

# **CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the annual meeting conducted on 17 January 1998 at the offices of H.T. Harvey & Associates in Alviso, California (prepared by S.C. Rottenborn and R.A. Erickson)**

(numbered items correspond to numbered items on the proposed agenda dated 12 January 1998)

**Present:** Chairman R.A. Erickson; Vice Chairman S.B. Terrill; members K.L. Garrett, S.N.G. Howell, Guy McCaskie, Joseph Morlan, Peter Pyle, S.C. Rottenborn, Mike San Miguel, and D.S. Singer; and Secretary D.V. Blue.

**1. Called to Order** (Erickson presiding) at 0910

**2. Approval of the 1997 Minutes** (Garrett/San Miguel, 10-0)

**3. Discussion of Bylaw Changes Adopted Last Year, and Recommended Additional Changes**

Changes mandated last year still need to be made - Erickson [and Heindel] will do this.

Secretary Blue wants to split his current duties so that a new Secretary will take care of the Secretary's typical duties (receiving, numbering, and packaging records, sending them to Committee members, receiving and tallying votes, maintaining the database). Blue will continue to work on the web site and other projects, and is willing to maintain other secretarial duties until a new Secretary is ready to take on the work. Mike Rogers is willing to be Secretary but will need support from Blue and Erickson until he is prepared to take on all responsibilities of the Secretary; this transition should occur as quickly as possible. Blue and Erickson agreed to meet with Rogers in the S.F. Bay area to familiarize him with the role and duties of the Secretary.

McCaskie expressed interest in eventually taking on the role of a non-voting Secretary sometime after his current term expires.

Records should go to the same person who enters the data, so Secretary should always be the one to receive the records. It would be best if the Secretary (and his/her address) would remain consistent and not change so frequently, although the CBRC has little control over this.

Database management has taken a lot of Blue's time, but he has improved the system, so the job should be easier for the next Secretary. Thirty percent of submissions are electronic. Voting forms that specify recirculation requests and votes on "same bird" issues are needed and are being used.

It was decided that maintaining the Chairman position would be helpful, especially with a new Secretary who has no CBRC experience. Some questions that have been sent to the Secretary should be answered by the Chairman or by someone who has been chosen to speak for the Committee to the public.

A non-voting Secretary does not have any voting rights, either on records or in meetings.

**4. Election of Members**

**4a) Discussion of Future Membership**

The CBRC would preferably include members from a variety of locations in the state, but the best candidates should be elected. Lack of females on the Committee is not due to discrimination as some birders have intimated, but an effort should be made to encourage full Committee participation by women.

#### **4b) Discussion of Potential Ways to Increase Participation in the CBRC**

Currently, there is a fairly large number of candidates, and interest in the CBRC seems to be increasing. Increasing the rate of turnover of members on the Committee is good for PR. Morlan moved to limit terms of voting members to three years, followed by a mandatory sabbatical of one year before a member can be re-elected. This motion was seconded by Erickson, then amended by McCaskie so that this change to the bylaws would take effect on 18 January 1998 rather than affecting the single current member whose first term expired after the 1998 meeting (Howell). Under "Election and terms of office", the bylaws would be changed to read "one full term" rather than "two consecutive full terms" (exact wording of the bylaw change to be determined by Matt Heindel). This motion passed by a vote of 10 for, none against.

#### **4c) Discussion of Voting System**

The system of voting during elections of new members was discussed, with options of having each member vote for only three of the eight nominees or having each member rank-order all eight nominees. For the 1998 election, it was decided that members would rank-order all eight candidates but that the top three candidates on each member's list would be their true votes. Therefore, the voting system remained unchanged from past years, but the rank-order system was tested to determine whether the results would be the same under both systems.

#### **4d) Election**

Eight candidates for the CBRC (Chris Corben, Matt T. Heindel, Steve N.G. Howell, Alvaro Jaramillo, Nick Lethaby, Michael A. Patten, Don Roberson, and Michael M. Rogers) were discussed, and voting took place as described above. Heindel, Howell, and Jaramillo were elected to fill the vacancies left by Howell, Pyle, and Terrill. Comparison of the two methods for voting indicated that both methods would have given the same result in this election.

