely marked" than that of a Western.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

Sample comments from the Committee are as follows: (1) "A record like this reflects the dichotomy of opinion on this Committee between those who are willing to trust inadequately documented records from observers who are very trustworthy and those who are not." (2) "Everyone on the Committee agrees the observer identified this bird correctly. Therefore, it was a Semipalmated Sandpiper. Since it was a Semipalmated Sandpiper, I am voting for it." (3) "I support this record because I'm certain that a correct identification was made. If this were a first state record, then I certainly would have a much more difficult decision. . . ." (4) "My standards for acceptance of this species are especially lax now that it is off our review list, and I feel more harm would be done in 'rejecting' this record than in letting it slide through." (5) "I don't believe in voting 'yes' only due to the observer's name." (6) ". . . these details should never have been submitted . . . and the sighting would stand if it had not been sent to the Committee for authentication. Now it will have to be published as a rejected record. Acceptance of records merely on the observer's reputation undermines the function and status of the Committee." (7) "Such a sketchy record can never stand the test of time. I believe one of our primary concerns is to accept only those records which are not likely, because of their nature, to be discredited by future ornithologists. If this record is accepted, it must be done so solely on the basis of the observer's reputation. This is not enough, as even good birders make mistakes. One hundred years from now no one will have heard of the observer—or most (all?) of the Committee members—and must then either take the word of an 'unknown' Committee or validate the record themselves. They will not be able to do the latter with this description. Science must be built on a firm foundation. It is far better to have 10 unquestionable records than to have 50 records, some of which are wrong."

Even though everyone believed a Semipalmated Sandpiper was seen, the documentation was judged inconclusive and the record was rejected, 4-6. This demonstrated variation in approach to the validation process is considered by all members to be a highly desirable attribute of the Committee. It should be pointed out that unbeknownst to the Committee, the description of this bird was originally directed to *American Birds* and was later submitted to the Committee by another person in the observer's name. Without doubt, a report meant for this Committee would have been far more complete. See Rufous-necked Stint below.

**RUFIOUS-NECKED STINT** (*Calidris ruficollis*). One immature (118-1978) 1-6 Sep 1978, Santa Clara River mouth, Ventura Co.; photo on file.

This record was at first widely accepted as a Rufous-necked Stint. It was so published by McCaskie (1979a) and Roberson (1980) but later retracted by McCaskie (1981) and Roberson (1980, Errata and Addenda) and published as a Semipalmated by Garrett and Dunn (1981). Committee members, upon reflection, felt that the bird probably was a Semipalmated and rejected the record on the first round, 0-10. The considerable controversy surrounding this record led to an increase in our knowledge of Rufous-necked vs Semipalmated identification, although this problem is far from solved. Separation of young Rufous-necked from Little Stint (*C. minuta*) apparently is even more difficult. Proposed field marks of juvenal Rufous-necked compared to juvenal Semipalmated include the following: (1) chestnut or bright rufous edgings on the back feathers and inner scapulars; a Semipalmated, as in the case of the Santa Clara River bird, can show fairly bright rusty (but not chestnut or bright rufous) on the inner scapulars and tertials but not the back; (2) reportedly, grayish median and lesser wing coverts with slender dark centers and thin whitish fringes, producing a gray "panel" contrasting with the inner scapulars and back feathers, both of which have broad dark centers and bright chestnut or rufous edges (the outer scapulars are more

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### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

like the coverts); these wing coverts in a Semipalmated are like the back feathers —broad black centers with narrow buff to whitish margins, giving a uniform appearance to the entire mantle (but sometimes interrupted by rustier-edged inner scapulars and tertials); caution: the scapulars often hide the wing coverts; (3) a slightly drooped, finer, more tapered bill, much like that of a Least Sandpiper; the bill of the Semipalmated is straight with less tapering to a blunter, thicker, even bulbous, tip; (4) webbing lacking between the forward toes; however, the webbing of a Semipalmated can be so restricted as to be virtually invisible in the field, especially if the feet are muddy; (5) more white in the tail; (6) head perhaps whiter than that of a Semipalmated, the crown, auriculars and possibly the nape being paler; and (7) calls may well be different, but if so, the differences are slight, may defy description, and in any event should be used only by observers thoroughly familiar with *both* species; one call of *ruficollis* has been rendered as a soft "kip." The above notes are largely *fide* Jon Dunn, who corresponded with P. J. Grant, D. I. M. Wallace, A. J. Prater and others. The marks are largely untested and must therefore be used with extreme caution. The record clearly demonstrates the elementary state of stint identification. Even the British are confused!

