



**Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee  
2006 Annual Meeting  
Saturday, March 4, 2006**

**Meeting Minutes and Annual Business Report**

The 2006 Annual Meeting of the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) was called to order at 10:15 am at the home of Phil Davis in Davidsonville, MD. Members present included Paul O'Brien (Chair), Phil Davis (Secretary), Ed Boyd, J.B. Churchill, Patty Craig, John Hubbell, Paul Pisano and Sherman Suter. Absent were Don Broderick and Hans Holbrook. An MOS Board Meeting was held on this same date and prevented the MOS President and Vice President from attending.

**1. Secretary's Report.** The Secretary presented the following report:

**a. Database Status Report.**

- i. **Database Contents. Figure 1** presents a glossary of the status/decision categories currently used in the MD/DCRC database. **Figure 2** summarizes the current contents of the MD/DCRC database by status/decision category and indicates the changes ("deltas") since last year. Between last year's and this year's Annual Meeting more than 290 "historical" reports were added to the database, largely from the data uncovered by the Secretary from historical journal research. During this coming year, the "Reviewable" reports (indicating that the sightings were published in MB or AB/NAB) and the reports remaining in the "Research" category will continue to be pursued and resolved. Reports without supporting documentation will become "Unreviewable," meaning that they were published but no or insufficient documentation exists for a committee review. The completion of this phase of canvassing old records should bring the committee's database mostly up to date by next year's Annual Meeting.
- ii. **Reports Received Per Year. Figure 3** indicates the number of reports the MD/DCRC receives each year. The table separates "current" reports (defined as initial documentation received within six months after the first sighting date) and "historical" reports (documentation received more than six months after the first sighting date). The committee's emphasis in locating and obtaining old published historical reports during the period from 1995 through 2005 can be easily seen from the numbers of historical reports received during this period. From 1991 through 2005, the number of "current" (contemporary) reports received per year has averaged approximately 40.

**b. Review Package Status Report.**

- i. **Completed Packages. Figure 4** presents a statistical summary by calendar year of completed review packages. The table shows the yearly total and average number of reports circulated, the total and average number of new reports, and the total and average number of decisions reached. Decisions include the "Accepted," "Accepted-Group," "Accepted-Form," "Not Accepted," "ID OK/Questionable Origin," and "ID OK/Exotic Origin" categories.

Decision	Decision / Status Description
<b>S&amp;R</b>	Records from the committee's baseline document: Stewart & Robbins, The Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia, 1958.
<b>Accepted</b>	Reports accepted by the committee.
<b>Accepted-Group</b>	Reports accepted only as to a species complex or genus--where all other species of this group are reviewable at the observed location.
<b>Accepted-Form</b>	Reports accepted as an unusual subspecies or form.
<b>ID OK/?? Origin</b>	Reports accepted for the species/group reported, however, a majority of the committee questioned whether the bird was a "natural" vagrant or a "wild" bird.
<b>ID OK/Exotic Origin</b>	Reports accepted for the species/group reported, however, a majority of the committee felt the bird was of exotic (i.e., captive) origin.
<b>Not Accepted</b>	Reports not accepted by the committee.
<b>Circulating</b>	Reports currently in circulation and under review by the committee.
<b>Recirculate</b>	Reports where no committee decision was reached during the latest circulation. The report will be circulated again.
<b>Ready</b>	Reports ready for circulation. All relevant reports, or a sufficient number of reports, have been submitted.
<b>Reviewable</b>	Reports of a species/location that meets the committee's Review List criteria. Additional observer data is believed to be outstanding.
<b>USNM</b>	Reports of specimens in the US Museum of Natural History that have not otherwise been published. Specimens are to be verified and reviewed by the committee.
<b>Hold</b>	Reports where review of this species or genus/group has been suspended pending resolution of taxonomy or field identification issues.
<b>Unreviewable</b>	Reports with insufficient descriptive identification details to permit a review by the committee. Typical for many older published sight records.
<b>Report</b>	Reports submitted indirectly to the committee (e.g., via NA Birds, Voice of the Naturalist, etc.). Observer concurrence is required prior to committee review.
<b>Non-Review Species</b>	Reports submitted for a species/location that does not fall within the committee's Review List criteria.
<b>Reopened</b>	Reports reopened for consideration by the committee. Reopened reports are "removed" from the committee's database statistics and replaced by the reopened report.
<b>Research</b>	Reports previously published - investigation in process to determine if documentation exists.
<b>DCRC</b>	Reports from the defunct DC Records Committee files - being investigated.
<b>Withdrawn</b>	Reports withdrawn by the original observer(s).

**Figure 1. MD/DCRC Database Status/Decision Definitions**

- ii. **Packages in Circulation.** **Figure 5** summarizes the contents of the packages that are currently in circulation at the time of this Annual Meeting.
- iii. **Acceptance Rate.** From last year to this year, the committee's cumulative acceptance rate rose from 78 to 79 percent. This rate, shown in **Figure 6**, is determined by dividing the total number of accepted decisions (which includes "Accepted", "Accepted-Group", "Accepted-Form", "ID OK/?? Origin", and "ID OK/Exotic Origin") by the total number of decisions--which includes the "Not Accepted" decisions).
- c. **External Communications Status Report.** **Figure 7** presents a summary of significant communications with people or organizations outside of the committee's routine MD and DC sighting report communications.
- d. **Internal Communications Status Report.**
  - i. **Email Traffic.** **Figure 8** summarizes the secretary's MD/DCRC-related email message communications over the past years, reflecting an increase in relevant email, listserver messages, digital documentation communications, and efforts to track down historical documentation.
  - ii. **Acknowledgements.** Since last year's Annual Meeting, 124 acknowledgements were mailed to observers (99 were sent last year).