#### **5. Election of Secretary**

After voting for the CBRC membership took place, but before these votes were tallied, Erickson nominated Rogers as Secretary (Morlan seconded). Blue withdrew his name from consideration for this position, and Rogers was elected Secretary 10-0. Rogers is officially the Secretary of the CBRC after adjournment of the meeting, but Blue will retain the duties of Secretary until Rogers is ready to take them on.

#### **6. Election of Chairman**

San Miguel nominated Erickson for Chairman, Pyle seconded, and Erickson was elected 10-0.

#### **7. Election of Vice-Chairman**

Heindel was nominated by Erickson, seconded by Morlan, and elected Vice Chairman (10-0).

#### **8. State of the Committee**

##### **8a) Annual Reports**

- Singer and Garrett will send a draft of their report on 1995 records to members by the end of January 1998, needing comments from members within one month.

- San Miguel and McCaskie have volunteered to author the CBRC report on 1996 records; a draft of this report should be prepared by 15 August 1998.
- Morlan and Rottenborn will write the report on 1997 records.

Morlan will explore options for changing the format to make species accounts more readable but will include Phil Unitt in any discussion of changes that will require additional space in these reports. Options for making portions of the annual reports more “readable” were discussed, but it was decided that writing out all observers’ names requires too much space. Garrett and Singer will draft guidelines for writing CBRC annual reports and provide an electronic copy of the format of their report to future authors.

### **8b) Circulation**

Circulation of records has improved. Blue will work with Rogers on the use of email to circulate votes and comments, with the hope that in the future most/all votes and comments will be circulated electronically.

**8c) Budget** Currently appears adequate.

### **8d) Secretary’s Comments**

Blue urged members to be very careful about typos in their votes. Members should not ask for a record to be recirculated just to see the comments of others and, as much as possible, members should assist the Secretary in tracking down additional information on records.

### **8e) Assignments/Volunteers**

Garrett has been handling PR for the CBRC on the internet and will continue to do so. Other members may respond with their own opinions, but any opinions written on behalf of the CBRC should include the Committee's opinions as a whole rather than that individual's opinions.

The next WFO meeting will be 1-4 Oct. 1998 in Arcata. CBRC members should try to attend, and McCaskie volunteered to give an official CBRC presentation.

Blue has been working on the web site. Peter LaTourrette is webmaster of the WFO site ([www.wfo-cbrc.org](http://www.wfo-cbrc.org)). Morlan, Singer, and possibly Rogers will be involved with Blue in managing the site.

Blue has been cleaning up the database, transferring the master list into a database format. All 4500 records have been entered, but Blue still needs to "clean up" the master list.

Rottenborn will look into how origin issues are treated by other records committees in the hope of coming up with some guidelines for the evaluation of such records and in order to specify language on how the CBRC deals with records in which origin might be questionable. Garrett and Howell will look into surveys of captive-held birds.

## **9. Introduced Bird Subcommittee Report**

Garrett brought a hand-out and reviewed criteria for inclusion of introduced species on the state list. Several species (Red-crowned Parrot in particular) may be proposed for acceptance to the state list in the near future. Garrett, Morlan, and San Miguel will continue to serve on the subcommittee.

## **10. CBRC Review List**

Several changes to the review list were proposed or discussed. The primary criterion for adding or removing a species will continue to be whether or not the species has averaged four records per year over the previous 10 years; whether the species had 100 accepted records in the state was considered secondary.

Erickson moved to add Long-billed Murrelet to the review list (Garrett seconded, passed 10-0); the CBRC will review all known reports of this species in California. The addition of Brown Thrasher and Cape May Warbler to the review list was discussed, but no statistics on their recent occurrence in the state were available, and no motions were made. Erickson moved to add Blue-headed Vireo to the review list (San Miguel seconded, passed 10-0). The CBRC will initially review only those records of Blue-headed Vireo since the species was recognized in July 1997, except for specimens collected prior to that date. Rottenborn will track down all reports of this species prior to 1997 and will attempt to determine which of these records are adequately documented for review by the CBRC.

