

2014 MINUTES OF THE MONTANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Date: 26 September 2014

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

Members present: Rose Leach (Chair), Chuck Carlson, Dan Casey, Coburn Currier, Nate Kohler, Harriet Marble, Ted Nordhagen, Forrest Rowland, Dan Sullivan, John Carlson, Bob Martinka

Members absent: Jeff Marks (Secretary), Fritz Prellwitz

Non-members present: none

Approval of 2013 Minutes: 10:00

Action Items from 2013:

Harris's Hawk. Fritz will compile information on falconry as it relates to extralimital records of this species.

Baikal Teal. John provided a link for the recently accepted record of a Baikal Teak in Arizona: http://www.sandiegobirding.com/?page_id=262.

Rose and Bob M attended the Heritage Program's November 2013 meeting; Rose will continue to discuss data vetting issues with Heritage.

Coburn entered our 2013 information into Tracker. Rose will request the 2014 information be entered.

Evaluation of records: Reports and photos were posted on our Yahoo site, and Committee members submitted votes via e-mail in advance of the annual meeting. We reviewed 38 reports that included 32 species (5 species had multiple reports) in 2014, and accepted all but 6 of them. Highlights included the addition of **Western Gull** to the State List. One constant thread during discussion was the need to make sure that observers work on eliminating other species with their write-ups, and the need to be more careful in their descriptions, so that the written descriptions do not conflict with the accompanying photos. We discussed the possibility of an exclusion area at **Bowdoin** for **Sedge Wren**. Discussed the need to identify the subspecies for the recent **Curve-billed Thrasher** record from Ennis (2014-032). Photos this time were not conclusive. Discussed the need to look for **Gray Flycatchers** in the Bear Canyon area south of the Pryor Mountains, and wished the report for there had included definitive photos. Discussed the mechanism for not voting (**NV**) for members not comfortable making a decision on a particular record. We have this ability now, when members submit their own records. We discussed the need (or not) to address this in bylaws. The risk is to put off making hard decisions. No action on this item.

Exotics: When handling records of California Quail and Chukar outside of established areas (i.e., Bitterroot Valley for quail and Pryor Mountains for Chukar), validate them but with comments that clarify their status as not established. Keep an eye on Chukar on future eBird or other records, to consider if it is becoming established elsewhere. Exotics not established anywhere in the state should still be invalidated.

Supplemental List: no change. Discussed **Bell's Vireo**, which has **multiple single-observer records** of the species, which is on the Supplemental List. *Birds of Montana* included this species. But true to our bylaws, single-observer sight records have inherent uncertainty, and even when there are multiple single-observer records, the species should stay on the Supplemental List until it meets our criteria. It was fine to include in the book, no conflict really.

Review List: We expanded the exception area for **Blue-headed Vireo** to include LL 9–12 and 21–24 (8 blocks). We discussed removing **Northern Parula** and **Sagebrush Sparrow** from the Review List, based on information from Coburn on the number of records for these species (near or over 20). We decided Jeff should tell us how he evaluated the records (as a result of his research for the book) before deciding on removal. This is moved to an action item, below. We again note that records for rare species (i.e., no longer on the review list) still could be reviewed in the eBird data base, and reviewers would have the opportunity to gather relevant information related to how the identification was made at that time.

Old reports reconsidered: None.

Bylaws discussion: None.

eBird Discussion: Dan Sullivan volunteered to help with Hot Spot editing, and he will check with John Carlson and with Brian Sullivan. Also, he will clarify with John Parker and Brian Sullivan regarding review duties for Park County. Overall review seems to be going well, although the queue seems to stay near 400.

Membership: Remains full with 13 members. We remain concerned with the average age of members and will strive to add younger people to the Committee when openings for new members become available. No terms expired, so no elections were needed. **Election of Chair and Secretary:** Jeff's 2-year term will expire at the end of 2015.

Action items:

Rose will follow up with observers for information on the 2nd Black-legged Kittiwake at Ennis Lake.

Rose will contact Brian Sullivan about the appropriateness of entering our historical information into eBird, with a group name for the observer. We would likely wait until they migrated photos from the flickr site (*Note:* Brian thought entering our records was a great idea.)

Each of us will be sure to contact fellow eBird reviewers if we make changes to the lists or filters of others.

Dan will send the **spreadsheet of all records reviewed by the committee** since it was formed (1991-2011), as a reference for all committee members. It may have a few glitches, but should be complete for the most part. (*Note:* this has been completed.)

Rose revised our 2014 voting spreadsheet to send to Jeff and to Heritage. (*Note:* our data were entered by late 2014 via Scott Blum at Heritage).

Jeff will send information on **Northern Parula** and **Sagebrush Sparrow**, and we will evaluate their removal from the Review List via email. (*Note:* this is now in progress.)

Forrest will look into putting all of our scanned files on DropBox (although it appears the Yahoo Group has more room now).

Adjourned: 14:45

Our next meeting will be at Great Falls on 25 September 2015

Submitted by: Rose Leach, 24 January 2015