State	Category / Status	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Delta
MD	Accepted	258	332	362	377	381	380	424	464	486	22
	Stewart & Robbins	9	9	100	85	83	81	82	81	87	6
	Accepted-Group	2	2	9	9	10	10	10	11	15	4
	Accepted-Form	-	1	3	3	3	6	7	10	11	1
	ID OK/?? Origin	5	5	5	5	6	7	8	8	8	0
	ID OK/Exotic Origin	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	0
	Not Accepted	119	124	127	132	133	132	140	147	149	2
	Circulating	45	28	9	15	49	78	29	13	84	71
	Recirculate	22	21	27	25	23	18	49	54	34	-20
	Ready	102	49	64	61	69	78	77	112	82	-30
	Reviewable	35	45	36	35	42	44	66	249	520	271
	USNM	-	-	6	26	21	14	14	11	10	-1
	Hold	11	11	16	15	15	15	15	-	-	-
	Report	0	3	5	0	0	0	1	-	-	-
	Unreviewable	221	224	238	246	248	255	257	287	291	4
	Non-Review Species	109	112	119	136	139	140	139	357	164	-193
	Reopened	-	-	5	5	6	7	4	8	8	0
	Withdrawn	4	5	7	7	8	9	9	11	11	0
	Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	361	46	41	-5
		<b>MD Totals</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>1135</b>	<b>1179</b>	<b>1233</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>1693</b>	<b>1871</b>	<b>2003</b>
DC	Accepted	14	16	19	20	20	20	25	35	45	10
	Stewart & Robbins	-	-	25	8	8	8	7	9	9	0
	Accepted-Group	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	4	2
	Not Accepted	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0
	Circulating	1	4	1	2	7	13	4	5	6	1
	Recirculate	1	2	4	4	5	2	9	3	4	1
	Ready	6	2	3	7	14	21	15	19	8	-11
	Reviewable	1	7	9	5	6	4	10	45	62	17
	USNM	-	-	4	26	27	15	14	31	32	1
	Report	0	10	10	2	2	2	4	-	-	-
	DCRC	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	10	10	0
	Unreviewable	8	13	17	16	28	30	27	37	33	-4
	Non-Review Species	3	3	3	6	7	7	11	26	20	-6
	Withdrawn	-	-	-	-	0	1	2	3	4	1
	<b>DC Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>12</b>
DE	Withdrawn							1	1	1	0
VA	USNM						1	1	2	3	1
	Report							1	-	-	-
	Unreviewable									1	1
	DCRC							1	-	-	-
	Withdrawn							1	4	2	-2
NY	Withdrawn							1	1	1	0
	Reviewable									4	4
??	USNM				2	3	5	7	3	3	0
	Unreviewable							1	2	2	0
	Research							2	2	2	0
	DCRC							7	-	-	-
	Withdrawn						2		-	-	-
	<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>1234</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>1369</b>	<b>1409</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>2126</b>	<b>2270</b>	<b>4</b>

Figure 2. MD/DCRC Database Summary as of 03/04/2006 and Changes from Previous Annual Meetings

Year	Reports Received	"Current" Reports	Historical Reports
1966	1	0	1
1979	2	2	0
1980	1	1	0
1982	1	1	0
1983	2	1	1
1984	3	3	0
1985	4	4	0
1986	3	3	0
1988	2	0	2
1989	2	2	0
1990	3	3	0
1991	25	25	0
1992	13	12	1
1993	26	24	2
1994	58	47	11
1995	187	45	142
1996	104	47	57
1997	267	43	224
1998	44	30	14
1999	198	44	154
2000	53	48	5
2001	81	41	40
2002	39	27	12
2003	477	42	435
2004	189	65	124
2005	129	55	74
2006	9	5	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1927</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>1297</b>
<b>Average</b>		<b>23</b>	

Figure 3. MD/DCRC Reports Received per Year

Year	Pkgs	Weeks	#Items	#New	#Decisions	Dec%	Avg#Items	Avg#New	Avg#Decs
1985	3	72.0	40	40	13	33%	13	13	4
1986	7	21.0	61	35	35	57%	9	5	5
1987	6	17.6	59	27	43	73%	10	5	7
1988	4	15.0	33	25	20	61%	8	6	5
1989	4	26.6	35	20	17	49%	9	5	4
1990	3	35.1	30	15	12	40%	10	5	4
1991	7	18.9	65	35	36	55%	9	5	5
1992	9	18.3	75	43	39	52%	8	5	4
1993	4	13.3	41	22	27	66%	10	6	7
1994	4	25.6	39	20	28	72%	10	5	7
1995	4	25.8	63	50	33	52%	16	13	8
1996	4	25.2	51	37	33	65%	13	9	8
1997	5	21.1	68	47	49	72%	14	9	10
1998	7	19.3	107	84	81	76%	15	12	12
1999	6	17.8	84	61	50	60%	14	10	8
2000	3	15.2	27	15	20	74%	9	5	7
2001	3	25.8	44	30	27	61%	15	10	9
2002	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2003	8	37.6	79	69	45	57%	10	9	6
2004	7	45.9	90	63	52	58%	17	10	14
2005	5	26.3	95	63	70	74%	19	13	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

Figure 4. Package Statistics Summary

Year	Pkg	Start Date	# Items	# New
2005	098	08/17/2005	19	14
	099	10/27/2005	20	14
	100	12/20/2005	16	12
		<b>Totals (3)</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>40</b>
		<b>Averages</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>
2006	101	01/27/2006	17	9
	102	03/04/2006	18	10
		<b>Totals (2)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19</b>
		<b>Averages</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>59</b>	
	<b>Grand Averages</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	

Figure 5. Status of Packages Currently in Circulation

Decision/Status	AM 2005 #Records	AM 2006 #Records
Accepted	499	521
Accepted-Group	13	19
Accepted-Form	10	11
ID OK/?? Origin	8	8
ID OK/Exotic Origin	2	2
Not Accepted	150	152
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>723</b>
<b>Acceptance Rate:</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>79%</b>

Figure 6. MD/DCRC Acceptance Rate Report

Mon	Year	Contact	St	Topic
Mar	2005	Brinkley, Ned	VA	MD Painted Bunting records
Mar	2005	Toomey, Pat	MT	State Bird Checklist project
Mar	2005	Sullivan, Brian	NY	State Bird Checklist project
Apr	2005	Kratter, Andrew	FL	MD and DC holdings in the FLMHN collection
Apr	2005	Caves, Julie	MI	Western Wood-Pewee identification
Jun	2005	Rohrbacher, Frank	DE	MD/DE South Polar Skua record
Sep	2005	Jaramillo, Al	CA	Starting a records committee from scratch (Ecuador)
Sep	2005	Coopmans, Paul	EC	Starting a records committee from scratch (Ecuador)
Nov	2005	Dean, James	DC	USNM Western Wood-Pewee specimens