RED-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa brevirostris*). One adult (13-1981) 3 Nov 1980, Moss Landing, Monterey Co.

Although this record was rejected, 1-9, on the first circulation, some Committee members felt that the bird might well have been a Red-legged Kittiwake. However, this would have been the first record for the state (although long overdue, judging from the three Oregon and one Nevada records mentioned by Roberson 1980) and as such required a more thorough description, preferably by more than one observer, to rule out an aberrant Black-legged Kittiwake (*R. tridactyla*) and other species. The Moss Landing bird was said to have "bright red" legs and feet. However, Black-legged Kittiwakes with pinkish legs and feet have been seen in Monterey (Binford pers. obs.; G. McCaskie in litt.) and one with orange-red legs and feet was noted in Britain (Coulson 1959). All other characters described would fit a Black-legged equally well. Unfortunately, underwing color (dark), so critical to identification of this species, was not noted, nor were the darker mantle, shorter bill, more rounded head, steeper forehead and pure white trailing edge of the primaries, compared to Black-legged. Perhaps most damaging was the described all-white head. By 3 November an adult Red-legged should be in full basic (winter) plumage, not the alternate (breeding) plumage described, and have an obvious dark auricular spot and a dusky wash on the crown.

THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*). One (71-1978) 3 Jan 1977, Eel River mouth, Humboldt Co. One (26-1978) 21 Jan 1978, Otter Point, Pacific Grove, Monterey Co.

Record 26-1978 was published by Winter and Manolis (1978) but rejected by the Committee, 3-7, on the third round. The Committee's comments demonstrate confusion on certain field marks, especially the color of the upperparts. According to some observers (J. Dunn and T. Wahl, pers. comm.), the entire mantle and the dark portions of the head and neck of breeding Thick-bills are jet black, without the grayish or brownish cast of the Common Murre (*U. aalge*). Whether or not this difference holds for all breeding birds and for immatures and winter adults is uncertain. Roberson (1980) states that the head of a winter Thick-bill becomes brownish but the back remains black, providing a contrast useful in separating this species from the uniformly grayish (brownish?) Common Murre. Upperpart coloration needs additional study and documentation before it can be used in the field. The inverted "V" shape of the white on the chest and the white tomial stripe were not seen on the Pacific Grove bird,

## UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

although the Committee agreed that these marks are not always present on Thick-bills. While the description of the bill as "blunt, short, thick, and with a decurved culmen" sounds right for a Thick-bill, the Committee pointed out that there is some overlap in length and shape with the Common Murre and that more detailed descriptions of culmen shape (the distal half is more strongly decurved in relation to both the horizontal plane and to the remainder of the culmen; see photo in Roberson 1980:210) and bill size (usually higher in relation to length and sometimes shorter overall) were necessary before the bird could be accepted on bill characteristics alone.

Record 71-1978 was accepted by Winter and Erickson (1977), McCaskie et al. (1979), and Roberson (1980) but rejected by the Committee, 4-6, on the second round. All dissenters felt that the description was too incomplete for conclusive identification of the species. The proper face pattern (black extending from the crown to the malar area, without white above the black eye stripe) was the only accepted field mark noted, although the upperparts were said to be jet black. The bill was described only as "stout." No mention was made of a white inverted "V" on the chest, pale tomial stripe, or the usual thick-necked appearance (see photo in Roberson 1980:210). Distance (300 yards) may have precluded detection of the critical marks.

**BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Cyanthus latirostris*). One female (56-1977) 8 Oct 1967, Pt. Pinos, Pacific Grove, Monterey Co.

One of the two observers later became a member of this Committee. His original notes were in the form of an English theme written at age 14. The age and inexperience of both observers and the incompleteness of the descriptions forced the Committee to question the record (vote 4-6 at the meeting of 13 February 1982).

