

# FIRST UTAH BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT\*

Ella Sorensen, Keith L. Dixon, Steven P. Hedges, Clayton M. White

This is the first report of the Utah Bird Records Committee and contains 23 accepted records of 18 species and one unaccepted record. The accepted records include three new species for Utah: Zone-tailed Hawk, Glaucous-winged Gull, and Kentucky Warbler. This report also lists several species status changes within latilong categories of the Utah Bird Distribution Latilong Study resulting from these records evaluations. Evaluated records are listed by common name and scientific name following nomenclature of the 1983 American Ornithologists' Union Checklist. Information listed for each accepted record includes, in order: number of birds recorded including age and sex if available, Committee file number (in parentheses), dates of known occurrence, locality, initials of all known observers with the finder listed first (in parentheses), initials of Observers Submitting written documentation (documented: ) or photographs (photo:), initials of consultants (consulted: ), and comments. Unaccepted records contain the same information as accepted records with the exception that observers are not listed. Records not included in this report are still being evaluated by the Committee.

The Records Committee would like to thank those individuals who have submitted records. Those records will provide valuable information on the status and abundance of bird species in Utah in the years ahead. The Committee encourage the submission of documentation on all unusual bird sightings by all observers. Some observers may note a fieldmark that is not reported by another observer, and that one fieldmark may prove the difference between a record being accepted or rejected by the Committee. Don't rely on other observers to report your sightings. Utah Bird Record forms are available from any Committee member.

## ACCEPTED RECORDS

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). One third year male (4-1984); 4-8 Apr 1984; Bullfrog Marina, Lake Powell, Garfield Co.; (SS,ES,RS); documented: SS; photo: SS; consulted: (KK,HK,RS,AP,JH,RC,GM,OA).

Most inland records of this species have been from late summer or early fall, and are generally first year immatures, which makes this record unusual. The possibility that this bird might be an escapee was questioned, but was considered highly improbable by those consulted.

GREAT EGRET (*Casmerodius albus*). One (5-1984); 5 Jun 1984; Grafton, Washington Co.; (KT,JAG,JLG); documented: JLG. One (6-1984); 3 Jul 1984; west of Salt Lake Airport, Salt Lake Co.; (HBS); documented: HBS. Three (4-1985); 9 Apr 1985; Grafton, Washington Co.; (JLG); documented: JLG.

Records 5-1984 and 4-1985 were the third and fourth, respectively, for the Zion area. Record 6-1984 was the first for Latilong 5.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*). Three adults (1-1984); 9 Jan 1984; Fish Springs, Juab Co.; (ES,RS,BB,GB); documented: ES; photo: ES; consulted: PL,JD,GM,TP.

Identification was based on voice, bill characteristic (large size, straighter profile, and all black color), and the black at the base of the bill forming a relatively wide angle from the eye. The bill of all three swans lacked yellow, but had an orange-red line. These marks were put into perspective by McCaskie: "Virtually all adult Trumpeter Swans show the reddish line along the bill, but a number of Tundra Swans also show this same mark, hence the problem." (It is not a diagnostic mark for Trumpeter Swan as formerly believed). Most adult Tundra Swans show a yellow spot on the bill in front of the eye, but a few lack this mark. Therefore, the all black bill is not a diagnostic mark for the Trumpeter Swan. Winter Trumpeter Swan reports and photographs have come from Fish Springs for many years and it has been suggested that they come from Ruby Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada, but, according to Tim Provan, waterfowl experts from Nevada Fish and Game do not share this opinion.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta nigra*). One immature female (9-1984); 1-2 Dec 1984; Saltaire Resort, Salt Lake Co.; (ES,RS,BB,GB,CM,JB); documented: ES; photo: ES; consulted: PL,GM. This is the second acceptable record for the state.

SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*). One female (2-1985); 14 Nov 1984; Minersville Res., Beaver Co.; (SR); documented: SH. Two (10-1984); 1-2 Dec 1984; Saltaire Resort, Salt Lake Co.; (ES,RS,BB,GB,HBS,CH,HC,OM,JB); documented: ES; photo: ES; consulted: PL. Record 10-1984 is the first for Latilong 5. Record 2-1985 is the third for Latilong 15.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (*Melanitta fusca*). Two immatures (11-1984); 31 Oct 1984; Grafton, Washington Co.; (JLG); photo: JLG. Five immatures (1-1985); 31 Oct 1984; Minersville Res., Beaver Co.; (SH); documented: SH. This is the most commonly reported species of scoter in Utah.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (*Buteo lineatus*). One (5-1985); 28 Dec 1984-8 Jan. 1985; St. George, Washington Co.; (MW.MB,SH,RG,ES,RS); documented: SH,ES; photo: ES; consulted: PL.