Figure 7. Summary of the Past Year's External Communications

Calendar Year	# MD/DCRC Email Messages Sent
2005	1212
2004	610
2003	731
2002	570
2001	287
2000	128
1999	307
1998	66
1997	64

**Figure 8. Number of MD/DCRC Secretary Email Messages Sent by Calendar Year**

- iii. **Decision Reports.** Since last year's Annual Meeting, 84 decision notices were sent to observers for Packages 095 - 097.
- iv. **MOS MD/DCRC Web Site Updates.** The Secretary has continued to update and publish MD/DCRC data products to the committee's web pages on the MOS web site. Thanks to Fran Saunders, the MOS Webmaster for maintaining these pages. The Secretary occasionally reminds the local birding community via e-mail messages on the local birding listserver (MD Osprey) that the web site information is available for reference. After this year's meeting, the web site will be updated with new Review Lists, Official Lists, Database Contents and other related documents. The link to the committee's web pages is:

<http://www.mdbirds.org/mddcrc/rcindex.html>

- e. **Storage Status Report.** A summary of the amount of MD/DCRC storage (both hardcopy/paper and electronic) is shown in **Figure 9**. The committee's files currently fill the equivalent of approximately 39 document boxes. Additional committee reference material is not boxed, but is on bookshelves. These items include a library of Maryland Birdlife and American Birds/Field Notes/North American Birds. Other non-boxed reference material includes baseline publications such as Stewart and Robbins (1958), the Maryland Breeding Bird Atlas, and historical publications such as Kirkwood (1895), and Coues and Prentiss (1863 and 1883). The committee's electronic data files currently consume over 5.35GBs of data storage. Currently, all electronic data is periodically duplicated and stored both on-site (in the Secretary's home in a fire-retardant safe) and off-site, typically with the Chair.

Media	Contents	Amount of Storage
<b>Paper/Hardcopy</b>	Reports/records/packages files	22 document boxes
	Video/audio tapes	1 document box
	Identification/reference files	3 document boxes
	Correspondence/miscellaneous files	10 document boxes
	Supplies	3 document boxes
	Maryland Birdlife journals	2 feet of shelf space
	American Birds journals	2 feet of shelf space
	Historical references (S&R, AOU, etc.)	1.5 feet of shelf space
<b>Electronic</b>	Documents and databases, etc.	2.58 GB
	Electronic sighting documentation	2.77 GB

**Figure 9. MD/DCRC Storage Status**

- f. **Member Package Review Performance.** The Secretary compiles and analyzes the length of time each member retain each review package. A handout was provided that summarizes the average turnaround time of all MD/DCRC members. Individual members were also provided with specifics of their package by package performance.

g. **Database Projects Status Report.**

i. **Projects Completed.** The following database projects were completed since the last Annual Meeting:

1. **AOU Check-List 46th Supplement Update.** The AOU 46th supplement changes were analyzed and determined to be minor, as they pertain to the MD/DCRC; therefore, no update to our indices was performed for this annual cycle for taxonomic order or common/scientific names.
2. **Species Review Status Change History.** The Secretary has compiled a chronology of the historical changes to the review lists— to capture, for example, when Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*) was dropped from the review list; or when the review range of Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*) was redefined, etc. This information was becoming lost and needed to be captured for posterity. A copy of the interim results was provided to the committee members.
3. **Historical Records Research.** With the completion of the Review List Status Change History (above), research was pursued last year for species that were "reviewable," including the following: Sandhill Crane, Ruff, Franklin's Gull, Thayer's Gull, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Bachman's Sparrow, Anhinga, Northern Shrike, Mississippi Kite, Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, and Brewer's Blackbird. Sightings when each species was reviewable can now be pursued for documentation, or closed-out. The Secretary is still trying to straighten out some dates and specimens for DC Storm-Petrels (Leach's, Wilson's and Band-rumped).
4. **Package Number Field Expansion.** The Secretary implemented a "Y2K" type of fix to expand the package number field from two to three digits. This action is completed.

ii. **Projects In-Progress.** The following database projects are still in work:

1. **Quality Assurance/Loss Prevention Plan/Permanent Storage Plan.** The MD/DCRC Quality Assurance and Loss Prevention Plan is moving forward. All reports and records for which decisions have been reached have been physically segregated and for a large percentage of them, a quality audit has been conducted. All information with each file has been photoduplicated. The Secretary plans to scan and electronically capture all photo documentation, then the original files can be moved into the MOS controlled storage. This is a project in-process. During the past year, the Secretary had cause to use the Smithsonian Archives operation and was quite impressed by the unit's capabilities. The MD/DCRC or MOS may want to consider donating its original documentation to the Smithsonian and then securing use of these facilities and services for historical preservation of documentation.
2. **Quantitative Status System.** Over the past few years, the committee approved a "quick look" species status system that presents an "at a glance" view of a species status using total numbers of reports/records and numbers in certain decision/status categories, similar to a California system. The report format is ready but this project is on hold until the historical database research is completed, since the quantitative summary data will be incorrect for many species until all historical reports/records are captured and the database is fully updated.
3. **ID Articles and Index.** The committee now has 445 identification and reference articles in its files. This past year, the Secretary created an index number scheme and has assigned an index number to each article. During the next year, the Secretary plans to inventory, sort, and better organize these files.

4. **DC Reports.** A number of reports from the defunct DC Records Committee are of uncertain status. These reports were added to the committee database in a “DCRC” (DC Records Committee) status category. These reports require additional validation research before they can be placed into any of the regular MD/DCRC status categories.
- iii. **Future Projects.** The following database projects have not yet been started.
1. **Web-based Records Committee Vision.** The Secretary plans to implement the following functions:
    - i. **On-line Photo Gallery.** This project will publish, on-line, accepted record photographs, images, and other documentation. The plan is to begin with first state records.
    - ii. **On-line Database.** This project will provide MD/DCRC interactive, query-based database access to interested parties on-line, via the web.
    - iii. **Review Process via the Web.** This project will allow committee members to access an “intranet” (not accessible to the general public) to review records on-line.

