

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE FOR 2007

The New York State Avian Records Committee (hereafter “NYSARC” or the “Committee”) reviewed 154 reports from 2007, involving 79 separate sightings, and an additional two reports from previous years. Reports were received from all over the state, with 31 of the 62 counties represented. The number of reports accompanied by photographs remains high. *The Committee wishes to remind readers that reports submitted to eBird, listserves, local bird clubs, rare bird alerts (RBAs) and Kingbird Regional Editors are not necessarily forwarded to NYSARC, and doing so remains the responsibility of the observer.* The growing use of the internet and mobile phones has had a very positive impact on the timely dissemination of rare bird sightings and has made it easier for birders to locate birds found by others. The Committee has always held that receipt of multiple independent reports provides a much fuller documentation of the sighting and can in some cases increase the likelihood of acceptance. We therefore urge ALL observers, not just the finder, to submit written reports and/or photographs. The names of the 83 contributors who submitted materials (written reports, photographs and sketches) are listed alongside accepted reports and again at the end of this document. Where possible, the name(s) of the original finder(s) is (are) included in the narratives. Production of this Annual Report is a team effort involving a large number of people. In addition to the contributors mentioned above, several *Kingbird* Regional Editors have made valued efforts in cajoling reluctant observers into preparing and submitting documentation. Ian Richards and Andy Kratter provided helpful information on vagrancy of Cassin’s Kingbird. On behalf of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA), we thank this army of willing volunteers for their help in documenting the rare birds of New York State (NYS).

HOW TO SUBMIT REPORTS

Advice on how to prepare and submit a report is provided on the NYSARC pages within the NYSOA web site:

<http://nybirds.org/NYSARC/NYSARCHome.htm>

Here, a list of species requested for review by NYSARC (The Review List) is provided along with illustrated copies of previous annual reports. The Committee is very grateful to Carena Pooth (NYSOA President and website administrator) for updating and continuously improving the NYSARC web site. An online reporting form allows observers to compose a written report and attach up to five digital image files. Documentation (written reports and photographs) and any other correspondence for the Committee can also be sent via email or regular mail to:

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COMMITTEE NEWS

Voting on the 2007 reports was finalized at the Committee's Annual Meeting held on Saturday, 19 Sep 2009 at the Greene County Building in Coxsackie, NY. Other topics of discussion included consideration of how the growth of the internet as the primary medium for disseminating bird-related news is likely to influence the submission of documentation (written descriptions, photographs, etc.) to ornithological journals and bird record committees. Whilst timely release of information is highly desirable, there are concerns that much of this information is not vetted and is transient in nature, meaning that it will not necessarily be available for future scrutiny. The selection of voting members was also discussed at length. The Committee is in favor of maintaining good representation from across the state and in promoting member diversity. At the same time, it recognizes the value of continuity and experience as a means to ensure an efficient and fair review process. Lastly, the impact of the new accelerated review process for potential first state records was assessed. This has been successful in terms of reducing the delay in announcing additions to the New York State Checklist but at the same time raises two important issues. First, there is often a lag between a sighting and the submission of reports by key observers that may potentially compromise the review, and second, the selection of reports to go forward in this way raises the delicate issue of pre-review, which goes against the current practice of independent first round voting (i.e. without discussion between Committee members). As has been pointed out before, some reports are very well documented and involve species that are strong candidates for natural vagrancy. Others may be more likely escapes (e.g. exotic waterfowl, commonly kept cage birds) or simply erroneous identifications by inexperienced observers. Criteria were developed to minimize the number of reports that would require accelerated review. Hopefully this will be less of an issue as the lag between when a sighting occurs and the publication of the relevant Annual Report (ideally one-two years) becomes shorter. Observers can play an essential role in making the process work by submitting materials within two months of a sighting.

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of the 2007 Annual Report include four new additions to the New York State Checklist; a **Pink-footed Goose** (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) and a **Cassin's Kingbird** (*Tyrannus vociferans*) from Montauk, Suffolk Co., a **Western Reef Heron** (*Egretta gularis*) from Coney Island Creek in Brooklyn, Kings Co., and a **Scott's Oriole** (*Icterus parisorum*) that wintered in Union Square, Manhattan, New York Co. With these four additions, the list now stands at 474 species. Without a doubt 2007 was an exceptional year, as the report also

includes second state records of **Anna's Hummingbird** (*Calypte anna*) from Liberty, Sullivan Co., and **Smith's Longspur** (*Calcarius pictus*), a well studied individual found at Jones Beach, Nassau Co. Lastly, the late fall was notable for the influx of **Ash-throated Flycatchers** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), with multiple birds present.

2007 Reports Accepted

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

2007-53-A/E One, Deep Hollow Ranch, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 18, 19, 22, 24 Nov and 27 Dec (Ed Coyle, Brendan Fogarty, Shaibal S. Mitra, Dominic Sherony, Shawn Billerman; ph E. Coyle, B. Fogarty, S. Mitra, Gary Chapin, S. Billerman)

This handsome European goose was discovered on 18 Nov by Shai Mitra and Patricia Lindsay on the short-grass pasture of the historic Deep Hollow Dude Ranch and was reported almost daily until 20 Feb 2008. Mitra and Lindsay found the Pink-footed while looking for the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*, NYSARC 2007-52-A/D) that had been present on the same pastures for more than two weeks. As a continent-wide rarity, the Pink-footed Goose attracted hordes of birders from all over the U.S. and Canada. The discovery of two Ash-throated Flycatchers (*Myiarchus cinerascens*, NYSARC 2007-62-A and 2007-78-A), a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*, NYSARC 2007-61-A), several Western Kingbirds (*Tyrannus verticalis*), and other scarce landbirds in the same general area further amplified the excitement for local and visiting birders alike. For a full account of this extraordinary season in and around Montauk see the collection of essays compiled by Patricia Lindsay in the March 2008 issue of *The Kingbird* (KB 58(1): 2-12). Photos by Shai Mitra and Lloyd Spitalnik were published in *North Am. Birds* 62(1): 46 and *The Kingbird* 58(1): 47 & 50.

After some discussion at its Annual Meeting, the Committee voted unanimously to accept this as the first state record. The identification is firmly established and discussion centered on the question of origin. It was agreed that sufficient evidence has accumulated to conclude that genuine vagrants are reaching North America and are doing so with increasing frequency. This correlates with a steady growth in the population that breeds in Iceland and to a lesser extent in eastern Greenland, due to sustained conservation efforts on the wintering grounds in Britain and Ireland and increasing use of lowland nesting areas (Mitchell and Hearn 2004). Although the Greenland population is small compared to those nesting in Iceland and Svalbard, it is supplemented in late summer by Icelandic birds that migrate across the Denmark Strait to molt (Taylor 1953).

As already mentioned, there has been a steady increase in the number of reports from other U.S. states and Canadian provinces. There are records from Newfoundland (one in 1980, max. four in 1995), Nova Scotia (three in 2005), Prince Edward Island (three in 2004/05), Quebec (singles in 1988, 1996, 2004, 2005 and 2007), Vermont (one in 1999), Connecticut (one in 1998, two in 2006), Rhode Island (two in Jan 2007), Massachusetts (one in 1924, one in

1999, two in 2008/09), Delaware (one in 1953) and Pennsylvania (one in 1999). Two birds in Washington State (Nov 2003-Jan 2004) are the only documented examples west of Pennsylvania, consistent with the Western Palearctic range of the species. The fact that the North American reports are concentrated in the northeast of the continent and sometimes involve multiple individuals argues in favor of natural vagrancy.

The location of Deep Hollow was also a factor in the decision. First, there is a clear historical precedent, based on band recovery and sightings of marked birds, for the occurrence of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) from Greenland wintering on eastern Long Island. Second, it was noted that Deep Hollow is situated at the very eastern tip of the South Fork and offers one of the first suitable grazing areas for a migrant goose traveling down the coastline. A local flock of resident Canada Geese also may help to draw in passing birds in the same way that wildfowlers use live or artificial decoys to attract their quarry. In addition to the Barnacle and Pink-footed, the Deep Hollow flock was joined a few days later by a first-basic Atlantic Brant (*Branta bernicla*), followed by an adult Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*).