This hawk was first located on the St. George Christmas Bird Count by Merrill Webb. The date follows patterns for records in Nevada, Arizona, and portions of California outside of its breeding range. This is the second acceptable record for Utah.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*). One adult (7-1984); 3 Jun 1984; Capitol Reef National Park, Wayne Co.; (CS,AS,ST,DT,JS,LW,BM); documented: CS; consulted: KK,PL.

This is the **first record for Utah**. This species resembles a Turkey Vulture in flight, having a similar underwing pattern and characteristic teetering flight on uptilted wings. The bird was initially thought to be a Turkey Vulture until the long black tail with prominent white barring was noted. The riparian habitat of Capitol Reef is suitable habitat for this species. The observers were part of a Peregrine Falcon survey team and two were familiar with the species.

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL (*Larus glaucescens*). One immature (11-1984); 20 Nov 1984; Provo City Landfill, Utah Co.; (DF); documented: DF; photo: (DF).

This is the **first record for Utah**. One of ten photographs submitted was of a large first winter full which clearly shows white primaries that are uniformly colored on the uppersides and

somewhat silvery on the undersides. The bill is large and all black. A second photo, taken at an angle or with a film aberration, made the gull appear quite light headed and long billed, causing some initial reservations from one reviewer that a Glaucous/Herring hybrid had not been ruled out. This possible hybrid was not addressed in the written description. The photographs were further reviewed by a number of persons knowledgeable of Glaucous-winged Gull and the general feeling was that the gull was correctly identified. Gull identification can be extremely difficult, even for those persons with extensive field experience. Individuals within a species can vary greatly; there are many plumages and stages of molt between those plumages as well as numerous hybrids and aberrant plumages. Albinism and leucism are also often seen in gulls. All must be ruled out before a record can be accepted. The excellent in-flight photograph of the subject bird allowed all those possibilities to be ruled out for this new state record.

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*). One male (8-1985); 8 May 1985; Zion National Park, Washington Co.; (JT,8B,SH); documented: JT,SH.

The normal range of this species includes Arizona where it is common throughout the central and southern mountains. It is known to straggle from its breeding range at all seasons except early spring. This is the **first accepted record for Utah**.

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*). One (2-1983); 25 Dec 1982-late May 1983; Salt Lake City, Salt Lake Co.; (SL,TM,JA); documented: SL; photo: SL.

Evidence indicates that this species is expanding its range westward.

BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER (*Polioptila melanura*). One male, one female, one unidentified (8-1984); 9 Jun 1984; Lytle Ranch, Beaver Dam Wash, Washington Co.: (BB,ES,RS,SH,BD,MW); documented: ES,SH; photo: BB. One male, one female (9-1985); 11 May 1985; Lytle Ranch, Beaver Dam Wash, Washington Co.; (SH,JB,CM,RS,DJ); documented: SH.

Record 8-1984 represents the **first accepted record for the state** and the first report of attempted nesting. Two birds, a male and a female, were observed building a nest in a catclaw acacia and were joined briefly by a third possibly female bird. The nest was approximately half completed on 9 June and was completed on 12 June. The nest was empty when checked by Merrill Webb two and one half weeks later, indicating that the nesting attempt was not successful, although the birds were still in the area.

Record 9-1985 was found on the west side of Beaver Dam Wash about one mile north of the previous record. A pair was also noted earlier in 1985 in the same location as Record 8-1984, indicating that at least two pairs are present in the Wash.

VARIED THRUSH (*Ixoreus naevius*). One adult male (3-1985); 17-18 Dec 1984; Cedar City, Iron Co.; (LR,SH); documented: SH; photo: SH.

This is the second accepted record for Latilong 19.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*). One (3-1984); 9 Mar 1984; Salt Lake City, Salt Lake Co.; HBS; documented: HBS.

Many observers felt that Mockingbirds had increased significantly in portions of northern Utah in 1984.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*). One adult male (10-19a5); 11 May 1985; Lytle Ranch, Beaver Dam Wash, Washington Co.; (RH,JL,ES,SH,CM,JB,BW,DJ); documented: SH,ES.

This is the eighth record for Latilong 19 and the fourth record for Beaver Dam Wash.

KENTUCKY WARBLER (*Oporornis formosus*). One adult male (6-1985); 13 May 1985; Ogden, Weber Co.; (MK,JR,DP); documented: MK; photo: MK; consulted: GM.