The Secretary will coordinate these web-based plans with the MOS Web Site Director. These projects are currently secondary to the historical canvass.

2. **Data Dictionary and Standardization.** The Secretary plans to define a formal data dictionary and schema for all committee data fields and data tables. This project will include a data normalization exercise to clean up the data structures (eliminate duplicate or obsolete fields, etc.). Steps were recently taken to begin this process however, more work remains to be completed on this project.
3. **Business Processes Definition and Documentation.** For posterity, and to share with other state/provincial records committees, the Secretary intends to document the MD/DCRC Level 2 and Level 3 business processes using process flow diagrams. Efforts were briefly begun on this project, but more remains to be done.
4. **Extinct/Extirpated Species Research.** This project involves researching historical species that are extinct or extirpated from Maryland. Examples include Eskimo Curlew (*Numenius borealis*), Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*), and “Heath Hen” [Greater Prairie Chicken] (*Tympanuchus cupido cupido*). The objective is to capture all historical documentation for the committee’s files. Some information has been gathered but a detailed canvass of the literature and analysis of the results is still pending. This is a low priority project.
5. **Museum Collection Specimens.** There are still some leads to be tracked down at the USNM and other museum datasets have been obtained and will be analyzed regarding possible reviewable species for MD and DC. A number of other museum databases were available and were obtained on-line via the web; others were made available via direct request. The Secretary will continue this pursuit.
6. **Unsubmitted and Outstanding Documentation Status.** After the historical analysis and research is complete, the committee will be ready to publish a list of sightings in the Maryland Yellowthroat for which no documentation exists. Current sighting documentation issues are being pursued with individual observers.

## 2. Subcommittee/Project Reports



a. **Outreach Subcommittee.**

- i. **Identification Workshops.** At last year's meeting, the committee discussed the idea of one or a series "outreach" identification workshops focused on regional ID challenges and targeting advanced-intermediate birders. The Secretary developed a presentation along these lines that focuses on "Maryland's Next Species," based on the Maryland Yellowthroat survey of 2001 and the attending article published by Marshall Iliff in 2002. This program was presented to the Anne Arundel Bird Club in February 2005 as was well-received. The current version was available at the meeting for the members to review. This presentation is now available for local MOS chapter programs.
  - ii. **Observer Reports.** With the improved database capabilities now operational, the MD/DCRC can, "with the push of a button," generate a complete detailed report of records and reports for any given observer. The Secretary plans to offer such reports to observers with large numbers of database entries as a means to detect and correct any errors and to stimulate the submission of outstanding documentation. This will not happen, however, until the remaining historical data is captured.
  - iii. **County Reports.** The Secretary has provided database reports to support the efforts of counties with active county list committees, specifically Howard and Harford. With the new database capabilities, the hope is to deal with one point of contact from each county who can review and comment on the local records. This will not happen, however, until the remaining historical data is captured.
- b. **Subspecies/Distinct Forms Subcommittee.** This first Maryland Subspecies Review list was coordinated with the members after last year's annual meeting and has been published on the MD/DCRC web pages. There is no word on the publication status of Marshall Iliff's detailed manuscript on the Annotated Checklist of the Subspecies of Maryland.
- c. **MD/DCRC Decision Reports.** Specifics on the next MD/DCRC decision reports follows:
- i. **Format and Framework.** An extensive report framework was generated directly from the MD/DCRC database and the secretary has summarized much of the "front-end" facts and figures to support these reports.
  - ii. **Third MD/DCRC Decision Report.** Marshall Iliff is working on this report. The MOS decision was to publish this, and future reports, on CD-ROM media as an issue in the Maryland Avifauna series.
  - iii. **Fourth MD/DCRC Decision Report.** Sherman Suter has volunteered to author the next general decision report. He is waiting for some format issues to be resolved in the Third Decision Report before initiating this task.
  - iv. **Fifth MD/DCRC Decision Report.** The Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) decision that was published on the MD/DCRC web pages will be expanded and published in Maryland Birdlife, or on a Maryland Avifauna Series CD, as a decision report. Paul O'Brien and Phil Davis have volunteered to author this report. The ending date referenced in this report will need to be coordinated to be synchronized with the appropriate issue of Maryland Birdlife in which it appears.

**3. Committee Procedures and Processes:**

a. **New First State Taxa:**

Since the last Annual Meeting, the following state firsts have been added:

- i. **Maryland** (the species count still stands at 424):
  1. **Species added:** none
  2. **Subspecies/Forms added:** none
  3. **Exotics added:** none
- ii. **District of Columbia** (the species count still stands at 325):
  1. **Species added:** none

#### **b. Review List Changes:**

1. **MD List Changes.** The following discussion and changes related to the MD Review List:
  - i. **Common Raven.** A few years ago the committee changed the original review range of this species (east of Frederick County) to east and south of Frederick and Montgomery Counties. The species is being reported with more regularity in the Piedmont, and even on the Coastal Plain. **The committee decided to change the review range again so that the species is reviewable only east of the Piedmont.** This change will be effective with the date of this meeting.
  - ii. **Brown-headed Nuthatch.** This species has recently been expanding its range to the north of its current breeding areas in Maryland on both the eastern and western shores. After discussion, the committee decided to leave the review range as is for now, especially until the expanded Kent and Calvert County populations are documented and tracked for a while.
  - iii. **Franklin's Gull.** The current review range for this species is very unusual; basically a swath of the center of the western shore. **The committee decided to remove the species from the MD Review List, entirely, effective with the date of this meeting.**
  - iv. **Cave Swallow.** This species was discussed but will be left on the MD review list.
2. **DC List Changes.** The following changes and discussion related to the DC Review List.
  - i. **Greater White-fronted Goose.** Since this species is not reviewable in Maryland and since there are now several accepted records and additional reports for DC, **the committee decided to remove this species from the DC review list.** As in Maryland, Pink-billed forms, however, are still reviewable as a form/subspecies unusual to the region.