Virtually every beginning birder "identifies" rarities during his birding youth. If not, verified by experienced observers at the time, most of us, in later years, come to question such records, especially if supported only by memory or by the usual embryonic note-taking system. Even if we still count such birds on our personal lists, we rarely feel secure enough in our early judgment to report the sightings to a group like the CBRC. When a beginner sees a rarity, he should *immediately* notify the closest and most experienced birder available, as well as any others he knows. If confirmed, such a record will enhance the beginner's reputation, result in meeting new friends (who come to see the bird), and alleviate the possibility of having to question the record in later years.

**\*LEAST FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax minimus*). One (161-1977) 9 Oct 1974, "Abandoned Ranch," Point Reyes, Marin Co. One (3-1980) 24 May 1975, Santa Barbara Island. One (110-1980) 24 Sep 1979, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Co.

Record 161-1977 circulated three times and then received a final vote of 8-2 at the meeting of 13 February 1982. It was accepted by Stallcup et al. (1975). Committee discussions on this and other Least Flycatcher records demonstrate our collective "state of the art" or more precisely our uncertainties about *Empidonax* identification. Some Committee members liken the call note of the Least to "a far away Audubon's Warbler" (*Dendroica coronata*, western races), having a distinct "ch" sound, as described for the Point Reyes bird. Other members cannot detect the "ch" sound and describe the call as a soft mellow "wit," much like that of a Willow Flycatcher (*E. trailii*). Most members say Hammond's Flycatcher (*E. hammondi*) has only a distinctive loud "peek" reminiscent of a Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*), but some say it has both this call and a soft mellow "wit" (like Least?). The description of the Point Reyes bird says it "flitted its wings sometimes," thus approaching the behavior of Hammond's; however, it is clear that the exact nature of wing flicking in these two species (and other *Empidonax*) is unknown; if differences exist, are they in frequency, inten-

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### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

sity or timing? And is there overlap? Some members think that tail length, not described for the Point Reyes bird, is an important field mark, feeling that Least should look short-tailed, even compared to Hammond's, while others say that Hammond's and Least overlap or are hard to distinguish in this regard. Many feel that the pale underparts (faint or interrupted dark breast band) and yellow restricted to the undertail coverts, as described for the Point Reyes bird, is indicative, if not diagnostic, of Least, but others point out that in fall some *Empidonax* (even Western, *E. difficilis*) can be so worn and faded as to lack most yellow. The bill color on the Pt. Reyes bird was described as "yellowish-brown" below. Some members believe that in fall the lower mandible should clearly be yellow (except for the extreme tip, dark), while others think there is enough variation to encompass "yellowish-brown." Some members objected to the "greenish-brown" back of the Pt. Reyes bird, while others thought this adequate or just right. The bill shape was not well-described; one observer called the bill "long," while a Least should have a bill as short as or shorter than any other *Empidonax* and relatively wide; also, the convex sides of the bill as viewed from above or below were not mentioned.

All in all, Committee discussions demonstrated that *Empidonax* identification is not a closed book (some would say we are still on page one) and that even "experts" differ significantly in what they believe, emphasize and use. Obviously such identifications are not for the inexperienced observer. We need a thorough field study of eastern vs western *Empidonax*, with scientific attention to calls and behavior.

Record 3-1980 was rejected, 3-7, on the first round. It was accepted in *American Birds* (McCaskie 1975e). Dissenters pointed out the lack of bill shape description and the following dubious statements: (1) the bird "often flicked wings kinklet-like," a characteristic perhaps more common to Hammond's, but see above. (2) "Outer webs of outer tail feathers lighter than inner webs . . ." also suggests Hammond's; Least may show a narrow, slightly paler outer web, but apparently only when strongly backlit. (3) "Breast gray (duskier but no darker than head) becoming lighter on belly" again suggests Hammond's; Least should have gray only on the sides of the chest or have a chest band much paler than the head. (4) "Bill . . . horn-colored [= pale] at base of lower mandible becoming dark toward tip" better fits Hammond's; Least should have a lower mandible that is nearly all yellowish (but see above).

Record 110-1980 was rejected, 3-7, on the first circulation. Dissenters pointed out that a 10-second view is not sufficient to clinch such a difficult identification and that critical marks such as bill shape and color, call, and upperpart color were not noted. This record was accepted by McCaskie (1980a).

VEERY (*Catharus fuscescens*). One (60-1977) 29 May 1977, Oasis, Mono Co.

