

CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE (CBRC) ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Online meeting, CA – 15-16 January 2021

15 JANUARY 2021

Meeting called to order at 13:00 (Chair presiding). Members: Dan Singer (Chair), Alex Rinkert (Vice-Chair), Tom Benson (non-voting Secretary), Debbie House, Guy McCaskie, Jim Pike, Peter Pyle, Adam Searcy, Susan Steele, Ryan Terrill.

Welcome and introductory comments by Singer.

1. REVIEW OF MINUTES OF 2020 MEETING

The minutes from the annual meeting held on 17-18 January 2020 in Los Gatos, California had been previously approved via email (16 July 2020). No one requested any changes at the 2021 meeting.

2. MINUTE KEEPING FOR 2021 MEETING

Chair requested taking minutes be a shared responsibility. A discussion of format and specifics followed. Terrill, House, Searcy, and Rinkert agreed to take minutes. All in favor.

--CLOSED SESSION--

3. ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS

- a. Election of members (three-year terms). The terms of Jim Pike, Peter Pyle, and Dan Singer expire after the 2021 meeting.

Nominations:

Jonah Benningfield

Jon Dunn

Rob Fowler

Chris Howard

Andrew Howe

Logan Kahle

Lisa Hug

Justyn Stahl

Rob Fowler, Chris Howard, and Justyn Stahl were elected.

A formal letter or note will be sent to each nominee by the Secretary informing them of the election results. Precise wording of this will be at the Secretary's discretion, but at a minimum should include an introductory comment, a list of all nominees, and those elected. Voting details shall not be included.

- b. Election of Chair (one-year term) – nomination: Justyn Stahl (Singer/Terrill). Stahl elected 9-0.

- c. Election of Vice-Chair (one-year term) – nomination: Ryan Terrill (Singer/McCaskie). Terrill elected 9-0.

- d. Election of the Secretary (one-year term) – nomination: Tom Benson (Singer/McCaskie). Benson elected 9-0.

- e. Discussion of member nomination and selection process – Singer led a discussion of general considerations of potential Committee members. Each member should consider candidates based on his/her own priorities, but general considerations are:
 - 1) Regional balance
 - 2) Age balance
 - 3) Experience balance (new blood plus old timers, those with institutional memory of how things worked in the past and our past decisions and philosophies)
 - 4) Diversity balance
 - 5) Support of the CBRC, both in submitting records and in being fully supportive of the CBRC. This does not mean that they agree with all of the CBRC’s decisions, but they are supportive of the process and of the Committee.

For the sake of discussion, the Committee reviewed the following criteria for Committee membership considered by the British Birds Records Committee (as published in British Birds in April 2017):

- 1) A widely acknowledged expertise in identification
- 2) Proven reliability in the field
- 3) A track record of high-quality submissions of descriptions of scarce and rare birds to county records committees and BBRC
- 4) Experience of record assessment
- 5) Regional credibility
- 6) The capacity to handle the volume of work involved in assessing upwards of 700 records per year
- 7) The capacity to work quickly and efficiently
- 8) Easy access to the internet

--OPEN SESSION--

4. MASKED/NAZCA BOOBY DISCUSSION

Pyle led a discussion of his analysis of all CBRC accepted records of Masked, Nazca, Masked/Nazca boobies that contained photo documentation. In advance of the meeting, committee members reviewed Pyle’s analysis and voted conditionally on which records they supported for re-review. After discussion a formal vote was held and those records which received an accept vote were circulated to the current committee after the meeting in Batch 200 and 20P.

5. BYLAW PROPOSALS [Changing bylaws requires at least eight votes]

a. Terrill proposed modifying language to VI. B. 4. in order to clarify assumptions concerning egg records. "Records based based solely on eggs (or egg specimens) will be treated as a record of one individual (a single female that laid a clutch of eggs). If the eggs hatch, the number of individuals in the record will be determined as one adult plus the number of hatched eggs of that species

Motion to amend bylaw per above passed 9-0 (Terrill/Singer).

b. Steele proposed modifying language to VI. D. 1. pertaining to records which have received a final accept decision and subsequently resubmitted for review. "For previously accepted records any member may bring the record to an annual meeting and request that it be re-reviewed. This request will be made in writing and state the justification for the re-evaluation."

Motion to amend bylaw per above passed 9-0 (Steele/Terrill).

6. PROCEDURAL ISSUES [requires majority vote]

Benson requested that members use secretary@californiabirds.org or tbenson@csusb.edu for all CBRC-related communications to the secretary. This makes is easier to archive and organize emails. Please do not use his AOL account.