#### **4. Decision Issues.**

- a. **New fourth round discussions.** There is one report that qualifies for fourth round discussion: the MD/2003-109 Chesapeake Bay Audubon's Shearwater. No new information was presented during the discussion. The final fourth round voting will be handled after the meeting.
- b. **Record reopenings.** The members did not petition to reopen any previous records.

#### **5. Circulation Issues.**

**a. Species issues:**

- i. **Common Gull** (*Larus canus canus*). At the 1999 Annual Meeting, members petitioned to reopen the previously accepted Conowingo "Common" Mew Gull (*Larus canus canus*) record [MD/1995-033] due to recently more fully understood variations in Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) plumages. In keeping with the new procedure, a narrative providing rationale for the reopening was provided by Marshall Iliff; however, additional analysis that was anticipated has not yet been submitted to the committee by other members. Jonathan Alderfer had indicated that the status of identification issues between Common Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls is still not settled. He had previously indicated that he might submit the second Conowingo bird as a Common Gull to the committee (this bird was initially called a Common Gull, but was later thought by many to be an immature Ring-billed Gull and was never submitted to the committee). The committee dedicated some of time at last year's (2004) Skins Workshop to study immature Common v. Ringed-billed Gull specimens at the Smithsonian to try to determine the variability of the upper wing coverts and tail pattern in Common and Ringed-billed Gull. The latest literature was also searched. Paul O'Brien took the files on these two sightings submitted the following analysis and recommendation as to course of action.

**First Year Common and Ring-billed Gulls**

A first year Common Gull (COGU) was reported from Conowingo Dam in January 1994 [MD/1995-033] and the record was subsequently accepted. In January 1998 another bird was found at Conowingo and initially thought to be a Common Gull. After close examination of photographs, the consensus was that the bird was a variant Ring-billed Gull (RBGU), based on the pattern of markings on the upper wing coverts, and the report was never submitted. However, some questioned the validity of this field mark since there was no mention in the literature of the extent of variation in the covert pattern of either Common or Ring-billed Gull. At the February 27, 1999 Annual Meeting, seven committee members petitioned for the re-opening of the accepted record in order to determine what characters were used to establish the identification and to permit further examination of the question of variability in Common and Ring-billed Gulls as it might apply to this record as well as the unsubmitted 1998 report.

At the MD/DCRC Annual Skins Workshop on March 29, 2003 the members examined first year Common and Ring-billed Gulls. Several COGUs exhibited median and lesser upper wing coverts with dark shaft streaks with occasional cross bars and some had somewhat pointed tips, both situations possibly a function of wear. These markings were not high contrast. Some RBGUs had uniform brown, rounded coverts. Thus the covert patterns are subject to some variation not considered in the Tove (1993) paper.

One COGU had extensive black outer web extensions along the shaft from the black tail band up into the center of the tail. All RBGUs had flecking in this area. In some it was restricted, but never absent.

The committee revisited the study of these two species at the 2004 Skins Workshop. On the question of the extent of variability in the tail patterns of the two gulls, a thorough study of 35 RBGUs revealed that the outer web of the outer rectrix always exhibited some discrete blackish markings, if only in the sub-terminal portion of the web. These markings were numerous and widespread in some specimens or as few as two restricted to the subterminal part of the web, but always appeared as bulges or bars that extended from the shaft toward the outer edge of the web. The members felt that these marks should be apparent in flight if the bird were relatively near and the tail was fanned, and that they could be captured in photographs under these conditions. Of the seven COGUs, only one exhibited any blackish markings in the outer web, and that consisted of a small intrusion of black near the tip of the web that appeared to bleed outwardly from the shaft to no more than 1/3 of the width of the web and was not a discrete bulge.

The coverts were a soft, uniform gray-brown in COGU, but paler with greater contrast in RBGU.

Another question, this prompted by the Lauro and Spencer (1980) paper, was the usefulness of the tertial pattern as a field identification aid. The difference was quite apparent in the specimens and could be useful in the field. In COGU the tertials are a soft gray brown with noticeably broad, off-white fringes, especially at the tips. In RBGU the tertials had dark brown to blackish centers with narrow white fringes. Again, good photographs should capture this rather distinctive character.

There was obvious overlap in body size as well as bill size, rendering those characters useful only on birds at the extremes of measurements.

Armed with these criteria, it should be possible to distinguish these two very similar species in the field, given good looks and, especially, good photographs. As always, any identification should be based on a combination of characters that are consistent with the species in question.

Returning to the question of the criteria used in the identification of the 1994 and 1998 birds, the Chair has reviewed the evidence from both the accepted record and the unsubmitted report, the latter summarized in a posting to MDOsprey February 14, 1998.

**Record # MD/1995-033:** This bird was on the water or on rocks for an hour, during which time it preened and stretched repeatedly, permitting the study of many characters through a Questar in good light. The body of the COGU was not as heavy as that of nearby RBGUs and was one to two inches shorter on average. The smallest RBGUs approached the COGU in size. The head was slightly smaller and more rounded than that of an RBGU. The bill was smaller and more delicate than on RBGU with no noticeable gonydeal angle. The outer webs of the outer rectrices were completely white and the inner webs showed only a single subterminal black smudge. Otherwise the terminal one third of the tail was black, crisply separated from the pure white of the inner two thirds. The lesser and median wing coverts were a medium brown and the greater coverts a very pale tan. The distance was too great to discern any patterns. The tertials had broad white or pale fringes with dark brown centers and no markings. Other characters included pure white under and upper tail coverts and white wing linings with limited brown streaking. The mantle was slightly darker than some RBGUs but similar to others. However the observations were carried out in bright sunlight which washes out grays and makes subtle comparisons difficult. In sum, a combination of characters consistent with COGU was described with no questionable features, thus lending confidence that the identification was correct and the original decision to accept was justified.