This is the **first record for Utah** (see article on page 35).

HOODED WARBLER (*Wilsonia citrina*). One adult male (2-1984); 5 Nov 1983; Pintura, Washington Co.; (MW); documented: MW.

All field marks were observed at close range for this first accepted record for Utah. The November 5th date is consistent with records of this eastern vagrant in the states adjacent to Utah.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*). Eight (7-1985); 9 May 1985; Duchesne, Duchesne Co.; (BH); documented: BH.

Common Grackles were first reported as breeding in Utah in the Vernal area in 1976 and they have continued to breed at that location, which is the only verified breeding site in the state. The presence of eight birds 50 miles west of Vernal may indicate a further range expansion.

## UNACCEPTED RECORDS

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*). One (1-1983); 5 May 1982; Owl Creek Canyon, San Juan Co.; consulted: GM.CC,AP,JO,PL.

This record was previously accepted by the Committee, but was re-reviewed by the Committee based on new information. Every year, observers in California actively and successfully search for vagrant warblers. By 1980, 46 species had been recorded in the state, including 29 species of eastern warblers. The number of eastern warbler records between 1975 and 1979 averaged nearly 1,000 per year! (Roberson, D. 1980. Rare Birds of the West Coast). In spite of this intense activity, there are still no acceptable records of Olive Warbler in California. The species has never been recorded in Colorado (Charles Chase, pers. comm.). In addition, there is only one lowland record for Arizona and even that record is somewhat controversial, according to Allah Phillips (pers. comm.). The species is apparently not prone to wandering from its montane breeding habitat in any season.

This record was questioned by several out-of-state ornithologists. Owl Creek Canyon is a lowland, riparian habitat that can be considered atypical for this species. The description of the record which contains words like "flirting", "bouncing", and "it quickly went on its way" seems inappropriate for an Olive Warbler which is usually considered to be a slow moving species. The sketch of the dark mask was incorrect for this species, and the white in the tail, an easily seen field mark, was not mentioned. This would be the northernmost report in the U.S. for this species. Because of its significance, the Committee felt that an acceptable record of Olive Warbler must be accompanied by more thorough documentation.

OBSERVERS CITED: Bob Bond, Georgene Bond, Mark Bromley, Joelle Buffa, Carl Chindgren, Helen Chindgren, Bob Douglas, David Fischer, Jerome L. Gifford, Jewel A. Gifford, Roy Given, Bruce Heath, Steven Hedges, Ruth Henson, Dave Jensen, Merlin Killpack, Sally Layer, Joe Leigh, Burt Metcalf, Clyde Morris, Don Paul, Jack Rensel, Larry Royer, Jim Saylor, Christopher Schultz, Steve Scott, Ella Sorensen, Richard Sorensen, H.B. Spencer, Dan Taylor, Sherry Teresa, Kirk Topham, Jim Tucker, Anne Van Sweringen, Merrill Webb, Barbara Woolf.

CONSULTANTS CITED: Daniel Anderson, Charles Chase, Roger Clapp, Jon Dunn, John Hubbard, Kenn Kaufman, Hugh Kingery, Paul Lehman, Guy McCaskie, Allan Phillips, Ralph Schreiber.

## LATILONG CHANGES

The following changes in Latilong Category have resulted from the preceding record evaluations. The former latilong category of a species is included in parentheses.

Category 2 - Occurrence is documented by a verifiable photograph.

Brown Pelican (Category 4 - Provisional)

Black Scoter (Category 3 - Accepted sight records)

Kentucky Warbler (no previous record)

Category 4 - Provisional; documented by 1 or 2 accepted written descriptions.

Zone-tailed Hawk (no previous record)

Acorn Woodpecker (Category 5 - Unverified)

Hooded Warbler (Category 5 - Unverified)

Category 5 - Unverified; no accepted written documentation.

Olive Warbler (Category 4 Provisional)

Category 6 - Unestablished introduced species or escapees.

Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*) (Category 3 - Accepted sight records)

For an introduced species to be considered established, there must be (1) a minimum of 10 years of persistent records and (2) satisfactory evidence of maintaining a reasonably stable or increasing population through reproduction (1983 A.O.U. Checklist). Criterion 1 has been met for the Spotted Dove, but there is no evidence that its population is stable or increasing. Rather, it appears that its numbers are rapidly decreasing in the Salt Lake area, which is the only area in the state where it has been confirmed. To consider this species established is premature.

\*Source: *Utah Birds* 1(2):28-34