7. EXPEDITED REVIEW

Two batches (20Fx and 20Nx) were circulated via Expedited Review procedures since the 2020 meeting. These batches contained 45 records. No records in either batch were requested to be recirculated. No species were added or removed from the Expedited Review list and members expressed satisfaction with the Expedited Review process.

8. REVIEW LIST

[Requires seven votes to add or remove - "In general, the Review List will consist of species that have occurred within California and adjacent ocean on an average of four or fewer times per year during the ten-year period immediately preceding revision of Review List."]

Potential Additions:

- **Mexican Duck:** Recognized as species by the AOS supplement in July 2020, Singer introduced this potential addition to the State and Review lists and outlined David Vander Pluym and Lauren Harter's information on identification and distribution of this species. Records submitted by Vander Pluym and Harter to be circulated to the new committee for consideration.

Potential Deletions:

- **Broad-billed Hummingbird:** Benson proposed removal from the Review List. A total of 114 accepted records and a 10-year average of 4.2 records per year, three of the last four years have had 7 or 8 records, and it is no longer considered a significant identification challenge.

Motion to remove from the review list passed 9-0 (Singer/Pike).

9. FOURTH AND FINAL RECORDS

The following records without a decision after three rounds of voting were discussed and then voted upon following the meeting.

- a) **2019-027 Glossy Ibis** near Bakersfield KER, 23 April 2019. The third round vote was 5-4 (accept-reject) with concerns regarding hybridization. Specific concerns on this bird are the presence of red intertarsal joints, and possibly aberrant facial skin color and pattern. There was no consensus as to whether red intertarsal joints are ok for Glossy. Several committee members remarked that their photo reviews indicate a lack of red joints found in Old World populations and in the overwhelming majority of eastern US birds. More links to photo references were shared, but not reviewed during the meeting. Terrill shared a manuscript (Oswald et al. 2019) on ibis hybridization and introgression, and discussed whether, due to introgression with White-faced Ibis, this bird is just an example of what Glossy Ibis look like in the U.S., and it may be different than Old World birds. Searcy shared a packet of 7 Ibis references. This record will be recirculated.
- b) **2019-083 Nazca Booby**, Pt. Arguello SBA, 30 Jul 20219. There was video and still photos submitted with this record and Pyle noted that screen grabs of video show bill color better. This stimulated a short discussion reiterating some points about booby identification. There can be a great deal of difference in how monitors look and calibrating your monitor might be an option. Bill shape differences could also be helpful in evaluating Masked and Nazca Booby records. There may also be differences in bill color due to season, sex, and body condition. Tail color is a supporting feature, but there is overlap. It is less common for Masked to show white in tail, but also more common for Nazca to have black tails.
- c) **2019-090 Nazca Booby**, 205 km SSW San Miguel Island SBA, 23 Jul 2019. The single photo of a bird taken through the window that was submitted with the documentation for review is of very low resolution. The photo that is on the eBird checklist (link provided in the report) is much better and reviewers were advised to look at it.
- d) **2019-048 Eastern Wood-Pewee**, Mendoza Ranch MRN, 2 Jun 2019. The third round voting was 7-2. Written documentation, photos and a weak recording are included with the record. Those not supporting the record or on the fence are finding the weak, truncated recording not convincing enough and they would like to see the end of the call. Those in support noted photos showing an entirely orange lower mandible, a pale whitish throat, and pale flanks. Jon Dunn's support of and remarks concerning the record during a previous round helped convince some reviewers to support the record. The recording, although weak was characteristically upslurred as for EAWP, and had a narrow frequency band. WEWP calls are essentially flat, but may sound like they rise a bit in frequency due to a broadening of the frequency band mid-way into the call. In contrast, EAWP maintains a narrow frequency band throughout the call, even as the call rises in pitch.

e) **2010-177a Veery**, Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory HUM, 3 Nov 2010. At the 2020 meeting, Dunn led a discussion and put forward a motion to re-review this record that was previously accepted 9-0. Some committee members have been hesitant to vote against a record that during previous review, had unanimous support- especially without new information being provided. The Bylaws allow this, but Committee members would like better documentation regarding who requested recirculation. This Bylaws were modified during this meeting to reflect that concern. Other committee members do not have hesitations about “overturning” previous decisions if appropriate. Identification problems were noted with the record, leading to members only “weakly” supporting the record, or indicating they may not have even voted for it the first time, had they been presented with the record.