**January 1998 Conowingo Dam Gull:** This bird was seen almost exclusively in flight. The size was similar to or marginally smaller than a RBGU, a size difference that could only be seen when the bird was flying next to a known RBGU. The wings seemed narrower to some. The bill was similar in length to that of an RBGU, slightly more narrow, but not particularly thin or short and it had a somewhat swollen tip. The mantle was described as 1/2 shade darker than the average RBGU. The tail had a subterminal black band on all but the outer rectrices where there was a smudge of black on the inner web which bled across the shaft to the outer web the length of the black band on the right side only. There was a fairly broad and well worn terminal white band. The upper and under tail coverts were white. The greater coverts were white with a dark arrow-shaped pattern in the centers. The median and lesser coverts were dark brown to black with high contrast angular centers. Unfortunately, the tertials were hidden in the photographs. However, the summation of characters is more consistent with RBGU than with COGU, even though some characters are seen on COGU. The covert patterns were outside the range we saw on the museum specimens of COGU and as described in the literature, as was the high contrast. Structural features such as size and bill shape were not consistent with COGU. The conclusion would seem to be that the 1998 bird was an uncommon variant of RBGU.

Paul O'Brien  
MD/DCDC Chair

11 Mar 2005

- ii. **Slaty-backed Gull** (*Larus schistisagus*). For the Conowingo possible Slaty-backed Gull [MD/1999-052] review packages were provided to six outside experts: Mark Brazil (Japan), Jon King (CA), Steve Mlodinow (WA), Martin Reid (TX), Jon Dunn (CA), and Paul Lehman (NJ). As of this date, four reviewers have responded and there is no clear consensus in their views. A review of the file shows that Marshall Iloff's latest position is that the bird is a hybrid. The committee's current general position is to not review hybrids unless both of the suspected parents are review species. The committee agreed to circulate this file as a Slaty-backed Gull for review to get the observation into the committee record. The Secretary will list himself as the submitter to put this report on the record.
- iii. **Barnacle Goose** (*Branta leucopsis*). This item is still open from last year. Previously, the committee decided to review the reports of this species that are in the "ready" category. However, upon reflection, it was decided that the current literature and recent thinking be encapsulated into a position paper for the members and that this paper should be circulated with the reports. Paul O'Brien has summarized his opinions and findings on the problem. Phil Davis has some notes on this subject, too, and will write them up. Marshall Iloff is also working on a paper. A check with other records committees will be made to see if any of them has any recent news on this subject.
- iv. **Western Wood-Pewee** (*Contopus sordidulus*). There are two Maryland specimens labeled as Western Wood-Pewee in the USNM. There is also one DC specimen that was previously considered to be a Western Wood-Pewee, but is currently labeled as an Eastern. The Secretary had previously located a recent paper on Wood-Pewee identification and the MD and DC specimens were then inspected at a previous Skins Workshop. Jonathan Alderfer measured the specimens and applied the identification keys, however, neither bird keys fully at the 100 percent level. Jonathan had a question on the paper that he wanted to ask the author and retained the measurements. Since the committee was not able to obtain Alderfer's measurements, we remeasured and photographed the specimens at a subsequent Skins Workshop, but suspect an error in the measurement process. The idea of trying to have a future DNA analysis performed on these specimens was discussed and pursued, thanks to a lead on some relevant information from Walter Ellison.

The DNA analysis request has now been filed with the Smithsonian and we are waiting for the results. For the record, the email message thread, below, documents the committee's pursuit of this DNA analysis. Thanks to Paul O'Brien for leading this effort.

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From: Paul O'Brien  
To: Carla Cicero, Berkeley University  
Date: 07 Dec 2005

I chair the Maryland/DC Records Committee, a function of the Maryland Ornithological Society. We have been sifting through the Smithsonian collection to capture historical records of note for our data base. Normally this does not present identification problems, but we have one now. Three *Contopus* specimens, two from Maryland, one from Washington, D.C., have been giving us fits, to use the technical term. All were initially thought to be Western (*sordidulus*), but Van Remsen expressed some doubts about the D.C. specimen. We found Hubbard's paper (Hubbard, John P., Eastern Wood-Pewee Specimens from New Mexico, Plus a Reevaluation of Mensural Criteria for Identifying This Taxon. Occasional Papers Southwestern Biology, 9, 1-13, 2002) and decided to make the appropriate measurements to see how all three specimens fit the key. It turns out that they are all over the map and now we don't know what we have. That is why I am contacting you.

We also found your paper with Ned Johnson (Mol. Phylogen. Evol. 22, 289-302, 2002) (I hope that's the right abbreviation.) in which it appears that you may have a probe or probes that can distinguish *sordidulus* from *virens*. I'm only a pre-molecular biochemist, of the grind and find era (30 years at NIH), so I can't evaluate your data intelligently. But if there is a way to differentiate these two species, I wonder if you are in any position to analyze a sample or two. I know enough about molecular biology to realize that reagents are expensive and experiments can only be done if there is an on-going research project along related lines - and there is a pair of hands to do the work. Nevertheless I thought it worth a try to ask if you could help us. I will fully understand whatever answer you give me, so don't hold back.

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From: Carla Cicero, Berkeley  
To: Paul O'Brien, MD/DCRC Chair  
12 Dec 2005

Thanks for your message. Right now I am not doing any work on flycatchers, and these are probably older specimens that would require "ancient DNA" techniques from skins - correct? I don't have much experience in that. One suggestion is to contact Rob Fleischer or Mike Braun at the Smithsonian - perhaps they would be willing to analyze the samples for you. They probably have primers for the markers that Ned and I used in the MPE study, and could compare the sequences (published in Genbank) to target a variable but small piece of DNA (with older material, the DNA would be degraded so it's easier to successfully amplify/sequence smaller fragments).

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Date: Thu, 15 Dec 2005 14:38:18 -0500  
From: "Robert Fleischer" <Fleischer.Robert@NMNH.SI.EDU>  
To: <PObrien776@aol.com>  
Cc: "Jon Beadell" <Beadell.Jon@nmnh.si.edu>  
Subject: Re: Fwd: Separating Eastern and Western Wood-Pewees  
Hi Paul,

We do museum specimen extractions and amplifications routinely, and my graduate student Jon Beadell has agreed to do these enigmatic pewees for you (he excels in the ancient lab). I see from genbank that the mtDNA cytb gene is about 2% different between the two species, including the region of the gene that we normally do in our ancient lab. Thus it should be fairly easy to determine the species of these specimens (at least of the bird's mother if there is a chance they are hybrids!). In order to do this, you will need to obtain permission from the SI bird division via James Dean to allow us to sample a tiny piece of toepad from each of the three specimens. Let him know that we will be the ones isolating and amplifying mtDNA to determine the species for you. Once we have the permission (usually takes a few weeks) we can sample and add it to our work in the ancient lab and have an answer fairly quickly (assuming the toepads work).

