

Maryland Ornithological Society



**SECOND REPORT OF THE MARYLAND/DC RECORDS
COMMITTEE**

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This is the second report of the Maryland/DC Records Committee (MD/DCRC), a committee of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS). Peterjohn and Davis (1996) described in detail the history and function of the committee and provided a summary of all 303 committee decisions from its inception in 1982 through 1995. This article summarizes the 102 final decisions reached between 1996 and March 1998.

To briefly summarize, the purpose of the committee is to: (1) review reports of unusual sightings within its area of coverage; (2) determine the adequacy of documentation of such reports; (3) maintain a state list of birds for Maryland; (4) maintain a district list of birds for the District of Columbia; (5) publish periodic reports of its findings; and (6) maintain in a file accessible to interested persons the primary reports, the deliberations of the committee and, in some instances, opinions received from outside experts and/or copies of some of the relevant literature. By these steps the committee aims to convert reports of sightings into documented records that can be used for scientific studies of bird distribution and patterns of avian vagrancy.

The MD/DCRC consists of nine voting members, a chair and a non-voting secretary. Voting members serve three-year terms. The voting members review the documentation submitted for each report and assess whether or not this information adequately supports the claimed identification. Reports may receive multiple circulations among committee members depending upon the number of votes to “accept” or “not accept” a given record. The committee has a stated “Goals, Policies, Criteria for Acceptance, and Procedures” which is available from the Secretary and details the functions of the committee. Committee members during the final review of the records summarized here were Robert Dixon, Mary Gustafson, Mark Hoffman, Robert Hilton, David Holmes, Marshall Iliff, Ottavio Janni, Gail Mackiernan, Willem Maane, Harvey Mudd, Robert Norton, Michael O’Brien, Paul O’Brien, Bruce Peterjohn, Paul Pisano, Sue Ricciardi, and Mary Ann Todd. Bruce Peterjohn and Harvey Mudd were chairs of the committee during this time, and Phil Davis served as secretary.

Participation by the birding community is vital to the success of the MD/DCRC. Reports should be sent to Phil Davis, MD/DCRC Secretary, 2549 Vale Court, Davidsonville, MD 21035. The list of species reviewed is available from the Secretary or on the MOS website (<http://www.MDBirds.org>).

In the following accounts, abbreviations are used for Maryland’s counties: ALGY, Allegany; ANAR, Anne Arundel; BALT, Baltimore; CLVT, Calvert; CRLN, Caroline; CARR, Carroll; CECL, Cecil; CHAS, Charles; DORC, Dorchester; FRDK, Frederick; GARR, Garrett; HARF, Harford; HWRD, Howard; KENT, Kent; MONT, Montgomery; PGEO, Prince George’s; QUAN, Queen Anne’s; STMA, St. Mary’s; SMST, Somerset; TLBT, Talbot; WASH, Washington; WICO, Wicomico; WORC, Worcester. Additionally, * indicates that photographs were submitted for a record; # indicates that audio recordings were submitted for a record; + indicates a record of a specimen. The committee reference number for each record is included in parentheses.

Observer abbreviations are also included within the parentheses. All individuals who provided written descriptions, photographs, or other documentation to the committee are cited for each record. The observer who provided the most thorough documentation for a record is generally cited first; this observer may or may not have initially discovered the bird. For many records, the person who discovered the bird may not have provided any documentation to the committee, while for some records, the identity of the discoverer is not even known to the committee. Our intention is not to deny recognition to observers who discover rare birds, but only to indicate those individuals who provided information to the committee. The term *et al.* is used for reports where multiple observers were known to have been present but only the cited individual(s) actually provided documentation to the committee.

In the following accounts, comments on identification, age, and sex are the responsibility of the authors, but are usually based on comments made by committee members during review of the report. All taxonomy follows the Seventh Edition of the AOU Check-list (1998). Information and comments from Peterjohn and Davis (1996) have been repeated where appropriate.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

This section includes all records accepted by the MD/DCRC between the publication of Peterjohn and Davis (1996) and March 1998.

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis*

Assateague Island, WORC, MD, April 24, 1994–May 12, 1994 (*MHo, *GJ, et al.; MD1995-026); Eastern Neck NWR, KENT, MD, November 24, 1995–November 27, 1995 (*MI, et al.; MD1996-029).

These are the third and fourth records of Western Grebe in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Both individuals were photographed and the photos clearly eliminated the similar Clark's Grebe (*A. clarkii*).

All *Aechmophorus* grebes in Maryland should be carefully identified and documented to determine species. Critical examination of the head pattern and bill color must be made. Birds intermediate in plumage between Western and Clark's Grebes do occur (Storer and Nuechterlein 1985, 1992; Eckert 1993).

These records are consistent with the Western Grebe's status as a rare migrant/winter visitor to the eastern United States (Storer and Nuechterlein 1992).

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, February 28, 1970–April 9, 1970 (LRh, *WJ, et al.; MD1995-004); Havre de Grace, HARF, MD, July 23, 1987–August 14, 1987 (*AB; MD1996-001); Assateague Is, WORC, MD, September 12, 1992 (BO, et al.; MD1996-002); Jug Bay, PGEO/ANAR, MD, May 26, 1994–May 28, 1994 (*GK; MD1996-003).