Challenges noted with this record include:

- 1) it was an “after the fact” identification
- 2) Was eastern Hermit Thrush considered? Measurements overlap enough.
- 3) Flank color is not consistent with Veery

This is a species that can be very difficult to identify, and other records from reputable observers have been rejected. This record does not include photos.

10. RECORDS BROUGHT TO MEETING BY REQUEST

2020-127 Hudsonian Godwit, Salton Sea, IMP, 10 Oct 2020 – Pyle

Pyle requested discussion because of concern to make sure Black-tailed Godwit had been considered and ruled out. He noted black markings on flanks in the photos for one of the records which, based on his eBird photo review, is good for HUGO. McCaskie (the observer) said he saw the black underwings, confirming Hudsonian. He said he guarantees that he made sure it was not a Black-tailed Godwit, even though underwing color was not described. There was some confusion with the record, as two HUGO were seen that day at the Salton Sea by McCaskie. No further discussion and the record stands.

2017-027 Slaty-backed Gull (see comments from B. Sullivan) - Benson

Benson shared an email exchange between Brian Sullivan (eBird) and him regarding this record involving a first cycle bird submitted as a Slaty-backed Gull. In his email, Sullivan suggested we get additional expert opinions on this bird, and apparently there is limited information on identifying first cycle birds. Benson asked if, when there is published info on slaty backed gull, does anyone want to do the research on first cycle slaty-backed gulls and choose records to re review? Pyle mentioned there is a paper in Birding magazine. He is not convinced “we” really know how to identify them. Alvaro Jaramillo is working on the problem this winter and there are some updates on a Facebook Gull group. Alvaro went back to a few records that were rejected and he thinks they look better than 2017-027 for Slaty-backed. The current state of knowledge on how to identify first cycle Slaty-backed Gulls is limited although those who spend a considerable amount of time looking at gulls might be able to identify them more regularly. Singer reported he spent time with Alvaro in Japan and first cycle “Vega” Herring Gull vs. Slaty-backed were not identifiable at times. When more concrete information is available, past records will be considered for reevaluation.

All Gray-faced Petrel records -Singer

Paul Lehman contacted Singer asking if all Great-Winged Petrels records in California have been confirmed as Gray-faced or if any records needed to be revisited? Lehman looked at all the photos and thinks they look like Gray-faced. Benson reported that Justyn Stahl also looked at photos of past records and determined they are Gray-faced and are identified as such in annual reports. No further action was taken.

2019-073 Masked Booby, Pt. La Jolla SD, 27 Jul 2019 - Pyle

This record was endorsed 8-1 on the second round based on a sight record only. Given the difficulty discerning bill color, even with photos, a discussion was requested. Concerns raised include no mention of bill shape, and no mention of a “greenish tone” to the bill, which might be expected on any “good” Masked Booby. Following the discussion, Pyle requested recirculation for a third round and Pike seconded the motion.

2020-019 and 2020-020 Masked Booby – same bird issues -Pyle

Pyle requested discussion and but said okay to leave as two birds. He doesn't feel strongly about the issue. We briefly reviewed the photos and the orange color on the bill of 2020-020 brought up the question of whether it might be a Nazca. Pyle remarked that both birds had “intermediate” bills when scoring (he felt the orange color was an artifact of lighting) and he requested that the same bird issue be considered since both records scored 7-2, and are going on a third round anyway. Resolution: recirculate and ask about same bird issue.

2004-208 Dusky-capped Flycatcher -Tietz

Jim Tietz asked for re-review of this previously-rejected record due to “new and substantial evidence” discovered in the form of photos. The photos struck some as an Ash-throated Flycatcher. Several supported re-review given the new and substantial evidence of photos and that this documentation should be added to the record. Pyle/Singer motioned to re-review was approved 9-0 vote.

2020-164 Wood Thrush and 2020-087 Connecticut Warbler - Singer

Singer provided some history and context for two records currently in circulation.

2020-100 Eastern Yellow Wagtail - Terrill

Terrill brought this forward for discussion, not about this record per say, but should we have a Western/Eastern Wagtail category when we don't have recordings or well-described vocalizations. It's not unthinkable to get a European bird. The eastern subspecies of Western Yellow Wagtail (*thunbergi*) is an Asian pacific flyway bird that occurs east of many Eastern Yellow Wagtails. Most of our wagtail birds are trans-Beringia migrants. We should make sure that the documentation rules out Western Yellow Wagtail when reviewing records. Past protocol has been to only create a slash category if needed – when one shows up. This is how we have dealt with these issues before. There is one record

of Western Yellow Wagtail for Greenland but none for US, however the possibility should be considered when reviewing wagtail records. There was not much support for adding Western/Eastern as a review species and we will continue with current philosophy.