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Date: Thu, 15 Dec 2005 15:25:09 -0500  
To: [PObrien776@aol.com](mailto:PObrien776@aol.com)  
From: Mike Braun <[braun@lab.si.edu](mailto:braun@lab.si.edu)>  
Subject: Re: Fwd: Separating Eastern and Western Wood-Pewees  
Cc: [Fleischer.Robert@NMNH.SI.EDU](mailto:Fleischer.Robert@NMNH.SI.EDU), [lweigt@lms.si.edu](mailto:lweigt@lms.si.edu), [dovec@si.edu](mailto:dovec@si.edu), [adriskel@lab.si.edu](mailto:adriskel@lab.si.edu)  
Hi Paul,

Do you know the age of the specimens off hand? And their USNM numbers? If Rob isn't anxious to do this, we have a DNA bar-coding initiative at the Museum and this would be right up their alley. I'll forward to some of the principals.

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Date: Thu, 09 Mar 2006 12:53:12 -0500  
From: "Robert Fleischer" <[FleischerR@si.edu](mailto:FleischerR@si.edu)>  
To: "James Dean" <[DEANJ@si.edu](mailto:DEANJ@si.edu)>  
Cc: <[PObrien776@aol.com](mailto:PObrien776@aol.com)>, "Jon Beadell" <[BEADELLJ@si.edu](mailto:BEADELLJ@si.edu)>

Subject: pewee sampling request

Hi James,

The Maryland Ornithological Society's MD/DC Records Committee (MD/DCRC) is charged with maintaining a thorough and accurate database on the avifauna of Maryland and the District of Columbia. In pursuing this goal, the committee came across three specimens in the USNM database labeled as Western Wood Pewees, *Contopus sordidulus*, two from MD, one from DC. Van Remsen examined the specimens and felt that the DC bird was probably an Eastern Wood-Pewee, *Contopus virens*, based on back color and mensural characters. Subsequently the label was changed to *virens*. In order to resolve this question, the MD/DCRC attempted to key the three specimens using Hubbard's criteria (Hubbard, J. P., Eastern Wood-Pewee Specimens from New Mexico, Plus a Reevaluation of Mensural Criteria for Identifying This Taxon, Occasional Papers Southwestern Biology, 9, 1-13, 2002). The DC specimen keyed cleanly to *virens*, but the two MD specimens did not key to *sordidulus* cleanly, one tending toward *virens*, the other close to *sordidulus*. Thus there are uncertainties with all three specimens that we would like to resolve.

Rob Fleischer and the MD/DCRC propose to investigate the systematic status of these three enigmatic specimens in the USNM collection using ancient DNA techniques on small toepad samples taken from each specimen. Laboratory work will be performed by Rob Fleischer and Jon Beadell employing established methods that he has developed for isolating and sequencing DNA from old museum specimens. According to sequences available on Genbank, the two species differ in mtDNA Cytb sequences by about 2%, including the region of the gene normally studied in Fleischer's Genetics Program ancient laboratory. Thus it should be fairly easy to determine to species the maternal background of each specimen. Various nuclear introns should identify the male parent, should hybridization be suspected. We will use standard methods to extract DNA from the toepads of these specimens, amplify and sequence several small pieces of the mtDNA Cytb gene, and compare the sequences to the references on Genebank.

The specimens to be sampled are:

USNM # 523922, collected in DC by P. Bartsch 9/18/1899

USNM # 478783, collected in Ocean City, MD, by C.S. Robbins 9/13/1961

USNM # 530823, collected in Ocean City, MD, by C.S. Robbins 9/01/1967

Thanks for your help with this.

Rob Fleischer

Paul O'Brien

Jon Beadell

Robert C. Fleischer

Genetics Program

National Museum of Natural History

National Zoological Park

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- v. **Dark-eyed Junco** (*Junco hyemalis*). The committee reaffirmed its position on the circulation of its backlog of junco reports. Previously, the committee decided to proceed with review of the submitted Oregon/Pink-sided Juncos (*J. h. oregonus* / *J. h. mearnsi*) despite the fact that there are some open Junco taxonomy issues. The committee decided to go ahead and review MD/DCRC reports of the junco complex based on the current literature.
- vi. **Redpolls**. The question was again discussed of how to handle the review of the Dave Czaplak Birding article with up to 15 individual birds mentioned in it. The Secretary has decomposed the article and split each reviewable photograph into separate database

records and identified the reviewable photograph numbers. Paul O'Brien's written reports were also merged into this process. This package of reviewable redpolls (*exillipes*, *hornemanni*, and *rostrata*) is now ready for review.

- vii. **DC Historical Yellow Rail Habitat.** In Package 96, a number of historical DC Yellow Rail specimen-photograph records circulated. Some of these USNM specimens were collected "on the Potomac marshes" in the 1880s. One member asked how we know that these marshes were within the District of Columbia, rather than within Virginia (whose boundary is generally the high tide line on the Virginia side of the Potomac) or in Maryland. Several historical references were presented and discussed at the meeting. Our placement of these specimens is in agreement with USNM personnel and with David W. Johnson (author of *The History of Ornithology in Virginia*, 2003), who has also written on this topic in *The Raven*, the journal of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. A historical map of the Potomac River, from *Avifauna Columbiana* by Coues and Prentiss (1883) was presented. This map specifically shows the "wild rice marshes" of the Potomac River ca. 1883, prior to the filling of the marsh lands. A scanned image of this map is included, below, as **Figure 10**. Johnson (2003) also states, "An informative account of Marsh Wrens along the Potomac River marshes appeared in Coues and Prentiss's publication: 'The wren is extremely abundant, but only in certain localities, chiefly marshes bordering the Potomac and Anacostia, where the stretches of wild oats (*Zizania aquatica*) furnish a congenial home. Hundreds of the large globular nests, affixed to the swaying reeds, used to be found in the bit of marsh bordering the Lee estate, and thence toward the Virginia end of the Long Bridge [now the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge].' " Johnson adds, "This account clearly confirms the earlier existence of marshes along the Potomac River, as least as far upstream as Roosevelt Island, as well as the flora and fauna of those marshes, now destroyed by dredging, grading, and filling."