As noted by Lindsay and Mitra (2008), there have actually been two prior occurrences of Pink-footed Goose in Suffolk Co.; the first was a bird that spent the winter of 1971-72 on the Timber Point Golf Course in Great River (see Davis and Morgan 1972), followed by another at the Spring Lake Golf Course and nearby ponds in Middle Island from 16 Jan 1991 to the end of the month (NYSARC 1991-13-A, see Schiff and Wollin 1991). The 1971 bird pre-dated the formation of NYSARC and was not submitted retrospectively. The 1991 bird was submitted and the identification accepted, but the Committee felt that there was insufficient precedent to conclude that this was a definite wild vagrant and thus ruled the origin as 'uncertain.' The 2007 Pink-footed showed no signs of captivity such as bands or clipped toes, and exhaustive inquiries by Dominic Sherony have confirmed that the species is only very rarely kept in waterfowl collections, thereby greatly reducing the specter of an escape (Sherony 2008).

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2007-19-A/C One, Walker Lake Ontario Road, Sweden, **Monroe**, 22 Apr (Sharon Skelly, Jeanne Skelly, Dominic Sherony; ph D. Sherony)

2007-52-A/D One, Deep Hollow Ranch, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 4 Nov-9 Mar 2008 (Angus Wilson, Brent Bomkamp, Shaibal S. Mitra, Brendan Fogarty; ph A. Wilson, S. Mitra, B. Fogarty)

The Monroe County Barnacle Goose was found by Gary Chapin with a flock of Canada Geese (*B. canadensis*) on the edge of a partially flooded farm field on Walker Lake Ontario Road, just south of the Lake Ontario shore. This very wary bird remained quite a distance from the roadway, allowing for some digiscoped photographs. It was seen by many but present on only one day, as these geese were moving north during spring migration.

The Deep Hollow Barnacle Goose was discovered by Vicki Bustamante on 30 Oct and remained until 9 Mar 2008. We received four reports of this bird, all well written, with three accompanied by excellent photographs. Photos by Shai Mitra were published in *The Kingbird* 58(1): 47 & 50. Since the wintering *The Kingbird* 2009 December; 59 (4)

grounds for Barnacle Geese are near coastal areas, it is not surprising that we have had them wintering on Long Island repeatedly in the past few years.

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*)

2007-4-A One, Iroquois NWM, **Genesee**, 18 Jan (William W. Watson)

Seen only in flight overhead with a large flock of Canada Geese (*B. canadensis*), the acceptance of this record may have encountered more reticence on the part of the Committee had it occurred a few years earlier. The identification was based upon the very small size, short neck, and Canada Goose-like plumage. Although the possibility of Lesser Canada Goose (*B. c. parvipes*) or a Canada-Cackling Goose hybrid may not be safely ruled out in such a view, these possibilities are considered much less likely nowadays. Indeed, Cackling Goose reports have increased to the point where numerous records every spring and fall are now the norm, especially in Western New York, where this sighting occurred. As a result of all these records, Cackling Goose has been taken off the Review List since this sighting.

'Eurasian' Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*)

2007-65-A One, Norman Levy Preserve, Merrick, **Nassau**, 29 Dec (Seth Ausubel)

The major concern for the Committee with 'Eurasian' Green-winged Teal is the high frequency of hybrids between the U.S. and Eurasian subspecies. Seth Ausubel was able to study this adult male at relatively close range and under good lighting conditions. To his credit, he noted the clear lack of a vertical stripe on the side and the presence of a horizontal white stripe formed by the greater secondary coverts when the wings are folded. These features were consistent on both sides of the bird and are the most defining characteristics of this race.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

2007-16-A/B One, Ausable Point SP, Town of Peru, **Clinton**, 23-25 Mar (William E. Krueger, Charles W. Mitchell)

This well described drake Tufted Duck was found on Lake Champlain in a flock of Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*) along with other ducks and seen over several days. For unknown reasons, Tufted Ducks have become increasingly scarce statewide, with the regularity of sightings falling off notably in recent years.

Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

2007-48-A/B One, Grevelly Point, Cumberland Head, **Clinton**, 6 Nov (William E. Krueger, Charles W. Mitchell)

2007-67-A One, Sheldrake Point, Cayuga Lake, **Seneca**, 8 Nov (David M. Nutter)

The basic-plumaged Pacific Loon on Cayuga Lake was first found by David Nutter and was followed by several reports of Pacific Loons from elsewhere on the same lake, as far down as Myers Point in Tompkins County. Although the chinstrap was not seen unequivocally, there was nothing in the description to suggest Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*). Interestingly, a well-documented Pacific Loon was observed in the same general area in the previous winter (NYSARC 2006-4-A/D) and is suggestive of a returning individual. The Lake Champlain bird was studied by telescope for 20 minutes.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

2007-74-A One, Rigney Bluff, Dewey Avenue, Rochester, **Monroe**, 23 Dec (Jeanne Skelly; ph J. Skelly)

A Western Grebe was found on Lake Ontario by Greg Lawrence and seen by several observers. The description of the head and eye pattern eliminated the possibility of Clark's Grebe (*A. clarkii*), and Jeanne Skelly's photograph confirmed the identification. Although this species has been found in the state in all seasons, the majority of records come from winter. Prior to the late nineties it was rarely reported, but since 2002 it has been recorded annually in the state.

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

2007-1-A One, Jones Beach State Park, **Nassau**, 2 Jan (Ed Coyle; ph E. Coyle)

This Brown Pelican was photographed by Ed Coyle as it flew over the boat basin at the western end of Jones Beach. During the summer Brown Pelicans are regular along the Atlantic coast as far north as Island Beach, New Jersey, and occasionally lone individuals or groups wander up to Long Island, although the numbers vary from year to year. Brown Pelican is no longer considered a review species for downstate NY, but this mid-winter date is quite unusual, although not without precedent.

Western Reef-Heron (*Egretta gularis*)

2007-34-A/K One, Coney Island Creek, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 9 Jul-14 Aug (Brendan Fogarty, Jeanne Skelly, Richard Guthrie, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Richard Fleming, John J. Collins, Ed Coyle, Dominic Sherony, John Gluth, Doug Gochfeld, Angus Wilson; ph B. Fogarty, J. Collins, E. Coyle, D. Sherony, J. Gluth, D. Gochfeld, A. Wilson)

This dark-morph adult Western Reef-Heron was discovered by Alex Wilson on 8 July during a routine visit to Dreier-Offerman Park, a modest area of former landfill on the north bank of Coney Island Creek (see Wilson 2007 for a full account). This represents the first record for NYS. The heron favored a shallow bay that drained at low tide but was also spotted roosting or fishing from the decaying remains of former piers and abandoned barges in the main channel of the creek itself. The identification was established by a number of features including the dark blue plumage, white throat, black legs with yellow feet, two long head plumes, and hefty dagger-like bill. There were ample opportunities to compare the reef-heron to its smaller cousin the Snowy Egret (*E. thula*). During the subsequent month, the reef-heron was seen by many people from the region and well beyond. Constant updates were posted on the internet, which helped those who had to try multiple times to finally see this exciting bird for themselves. Its appearance in Brooklyn was presaged by a single observer report of a Western Reef-Heron on the shoreline at South Amboy, Middlesex, New Jersey, on 10 Jun 2007, and subsequent reports from the south shore of Staten Island bolster the idea that these sightings involve a single bird using suitable foraging habitat on both sides of the Outer New York Harbor. A color photograph by Joel Horman was published in *The Kingbird* 57(4): 321.

Western Reef-Herons are native to Africa, the Middle East and India. Of the two or three recognized subspecies, the Brooklyn bird clearly belonged to the *The Kingbird* 2009 December; 59 (4)

nominate form *E. g. gularis*, which is found in West Africa. The pattern of records from the Western Hemisphere is consistent with natural vagrancy, with a cluster of records from the eastern Caribbean and Atlantic coast of the United States and Canada (Cardillo *et al.* 1983, Murphy and Nanan 1987, Smith and Hutt 1984, Norton 1985a, 1985b, Mlodinow *et al.* 2004, Paice 2006). In chronological order these prior records are as follows: Massachusetts (Nantucket Island, 26 Apr-13 Sep 1983), St. Lucia (Vieux Fort, 18 Feb 1984 and 31 Jan 1985), Barbados (two together, Feb-Mar 1984, Graeme Hall Swamp, 29 Jun-18 Jul 1985), Trinidad & Tobago (Nariva Swamp, 22 Jan 1986), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Mustique Island, 1 Feb 2004), Newfoundland (Stephenville Crossing, summer until early Sep 2005), Nova Scotia (Glace Bay, Cape Breton, 26 Jun-2 Aug 2006), New Hampshire/Maine border (Rye Harbor, NH, early Aug 2006, Kittery, ME, 18 Aug 2006 and New Castle, NH, 19-30 Aug 2006). One scenario is that occasionally one or more Western Reef-Herons successfully cross the Atlantic from West Africa to the islands of the Caribbean region. Some birds may subsequently move northwards along the Atlantic coast of North America in the spring or early summer, perhaps returning to the Caribbean in the late fall. In support of this idea, a remarkable list of Afro-Palaearctic species has now been recorded in the eastern Caribbean, and it is presumed that the persistent easterly trade winds facilitate their crossing (Kenefick and Hayes 2006). Interestingly, several of these species, including Western Reef-Heron, are not considered traditional long-distance migrants.