2020-131 Mourning Warbler - Benson

Benson brought this record for discussion because the vote was so close 4:5. Should we do another round of voting so everyone can see others comments. Several were in support of recirculating in order to consider others comments. McCaskie's proposal to recirculate received unanimous support.

2020-059 Kentucky Warbler - Benson

The record is going for a third round. Benson wanted to discuss how the sonogram is being interpreted. He thinks the sonogram looks very good for Kentucky and even if the song might sound similar to Common Yellowthroat, the sonogram would look very different. Others who reviewed the sonogram think it looks very good for Kentucky Warbler. There was some concern about the beginning of the song is atypical and would be more convinced if a call note was heard or described. Steele consulted outside parties who felt the recorded song was not atypical of Kentucky. The other species considered was Common Yellowthroat, but due to habitat and elevation, this species would be rare as well at the location.

Meeting adjourned at 07:45pm on January 15.

16 January 2021

Meeting called to order at 0908. All members present.

11. OFFICIAL STATE SPECIMEN/RECORD DESIGNATION

Ryan Terrill and Adam Searcy proposed the creation and maintenance of an official list with a "type" specimen for each species on the state list. The first state list was based (mostly) on Grinnell and Miller (1944) and specimens cited therein, but later records from splits and introduced species have not had a designated specimen. This explicit designation of a specimen or specific record of occurrence is common in voucher based checklists in other biological fields.

Terrill and Searcy agreed to split effort and compile a list of the earliest specimens or first records for all species currently on the state list.

12. DATE CORRECTIONS TO PUBLISHED RECORDS

2004-058 Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Amend date span from 28 May-18 Jul and 5 Nov 1972 to 28 May-18 Jul and 5-20 Nov 1972 based on new documentation from Don Roberson.

Motion to amend bylaw per above passed 9-0 (Singer/Pike).

1981-082 Broad-billed Hummingbird

Amend date span from 8-9 Oct 1981 to 8-10 Oct 1981 based on new documentation from Richard E. Webster.

Motion to amend bylaw per above passed 9-0 (Singer/Terrill).

2011-042 Yellow-throated Warbler

Amend date span from 13 Sep-30 Dec 2011 to 13 Sep 2011 to 2 Jan 2012 based on new documentation from Bob Gunderson

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bobgunderson/6623964969/>.

Motion to amend bylaw per above passed 9-0 (Singer/Terrill).

Date span corrections - San Diego County records

Paul Lehman and Guy McCaskie compiled eighteen records from San Diego County requiring date-span corrections. Some records requiring further information where delays pending further research and will be brought to the next Annual Meeting in 2022. All newly accepted date spans below were resulted from a collective motion from Singer/McCaskie.

2008-091 Red-necked Stint – delayed

2006-117 American Oystercatcher – delayed

2013-008 Curlew Sandpiper – approved 9-0

2006-095 Tricolored Heron – approved 9-0

2006-154 Tricolored Heron – approved 9-0

2006-152 Tricolored Heron – approved 9-0

2007-261 Tricolored Heron – approved 9-0

2008-026 Harris's Hawk – approved 9-0

2010-124 Harris's Hawk – approved 9-0

2011-184 Thick-billed Kingbird – approved 9-0

2013-193 Thick-billed Kingbird – approved 9-0

2017-151 Greater Pewee – approved 9-0

2017-035 White-eyed Vireo - delayed

2013-213 Blue-headed Vireo – approved 9-0

2008-218 Pine Warbler – approved 9-0

2010-167 Pine Warbler – approved 9-0

2013-222 Pine Warbler – approved 9-0

2010-156 Yellow-throated Warbler – delayed

2011-216 Grace's Warbler – approved 9-0

2013-163 Grace's Warbler – approved 9-0

2004-177 Scarlet Tanager – approved 9-0

2007-262 Scarlet Tanager – approved 9-0

13. SAME BIRD ISSUES

2017-005/2019-041/2019-150/2020-029 Black-tailed Gull, MTY/SM/SEFI, various dates – Pyle

Committee members discussed which of these records might be considered the same bird and voted to accept the 2019 records as pertaining to one individual.

Motion to consider records 2019-041 and 2019-150 the same bird passed 9-0 (Singer/Pyle).

14. VOTING FORMS

The committee discussed an update to voting form format to streamline voting process for members and recording process for the secretary. Terrill agreed to explore options for updating how we vote, including online systems such as Google Forms.

