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ALABAMA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT

Greg D. Jackson

This is the first report of the new Alabama Bird Records Committee. The committee was reorganized in late 1987, and soon began the formal evaluation of Alabama rare bird reports that had not been considered during the original committee meetings held in 1983. Forty-nine documented records were appraised in 1988 and 1989. The committee has now considered all reports not previously evaluated for which we have documentation, though there are several sightings that have been in print since 1983 for which we have no detailed written information.

The committee consists of a Secretary and six members, all of whom vote on each record. Members remain on the committee for three to four years, and at least two members are replaced each year. Records are submitted by birders to the Secretary, who then sends them by mail in a "round robin" fashion to each member. If a decision is not definitely reached during that circulation, the process is repeated. If there is still no unequivocal decision, then the record is considered at a formal meeting. Such a meeting occurred in Birmingham on 10 Feb 1990, and of the 49 circulated reports, only three had to be brought forth for discussion and resolution at that time.

The initial evaluation of submitted reports is performed by each committee member without the knowledge of the opinions of the other members, and this judgement is done as objectively and impartially as possible. A record is accepted by the committee if it finally receives no more than one negative vote. This helps ensure that few poorly docu-

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mented and/or questionable records will be accepted. However, it is possible that there will occasionally be a valid sighting that is not approved, because at least six members are not convinced beyond a reasonable doubt. Observers who submit reports to the committee should understand this process; a "not accept" vote should not be construed as a personal insult or condemnation of their skills. We are attempting to establish a "clean" set of records for the state; in order to achieve this goal, reports of rarities must be fully documented and then evaluated in a critical manner. This process is required of sightings by all birders, regardless of experience and knowledge.

During 1988 and 1989, the list of species requiring review was limited to only those birds that had three or fewer accepted records as of 1983. Because the backlog of unevaluated reports has now been cleared, at the February meeting the committee voted to expand the Review List to include many other rare species. This list was published in the March 1990 issue of *The Yellowhammer*, and the revision affects all observations occurring after 1 Jan 1990. For sightings of any of these birds to be accepted in the state records, complete written details (and photographs when available) must be submitted to the current Secretary (Robert A. Duncan, 614 Fairpoint Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561).

After the committee meetings in 1983, the "official" state list stood at 370 species. As a result of the action of the present committee, this "official" list is now 383 species. Of these, two are extinct (Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet) and two have been extirpated (Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Common Raven). An additional 12 species are "hypothetical," meaning that there are no acceptable specimens or photographs from the state, and the species has not been satisfactorily identified by several experienced observers. To be placed on this "hypothetical" list, convincing written documentation must be presented and approved by the committee.

Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the last two years of committee work. Table 3 lists the reports in print in various publications that were not considered by the original 1983 committee, and for which the present committee has been unable to obtain written details. These undocumented sightings are considered "not accepted," though if adequate details are submitted in the future they will be evaluated.



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TABLE 1. 1988 RECORDS COMMITTEE EVALUATIONS

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo/ ¹ Spec.	Decision ²	AL ³ Status
88-1	N. Fulmar	11/9/86	Baldwin		NI	
88-2	Ferruginous Hawk	2/24/88	Colbert		A	2H
88-3	Ross' Goose	2/22-23/88	Colbert	P	A	2
88-4	Cassin's Finch	12/24/88	Jefferson		NI	
88-5	Ferruginous Hawk	1/3-4/88	Baldwin		W	
88-6	Aud. Shearwater	1/3/87	Baldwin		A	2
88-7	West./Cl. Grebe	5/21/85	Limestone		NI	
88-8	Pacific Loon	1/2/88	Baldwin		A	5
88-9	Flammulated Owl	11/53	Shelby	S	NO	
88-10	Cave Swallow	4/14/87	Mobile		A	2H
88-11	Cave Swallow	4/28/87	Baldwin	S	A	5
88-12	Lesser Bl-b. Gull	1/31/88	Marshall		A	2
88-13	Lesser Bl-b. Gull	3/9-16/85	Marshall	P	A	1
88-14	Prairie Falcon	2/16/85-1/90	Marshall		A	1
88-15	Couch's Kingbird	10/4/88	Baldwin	P	A	1
88-16	Brant	11/16/85-1/86	Baldwin		A	4
88-17	Cinnamon Teal	10/19/85	Morgan	P	A	3