These are the first records of American White Pelican in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. In each instance, documentation was sufficient to eliminate other bird species, including non-native species of white pelicans. Photos of both the Blackwater (Rhodes 1970) and the Havre de Grace (Armistead 1987) birds have been published.

Throughout the world, there are six species of large white pelicans with varying degrees of black on the primaries and secondaries. At least one of these species, the Pink-backed Pelican (*P. rufescens*), has occurred in Maryland as a zoo escapee (Southworth and Southworth 1992a, 1992b). Any large white pelican discovered in Maryland needs to be critically examined, particularly the pattern of black on the flight feathers, to make a correct species identification. Harrison (1983 and 1987) provides good criteria for separating the white pelicans.

Despite its annual occurrence in nearby Virginia (Kain 1987), the American White Pelican remains a very rare species in Maryland.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

National Arboretum, DC, DC, August 11, 1960–August 14, 1960 (*MD, et al.; DC1997-439); Lake Merle, FRDK, MD, April 9, 1995–April 25, 1995 (SSu, *DH, *SY, et al.; MD1995-028); Patuxent WRC – North Tract, ANAR, MD, May 27, 1996–May 29, 1996 (BP, MG, POs, et al.; MD1997-418); Town Hill, ALGY, MD, August 31, 1996 (JP, RKi; MD1997-447); Town Hill, ALGY, MD, September 10, 1996 (JP; MD1997-450).

Two prior records of Anhinga had been accepted by the MD/DCRC in Maryland and none in the District of Columbia. All of these records were well documented with photographs or sketches. The DC bird was photographed (Donnald 1961), while the Lake Merle individual was seen by scores of observers and photographs even appeared in local newspapers.

There has been a rash of Anhinga sightings in Maryland (and the northeast) since 1995 and additional reports are under review by the Committee. Other out-of-range records during the spring-summer of 1995 include an individual in Delaware (April 23, Boyle et al. 1995), two in Pennsylvania (June 6, Paxton et al. 1995) and multiple sightings in northern Illinois (late-April, Brock 1995). During 1996, other extralimital records in the northeast were made in New Jersey (four sightings, late April to June, Boyle et al. 1996, Paxton et al. 1996), Pennsylvania (May 15, Boyle et al. 1996), Virginia (multiple sightings, Iliff 1996), and Connecticut (September 14, Ellison and Martin 1997).

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, April 28, 1980 (*RRo; MD1996-022).

This is the first record of Magnificent Frigatebird in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Previously, two records of frigatebird (sp.) had been accepted by the MD/DCRC (one in Maryland and one in the District of Columbia). Interestingly, the prior Maryland record was on April 30th.

The color photographs accompanying this record show an immature frigatebird with features eliminating all other species of *Fregata*. The committee has not been willing to assume any vagrant frigatebird in Maryland is a Magnificent Frigatebird. Although this is perhaps the most likely species, there are records of vagrant Great Frigatebirds (*F. minor*) from North America. It was fortunate that this individual was well photographed and in immature plumage, as positive identification of many frigatebird plumages may not be possible under most

circumstances. Future frigatebird records, which can be expected, should be critically studied and photographed if possible. See Howell (1994) and Harrison (1983 and 1987) for information on frigatebird identification.

Roseate Spoonbill *Ajaia ajaja*

Smith Island, SMST, MD, July 11, 1996–August 23, 1996 (*MHrm, DJo, MHrr; MD1997-455).

This is the second record of Roseate Spoonbill in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The prior record was from the exact same location in 1979 (Baugh 1979). The photos and description of this bird left no question as to its identity and a photo appeared in *Field Notes* (51:35). As noted by Peterjohn and Davis (1996), spoonbill populations have been slowly increasing and extralimital records have been noted north to the lower Great Lakes region.

Black-bellied Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

Potts Point, CLVT, MD, June 6, 1993 (*AMa; MD1995-036); Tuckahoe State Park, CRLN, MD, May 11, 1996 (*PT, *MMac; MD1996-024).

These are the first records of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in Maryland. Both records were documented with excellent photographs, clearly eliminating any other species, including non-native or hybrid waterfowl. The committee considered the possibility that these birds may have been of non-wild origin, but no evidence supported this position. The Potts Point record involved a flock of 12 individuals. Such a large flock would be exceptional for captive-raised birds, but somewhat expected for a wild flock of this highly social and gregarious whistling-duck. The Tuckahoe State Park bird was a single unbanded individual. Although the lack of a band is not definitive for wild origin, it is supportive. The expanding breeding population and increased number of vagrant reports also suggest wild origin for these records and the expectation of future Maryland records.

Other extralimital records of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck during the summer of 1993 included a flock of ten in Quebec (June 6–12, Yank and Aubry 1993), and a flock of nine in Ontario (June 17–July 7, possibly same birds as in Quebec, Ridout 1993).

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

West Ocean City, WORC, MD, July 19, 1961–December 2, 1961 (CHo, *SD, et al.; MD1996-039); Berlin, WORC, MD, February 16, 1975 (LMa; MD1996-040); Remington Farms, KENT, MD, November 2, 1984 (*JWhi; MD1996-041); Point Lookout, STMA, MD, November 11, 1985 (*RW; MD1996-042); Nottingham, PGEO, MD, November 19, 1986 (+GK; MD1996-043).