It is unclear whether the NY/NJ bird is the same individual seen elsewhere on the east coast in previous summers. Certainly there are insufficient differences in the plumages to rule this possibility out. Several photos submitted to the Committee, as well as others posted on the web, clearly show that the right hallux (hind toe) of the Brooklyn bird was missing. Scrutiny of photographs of the 2006 bird from Maine and New Hampshire indicated that both toes were present. It is conceivable that the reef-heron lost the toe in the interim or, perhaps, the sightings involve different individuals. Regardless, this distinctive and permanent injury may reveal the reef-heron's whereabouts in future years. At the time of writing, there have been no additional records from the U.S. or Canada.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

2007-26-A One, Cayuga Pool, Iroquois NWR, **Genesee**, 28 May (William W. Watson)

2007-27-A One, Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve, Town of Clifton Park, **Saratoga**, 2-3 Jun (John Hershey; ph J. Hershey)

We received two reports of Tricolored Heron, both seen about the same time from opposite sides of the state. The first bird was found late in the day near Cayuga Pool but seen at close range by a number of observers and was well described and compared to the ever present Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*). The second bird in Clifton Park, which is on Rt. 187 north of Albany, was also well described and digiscopeed by John Hershey. This species is known to breed on Long Island, so finding one in Clifton Park, Saratoga County, is unusual but not surprising.

White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

2007-29-A One, Jones Beach State Park, **Nassau** Co., 29 Apr (Thomas W. Burke; ph Gail Benson)

This alternate-plumaged adult White-faced Ibis was discovered feeding alongside seven Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*) in a grassy vernal pool on the side of a relatively busy park road. A number of other birders were able to view it during a period of an hour or so before all the ibis were flushed by a helicopter landing in a nearby parking field. The White-faced Ibis was never relocated. In addition to the pink facial skin, white feathers bordering the face, red eye and reddish legs, the written description noted the slightly larger size and subtly different coloration of the plumage compared to the Glossies. Interestingly, this same pool hosted a White-faced Ibis on 27 May 2000 (NYSARC 2000-77-A).

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

2007-79-A One, Hogan Point Road, Hilton, **Monroe**, 4 Aug (Dan Niven; sketch D. Niven)

Whilst waiting to capture and band migrant hawks from the Hogan Point blind, Niven spotted the kite drifting from west to east. It was buzzed by an Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), but the kite easily kept clear and soared onwards. Niven telephoned several birders further along the lake, hoping that they might catch up with it, but no additional sightings were forthcoming. Salient details were sketched on the back of an envelope, providing a wonderful memento of this stunning raptor.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2007-2-A One, Deposit, **Delaware**, 14 Jan (Thomas Salo; ph T. Salo)

This adult, gray-phase Gyr Falcon was watched and photographed as it preened in a tree and on a pole for about 30 minutes before flying after a Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) feeding in a freshly manured field. This is an area of open farm fields bordering the Delaware River, and the farm activity had attracted numerous ducks, geese and Rock Pigeons (*Columba livia*).

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)

2007-24-A One, Tonawanda WMA, **Niagara**, 5 May (William W. Watson)

A group of Buffalo birders found this Marbled Godwit feeding in shallow water and on exposed mud flats with 165 Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) in one of the impoundments at Tonawanda WMA. The detailed description of the size, overall color, and bill shape and color left no doubts about the identification. This species is reported annually away from the coastal areas, but most records are from the fall. It is most likely that a spring record in upstate NYS represents a bird from the James Bay population.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

2007-33-A/B One, Cupogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, **Suffolk**, 30 Jun-1 Jul (Shaibal S. Mitra, John Gluth; ph S. Mitra, J. Gluth)

2007-36-A/D One, East Pond, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, **Queens**, 21-27 Jul (Angus Wilson, Ed Coyle, Shaibal S. Mitra, Doug Gochfeld; ph A. Wilson, E. Coyle, S. Mitra,

D. Gochfeld)

After well over a decade's absence of accommodating Curlew Sandpipers in the coastal NY region, the string was broken when Shai Mitra and Patricia Lindsay found a breeding-plumaged adult that remained on the flats at Cupsogue CP for two days. Remarkably, Lindsay also found a second alternate-plumaged adult three weeks later, this time on the East Pond at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge on western Long Island. This bird remained for a week, allowing excellent views by many. The length and curvature of the bill suggested a different bird from that seen at Cupsogue. Color photos by Seth Ausubel and Angus Wilson showing both birds were published in *The Kingbird* 57(4): 323.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

2007-70-A One, Sky High Sod Farm, Town of Sullivan, **Madison**, 25 Aug 2007 (Bill Purcell)

This Old-World sandpiper has become less frequent in the past decade or so, for unknown reasons. Following about 40 records in *The Kingbird* between 1975 and 1980 (Levine 1998), there has only been a handful in recent years. Bill Purcell discovered this bird on a sod farm and identified it as a female (Reeve) based on the body plumage, leg length, and size. His analysis of the field marks included comparisons to more expected similar shorebirds, and size was judged using nearby Killdeers (*Charadrius vociferus*).

Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*)

2007-3-A/B One, Irondequoit Bay Outlet, Rochester, **Monroe**, 1 Jan (Richard S. Ashworth, Ferne Merrill; sketch R. Ashworth)

2007-12-A/C One, Piermont Pier; Piermont, **Rockland**, 25-26 Feb (Alan W. Wells, Kenneth M. McDermott, Robert Overbeck; ph A. Wells, R. Overbeck)

The occurrences of these two Ivory Gulls could hardly have been more different. The subadult at the outlet of Irondequoit Bay on Lake Ontario was seen under difficult circumstances by some, but not all, members of a field trip before taking flight and vanishing. By comparison, the Piermont bird was an immaculate adult and gave stunning views for those birders able to get to the site in time before it too vanished. Observers of the Irondequoit bird noted the rounded head, plump breast and short stature that initially suggested a pigeon, but other features, especially its appearance in flight, revealed it to be a small gull. The two descriptions and a sketch also indicated the dark legs and a blackish patch at the base of the bill. The one important feature that was not noted, however, was the presence of any black spotting on the wing coverts or tail, but, after reviewing reference photos, the Committee concluded that these can be quite reduced in some birds and might not be apparent when viewed at a distance.

The Piermont Pier projects into the lower reach of the Hudson River and gained fame during the winter for hosting a Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) that roosted on some pilings just yards from the walkway, offering wonderful photographic opportunities. After nightfall, the owl would venture out over the river in search of prey, notably Ruddy Ducks (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), which it would bring back and consume. It was the discarded heads and feet of these

ducks that seemed to have attracted the Ivory Gull, first identified on 25 Feb by Drew Ciganek, although non-birders indicated that it might have been present two days earlier. A report was submitted on Drew's behalf by Alan Wells, who also observed and photographed the bird. Wells indicated that 20-30 birders were present that first afternoon. Just before dusk the gull flew north towards the center of the ice filled river. Word spread overnight and many birders were on site early the next morning. Fortunately the Ivory Gull reappeared near the Snowy Owl and then worked its way along the north side of the pier. Ken McDermott suggested that more than 70 birders were present on and off during the day, not bad for a snowy Monday. Again the gull headed out into the river in the afternoon but sadly did not return the next day, presumably because the ice flow jammed along the north side of the pier had also disappeared due to improving weather conditions. Color photos by Sean Sime and Lloyd Spitalnik were published in *The Kingbird* 57(2): 145.