1. P - photograph, S - specimen
 2. A - accepted, NI - not accepted (identification), NO - not accepted (origin),
 3. W - withdrawn by observer
- Ranking of sighting in the accepted records (1 = first, 2 = second, etc.)
H - hypothetical list (as of this record)

TABLE 2. 1989 RECORDS COMMITTEE EVALUATIONS

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo/ ¹ Spec.	Decision ²	AL ³ Status
89-1	Pacific Loon	2/4/85	Baldwin		A	3
89-2	Pacific Loon	4/24/88	Mobile		A	6
89-3	Pacific Loon	1/1/86	Baldwin		A	4
89-4	Lesser Nighthawk	4/11/85	Baldwin		A	3
89-5	Cave Swallow	4/14/87	Baldwin		A	2H
89-6	Trop/Couch's Kingbd.	9/27/87	Baldwin		A	2H
89-7	Ferruginous Hawk	12/29/85, 1/7/86	Baldwin		A	1H
89-8	Little Gull	1/24/87	Lauderdale		A	1H
89-9	Roseate Tern	11/24/83	Baldwin		NI	
89-10	Cave Swallow	4/25-26/87	Mobile		NI	
89-11	Black-ch. Humming.	1/15/84-4/84	Mobile	P	A	1
89-12	Black-ch. Humming.	4/8/84	Baldwin		NI	
89-13	Lesser Nighthawk	4/26/82	Baldwin		A	1H
89-14	Sulphur-b. Flycatcher	9/27/88-10/3/88	Baldwin	P	A	2
89-15	Olivaceous Cormorant	10/23/88	Baldwin		A	1

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(TABLE 2. Continued)

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo ¹ . Spec.	Decision ² .	AL ³ . Status
9-16	N. Wheatear	10/2-3/88	Baldwin	P	A	1
89-17	Fork-tailed Flycatcher	4/24/88	Baldwin		A	1H
89-18	Black-sh. Kite	12/27/88	Mobile		A	3
89-19	Pacific Loon	2/24/89	Baldwin		NI	
89-20	Sage Thrasher	10/15/86 +	Baldwin	P	A	3
89-21	Roseate Spoonbill	7/20-30/88	Mobile	P	A	5
89-22	Sharp-t. Sandpiper	4/30/88-5/1/88	Colbert	P	A	1
89-23	Lesser Nighthawk	1/1/83 +	Baldwin		A	2
89-24	Ross' Goose	2/17/89-4/2/89	Barbour	P	A	3
89-25	Bk-s Kite	1/15/89	Conecuh		A	4
89-26	Cave Swallow	4/17/87	Baldwin		A	4
89-27	Sooty Shearwater	3/4/89	Baldwin		A	4
89-28	Cave Swallow	4/22/89	Baldwin		A	6
89-29	Cave Swallow	4/22/84	Baldwin		A	1H
89-30	Black-ch. Humming.	10/9/88	Mobile		NI	
89-31	Rock Wren	2/4/84-4/84	Mobile	P	A	3
89-32	Roseate Spoonbill	8/12/89	Mobile		A	6

1. P - photograph

2. A - accepted, NI - not accepted (identification)

3. Ranking of sighting in the accepted records (1 = first, 2 = second, etc.)

H - hypothetical list (as of this record)

TABLE 3. RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED DUE TO ABSENCE OF DOCUMENTATION

Species	Date	County
Cory's Shearwater	11/22/86	Baldwin
Manx Shearwater	12/19/83	Baldwin
Audubon's Shearwater	12/19/83	Baldwin
Roseate Spoonbill	9/19-26/87	Greene
Black-shouldered Kite	10/13/83	Mobile
Ferruginous Hawk	12/15/84	Mobile
Ferruginous Hawk	12/29/84	Baldwin
Mountain Plover	4/6/84	Mobile
Long-tailed Jaeger	9/8/83	Baldwin
Iceland Gull	4/16/84	Mobile
Lesser Black-backed Gull	12/9/83	Mobile
Black-chinned Hummingbird	4/25/85	Mobile

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