Previously, the MD/DCRC had accepted two records of Fulvous Whistling-Duck in Maryland. Two of the current records involved large flocks, with 61 reported at Remington Farms and 25-30 at Point Lookout. The other records were of single individuals. Although this species is very erratic in its wanderings, there does seem to be a seasonal peak in late autumn, as demonstrated by the three November records. The two previously accepted records were in November as well. All these records were in different years, so multiple sightings of the same individuals were unlikely.

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii*

Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, October 28, 1991 (*MO; MD1992-035); Snow Hill, WORC, MD, October 20, 1992–November 27, 1992 (MO; MD1994-040).

As discussed by Peterjohn and Davis (1996), the field identification of Ross's Goose originally posed problems for the committee, as this species expanded from its largely western range to the East Coast (Ryder and Alisauskas 1995). It is now clear that small numbers of Ross's Geese winter in the large Snow Goose (*C. caerulescens*) flocks of the Delmarva Peninsula. The committee no longer reviews records of Ross's Goose from the Eastern Shore.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Bay Ridge, ANAR, MD, February 6, 1979–February 11, 1979 (*MHrm, et al.; MD1996-014); Jefferson Patterson Park, CLVT, MD, March 18, 1997–March 20, 1997 (*TB, PC, PO, *MHo, et al.; MD1997-496).

These are the first Tufted Duck records in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The 1979 individual was trapped and banded on 6 February 1979 during a waterfowl banding operation by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. It was also reported "in company with a female of the same species" (Ringler 1979), but no documentation was available for a second individual. Both accepted records were of photographed males.

The committee considered the potential that these individuals were not of wild origin, but their occurrence matches the pattern of vagrancy seen in this species in the northeastern United State (Mlodinow and O'Brien 1996). During the spring of 1997, there was an apparent influx of Tufted Ducks into eastern North America. In reference to the records from the Atlantic provinces of Canada, where the species is most regular in the northeast, Maybank (1997) commented that "oddly, there were many more Tufted Duck reports away from Newfoundland," where the species is most frequent. Reports came from Newfoundland (two birds), New Brunswick (four), and Nova Scotia (nine, where the species is "now almost routine"). Other Canadian records included Quebec (one, April 22, Bannon and David 1997) and Ontario (three, March 29–May 4, Ridout 1997). U.S. reports were from Massachusetts (one wintering, one April 15–16, Perkins 1997), Connecticut (one wintering, Perkins 1997), New York (two wintering, Boyle et al. 1997), and Kentucky (one, March and April, Brock 1997).

Additionally, hybrids between Tufted Ducks and other species of *Aythya* are known, and the committee considered this potential, but the observed characteristics of both individuals were believed to eliminate hybrid origin. Harris et al. (1989) and Madge and Burn (1988) should be consulted for a thorough review of the characteristics of Tufted Duck and its potential pairings with other waterfowl species. For males, close attention must be given to bill-tip pattern, bill-and-head shape, tuft shape and length, overall size and structure, eye color, back and flank color, and wingstripe (Harris et al. 1989).

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*

Patuxent Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, December 29, 1994 (+RZ, *WM; MD1995-029); Patuxent River Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, February 28, 1996–March 3, 1996 (PC, KR, HM, PO, *MHo, et al.; MD1996-045); Patuxent River Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, January 22, 1997–March 1, 1997 (*PC, *KR, et al.; MD1997-630); St. George's Island, STMA, MD, February 7, 1997–February 9, 1997 (PC, *JS; MD1997-495).

These are the first records of Barrow's Goldeneye in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The December 29, 1994 record consisted of the wing of a female donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of their annual waterfowl harvest survey. Identified after-the-fact, follow-up research allowed determination of the exact location where the bird was shot. Carney (1983, 1992) provides invaluable information on species, sex and age determination of waterfowl wings. Identification of female goldeneyes, in particular, is very difficult (Tobish 1986, Madge and Burn 1988), and hybrids are known (Martin and DiLabio 1994).

Interestingly, the second and third record came from the same locality the next two winters. Documented by photos and written descriptions, the presence of at least one male Barrow's Goldeneye was conclusively demonstrated. Special thanks are due to the staff of Patuxent Naval Air Station for making arrangements to allow many birders to see this rare species on a restricted military base.

The combination of four records in Southern Maryland is unprecedented for this latitude in the eastern United States.

Masked Duck *Nomonyx dominicus*

Elkton—Elk River Marshes, CECL, MD, Sept. 8, 1905 (+JCS, CHou, et al.; MD1997-492).

This is the only record of Masked Duck in Maryland; it was shot by a J. C. Smith while he was rail hunting on the "Elk River marshes" in 1905 (Houghton 1906). The Committee found the photographs of the specimen to be diagnostic of an adult male Masked Duck. Other reports and records of historical vagrancy to the northeast (Mlodinow and O'Brien 1996, Lockwood 1997) and the fact that this species is rarely known to be kept in captivity contributed to the conclusion that this was a wild bird.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, May 31, 1972–June 11, 1972 (WJ, *PGD, et al.; MD1996-004); LaVale, ALGY, MD, August 17, 1974–September 19, 1974 (KH, *JP, *RJ, et al.; MD1996-005); Catonsville, BALT, MD, June 10, 1992 (EBo; MD1996-006); Laurel, PGEO, MD, April 24, 1993 (ABa, PSt; MD1996-008); Seneca Creek State Park, MONT, MD, May 14, 1993 (RNo; MD1996-009); Ft. Smallwood Park, ANAR, MD, April 22, 1995 (SR, RRin, COr; MD1996-010).