'Common' Mew Gull (*Larus canus canus*)

2007-77-A/B One, Marine Park and Mill Basin, Brooklyn, **Kings**, 8-9 Apr (Doug Gochfeld, Angus Wilson; ph D. Gochfeld, A. Wilson)

This late second-cycle Mew Gull of the nominate European subspecies was found by Angus Wilson as it perched on wooden pilings at the head of Gerristen Creek, a tidal extension of Jamaica Bay. After allowing careful study, the gull disappeared but was later relocated a short distance away, bathing in a rainwater pool on a vacant lot behind a department store. It then flew to the West Mill Basin, another tidal channel, where it roosted on a floating pier and was viewed by a number of Metro area birders able to escape their Easter Sunday duties. Together with a number of Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*) and a lone Laughing Gull (*L. atricilla*), the Mew Gull was enticed across the channel with bread, giving superb flight views. The following morning it was re-sighted by several people on Gerristen Creek and the adjacent playing fields. The identification was based on a full suite of characters including the slightly smaller size compared to Ring-billed Gull, narrower bill with a blue-green base, bluish legs, more sharply defined white tertial tips ('crescents') visible when at rest, unmarked tail, and large mirror on P10. Color photos by Angus Wilson and Sean Sime were published in *The Kingbird* 57(3): 239.

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

2007-66-A, One Lake Edwards, Perinton, **Monroe**, 19 Dec (Dominic Sherony; ph D. Sherony)

2007-76-A, One, Lock No. 6, Oswego River, **Oswego**, 27-28 Dec (Matthew A. Young; ph Kevin McGann)

Because of its proximity to the High Acres landfill, Lake Edwards is often a productive spot for gull watching and hosts 10-20,000 gulls daily. This first cycle gull was photographed as it roosted on the snow covered ice with Herring (*L. argentatus*) and Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*) Gulls. Another first cycle bird was photographed on the Oswego River. It was discovered by Matt Young, Bernie Carr and Kevin McGann during the Christmas Bird Count. Numerous 'Kumlien's' Iceland Gulls (*L. glaucooides kumlieni*), including eight first cycle

birds, were present for direct comparison.

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)

2007-14-A/D One, Sullivan County Landfill, Monticello, **Sullivan**, 24 Jan sporadically to 21 Mar and off Route 299, New Paltz, **Ulster**, 4 Mar (Renee Davis, William W. Watson, James Pawlicki, John H. Haas; ph R. Davis, J. Pawlicki, J. Haas)

This adult Slaty-backed Gull was discovered by landfill-maven John Haas on 24 Jan, and he was able to call a few local birders in time to see it before it took to the sky and disappeared. The gull was not seen again until 10 Feb, after which it made regular appearances until 24 Feb, allowing a number of observers to view it, most often when it came off the dump to loaf and bathe in melt water that had collected on the roofs and plowed parking lot of the Apollo Plaza shopping mall. The Committee considered whether the New Paltz bird (report A) involved a different individual from the Monticello bird. The former was found by Renee Davis and Marge Gorton feeding in a corn field off Route 229 with an assemblage of other gulls. Davis's photos clearly show an adult Slaty-backed Gull that closely resembles the Monticello bird, which Davis had also seen. Although the two sites are about 18 miles apart, it is clear that gulls using the landfill range widely and may even spend the night on the Hudson River. Furthermore, a number of observers were unrewardingly staked out at Monticello during the time the New Paltz bird was seen.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

2007-28-A One, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, Westhampton Dunes, **Suffolk**, 10 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2007-30-A One, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, Westhampton Dunes, **Suffolk**, 16 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

2007-31-A One, Cupsogue County Park, near Moriches Inlet, Westhampton Dunes, **Suffolk**, 16 Jun (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

Once again, careful study of terns roosting on sand flats at the Moriches Inlet revealed a handful of Arctic Terns mixed in with the more regularly encountered species. Careful appraisal of plumage details in the field and from photographs established that different individuals were being observed on successive visits, including two distinctly separate first summer birds on 16 Jun. Although this break in the barrier beach has emerged as the top spot for the species in the state, this might in part reflect greater ease of access compared to other tern roosting sites and more intense scrutiny by Mitra and others. For a full account of this fascinating phenomena, see Mitra 2009. Even though the regular occurrence of non-breeding Arctic Terns during the summer is now firmly established, field identification remains a challenge and photo-documentation is especially important. A color photo of the 10 Jun first-summer bird taken by Shai Mitra was published in *The Kingbird* 57(4): 324.

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

2007-35-A One, Breezy Point, **Queens**, 15 Jul (Alexander Hellquist; ph A. Hellquist)

This Sandwich Tern was photographed as it flew along the beach, and the observer noted that the outer primaries were in molt, suggesting a non-breeding

bird. There is a large Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) colony in the dunes at Breezy Point, and this may attract wandering non-breeders of other less common species. In late Aug 2005, two Sandwich Terns were noted on this same stretch of beach (NYSARC 2005-46-A).

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

2007-43-A One, Derby Hill, Town of Mexico, **Oswego**, 12 Sep (Bill Purcell; ph Doug Linstruth)

This Long-tailed Jaeger was studied as it flew out of the SE corner of Mexico Bay towards the observers and parallel to the shoreline. It was viewed from Derby Hill, overlooking the lake, and the bird passed below the observers as close as 80 yards. A series of photos by Doug Linstruth shows all the key field marks of this species. One of these photos was published in *North Am. Birds* 62(1): 46. This is apparently the first Long-tailed Jaeger ever photographed over Lake Ontario in New York and the second record accepted by NYSARC from that area. Most sightings are usually not reported.

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

2007-38-A/C One, Towpath Street, Port Crane, **Broome**, 18 Aug, 9 Sep, 2 Oct (Robert Grosek, Jon Weeks, Doug Gochfeld; ph R. Grosek, D. Gochfeld)

This dove was studied by several observers during the late summer and early fall, and was typically seen in the company of Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*). Detailed descriptions were supplemented by color photographs. Eurasian Collared-Dove was introduced to the Bahamas and has spread rapidly across the southern and western portions of the United States. Since addition of this species to the NYS Checklist in 2002 (NYSARC 2002-26-A/B), there has been no more than a scattering of NYS reports, suggesting that a widespread colonization of the state, as seen in many other parts of the continent, is not on the immediate horizon. This represents the first accepted record for Broome County and Region 4, and it is only the fifth for New York State. With this scarcity in mind, observers are reminded to document any sightings fully, paying careful attention to the possibility of escapes and other exotic doves, including Ringed Turtle-Dove (*S. risoria*). A color photo by Doug Gochfeld was published in *The Kingbird* 57(4): 322.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)

2007-56-A One, private residence, Windslow Street, Liberty, **Sullivan**, 29 Oct–21 Nov (John H. Haas; ph J. Haas)

Homeowners David and Linda Boyce first noticed this unfamiliar hummingbird on 5 Oct and contacted Renee Davis, who, despite visiting several times, did not see the bird until 28 Oct, coincident with the first really cold temperatures of the fall. Suspecting this was an Anna's rather than a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*), Davis then contacted John Haas, who saw it the next day and on several subsequent occasions. The hummingbird fed from sugar feeders and late-flowering plants in the yard, sometimes occupying a prominent perch in a tree from which it would call and launch attacks on any small bird that

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ventured near the sugar feeders. The bird survived several very cold nights but was found dead on 22 Nov. This is the second record for NYS, the first being an adult male that visited a yard in Binghamton in mid-Nov 1998 (NYSARC 1998-8-A/E). The specimen, the first for NYS and most likely the only one from the northeast, was donated to the American Museum of Natural History.

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

2007-44-A/D One, South River Road, Houghton, **Allegany**, 16, 17, 22 Oct (Jeanne Skelly, Erin Karnatz, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Kimberly Sucus; ph K. Sucus)

2007-45-A/C One, West Walworth Road, West Walworth, Macedon, **Wayne**, 24-26 Oct (Jeanne Skelly, Mike Tetlow, Gerald S. Lazarczyk; ph Dominic Sherony, G. Lazarczyk)

The hatching-year female Rufous Hummingbird from Houghton was first sighted by homeowner Larry Wilson as it visited their sugar feeders. Over the course of a week, it was viewed by many, and several observers claimed there were two distinct Rufous Hummingbirds present, but evidence of the second bird was never provided. On 17 Oct the immature was banded by Erin Karnatz, who made the identification based on measurements of the wing chord and bill and details of the plumage.