Dissenters pointed out that the Swainson's Thrush (*C. ustulatus*) varies both individually and geographically in the degree of reddishness of the upperparts and that the apparently diagnostic flank color (gray in Veery, brownish in Swainson's) was not specifically described. Supporters argued that the grayish unmarked face (lack of wide buffy eyering), scant throat and breast spotting, and extra bright back (like a Brown Thrasher, *Toxostoma rufum*) eliminate Swainson's and indicate Veery. Moreover, while the west coast race of Swainson's (*C. u. ustulatus*) is brighter above than the more easterly races, and the western Veery (*C. f. salicicola*) is duller above than the two eastern races, thus making difficult the separation of western Veeries from west coast Swainson's, there should be no trouble separating the bright eastern Veeries (which the Oasis bird was thought to be) from any Swainson's. This record was accepted by McCaskie (1977) but later rejected by him (1979a). In Committee it went the full three rounds and was finally judged unacceptable, 6-4, at the meeting of 13

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### UNACCEPTED RECORDS, identification questionable (Cont.)

February 1982. Obviously, many Committee members feel that the Veery is very hard to separate from Swainson's and that records must be supported by extensive details, including flank color.

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*). One (188-1980) 18 Oct 1980, Novato, Marin Co.

This record created great difficulties for the Committee, requiring three circulations and a meeting (13 February 1982) before a decision could be reached (accept 1, reject 7, unresolved 2). Had the description been more complete, the record might well have been accepted. There is little doubt that a wagtail was seen; both observers had seen Gray and Yellow wagtails previously. The wings were correctly noted as "plain gray" (without the wing bars of a Yellow) and the back as "pearl gray" (without a yellow-green or brownish cast). Unfortunately, the observers failed to note the extra long tail, yellowish rump, and call, all of which should, ideally, be recorded for a first state record. This would have been only the second fall record for North America and the first record south of Alaska.

PINE WARBLER (*Dendroica pinus*). One adult male (67-1980) 6-7 Sep 1979, Deep Springs College, Inyo Co.

This record was rejected on the first circulation, 3-7. Most Committee members felt that it was a Blackpoll Warbler (*D. striata*), pointing out that the black back stripes and the usually pale toes of a Blackpoll can be very inconspicuous. A diagnostic mark of the Pine was not noted in the description—the yellowish (adults and immature male) or whitish (immature female) extension of the throat paleness up and behind the darker cheek patch, forming a half collar in the manner of a Cape May Warbler (*D. tigrina*). One member said "I think this confusion is due in large part to poor illustrations of both Pine and fall Blackpoll warblers" in field guides. Most accepted California records of Pine pertain to immatures, and most reported fall "adults" are probably Blackpolls.

KENTUCKY WARBLER (*Oporornis formosus*). One (11-1980) 30 Apr 1979, Coso Rest Stop on US 395 between Little Lake and Olancho, Inyo Co.

Although accepted by McCaskie (1979b) and Roberson (1980), this record was felt to be too incomplete to eliminate similar species and was rejected, 3-7, on the first round. The easily observed black on the forehead and crown and the larger body, bill, and legs compared to nearby Wilson's Warblers (*Wilsonia pusilla*) were not noted. Further, the bird was described as "flitting into the lower branches of the cottonwoods," a behavior not normal for the skulking Kentucky. The date is 2 weeks before the earliest accepted California occurrence.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER (*Oporornis agilis*). One (44-1979) 29 Oct 1977, Point Loma, San Diego Co.

Most members agreed that this bird was too incompletely described to establish the latest fall record for the state; the record was rejected on the second round, 3-7. Members pointed out that the description said nothing about this species' habit of walking (it only rarely hops), plump body shape, long undertail coverts (nearly to end of tail), or pale legs. Nor did the account deal with elimination of similar species—a "must" in reports of obscurely marked rarities. Fall Mourning Warblers (*O. philadelphia*) often have nearly complete (though usually narrow) eyerings.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### UNACCEPTED RECORD, origin questionable (identification accepted)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*). One immature (105-1978) 22 Apr 1978 (present Mar-May), Thomas Aquinas College, Malibu Canyon, Los Angeles Co. (photo on file), and what is believed to be the same bird 6-10 Jun 1978 (and probably into 1979, see below), Mugu Lagoon, Point Mugu Naval Air Station, Ventura Co.