The MD/DCRC had previously accepted two records of American Swallow-tailed Kite from Maryland. These six additional records continue the pattern of late April–early June vagrancy in this species. The record from LaVale is particularly noteworthy for its location, time of year and duration of stay.

Yellow Rail *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

Potomac, MONT, MD, May 14, 1992 (JJ; MD1994-032).

This record was exceptional in that the bird was flushed from a tall patch of grass while the observer was mowing a somewhat overgrown suburban lawn. Despite the remarkable circumstances, the committee found the account clearly addressed all the critical field marks of a Yellow Rail (e.g. dark color of wings and mantle, white secondary patch, flight style) and specifically eliminated all other North American small rails. The true status of Yellow Rail in Maryland remains to be determined, due to the species' very secretive nature (Bookhout 1995).

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*

Madonna, HARF, MD, April 11, 1982–April 12, 1982 (DK, *JKi, et al.; MD1995-012).

Records of Sandhill Cranes have increased dramatically in the Mid-Atlantic region over the past 15 years, as the eastern population has increased and expanded its breeding range (Hoffman 1989, Tebbel and Ankeny 1982). The committee now reviews only those reports of Sandhill Cranes west of the Piedmont. This record was well documented with photographs.

Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Baltimore Canyon, WORC, MD, August 18, 1996 (*DC, *MO, et al.; MD1997-448).

This is the second record of Long-tailed Jaeger in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC for Maryland. A bird in juvenile plumage, it was well documented by photographs, sketches and written details.

The true status of this species in Maryland remains to be determined. Despite the many pelagic trips out of Ocean City over the past 25 years, there are very few reports of Long-tailed Jaegers and only the two accepted records. To our south, in North Carolina, the species is much more regularly seen (Lee 1986, 1989). It is possible most Long-tailed Jaegers occur farther offshore, outside of the range of the normal day-long pelagic trips.

Jaeger identification, particularly from a moving boat, is challenging, but excellent new references, such as Olsen and Larsson (1997) provide guidance that was unavailable until recently.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Hains Point, DC, DC, April 5, 1996 (OJ; DC1997-414).

The committee felt that this record clearly documented DC's first confirmed Little Gull. Although regular along the Atlantic Coast, and at certain gull concentration points in the Chesapeake Bay region, the Little Gull is otherwise unknown as a vagrant on the Piedmont or farther west, except for this record and at Conowingo Dam in Harford and Cecil counties, Maryland.

Mew (Common) Gull *Larus canus canus*

Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, January 22, 1994 (BP, et al.; MD1995-033).

This constitutes the first accepted record of Mew (Common) Gull in Maryland. The committee found the details of the report, particularly the tail pattern, sufficient to establish this as a first basic plumaged Mew (Common) Gull. In first basic plumage, the European form of the Mew Gull, *L. c. canus* (= Common Gull) is readily separable from the western U.S. form of the Mew Gull, *L. c. brachyrhynchos*. East coast records have pertained to both forms.

First winter Ring-billed and Mew (Common) Gulls present a considerable identification challenge, and detailed study of a suspected individual would be needed to confirm an identification. While the identification of these species has been discussed in considerable detail by Lauro and Spencer (1980), Grant (1986), Harris et al. (1999), Lewington et al. (1991), and Tove (1993), much remains to be learned about them. Unfortunately, much of the relevant literature has a distinct European bias, concentrating on how to differentiate a lone Ring-billed Gull from many Mew (Common) Gulls, the reverse of the situation faced on this side of the Atlantic.

California Gull *Larus californicus*

Georgetown Reservoir, DC, DC, January 15, 1993–January 16, 1993 (*OJ; DC1997-091); Laytonsville Landfill, MONT, MD, January 23, 1993 (GM, et al.; MD1997-093); West Ocean City, WORC, MD, November 28, 1994 (*MO; MD1997-249); Laytonsville Landfill, MONT, MD, January 12, 1995 (OJ; MD1997-295); Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, January 28, 1995 (ESc, et al.; MD1997-285); Hart-Miller Island, BALT, MD, October 26, 1996 (ESc, RB; MD1997-456).

The MD/DCRC had previously accepted three records of California Gull in Maryland. The increased interest in “gull watching” in recent years has undoubtedly contributed to the increased number of records of this species. Additionally, better information is available to assist the patient observer in the criteria used to identify this western species (Grant 1986, Vanderpoel 1997). Any reports of California Gull should include a complete description of the bird and comparisons to individuals of the common species. Reports of this species in the eastern U.S. have increased in recent years, perhaps an artifact of observer interest and knowledge (Winkler 1996).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, August 1, 1992 (MO, *BPa, et al.; MD1994-026).

This is the first record of Arctic Tern in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Although perhaps more likely as a spring migrant, it appears a small number of non-breeding birds (in first alternate plumage) may summer off the mid-Atlantic coast (M. Hoffman, pers. obs.). This record was well documented with photographs and written descriptions.