Terrill moved to have Tricolored Heron removed from the review list (San Miguel seconded, vote 0-10). This motion was not passed. The removal of Reddish Egret, Philadelphia Vireo, and Mourning Warbler was discussed, but no motions were made. Pyle moved to have Zone-tailed Hawk removed from the review list (Terrill seconded, vote 6-4). This motion was not passed. Pyle moved to have Scissor-tailed Flycatcher removed from the review list (McCaskie seconded, vote 7-3), and the species was removed from the list.

#### **11. Records for which the Chairman/Secretary need direction**

11a) 1996-074, Neotropic Cormorant, 4 May - 1 June 1996, N end Salton Sea RIV

McCaskie decided that his second sighting of this species was probably of the same individual involved in the first sighting, so the Committee will consider only one bird to have been present.

11b) 1997-172 Tricolored Heron, 6 Sep 1996, Santa Ana R. ORA

A video tape of this bird will be circulated

11c) 1994-004, Trumpeter Swan, 30 Nov 1993, Modoc NWR MOD

The record was rejected by nine members, some questioning natural occurrence and some questioning whether the population from which these birds originated was established. The record will stand as: Not Accepted, Natural Occurrence Questionable

11d) 1992-259, Little Stint, 27 Jul 1992, Bodega Bay SON

Hong Kong experts did not think that the photos depicted this species; the record will stand as rejected.

11e) 1996-073, Little Gull, 13-21 April 1996, N end Salton Sea RIV and

11f) 1996-082, Little Gull, 27 May 1996, N end Salton Sea RIV

The birds involved in these records were considered to be different individuals based on plumage differences.

11g) 1996-091, Sooty Tern, 6-7 July 1996, Santa Margarita River mouth SD and

11h) 1996-119, Sooty Tern, 21 July 1996, Bolsa Chica ORA

The birds involved in these records will be considered as only "possibly" the same individuals, based on the distance between these sightings.

11i) 1995-042 Black-billed Cuckoo, "March" 1918, Fresno County

This record was rejected because it was thought that the information on the label of this specimen was not correct (being written 10 years after the bird was collected). Stands as: Not Accepted, Identification Not Established

11j) 1987-026, Eastern Wood-Pewee, 21 Oct 86, Cayucos SLO

Following recent records of Eastern Wood-Pewees, the observer of the Cayucos bird thinks that this 1986 record is comparable, even though he did not support it heavily when originally submitted; this record was rejected by the CBRC but may be reconsidered at a later time.

11k) 1997-173 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 27 Oct 1995, Carbon Canyon Dam ORA

A video tape of this bird will be circulated.

11l) 1989-011, Eastern Meadowlark, 27-30 Oct 1985, SE Farallon I. SF

After reviewing comments from "experts," Pyle suggested that the CBRC allow the rejection of this record to stand. Recommendation followed.

**12. Records brought to the meeting at the request of a member.**

12a) 1993-118, Bulwer's Petrel, 10 Jul-1 Aug 1993, n. end Salton Sea RIV (San Miguel)

San Miguel added some information on the circumstances surrounding the sighting and identification of this bird, although these details do not add new and substantial information and the record will stand as rejected.

12b) the Iceland Gulls (see WB 26:28-30) (Howell)

10-18 Jan 1985	Bodega Bay SON	7-1985 (ph.)
17-26 Jan 1986	San Diego Bay/Otay SD	15-1986 (ph.)
6-23 Feb 1987	Arcata HUM	72-1987

The CBRC decided that the Committee should vote on records of Iceland Gulls as long as the AOU considers Iceland and Thayer's Gulls to be specifically distinct. The three records of Iceland Gull that had been tabled will be reviewed beginning on the round of voting applicable when they were tabled, and subsequent records submitted will be reviewed as well.

12c) 1995-084, Sandwich Tern, 4-11 Jul 1995, Pajaro R. mouth MTY (Morlan)

This record will be recirculated because new photos have been obtained.

**13. Records without a decision after completion of the third round.**

13a) 1985-068 Murphy's Petrel 3 Jun 1985, 12 m. W of SE Farallon, MRN 5-5

Listed in error; to be treated by Garrett and Singer.

13b) 1993-133 Streaked Shearwater 13 Aug 1993, Red Bluff, THE (ph.) 8-2

Will stand as Accepted, over Erickson's protestations.