The adult male Rufous Hummingbird in West Walworth was originally reported by the homeowners Bill and Loretta Groell. The bird spent much of the fall in their floral adorned yard, initially accompanying the numerous Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) but remaining long after they departed. Mrs. Growell first saw this bird about 10 Oct, and it was last seen on 1 Dec. The Growells welcomed the numerous birders who came to see the hummingbird, many of whom also obtained photographs.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*)

2007-41-A/B One, Westchester Community College, Valhalla, **Westchester**, 16 Sep (Gertrude R. Battaly, Drew Panko; ph G. Battaly)

Unfortunately, this handsome Say's Phoebe was a one-day wonder but does constitute the first record for Westchester County. Say's Phoebe is typically a late fall and winter vagrant (Oct-Feb), and of the 15 or so previous records, only 4 have been in September.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

2007-58-A One, Dreier-Offerman Park, **Kings**, 1 Dec (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2007-60-A/B One, Mt. Loretto Unique Area, Staten Island, **Richmond**, 25 Nov (Joe Trezza, Howie Fischer; ph H. Fischer)

2007-62-A One, Rita's Stables, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 24 Nov (Seth Ausubel)

2007-78-A One, Deep Hollow Horse Ranch, Montauk, **Suffolk**, 18 Nov (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

The fall of 2007 marks an extraordinary season for this rare western *Myiarchus* flycatcher, with reports of six different birds from sites scattered along the Atlantic coastline, although reports on only four were received by NYSARC. In the same time period, four or more Ash-throated Flycatchers were reported from New Jersey (*North Am. Birds* 62(1): 48), again above the seasonal average, and Delaware received its first record (*North Am. Birds* 62(2): 225). The Dreier-

Offerman Park bird was found by Tom Preston as it perched in a small tree along the edge of an athletic field. Cliff Hagen found the Staten Island bird, which was enjoyed by numerous observers. The two Montauk birds were 1.5 miles apart, the first discovered by Shai Mitra and Patricia Lindsay shortly after they had found the Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) and a Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), with the second spotted subsequently by Seth Ausubel.

The past ten years have seen a steady rise in the number of accepted records, and it is easy to forget that the very first accepted record was of a bird found in Larchmont, Westchester Co., in Nov 1970. Currently, Ash-throated is the expected *Myiarchus* in late fall (Nov and Dec); however, the final identification must always be made with considerable care. As if to emphasize the point, a well-studied Great Crested Flycatcher (*M. crinitus*) was found at Sandy Hook in New Jersey, just south of the NY/NJ state line, on 25 Nov, remaining until 11 Dec, and another was in Chatham, Massachusetts on 23-24 Dec (*North Am. Birds* 62(2): 221 & 225).

Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*)

2007-57-A/B One, intersection of Gloucester Ave. & West Lake Drive, Montauk, Suffolk, 13 Oct (Shaibal S. Mitra, Angus Wilson; ph S. Mitra, A. Wilson)

This handsome kingbird was discovered by Andy Baldelli as it hawked insects along the roadside. Realizing that it was not the more likely Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*), Baldelli phoned Shai Mitra and Patricia Lindsay, who were out on Fire Island, and they quickly relayed the exciting news to others. Angus Wilson was able to rush to the spot, where he was joined by Karen Rubinstein, Barbara Rubinstein and Vicki Bustamante. After a few minutes of waiting, the kingbird reappeared and the tentative identification as a Cassin's Kingbird was confirmed. Major field marks included the brilliant white malar and chin, deep gray breast and head, deep bill with a distinctly curved culmen, and absence of white edging on the outer tail feathers of the square tail. More phone calls followed, and a caravan of birders from all over Long Island and the New York City area braved the fearsome Hamptons summer traffic, reaching the spot in time for stunning views of the bird as it perched on the roadside fencing or sallied forth to collect insect larvae from the ground or flying insects on the wing. In the late afternoon, the kingbird was flushed by a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) and vanished into private property, where presumably it went to roost. Extensive searches the following morning and on subsequent days failed to relocate it. Passing motorists were puzzled by the assembly of cameras and suspicious looking characters spread in a phalanx along the street, and those who stopped to ask 'who the celebrity was?' were quickly shown the funny little yellow and green visitor. A short feature by local reporter Russell Drumm with a photograph by Angus Wilson appeared on the front page of the *East Hampton Star*. Color photos by Shai Mitra appeared in *North Am. Birds* 62(1): 190 and *The Kingbird* 58(1): 47 and cover.

Cassin's Kingbird inhabits arid to semi-arid open habitat in southwestern North America and breeds as far north as Montana. The northernmost breeders

are strongly migratory (Tweit and Tweit 2000), and records from eastern North America have increased in recent decades. Florida had its first record in Dec 1988 (Sykes *et al.* 1989) and accrued twelve accepted records through 2008 (Kratzer 2009). Elsewhere east of the Mississippi River, the species has been recorded three times in Massachusetts (Eastham Town Hall, 21 Oct 1962; Monomoy, 9 Oct 1965; and Whatley, 2 Nov 2002); twice in Ontario (specimen Grand Lake, Achray, 4 Jun 1953; Britannia 19 Sep-9 Oct 1970; see Crins 2003); and once in Virginia (Eike 1978).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

2007-61-A One, Startop Estate, East Lake Drive, Montauk, **Suffolk**, (Shaibal S. Mitra; ph S. Mitra)

This hatching-year bird was found by Doug Futuyma on 3 Dec and last seen on 14 Dec, the day before the Montauk CBC, which marked the beginning of the frigid winter weather. The flycatcher favored the low bushes and fruiting trees that fringed the slope of a small hill, and several birders were able to enjoy this characteristic migrant to the southern plains states within yards of one or both of the two Eurasian geese wintering in the Deep Hollow area. There are more than 40 prior records for NYS, invariably from the warmer months (May-Oct), and the extremely late date is notable.

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

2007-75-A One, Payne Beach Road, Braddock Bay, **Monroe**, 9 Sep (Jeanne Skelly)

This Loggerhead Shrike was found by Dave Tetlow as it hunted from telephone wires. He alerted Jeanne Skelly, who was able reach the spot in time to see the bird. After a few minutes the shrike flew east and out of sight, and subsequent searches failed to find it. Video footage was taken by Tetlow but not submitted. Loggerhead Shrikes have unfortunately become increasingly rare across the entire northeast, including NYS. Once a breeding species and regular migrant, especially in spring, Loggerhead Shrikes are now less than annual in NYS, and all reports need to be fully documented.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*)

2007-55-A One, Fire Island Hawk Watch, Fire Island SP, **Suffolk**, 8 Nov (Shaibal S. Mitra)

2007-73-A Five, Mecox Bay, Watermill, **Suffolk**, 23 Nov (Doug Gochfeld)

2007-80-A One, Hither Hills State Park, **Suffolk**, 23 Nov (Angus Wilson)

Cave Swallow has undergone an extraordinary transformation from a barely dreamed of rarity to a scarce but regular late fall migrant. The season began in early Nov with a single bird that flew west along the dune line past Shai Mitra and Doug Futuyma on 8 Nov as they manned the Fire Island Hawk Watch. Then on 23 Nov, another was studied briefly as it too flitted west along the dune line past Angus Wilson at Hither Hills SP near Montauk. This sighting occurred in mid-morning, and it is conceivable this was one of five seen later by Doug Gochfeld and Shane Blodgett approaching Mecox Inlet. Again the swallows were flying west along the dunes and, as they neared the bay, were blown out over the ocean by the strong northwest winds. Another individual worked in

front of the observers before turning east and glancing off a plate glass window, apparently unhurt but suggesting the bird was searching for a roost spot. This date coincided with the seasonal maximum of 98 at Cape May (*North Am. Birds* 62(1): 48). During this period a number of birds also occurred on the Lake Ontario shore, but no reports were received.

Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*)

2007-59-A/G One, Oak Beach Road, Oak Beach, **Suffolk**, 20-25, 31 Dec 2007-1 Jan 2008 (Ken Thompson, Steven Schellenger, Ed Coyle, Shaibal S. Mitra, Arie Gilbert, Angus Wilson, Brendan Fogarty; ph K. Thompson, S. Schellenger, E. Coyle, S. Mitra, A. Gilbert, A. Wilson)

This very well-documented Townsend's Solitaire was found by Ken Thompson on 20 Dec and remained to at least 17 Feb 2008, during which time it was seen by many visiting birders. Seven independent reports were received and, remarkably, six of them included a photograph! See Figure D, p. 352 for a color photo by Ken Thompson. There appears to have been a small influx of Townsend's Solitaires into the Northeast around the same time, with additional birds at Sandy Hook, New Jersey, Rockport, Massachusetts, and Parkwood Hills, Ottawa, Ontario.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

2007-7-A/C One, Thrall Road, Cambria, **Niagara**, 5 Feb (William Watson, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Gerry Rising; ph G. Lazarczyk)

2007-10-A/D One, private residence, Bull Mill Rd., Chester, **Orange**, 19-20 Feb (Kenneth M. McDermott, Dennis M. Murphy, Kenneth Kijewski, Gerhard Patsch; ph K. Kijewski)

2007-54-A One, private residence, Poplar Lane, Saranac Lake, **Essex**, 20-24 Nov (Gordon Bryson; ph G. Bryson)

This scattering of late fall and mid-winter Varied Thrush reports is fairly typical. The Niagara County bird, visiting the home of gracious hosts Joan and Bob Barry, was last seen on 20 Feb. The Orange County bird was discovered by four members of the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club out collecting data for the Great Backyard Bird Count, and its charcoal-gray rather than black breast band suggests an immature male.

Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

2007-39-A/B One, Myers Park, Lansing, **Tompkins**, 9 Sept (Ryan Douglas, Michael J. Andersen; ph R. Douglas, M. Andersen)

2007-51-A/B One, Second Street, Blasdell, **Erie**, 19 May (Danielle J. Pecoraro, Tina Schulz; sketch D. Pecoraro, T. Schulz)

Finders of the Myer's Point bird were Mike Andersen and Kenneth Rosenberg, who first noticed it as it was flushed by other park goers. The initial in-flight view of this female/immature was insufficient to identify the bird, but fortunately it flew toward the observers and landed close by. A color photo by Rosenberg appeared in *North Am. Birds* 62(1): 190; see Figure D, p. 352 for a color photo by Christopher Wood. The Blasdell bird was an adult male that was spotted by Tina Schulz as it foraged on the ground below a feeder. After looking at a field guide, she contacted Danielle Pecoraro, who was able to confirm what *The Kingbird* 2009 December; 59 (4)

became the third record for Region 1. Although a photograph was not obtained, both observers sketched the bird. NYSARC has previously accepted five records for this species, four of them from the Long Island area. From 1964, they were annual in the state until 1978. Since then, there have been very few records (Levine 1998).

Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)

2007-72-A One, Fort Tilden, **Queens**, 14 Oct (Steve Walter; ph S. Walter)

This rare sparrow was discovered by Shane Blodgett, Mary Eyster, and Peter Dorosh on 13 Oct and photographed by Steve Walter the following day. After some initial uncertainty about the identity of the bird, photos were sent out via the internet for comment, which strongly favored an immature LeConte's Sparrow. The photos that Walter submitted to NYSARC were convincing to the Committee members as well. This species breeds in southern Quebec, but it remains a very rarely detected spring and fall migrant through NYS, with only a dozen or so records.

Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

2007-64-A One, Training Area 13A, Fort Drum, **Jefferson**, 1 Jun (Jeff Bolsinger)

Jeff Bolsinger listened to this Nelson's Sparrow singing for 2 to 3 minutes, hearing 8 to 10 songs, and he provided a detailed description of the song. The Committee accepted this record based on a number of factors. Notably, very few species have a song that is similar to that of Nelson's Sparrow, and the habitat, tall grasses in a shallow wet depression where the bird was heard at Ft. Drum, is appropriate for this species. Nelson's typically likes to sing from locations buried in the grasses and is often not visible. Important, too, is the fact that the date this bird was heard falls into the proper period for a spring migrant (late May to early June in NYS); this species is a regular spring and fall migrant in NYS, though generally difficult to find due to its habitat preferences.

Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*)

2007-18-A One, Hempstead Lake State Park, **Nassau**, 6 Apr (Brendan Fogarty; ph B. Fogarty)

The description supports the identity of this Lincoln's Sparrow. The most likely confusing species is an immature Song Sparrow, and the observer ruled out that possibility. Since Lincoln's Sparrow breeds and migrates in the state, this submission is due to the unusual date of occurrence; this bird was present for a while and may thus have wintered locally. Although Lincoln's is rare in NYS before May, there are April records and *Bull's Birds of NYS* (Levine 1998) cites a record of 1 Apr in the Adirondacks, with coastal extreme dates in mid March.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

2007-23-A One, private residence in Bennett Heights, Town of Batavia, **Genesee**, 21-25 Apr (Douglas Beattie; ph Gerald S. Lazarczyk)

This Harris's Sparrow was first seen visiting a feeder at the home of Donald Thurau in Batavia. It was found again four days later three-quarters of a mile east of its original location and digiscopeped by Jerry Lazarczyk.

‘Gambel’s’ White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*)

2007-25-A One, Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Manitou Beach Road, **Monroe**, 15 May (Dominic Sherony; ph D. Sherony)

This adult was banded and photographed along with a more familiar eastern White-crowned Sparrow (*Z. l. leucophrys*). ‘Gambel’s’ White-crowned Sparrows (termed the ‘West Taiga’ form by Sibley) are reported rarely but regularly in coastal NYS during the fall and winter, but there are very few reports from elsewhere in the state.

Smith’s Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

2007-9-A/E One, T. R. Roosevelt Nature Center, Jones Beach West End, **Nassau**, 2 Feb to 10 Mar (Ed Coyle, Lloyd Spitalnik, Thomas W. Burke, Doug Gochfeld, Shaibal S. Mitra ; ph E. Coyle, L. Spitalnik, D. Gochfeld, S. Mitra)

Ed Coyle first noticed this longspur on 2 Feb in an area of dredging spoils and scattered vegetation on the edge of a large coastal dune system at the western end of Jones Beach Island. This is a traditional wintering site for Lapland Longspurs (*C. lapponicus*), and a dozen or so were present for direct comparison, along with a scattering of Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) and Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*). Suspecting that this was a Smith’s Longspur from the outset but appreciating the profound rarity of the species in the east and the intricacies of longspur identification, Coyle sent his initial set of somewhat distant photos to local members of this Committee seeking an independent viewpoint. Initial opinions were equivocal but shifted once Coyle obtained and circulated better images. His tenacity and willingness to spend hours in the cold patiently stalking the flighty longspur flock is most commendable. Word of his exciting find spread quickly, and by the following weekend a large number of birders were able to view the longspur. It remained until 18 Mar and was seen by many people from NYS and beyond, including the participants of a pelagic that ran on the first Saturday from nearby Freeport. The excellent written descriptions and several sets of color photographs clearly support the identification as a Smith’s Longspur, firmly ruling out Lapland, McCown’s (*C. mccownii*) and Chestnut-collared (*C. ornatus*) Longspurs. Noted features included the relatively uniformly buffy underparts, conspicuous white eye-ring, less prominently marked face pattern compared to Lapland, less sharply defined flank streaks and submalar stripe, a somewhat thinner pinkish bill, and a lack of any chestnut tones on the wing coverts. Typical of a longspur, the primaries extended well beyond the tips of the tertials, but the spacing between primary tips (wing formula) differed from the Laplands in having a large gap between two of the primary tips rather than more uniform steps. Compared to its flock mates, the Smith’s fed in a rather slow and methodical fashion, often crouching close to the bases of the plants and tending to hunker down when alarmed rather than flushing. This constitutes only the second record for NYS, the first being an immature female inadvertently collected on 22 Sep 1974 at the western end of Fire Island, Suffolk, some 17 miles further east along the barrier beach. Photographs by Lloyd Spitalnik and Ed Coyle were published in *North Am. Birds* 61(2): 365 and *The Kingbird* 57(2): 146.