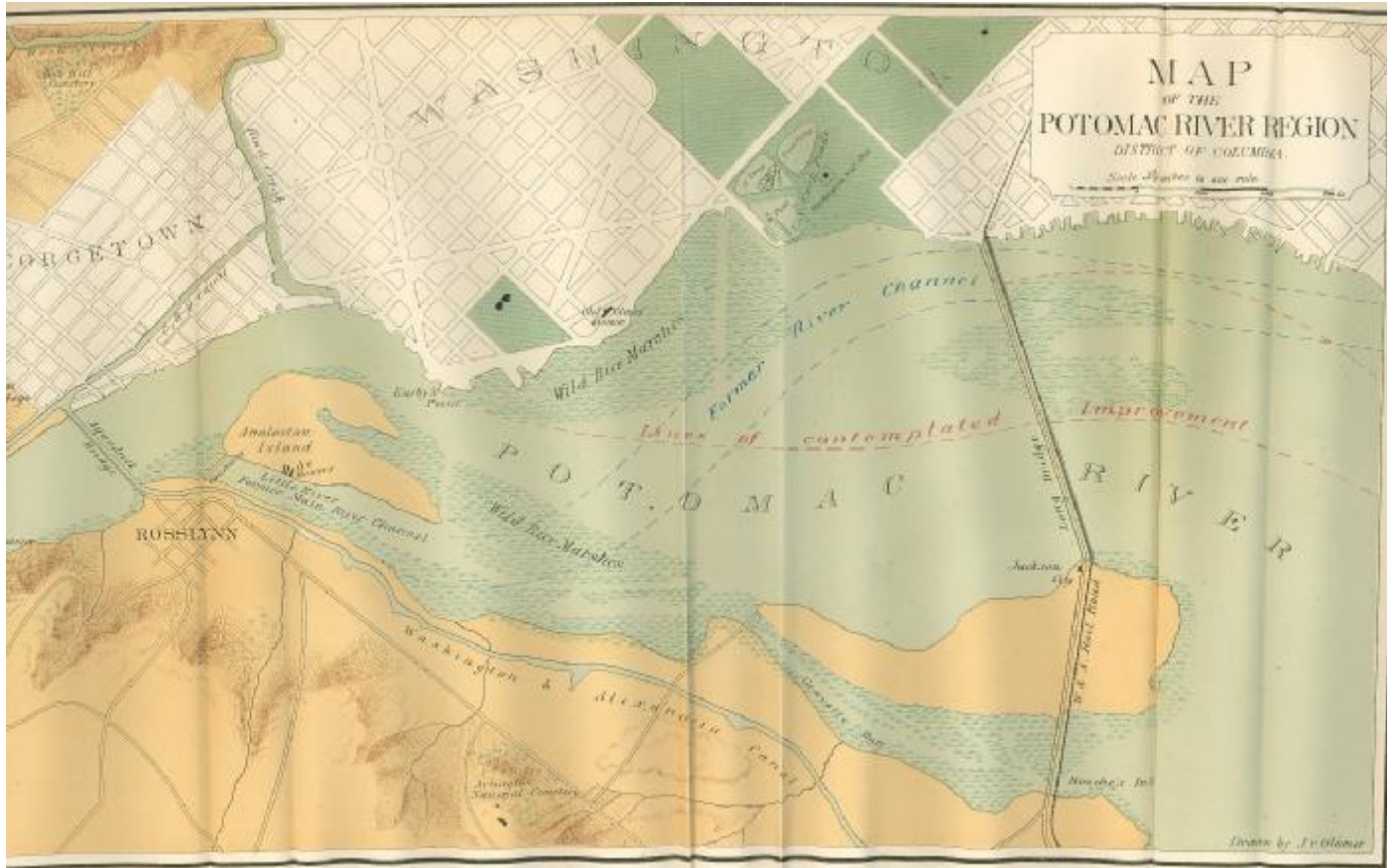


Figure 10. Historical Map of the Potomac River, ca. 1883.



- b. **Records Splits.** No administrative report splits were made during the year following members' recommendations from the ballot/comment forms.

6. **Skins Meeting.** The 2006 Skins Workshop was held at the US National Museum of History (Smithsonian Institution) on February 4, 2006. Minutes are being compiled.

7. **Old Business:**

- a. **Exotics Review Policy.** The committee does not have a policy to govern the submission of documentation or the review of exotic (or probably exotic) species. In January, 2005, the USFWS released a proposed list of avian species to be excluded from MBTA protection. Perhaps this list, which includes eight (8) status categories, can be used for the basis of reviews of non-native species. For example, Black Swan is a category 4, which is not known to breed in the wild. This issue was discussed briefly and will be continued until next year. How other records committees handle this will also be investigated.

8. **New Business:**

None.

9. **Elections:**

- a. **New members.** Members completing their voting terms are Don Broderick, JB Churchill, and, Patty Craig. The committee thanks them for all their efforts over the past three years. The new members elected were: Tyler Bell, Ellen Lawler, and Marcia Watson.
- b. **Secretary.** Phil Davis was reelected as the Secretary.
- c. **Chair.** Paul O'Brien was reelected as the Chair.

10. **Next Year's Meetings Dates:**

- a. **Annual Meeting:** Saturday, March 3, 2007.
- b. **Skins Workshop:** The committee decided that holding the workshop in the early February timeframe seems to work better from a workload standpoint. Therefore, we will try to hold next year's Skins Workshop during this timeframe, subject to USNM hosting availability. A tentative date is Saturday, February 3, 2007.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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