13c) 1993-050 Little Stint 16-21 Sep 1992, Eureka, HUM (ph.) 5-5

Ron LeValley has been asked repeatedly to send a color copy of the photo that he submitted to Audubon Field Notes. The record will be reviewed with its existing documentation.

13d) 1994-147 Mississippi Kite 20 June 1994, Bishop, INY 6-3

On to fourth and final circulation.

13e) 1994-061 Greater Pewee 19 Sept - 7 Nov 1993, San Diego Zoo, SD 7-3

On to fourth and final circulation.

13f) 1994-043 Scarlet Tanager 9 Oct 1993, offshore from SD 8-2

On to fourth and final circulation.

13g) 1994-045 Painted Bunting 24 Aug 1993, Tijuana R. valley, SD 7-2

On to fourth and final circulation.

13h) 1994-069 Common Grackle 24-26 Jan 1994, Capitola, SCZ 5-4

On to fourth and final circulation.

**14. Supplemental List** No motion; Rottenborn is pursuing

## **15. Miscellaneous Items**

### **15a) Public relations/outreach**

The CBRC acknowledged the efforts of people transcribing RBAs and asking for details of rarities to be sent to the CBRC. [also, see 16 below] The web site should have reasons why the CBRC is important, why people should send in reports and details, and how to describe birds. Members should strive to give a human face to the Committee.

### **15b) CBRC Publications/Products**

15b-1 A progress report on the book on species that have been reviewed by the CBRC was given. Drafts of the sections not yet submitted to Patten should be finished by 1 May 1998; Patten is free to write unfinished sections thereafter. Authors can get updated copies of the master list from Blue. McCaskie reported that Chevron is willing to fund part of publication cost for the book.

15b-2 The CBRC Publication List was discussed. Whether a publication is given a CBRC number is to a large extent at the discretion of the author. In general, publications that are written by present or past CBRC members and which draw heavily on CBRC records or decisions should be given CBRC numbers, while those written by CBRC members that have little or nothing to do with CBRC records are generally not given such numbers. The CBRC Chairman will keep track of the numbering system. Within one month, members should send a list of their CBRC-related publications to Erickson, who will then circulate the list for comments.

15b-3 The California field checklist should be released under the aegis of the CBRC, not just from the WFO. The Supplemental List should appear on the field checklist, which is to be reprinted after publication of the 7th edition of the AOU list. McCaskie will spearhead efforts to update the field checklist.

15b-4 "Official" names as they appear on the website: "California Bird List of the Western Field Ornithologists' California Bird Records Committee" and "Review List of the Western Field Ornithologists' California Bird Records Committee"

15b-5 It was decided that all evidence of the occurrence of a species in the state (e.g., tape, video, nesting, etc.) should be annotated on the field checklist and the website. The CBRC must review all such evidence and find it acceptable before such annotations are made. Garrett will make the annotations indicating whether the species has nested in the state, and the CBRC will comment on and eventually approve these annotations.

Whether a feather should be considered a specimen for the purpose of annotation of the state list was discussed. The CBRC determined that minimal criteria for acceptance as a specimen include the fact that the feather must be clearly identifiable to species and must be accessioned in a museum collection. The CBRC will decide at another time whether feathers will be considered a "specimen". A tape of a Barred Owl could not be played, so this tape will be played at the 1999 meeting to establish that an acceptable tape recording of this species exists for California.

### **15c) The Internet**

15c-1 Don Roberson's concerns regarding the availability of the master list to the public were discussed, and the Committee decided to include a statement of proprietorship with the master list. Roberson and Michael Patten will be given primary credit for compiling this list.

15c-2 Blue, Morlan, and Singer will work with Steve Sosensky on an internet CBRC report form.

- 15c-3 Blue, Morlan, and Singer will look into the logistics and implications of posting photos and sketches of rarities on the web.
- 15d-4 All members agreed to have their email addresses posted on the CBRC web site except Pyle (and Howell, who does not have an email address).