Convincing records of Arctic Tern have been difficult to obtain for Maryland (Peterjohn and Davis 1996). Many records from spring pelagic trips appear to lack any documentation and are not amenable to committee review. Excellent references on *Sterna* tern identification include Harris et al. (1989), Kaufman (1990), and Olsen and Larsson (1995).

Common Murre *Uria aalge*

Ocean City Inlet, WORC, MD, December 29, 1976–December 30, 1976 (*RRo; MD1995-013); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, January 16, 1977 (RRo; MD1997-236); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, March 12, 1994 (*GJ, PO, et al.; MD1997-180); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, February 25, 1995 (MO; MD1997-422).

These are the first records of Common Murre in Maryland accepted by MD/DCRC. Despite the many winter pelagic trips out of Ocean City over the past 25 years, murre records have been difficult to document and identify to species. The first record, in 1976, was of a bird in the Ocean City Inlet and a photograph of this bird appeared on the cover of Maryland Birdlife (Rowlett 1977). The other records were of birds observed from boats on offshore trips. Given the numerous records of the Razorbill, and even the Atlantic Puffin, it certainly appears the Common Murre is quite rare at our latitude.

Thick-billed Murre *Uria lomvia*

Franklintown Road, BALT, MD, March 6, 1962–March 7, 1962 (HB, et al.; MD1995-006); Assateague Island, WORC, MD, January 9, 1977 (*RRo, et al.; MD1997-237); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, February 26, 1995 (*MHo, *JS, MO; MD1997-423); Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, February 26, 1995 (*MHo, MO; MD1997-297).

These are the first records of Thick-billed Murre in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The first record was of a storm-blown individual, found grounded on a Baltimore City street (Brackbill 1962). The 1977 individual was observed (and photographed) from the north end of Assateague Island (Rowlett 1977). The 1995 records were of two different birds observed and well photographed on a pelagic trip off Ocean City.

As noted above under Common Murre, despite the many winter pelagic trips out of Ocean City over the past 25 years, documented records of either murre species are very few. It is clear these species are quite rare off Maryland’s coast.

Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris*

Millington, KENT, MD, November 3, 1975 (+DL0, RD; MD1996-017).

This is the only record of Groove-billed Ani for Maryland. The bird was found dead and the specimen preserved. Groove-billed Ani has a considerable pattern of vagrancy throughout the United States, although there are extralimital records of the Smooth-billed Ani as well (Balch 1979, McLean et al. 1995). Identification of anis is not always straight-forward, particularly with immature birds (e.g., immature Groove-billed Anis lack grooves on their bills). References such as Balch (1979) should be consulted.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis*

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, PGEO, MD, May 11, 1974 (*BMe, MPe; MD1996-018).

This exceptional record was documented with photographs (Meanley and Perry 1974). Well removed from the closest populations in southeastern Virginia, this species was formerly a rare resident of the Lower Eastern Shore (Stewart and Robbins 1958). Future claims of this species in Maryland must carefully exclude aberrant individuals of the two common *Dendrocopos* species.

Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens*

Patuxent River Naval Air Station, STMA, MD, December 18, 1994–January 3, 1995 (*KR, *MI, *#JS, *MHo, et al.; MD1996-013).

This is the second record of Ash-throated Flycatcher in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Although the committee does not assume any small, pale, early winter *Myiarchus* in Maryland is an Ash-throated Flycatcher, the documentation with this record eliminated all other *Myiarchus* species, including Nutting's Flycatcher (see Howell and Webb 1995, Pyle 1997). Future records should be equally well documented, to eliminate several similar species. Detailed study of the wings and tail must be made.

Ash-throated Flycatcher shows a clear pattern of early winter occurrence along the East Coast (Murphy 1982).

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*

Violette's Lock, MONT, MD, May 1, 1993 (BP; MD1996-019).

Although the Bewick's Wren formerly was a fairly common breeder in western Maryland (Stewart and Robbins 1958), recent records of this species in Maryland have been exceptionally few (Robbins 1996). To promote adequate documentation of current reports, the MD/DCRC added this species to its review list.

The committee felt that this was an exceptional description that addressed all the salient field marks and clearly separated a Bewick's Wren from a dull juvenile Carolina Wren.

Townsend's Solitaire *Myadestes townsendi*

Street, HARF, MD, March 22, 1996–April 13, 1996 (DBow, *GJ, *MHo, et al.; MD1996-027).

This is the only record of Townsend's Solitaire in Maryland. Given the numerous records of this species in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada, the species was not unexpected.

The committee commends the observers for the diagnostic photographs and excellent written accounts (Bowers 1996). The hospitality of the landowner is gratefully acknowledged as well.

Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

Ashton, MONT, MD, December 31, 1965–January 20, 1966 (*BG; MD1995-002).

Previously, the MD/DCRC had accepted two records of Varied Thrush from Maryland, although this record predates both of those. Photographs in the documentation for this record clearly substantiates the identification as a Varied Thrush. Despite this species' normal range in the Pacific Northwest and along the Pacific coast, it is a regular, albeit rare, visitor to New England, the upper Great Lakes, and southern Canada (Keith 1968). Records from the middle Atlantic Coast are much fewer. Like most records, including the prior two from Maryland, this bird was frequenting a suburban feeder (Getchell 1966).