This record was submitted as an escapee and to show that these two occurrences involve the same bird. The Committee agreed with the reporter on both counts, voting 0-10 on the first round. The bird in the Malibu photo seems to be in identical piebald plumage to the bird in the Pt. Mugu photo (in McCaskie 1978b). Most members felt that the bulk of evidence supported the theory that the bird escaped, probably from nearby Busch Gardens, which was known to have a similar, unclipped, unbanded, piebald immature that was lost at about the same time. What was presumably the same bird was collected in adult plumage (Los Angeles County Museum 90516) on 22 Dec 1979 at Pt. Mugu, Ventura Co., by W. F. Nichols.

This record and decision may cast doubt on all other California records of White Ibis. However, the Committee did not at this time wish to open the question of previously accepted records, preferring to await future developments that might demonstrate a clear pattern of occurrence. In its deliberations, the Committee agreed that the burden of proof that a bird is wild lies with the reporter, not the Committee. Obvious escapees should not be submitted.

### UNRESOLVED RECORD

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*). One seen on 9 Feb 1913 by Allan Brooks and two seen on 12 Feb 1913 by William L. Dawson, Potholes, above Laguna Dam, Imperial Co. (1-1979); submitted by DDeS.

After three rounds, this record received the following vote at the meeting of 13 February 1982: accept 3, reject 4, unresolved 3. The species therefore remains in the unresolved category of the California state list. See Brooks (1913), Dawson (1916, 1923), and Grinnell and Miller (1944) for details of these sight records. Those Committee members opposed to adding the Anhinga to the state list on the basis of this record pointed out that the only description of the birds consisted of the statements: when flying, the bird "looked for all the world like a small Goshawk [*Accipiter gentilis*] with a slender stick projecting in front; the regular succession of wing beats and sailings was just that of a Goshawk, and when the Darter alighted on a tree it did so with the ease of a raptor" (Brooks 1913); and "... their behavior contrasted strongly with that of the Farallon Cormorants [*Phalacrocorax auritus*] which accompanied them" (Dawson 1916); and "In striking contrast with the ungainly Shags, they described small circles in the air with a quick flap, flap, flap, and sail; and when they lighted on some dead limb overhanging the water, they did so with easy assurance and grace" (Dawson 1923). Supporters of the record pointed out that in early days it was not the custom to give a description of a rare bird and that Grinnell and Miller (1944) did not question the record, apparently including it on their hypothetical list because of their policy of accepting only specimen documentation. Brooks was confident enough of his identification to publish the record even in the face of scorn for sight records. Supporters also felt that the descriptive material, while not extensive, was adequate to indicate Anhinga, given the experience of Brooks. Dissenters thought the description was not adequate, especially for a state record.

## CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS

### CONTRIBUTORS

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the help of the members of the California Bird Records Committee and of the *American Birds* regional editors, Jules Evens, Ronald LeValley and Guy McCaskie, in reviewing this paper and providing valuable data.

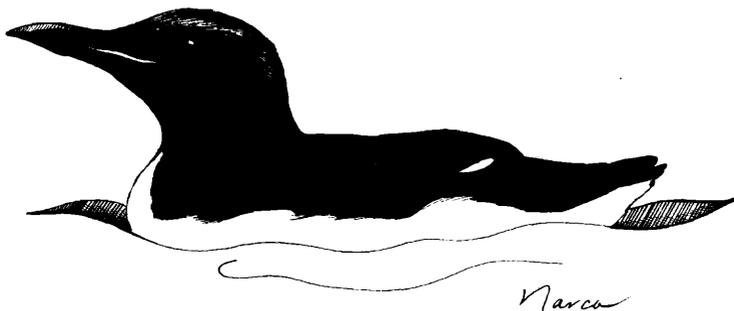
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Accepted 10 January 1983



Breeding-plumaged Thick-billed Murre

Sketch by Narca Moore-Craig



Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*). Richmond, Contra Costa Co., California, 17 February 1980. For information on the identification of this species see Binford and Remsen, *Western Birds* 5:111-126, 1974, and Burn and Mather, *British Birds* 67:257-296, 1974  
Photo by Ed Harper