

2012 MINUTES OF THE MONTANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Date: 12 October 2012

Location: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office, Great Falls

Members present: Dan Casey (Chair), Chuck Carlson, Coburn Currier, Nate Kohler, Rose Leach, Harriet Marble, Jeff Marks (Secretary), Fritz Prellwitz, Mike Schwitters, Dan Sullivan

Members absent: John Carlson, Bob Martinka, Ted Nordhagen

Non-members present: Paul Hendricks (Montana Natural Heritage Program), Robin Wolcott (lead eBird reviewer for Montana)

Approval of 2011 Minutes: 10:25

Evaluation of records: We reviewed only 44 new reports in 2012 and accepted all but three of them. As has become standard practice, reports and photos were posted on our Yahoo site, and Committee members submitted votes to the Secretary multiple times during the year in advance of the annual meeting.

Highlights included acceptance of four records for the **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, the 3rd record for the **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, the 3rd and 4th records for the **Great-tailed Grackle**, and five records for the **Northern Cardinal**. The Official State List remains at 427 species, and it is noteworthy that 2012 was the 2nd year in a row that no new species was added to the State List.

Review List: We proposed via Yahoo poll that **Cackling Goose** be removed from the Review List. The motion carried 11-2 on 4 May 2012, and Cackling Goose was removed from the list. The **Northern Parula** is at 20 records and likely will be removed from the Review List after the next accepted record.

Old reports reconsidered: None.

Bylaws discussion: None.

e-Bird Discussion: We reviewed the status of the review cue, filter editing, the process for requesting details, and subspecies issues.

Jeff will be the first point of contact for eBird submittals of species on our review list and will contact the observer and BCC the committee simultaneously. Robin summarized a number of issues with filters and how they have approached them for the Madison-Gallatin area. It is important that MBRC members review their filters carefully and update them, particularly to remove highly unlikely species altogether (to focus e-Birders on the most likely species in their submittals). We also discussed how we can access the data, and whether each MBRC member should have access to the entire review queue. John Parker would like to be the editor for Park County, currently assigned to Dan Sullivan. We discussed subspecies, many of which are completely extraneous, misleading, or impossible to verify in the field, and agreed to delete from our standardized options all subspecies not specifically requested in the latest edition of MBD. Tasks related to eBird are as follows:

- Clarify why the Missoula filter is not coming up on the eBird menu – Dan C.
- Clarify why the “Save” button is obscured on the filter menu page – Dan C.
- Craft a standardized letter (a few sentences) to send to observers reporting subspecies (particularly the most obscure/unnecessary ones), asking them to use them only when the ID was based on features seen or heard in the field – Dan C.
- See about statewide access for all MBRC members – Dan C.
- Review and fine-tune filters for all areas – everyone, with guidance information from Dan C. and Robin.

Other discussion:

California Quail in the Bitterroot (update; status of other exotics/releases). We had general consensus (but did not vote) to continue excluding the California Quail from the state list because it has not met the requirement of 10 years of a self-sustaining population. This led to a discussion of how to handle this species, Northern Bobwhite, Chukar, and exotic game birds in eBird. Robin Wolcott has asked for clarification from Brian Sullivan, who replied that states have made those decisions independently. He generally recommended treating them as valid (as long as the ID is likely to be correct) in order to track the spread of populations. We need more discussion on how best to handle this. But whether we mark such records as valid or not, they will still be retrievable from eBird.

Membership: The Committee remains at the maximum allowable number of 13. Coburn wishes to remain on the Committee despite leaving the Montana Natural Heritage Program. Dan C. will contact Heritage to see whether Coburn can continue to add accepted records of rare birds to the Tracker database even if he is no longer a Heritage employee. If the answer is ‘no,’ we will consider adding another member of the Heritage Program to the Committee. **Dan Casey would like to step down as Chair at the close of next year’s meeting.**

Election of Chair and Secretary: No elections were scheduled this year.

Action items: Jeff will contact the Batchelders to obtain measurements for the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (2012-024, 025), talk with Ted Nordhagen about the Scarlet Tanager report to clear up the ambiguous wording (2012-027), look for the second observer of the Snowy Owl (2012-041), update contact information for all Committee members, and contact all observers to tell them the results of the voting on their respective reports. **Dan C.** will contact Montana Natural Heritage Program to request that Coburn be allowed to continue to enter records into Tracker.

Coburn will check the scanned notes of Denver Holt to determine whether they mention a Yellow-throated Warbler record that made it into Tracker without a rare bird report. If so, we need to request a written report from Holt.

Adjournment: 13:45

Our next meeting is scheduled for Great Falls on 11 October 2013

Submitted by: Jeff Marks, Secretary, 15 October 2012