15. RARE BIRDS ONLINE

The committee discussed the status of California Rare Birds online and WFO support and conditions for updates to the publication.

- a. WFO continues to want a verbatim copy of the 2007 published book in its original form on their website
- b. The WFO Publications Committee supports the CBRC creating an updated new version of the book on the CBRC website as an online *second edition* that the CBRC will be able to update and edit moving forward.
- c. The WFO publication committee will bring the matter to the WFO Board this year.
- d. Details about what this effort might entail.
- e. A sub-committee will be formed to explore potential ways to make changes/updates, who would make them, and what would be updated.

Dan Singer, Deborah House, and Ryan Terrill volunteered to be members.

16. CBRC WEBSITE

The committee discussed potentially updating the website with more advanced record search functions, media, etc. The committee discussed the eventual need to find a new webmaster for the website once Joe Morlan steps down (which he has no plans to do at this point).

17. SCANNED CBRC RECORDS

The committee discussed the status of records scanned from ~2004 to 2007 by David Vander Pluym and reviewed by Searcy. There are an unknown number of complete individual records of 142 species on CD-R and CD-RW discs. Not all records were accessed but all discs checked remained functional.

18. ANNUAL REPORTS

44rd report (2018 records) – authored by Benson, Fowler, McCaskie, and Stahl. Published in *Western Birds* vol 51, no 3.

45th report (2019 records) – authored by Benson, House, McCaskie, Rinkert, Searcy, and Terrill. Will be published in *Western Brds*, vol 51, no 1.

46th report (2020 records) – to be authored by Benson, House, McCaskie, and Terrill.

19. BUDGET

The 2020 WFO budget included \$200 for the CBRC's miscellaneous expenses (e.g., Dropbox, WFOVZ costs). In 2020, the only CBRC expenditures (aside from page charges) were \$99 for Dropbox. WFOVZ file maintenance costs are covered by WFO's annual donation of \$250.

Donations are strongly encouraged, no matter the amount. The simplest way to donate, if you'd like to do so, is to visit <https://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/pagecharges.php>. Indicate which report you're donating toward. Total donations by current and former committee members towards page charges for the 43rd report totaled \$999.00 (per Suzanne Carota).

Crowd-funding CBRC reports. The CBRC's second attempt at crowd-funding page charges for an annual report via WFO's facebook page was successful, meeting our \$700 target for the 45th report within two weeks.

19. INTRODUCED BIRDS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

There was no significant activity by the subcommittee in 2020. The subcommittee consists of Kimball Garrett, Adam Searcy, John Garrett, Kristie Nelson, Jon Feenstra, and Tom Benson. A submission package on Nanday Parakeet is currently being drafted by Adam Searcy and will be presented to the full committee in 2021. Mitered Parakeet was discussed as it was recently accepted by the American Birding Association Checklist Committee.

20. OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Committee discussed having a larger online presence including Twitter and/or Facebook accounts. Terrill agreed to set up a CBRC Twitter account. Outreach to eBird users was discussed, as was the ongoing need to encourage users to include documentation in their checklists, as well as the ongoing challenge of persuading users to submit documentation to the CBRC. Current documentation examples on the CBRC website were reviewed and the idea of providing an example of a “good enough” description was discussed given changes in what birders are willing to submit beyond an eBird report or a photograph.

21. CBRC’S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The year 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of the CBRC. McCaskie and Rottenborn will prepare a brief (2-3 page) article for *Western Birds* on this, including changes since 1970 (e.g. in state list, number of records evaluated/year, nature of submitted records, CBRC process, etc.).

22. NEXT MEETINGS

The next annual Western Field Ornithologists scheduled to be held in Reno, Nevada on 25-29 August 2021 was switched to an online meeting due to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic concerns.

The next CBRC annual meeting was tentatively scheduled for 14-15 January 2022 at Occidental College in Los Angeles.

23. APPRECIATIONS

- a) Jim Pike, Peter Pyle, and Dan Singer for their services to the CBRC.
- b) Tom Benson for his critical work as Secretary
- c) Joe Morlan for his work updating the CBRC website
- d) Jim Tietz and Guy McCaskie for maintaining updates to “Rare Birds” on our web site
- e) WFVZ and Linnea Hall for their archiving services
- f) Phil Unitt and *Western Birds* reviewers for editing and publishing CBRC reports
- g) Cliff Hawley for operating our facebook crowd-funding campaign

ADJOURNMENT 11:30am on 16 January 2021

Minutes prepared by Dan Singer (reviewed by Tom Benson).