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus*

Assateague, WORC, MD, October 24, 1971 (*RRo; MD1995-015).

This is the only record of Sage Thrasher in Maryland. The excellent detailed description (Rowlett 1971, 1972) and accompanying photograph establish this bird as a Sage Thrasher and eliminate all other thrasher species.

Sage Thrasher is one of the rarest western vagrants to the East Coast. Its main breeding ranges lies west of the Rocky Mountains, in the arid Great Basin region. East Coast records are clustered in October and this record is typical in that regard (Bull 1964, Kain 1987, Veit and Petersen 1993).

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

National Arboretum, DC, January 14, 1972–March 4, 1972 (HBN, et al.; DC0000-012).

This well documented record covers all the critical field marks of a Bohemian Waxwing and clearly eliminates the possibility of a Cedar Waxwing. There are very few records of Bohemian Waxwing in the middle Atlantic States and this is the first record for the District of Columbia (Newman 1972).

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, October 21, 1962 (WSc, *CRo, et al.; MD1995-007).

This is the first record of Western Tanager in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The bird was captured at the former Ocean City banding station as part of "Operation Recovery" (Scudder 1962). Although the Western Tanager is known to occur as a rare fall migrant and winter visitor in states to our north (Bull 1964, Veit and Petersen 1993), Maryland reports have been difficult to confirm.

Identification of Western Tanagers in basic plumage must be accomplished using multiple characteristics. Some Scarlet Tanagers (*P. olivacea*) show relatively prominent wing bars, so this character is not a sufficient field mark for species identification. Any claimed sighting of this species should include a description of the wings, head, back, rump and if possible, underwing coverts. Davis (1972) and Pyle (1997) discuss the identification of *Piranga* species.

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*

Derwood, MONT, MD, December 17, 1994 (BM, RGi; MD1996-021).

This is the first record of Spotted Towhee in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Formerly considered a subspecies of the "Rufous-sided Towhee," the Spotted Towhee has been given species rank, as has the Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*), the former eastern form of the Rufous-sided Towhee. With this distinction, observers should take greater care in the observation of towhees in winter in the hopes of accumulating more records. There are a number of records of this species throughout eastern North American, from Quebec to Florida (Greenlaw 1996).

Baird's Sparrow *Ammodramus bairdii*

North Ocean City, WORC, MD, October 14, 1966 (+WV, GC; MD1996-047).

The immature individual was netted during the "Operation Recovery" banding operations and collected. It represents one of few Baird's Sparrows records for the eastern United States (AOU 1983) and Maryland's only record. Baird's Sparrow populations have declined on their midwestern prairie breeding grounds (Jones et al. 1998) and additional records may be unlikely. Additionally, Baird's Sparrow is a relatively short-distance migrant and more western in distribution, as compared to many of the more common western vagrants in Maryland (e.g., Lark Sparrow [*Chondestes grammacus*] and Clay-colored Sparrow [*Spizella pallida*]).

Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammodramus leconteii*

Ocean Pines, WORC, MD, December 27, 1974–February 8, 1975 (KK, *CV, et al.; MD1995-011); Gray's Creek, WORC, MD, December 29, 1993–February 20, 1994 (*MHo, *MI, PO; MD1996-049).

These are the second and third records of Le Conte's Sparrow in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. Both were discovered on the Ocean City Christmas Bird Count and subsequently seen by a number of observers and documented with photographs. The 1974 individual was the first state record (Klimkiewicz 1975).

Le Conte's Sparrow is proving to be a rare, but regular, wintering species in southeastern Virginia (Kain 1987). Additional Maryland records are under review by the committee. The very elusive behavior of this poorly-known species (Lowther 1996) suggests it may be more frequent in Maryland than the few records would indicate.

Harris' Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula*

Ellicott City, HWRD, MD, January 23, 1965–March 1, 1965 (*EB; MD1996-030); Ellicott City, HWRD, MD, January 23, 1965 (+EB; MD1996-031); Greenbelt, PGEO, MD, February 17, 1967–March 7, 1967 (JH; MD1996-032); Greenbelt, PGEO, MD, January 6, 1968–March 8, 1968 (JH; MD1996-033); Greenbelt, PGEO, MD, November 19, 1968–March 1, 1969 (JH; MD1996-034); Hagerstown, WASH, MD, January 15, 1988 (*HBr; MD1996-037).

These are the first records of Harris' Sparrow in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The Ellicott City records refer to two individuals, one of which was collected. The three Greenbelt records were of the same banded individual returning to the same location for three consecutive winters.

Harris' Sparrow is a rare wintering species throughout the eastern United States (Norment and Shackleton 1993). In the past twenty years, Maryland records have been very few, following a rash of sightings in the 1960s.

Smith's Longspur *Calcarius pictus*

Assateague Island, WORC, MD, November 27, 1976–January 16, 1977 (*MHo, *RRo, et al.; MD1996-028).

This is the only record of Smith's Longspur in Maryland. Two individuals were present on the north end of Assateague Island, associating with a large (50+) flock of Lapland Longspurs (*C. lapponicus*). Records of Smith's Longspur in the eastern United States are very few. Identification of out-of-range longspurs should be done with caution, using references such as Byers et al. (1995), Rising (1996) and Dunn and Beadle (1998).