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Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

2007-32-A One, Piermont Pier, **Rockland**, 20-25 Jun (Alan W. Wells; ph A. Wells)

This female Snow Bunting was discovered by Tom Dow on the bizarre date of 20 Jun and was seen several times over the next five days. Although Snow Buntings occur widely during the winter months, almost all depart by the end of April, and the prior latest date is 23 May. See Figure D, p. 352 for a color photo by Alan Wells.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

2007-8-A/D One Windsor Road, Baldwin, **Nassau**, 4, 17, 23 Feb, 11 Mar (Angus Wilson, Jeanne Skelly, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, William Watson; ph A. Wilson, G. Lazarczyk)

First noted on 31 Dec 2006 and thought to be a female Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*)—a spectacular winter find in its own right—this male Western Tanager was correctly re-identified by the homeowners John and Muriel Stahl when they consulted a field guide, and they promptly got in touch with the local Audubon chapter. A glorious splash of yellow in the dreary gray of winter, this tanager frequented their feeders until 30 Mar and was enjoyed by many visiting birders. A color photo by John Stahl was published in *The Kingbird* 57(2): 147.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

2007-13-A One, private residence near Westtown, Town of Minisink, **Orange**, 17-22 May (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph Ray Cramer)

Homeowners Mr. & Mrs. Ray Cramer identified this male when it visited their feeder. During the successive days it was viewed by a number of local birders and represents the first documented record for Orange County.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

2007-21-A One, Ripley, **Chautauqua**, 29 Apr (James Pawlicki, William W. Watson; ph and video J. Pawlicki)

This Western Meadowlark was observed and videotaped as it sang from various vantage points in and around the grassy field and vineyard adjacent to the Ripley Hawk Watch. Detailed descriptions of the song (heard well on the video) and plumage firmly established the identification by ruling out Eastern Meadowlark (*S. magna*).

Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

2007-37-A/B One, Jones Beach West End, **Nassau**, 5 Jul-18 Aug (Dominic Sherony, Corey Finger; ph D. Sherony, C. Finger)

This female Yellow-headed Blackbird frequented the cut grass of the median strip and park buildings, often in the company of Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). It was found by Corey Finger and remained for more than a month. Yellow-headed Blackbirds are fairly rare on Long Island, and most don't stay in one place for as long as this fairly cooperative bird.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

2007-11-A/C One, Tremper Avenue, Phoenicia, **Ulster**, 22 Feb, 11 Mar (Kenneth M. McDermott, James Pawlicki, William W. Watson; ph Kenneth Kijewski)

This brightly colored adult male spent almost the entire winter visiting feeders in the town of Phoenicia, where oranges and other fruit were put out for it by a number of homeowners. It was first brought to general attention by Rich Guthrie on 6 Feb and remained until at least 18 Mar. However, the homeowners said that it had been around since the late fall. A color photo by Lloyd Spitalnik was featured in *The Kingbird* 57(2): 147.

Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*)

2007-69-A/I One, Union Square Park, Manhattan, **New York**, 4 Dec – 5 Feb 2008 (Alice Deutsch, Joe Trezza, Thomas W. Burke, William W. Watson, Gerald S. Lazarczyk, Yolanda Garcia, Doug Gochfeld, Lenore Swenson, Brendan Fogarty; ph Ardith Bondi, David Speiser, Lloyd Spitalnik, D. Gochfeld; sketch Y. Garcia)

A bustling square in the middle of Manhattan might seem an unlikely choice of wintering spot for a denizen of the deserts of the southwestern United States and Mexico, but Union Square Park was clearly sufficient for this young male Scott's Oriole first observed by Alice Deutsch on 4 Dec 2007. Initially the bird was identified as an Orchard Oriole (*I. spurius*) based on the combination of black and green plumage, and it was not until photos by Ardith Bondi were posted on 23 Jan 2008 that this was corrected to Scott's Oriole. Seth Ausubel was one of the first to publicly suggest Scott's rather than Orchard. This constitutes the first record for NYS.

Nicknamed 'Scotty', the oriole favored a patch of shrubs and small trees near the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, where it associated with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) and consumed sap oozing from holes made by the woodpecker. Several of the reports noted that the oriole was quite aggressive towards other passerines, including the sapsucker. The oriole also fed on fruit left around the statue and Big Apple delicacies such as a discarded Kaiser roll and a hot dog bun. At times it would fly up into the tall trees at the center of the park, where it would preen undisturbed, or would fly onto the roofs of surrounding buildings, presumably to visit private gardens or other green spaces. After an absence in mid-winter, the oriole was re-sighted in Tompkins Square, another small city park three quarters of a mile away. Scott's Oriole is essentially a Mexican species whose summer range extends into the southwestern United States (Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, southern California and western Texas). Most individuals return south of the border in late Aug and early Sep, where they remain for the winter (Howell and Webb 1995; Jaramillo and Burke 1999). Thus the species is considered a short to medium distance migrant. However, a pattern of vagrancy to the north and northeast has become apparent, with records in Ontario (Nov 1975, Silver Islet Landing), Minnesota (23 May to mid-Jun 1974, Duluth) and Wisconsin (Jan–Feb 1996, Adams County), providing support for the notion that the Union Square bird was a natural vagrant (Denis 1976, Jaramillo and Burke 1999, Sundquist 1975). Bringing this point home, February 2007 also yielded first state records of Scott's Oriole in Pennsylvania and Kentucky: a male coming to

a feeder in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania from 19 Feb into March, and an immature female at a feeder in Frankfort, Franklin County, Kentucky from early February 2007 and through the winter (*North Am. Birds* 61(2): 364 & 368). One of the pivotal color photos of ‘Scotty’ taken by Ardith Bondi on 23 Jan 2008 was published in *North Am. Birds* 62(2): 333.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

2007-68-A, One, private residence, Montgomery, **Orange**, 21 Dec to 27 Jan 2008 (Kenneth M. McDermott; ph K. McDermott)

This adult male Hoary Redpoll joined a flock of Common Redpolls (*C. flammea*) visiting thistle feeders put out by Curt McDermott in a residential condo complex. Timely updates on the presence of the bird meant that many birders were able to stop by and see this striking individual. Whilst Hoary Redpoll is no longer considered a review species for most of New York, the species remains extremely rare south of the Catskill Mountains. During this same period, Hoary Redpolls were found widely across northern and central NYS, with several individuals visiting feeders in nearby Sullivan County.

2007 Reports Accepted but Origins Considered Unknown or Unnatural

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

2007-5-A Two, Irondequoit Bay, **Monroe**, 3 Jan (William W. Watson; ph Jim Pawlicki)

These two untagged swans were seen and photographed at very close range, leaving no doubt about the identification. Although New York does not yet consider Trumpeter Swan established for a long enough period to warrant inclusion on the State list, the species is now on the Ontario list because the Ontario Bird Records Committee has determined that they are established there. It is also on the list of two nearby states, Ohio and Michigan. Since Trumpeters have been released recently in central New York, north of the Montezuma wetlands complex, and perhaps still are being released, the origin of individual unmarked birds, such as the two at Irondequoit Bay, is extremely difficult to determine. Even some marked birds of this long-lived species could have been released as part of recent introduction efforts. Anyone who observes a tagged or banded bird should collect as much information as possible so that the provenance of that individual might be determined.

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*)

2007-47-A One, Hudson River, Saugerties Lighthouse, **Ulster** (Suzanne Stone; ph S. Stone)

This Black Swan was in the company of four Mute Swans (*C. olor*). This species, native to Australia, is popular with collectors of ornamental waterfowl and escapes occur periodically. Individuals may also be relatively long-lived, raising the possibility of a feral population becoming established, as has happened in other countries.

1991 Report Accepted

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)

1991-42-A One, Riverhead, Suffolk, 12 Dec (Paul H. Gillen, Jr.; ph P. Gillen, Jr.)

This first-basic Franklin's Gull was discovered by Paul Gillen, Jr. on 12 Dec behind the McDonald's restaurant on Route 24 in Riverhead. Conveniently, this gull showed a fondness for the french fries on offer at this fast food chain and remained until 10 Jan 1992. Franklin's Gull breeds in the northern prairies and then migrates south through Mexico to winter along the west coast of South America. Although rare throughout the state, sightings are most frequent in western NY, notably along the shorelines of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. There are only a handful of documented sightings from Long Island, and during its month-long stay the Riverhead bird was enjoyed by many regional birders.

1980 Report Accepted

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

1980-49-A One, private feeder, Moody Pond, Village of Saranac Lake, Essex, 29 Oct (John M. C. Peterson; ph J. Peterson)

This hatching-year Harris's Sparrow visited a feeding station belonging to Dirck and Mary K. Benson from 27 Oct to 5 Nov 1980. On 29 Oct, it was trapped, photographed and banded (band number 891-52720) by Mike Peterson.

REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Reports are not accepted for various reasons. The most frequent is that the material submitted to the Committee was considered insufficient or too vague to properly document the occurrence and/or eliminate similar species. Reports that simply state the species and location of the bird(s) but provide no description to support the identification are rarely accepted. Likewise, simply stating that it looked just like the illustration in the field guide is not sufficient. Records are never rejected because the observer is unfamiliar to the Committee or has had records rejected in the past. Every effort is made to be as fair and objective as possible, but if the Committee is unsure about a submission, it will take a conservative stance, preferring not to accept a good record over validating a bad one. All submissions, whether accepted or not, remain in the archive and can be re-evaluated if additional substantive material is presented. The Secretary or Chair can advise on whether the new information is sufficient to warrant re-evaluation by the Committee. Descriptions prepared from memory months or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. The Committee cannot overstate the importance of taking field notes while the bird is under study or, if this is not possible, immediately afterwards. It is very helpful to include a photocopy of your field notes with the report. This helps the Committee to know what was seen at the time of the actual observation, before field guides or other sources of information were consulted. Field sketches, no matter how crude, can

be extremely useful in illustrating what you saw. Lastly, when writing a report, it is very important to explain how you settled on the identification. ***What feature did you see or hear that clinched the identification for you?*** This is a vital aspect of any rare bird report and is all too frequently omitted. Providing a detailed answer to this basic question will greatly enhance the report and further improve your birding skills.

2007 Reports Not Accepted

Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*)

2007-17-A One, Hudson River at 94th Street and Riverside Drive, Manhattan, **New York**, 2 Apr

Whilst walking a dog along the Hudson River waterfront, the observer noticed this egret-sized bird flying with its neck extended with a slight kink and its long legs carried straight behind. Because the observer did not notice any pink tones in the plumage nor the distinctive hooked 'flamingo bill', the Committee felt this was more likely to be an egret. It is not uncommon for herons and egrets to fly with their neck extended, especially if alarmed.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

2007-42-A Sixteen, Summitville Hawk Watch, Summitville, **Sullivan**, 29 Sep

Sixteen large birds flying in 'V' formation were studied as they passed high over the Summitville Hawk Watch. The observer was unable to discern the bills and, judging from an internet report from that same day, was evidently unsure of the identification. Indeed, the birds were reported as an entirely unrelated species. Unfortunately, an accompanying photograph showed insufficient detail to further clarify the identification. In light of these issues, the Committee felt the identification of these birds is perhaps best left uncertain. It is worth noting that although American White Pelican is now sufficiently regular across most of NYS that it does not require NYSARC review, the species remains quite rare in Region 10 and full reports are requested.

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)

2007-22-A Two, RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary, Village of Catskill, **Greene**, 2 May

A group of five observers studied these two birds for 7-10 minutes as they soared at great height before gliding southeast towards the Hudson River. Unfortunately, the viewing conditions only allowed the observers to see the undersides of the birds. Details noted included the extended necks, long tails and what was considered to be a distinctive wing shape. Although some members felt the description was fairly consistent with adult male and adult female Anhingas, there was agreement that the details did not entirely rule out Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). Anhinga remains an extremely rare species in NYS.

Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*)

2007-71-A One, Lido Beach Passive Nature Area, Lido Beach, **Nassau**, 17 Aug

This small sized whitish egret was studied by two observers for a minute or less

as it stood in marsh grass before taking flight. Both observers noted an unfamiliar bill pattern and, in the instant the bird took flight, the observer providing the report perceived the legs and feet to be blue rather than black or yellowish. Although these scant details are provocative, the Committee felt that these views were too brief to firmly identify such as rare species, noting that mud could obscure the real color of the legs, especially of a juvenile bird.

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

2007-20-A One, Coulter Rd. Town of Johnsburg, **Warren**, 28 Apr

This buteo was studied as it perched in a leafless tree, and, as such, the back and wings were not visible. The most conspicuous feature was the rufous bib that covered the neck and upper chest. However, other aspects of the description seemed incompatible with a Swainson's Hawk and suggested either a Red-shouldered (*B. lineatus*) or Broad-winged (*B. platypterus*) Hawk. The presence of a white forehead and throat were not noted.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*)

2007-15-A One, mouth of the Saranac River, City of Plattsburgh, **Clinton**, 8 Mar

Described as a gray-morph adult, this large falcon was first noticed as it stood over the carcass of a Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) on the frozen river. The outflow from the sewage treatment plant maintains a small patch of open water at the mouth of the Saranac River, attracting large numbers of waterfowl and gulls. Although there are two prior accepted reports of Gyr Falcon from this spot, the Committee felt that in the absence of photographs, the description did not entirely rule out a lightly-marked immature *tundrius* Peregrine (*F. peregrinus*) nor a falconer's hybrid. Some aspects were indeed suggestive of Gyr Falcon, notably the indistinct moustache, perception of its large size and the March date. However, the combination of a gray, and apparently unbarred, back with a clear white throat and breast was hard to reconcile with a gray-morph adult. Likewise, use of a "dark spot behind its eye" as a field mark for Gyr Falcon is questionable.

'Common' Mew Gull (*Larus canus canus*)

2007-63-A/B One, Irondequoit Bay, LaSalle Landing Park, Penfield, **Monroe**, 9 Oct

This first-basic gull was studied by three observers for 40-45 minutes at a distance of 200+ yards as it stood or walked about in shallow water on a mudflat at the south end of Irondequoit Bay. Numerous Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*) and Bonaparte's (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) Gulls were present for comparison. Unfortunately the bird was not seen in flight, and thus critical details of the spread wings, the upper-tail coverts and the tail were not seen. A search the next day failed to relocate it. Given the circumstances, the reports were as detailed and analytical as possible. The gull was described as intermediate in size between the aforementioned species, with a noticeably short-legged and long-winged appearance. Streaking was noted on the back of the head, and the bicolored bill had a straw-colored rather than pink base. Although these details are provocative, they do not eliminate a very small Ring-billed Gull. Of the features studied, it was noted that the expected difference in mantle color was not present, and the base of the bill is usually greenish or
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grayish, not straw, in 'Common' Gull. Specific differences in bill shape rather than simply length/depth were not mentioned.

Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

2007-50-A One, north of ferry landing, Cumberland Head, Town of Plattsburgh, **Clinton**, 16 Nov

This jaeger was studied as it flew rapidly south with a strong tail wind. The observer had the impression that it was a relatively small bird with narrow wings and lacked white at the base of the primaries. The Committee was concerned by the mid-Nov date, which would be exceptionally late for a Long-tailed Jaeger, the fact that it was not viewed alongside more familiar species to aid in the evaluation of size and structure, and, lastly, because the plumage description presented a confusing mix of adult (dark cap and light collar, absence of white flash on underside of wing) and juvenile (dark belly) features.

Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus*)

2007-6-A One, Marietta, **Onondaga**, 6 Mar

This round-headed owl was viewed twice during the night as it fed on a dead Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*). The behavior sounded odd for a small owl such as a Boreal, and the description did not entirely rule out a larger species such as a Barred Owl (*Strix varia*), which is known to prey on birds as large as domestic chickens, grouse and pheasants. The absence of ear tufts argues against Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*).

Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)

2007-40-A One, private residence, New Russia, **Essex** 20-22 Sep

This tiny, short-billed hummingbird was watched as it visited flowers in the homeowners' window boxes and perched on their clothes line. It was not seen to use sugar feeders that were being maintained nearby. Although there was enough to suggest that this was a female or immature male and was likely not a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*), the details were insufficient to narrow the identification further.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

2007-49-A Flock, private residence, Grangerville, **Saratoga**, 10 Sep

The report involved 15-20 ground feeding birds that were described as having white breasts spotted with brown, a line of red under the wing and white lines above and below the eye. Naturally the large number of birds raised questions, and the Committee felt other possibilities such as a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) or some young American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) were more likely candidates.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Submitted on behalf of the New York State Avian Records Committee:

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Figure D. Photos from the New York State Avian Records Committee's Annual Report for 2007. Townsend's Solitaire, Oak Beach, Suffolk Co., 20 Dec 07, © Ken Thompson; Snow Bunting, Piermont Pier, Rockland Co., 25 Jun 07, © Alan Wells; Lark Bunting, Myer's Pt., Tompkins Co., 9 Sep 07, © Christopher Wood. See pp. 306-332.