Chestnut-collared Longspur *Calcarius ornatus*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, August 20, 1906 (+ALu, FK; MD1997-363).

This is the first record of Chestnut-collared Longspur in Maryland accepted by the MD/DCRC. The bird was collected on a farm on the mainland opposite Ocean City (Kirkwood 1908). This species has an extensive pattern of vagrancy to the eastern U.S. (Hill and Gould 1997). Apparent contractions of this species' range and long-term population declines (Hill and Gould 1997) might reduce the likelihood of future occurrences in Maryland.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*

Ocean City, WORC, MD, August 31, 1963 (EA, et al.; MD1995-008); Pendennis Mount, ANAR, MD, December 26, 1981–January 21, 1982 (HrW, et al.; MD1995-009); Hollywood, STMA, MD, February 8, 1993–April 4, 1993 (*PC, et al.; MD1995-040); Elkton, CECL, MD, December 13, 1993–December 19, 1993 (*GGr, *RHa, et al.; MD1995-037); Berlin, WORC, MD, December 27, 1993–April 5, 1994 (*GJ, et al.; MD1995-038); Berlin, WORC, MD, January 19, 1995–February 14, 1995 (*MH0; MD1995-039).

The committee had previously accepted two records of Painted Bunting for Maryland. Except for the August record at Ocean City, these records were of male Painted Buntings at feeders (and documented with photographs). Painted Bunting occurrences seem to be increasing in Maryland and the mid-Atlantic states.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*

Big Savage Mountain, GARR, MD, February 10, 1973 (*RR0; MD1997-411); Cumberland, ALGY, MD, January 8, 1996 (JP; MD1997-379).

These are the first records of Pine Grosbeak accepted by the MD/DCRC. One of the rarest "winter finches" at our latitude, additional historical reports are under review by the committee, as this species was only recently added to the review list.

**IDENTIFICATION ACCEPTED,
NATURAL OCCURRENCE QUESTIONABLE**

Based on the information provided to the committee, the identification of the following records was judged to be correct. The committee felt, however, that their escape from captivity was the most likely explanation for their appearance in the area rather than a natural origin.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

St. Michaels, TLBT, MD, January 12, 1996–February 25, 1996 (LW, *SRi, JR, et al.; MD1996-038).

Although this bird was clearly a European Goldfinch, the committee felt the evidence suggests it was not of wild origin. This species is an inexpensive cage bird that is frequently released into the wild. There is no known pattern of vagrancy that would support this as a record of a true European vagrant, or even a descendant from the ill-fated New York colony of years ago. Nonetheless, it is important to document such reports, in case a pattern were ever to be established. The committee compliments the observers on the detailed descriptions and photographs. Smith and Smith (1993) present a good rationale for the need to continually document such exotic species.

REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

This list contains reports that were not accepted by the committee. In the vast majority of these cases, the reports were not accepted because the evidence provided did not convince all (or all but one) of the committee members that the identifications were conclusively established. The identification may well have been correct; in only a very few cases was it felt that an identification was incorrect.

When submitting reports, observers are encouraged to provide a complete description of the bird (or birds) in question. Reports limited to "important characteristics" (as discussed in the following section) make evaluation more difficult. Often features that are not in themselves diagnostic prove to be highly supportive of an identification.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) Ocean City, WORC, MD, January 4, 1997 (MD1997-471). **White-tailed Kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) College Park, PGEO, MD, September 4, 1992 (MD1995-016). **Gyr Falcon** (*Falco rusticolus*) Chestertown, KENT, MD, January 19, 1997 (MD1997-473). **Mew Gull** (*Larus canus*) Ocean City Inlet, WORC, MD, October 26, 1990 (MD1995-030); **Mew (Common) Gull** (*Larus canus canus*) Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, February 2, 1994–February 4, 1994 (MD1995-031); Conowingo Dam, HARF/CECL, MD, February 6, 1994 (MD1995-032). **Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*) Atlantic Ocean, WORC, MD, May 16, 1976 (MD1995-034); Ocean City—Fourth Street Flats, WORC, MD, July 2, 1991 (MD1993-005). **White-winged Tern** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) Assateague, WORC, MD, August 6, 1994 (MD1995-019); Point Lookout, STMA, MD, August 14, 1994 (MD1995-020). **Vermilion Flycatcher** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) Hollywood, STMA, MD, July 12, 1992 (MD1992-029). **Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) Blackwater NWR, DORC, MD, December 9, 1994 (MD1996-012). **Common Raven** (*Corvus corax*) Brighton Dam, HWRD, MD, December 24, 1978 (MD1994-005). **Cave Swallow** (*Petrochelidon fulva*) North Beach, CLVT, MD, May 20, 1996 (MD1996-026). **Sprague's Pipit** (*Anthus spragueii*) Sandy Point, ANAR, MD, April 4, 1969 (MD1996-046). **Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*) Annapolis, ANAR, MD, Nov. 22, 1970–Jan. 30, 1971 (MD1995-041). **Pine Grosbeak** (*Pinicola enucleator*) Back River Sewage Treatment Plant, BALT, MD, May 4, 1996 (MD1997-465).

Additional comments are provided for some of the “Not Accepted” reports listed above. These comments include some information on patterns of vagrancy as an indication of when these species might be expected to appear in the Maryland/DC area. Identification information is also provided for some species to emphasize the level of information that may be needed to adequately document their occurrence in the area and the references relevant to the review. However, this information is not meant to specifically criticize the materials submitted for any of the “Not Accepted” reports.

Pacific Loon: Winter loon identification can be challenging, especially given the sometimes less than ideal viewing conditions. Reports of Pacific Loon should carefully detail the pattern of the head and neck, bill shape, and mantle color. Excellent references such as Kaufman (1990), Harris et al. (1989), and Jonsson (1993) should be consulted prior to going afield. Maryland still has no accepted records of this species.

Gyr Falcon: Separation of large falcons is very difficult considering the possibility of escaped European species (i.e., Saker [*F. cherrug*]) or hybrids (Gantlett and Millington 1992). Falconers keep Gyrfalcons and other species in captivity, and they occasionally escape or are seen “wild” while being flown. The focus on providing large falcons through captive-breeding programs has resulted in many different combinations, of which field identification would prove to be quite a challenge. However, the relatively large number of Gyrfalcon records from adjacent states (e.g., 41 from Pennsylvania, Fingerhood 1984) suggests that this falcon is a likely candidate for vagrancy to Maryland. Another record is under review by the Committee.

Mew Gull: Reports of Mew Gulls from the Atlantic coast include individuals of the Common Gull (*Larus c. canus*), vagrants from Europe, and the Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchos*) which occurs in western North America. Claims of this species in Maryland should be sufficiently detailed to establish which form is involved, which may require very careful attention to the wing-tip pattern and other subtle characteristics. Grant (1986) remains the standard reference for identification information on these races. Lauro and Spencer (1980), Harris et al. (1989), Lewington et al. (1991), and Tove (1993) provide additional information.

The two reports at Conowingo were subsequent to an accepted record. Although these reports were not accepted, the observers are to be credited with providing reports to the committee. It is critical that subsequent sightings of rarities be equally well documented as the initial observation. It cannot be assumed that because the initial sighting may have been correct, that all subsequent claims of the species are as well. Such assumptions frequently present difficulties for the committee in determining the actual period of occurrence for a given record.

White-winged Tern: Although numerous well-documented records exist for Delaware and Virginia (Kain 1987), this species has been difficult to document in Maryland; there are no accepted records. The lack of coastal fresh-water impoundments (the preferred habitat in the other states) would appear to be the principal factor in Maryland's lack of records. Always found with the much more numerous Black Tern (*C. niger*), large concentrations of the latter species in coastal Maryland are ephemeral in nature.

Although the White-winged Tern is distinctive in breeding plumage, variations in lighting and viewing conditions can make identification difficult. Individuals molting into basic plumage or in basic plumage present an identification challenge. All reports of White-winged Terns in these plumages must include careful descriptions of the breast, upperwing, rump, and head. See Harris et al. (1989), Alstrom (1989), and Olsen and Larsson (1995) for information on the identification of the marsh terns.

Cave Swallow: In recent years, a number of records of Cave Swallow have accumulated along the eastern coast of the U.S. and Canada. Records exist for Nova Scotia, Ontario, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina (West 1995). The increase in records may be attributable to the expansion of this species' range, or perhaps more efficient and knowledgeable coverage by birders (West 1995). Hence, this species is a likely candidate for addition to the Maryland list.

Cave Swallows in the middle Atlantic States could be of West Indian origin (*P. f. fulva*), which normally occurs in the Greater Antilles and S. Florida, or the population of the southwestern United State and adjacent Mexico (*P. f. pallida*), or perhaps even one of the Middle or South American races (West 1995).

Cave Swallows are very similar to Cliff Swallows (*H. pyrrhonota*) in general appearance, and excellent documentation will be required to confirm this species in Maryland. Given the less than ideal viewing conditions often associated with fast-flying swallows, this may be difficult to obtain. Additionally, hybrids between Barn (*H. rustica*) and Cave Swallows have been reported, as well as mixed pairs with Cliff Swallows (West 1995), which would further complicate identification.

Sprague's Pipit: There are very few confirmed records of vagrant Sprague's Pipits from eastern North America. King (1981) describes its field identification in detail. This shy species has very specific habitat requirements, preferring upland fields with short but thick grassy cover. It would not be expected to occur in the more open wet habitats preferred by American Pipits (*Anthus rubescens*) or in a flock.

Bullock's Oriole: This species is a very rare but fairly regular vagrant to eastern North America (Bull 1964, Kain 1987, Veit and Petersen 1993). They are most likely to be discovered during late fall and winter, primarily as visitors to feeders.

The identification of vagrant Bullock's Orioles is complicated by variation exhibited by Baltimore Orioles (*I. galbula*); identification of females and young males requires caution (see Pyle 1997, Lee and Birch 1998a, 1998b). Detailed descriptions of the upperparts, wings, head pattern, and underpart coloration are important for claims of female or immature male Bullock's Orioles. Hybrids between these two species are regularly reported from the Great Plains (Sibley and Short 1964), and further complicate the field identification of extralimital individuals.

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