**15d) CBRC Procedures**

- 15d-1 Erickson will continue to work with Manolis on the CBRC wagtail logo.
- 15d-2 A change in the system of numbering records was discussed. Changing this system from (XXX-19XX) to (19XX-XXX) will assist in sorting records in the database. The new numbering system was used throughout 1997 (albeit without the necessary change in the bylaws). There was some opposition to this change because it requires a bylaw change and because records under the old numbers have been published. Garrett moved that the bylaws be changed as follows. The previous text, "Affix to it a unique number, consisting of the year of receipt (not the year of sighting) preceded by a hyphen and the next available unused number, starting with '1', for that year" will be amended to read "Affix to it a unique number, consisting of two components separated by a hyphen: the year of receipt (not the year of sighting) and the next available unused number, starting with '001'". San Miguel seconded, and the motion passed 10-0. The new numbering system will be announced somewhere (in the book or an annual report) and it will be noted that the numbers for all records prior to 1997 were published in a different format.

Blue noted that a total of 567 reports were received in 1997 (although only 461 pertained to 1997 records).

- 15d-3 The Committee re-affirmed the rule prohibiting discussion of records during their first circulation, although such records can be discussed prior to circulation.
- 15d-4 Internet descriptions forwarded to the CBRC must be submitted directly to the Committee by the observer or be intended for submission to the Committee (e.g., by submission to Field Notes regional editors).
- 15d-5 All photo-only records should be circulated by the Secretary even if rejection is anticipated by the Secretary. For photos to be considered an acceptable record, they must be accompanied by the name of the observer, the location, and the date.
- 15d-6 New voting procedures will help to resolve same-bird issues more easily.
- 15d-7 Recirculated records will now be mixed with new records to expedite resolution of these records.
- 15d-8 The Committee discussed electronic images submitted for review. For now, the committee will not review electronic images due to the problem of archiving and future retrieval and review of these records. While it is easy to print out reports, there is no way to guarantee the final quality of color images (i.e. the image may not look like what was submitted. Significant changes in this area are anticipated in the future.
- 15d-9 Old records compiled by Roberson for statistical acceptance by the CBRC were discussed. Specifically, 10 records which had been rejected but which Roberson thought should be statistically accepted will be moved from "rejected" to Roberson's "Appendix B," a list of unreviewed records. These records were rejected because only scant details were available. The specific records:
  - Reddish Egret (1989-094) 18 Aug 1969 Pt. Mugu lagoon VEN
  - Emperor Goose (1989-094) 14-29 Dec 1968 (2) Limantour Estero MRN
  - Tufted Duck (1989-326) 23 Feb 1980 Cape Mendocino HUM
  - Yellow-throated Warbler (1989-093) 21-28 Sep 1969 Carmel R. mouth MTY
  - Yellow-throated Warbler (1988-020) 4 June 1978 SE Farallon I. SF
  - Yellow-throated Warbler (1988-021) 2-7 May 1980 SE Farallon I. SF

Prothonotary Warbler (1987-152) 30 Sept-11 Oct 1979 Malibu LA

Worm-eating Warbler (1987-204) 5 June 1973 SE Farallon I. SF

Worm-eating Warbler (1988-022) 28 May 1981 SE Farallon I. SF

Snow Bunting (1987-251) 26 Oct 1972 SE Farallon I. SF

[Note that this action was taken by general consensus late in the meeting and is technically in error. The Bylaws (section VI-H) state that a specific vote (requiring approval by all, or all but one, of the members voting at a meeting) is required to treat records in this manner. None of the records were discussed in any detail. In particular, the second Worm-eating Warbler record does not qualify for the "pre-1981 rule" agreed to in 1995, and will be recommended for removed from Appendix B by Erickson at the 1999 meeting.]

- 15d-10 Seabird records and the "same bird" issue were discussed. It was decided that the Secretary will have some discretion in considering records to be of the same bird or not prior to circulation, but in general, seabirds seen on different days will be considered different records for the sake of voting except in certain cases (e.g., sightings of a very rare species in the same location on consecutive days). All batches go to the Chairman first, so the Chairman can make any changes to the manner in which the records are batched before the rest of the Committee members see the records. It is generally easier to lump separate records as pertaining to the same bird than to split a record.

A 1977 record of Manx Shearwater from Monterey Bay (1979-029; Rejected) was discussed; this record may be reconsidered at a later time.

- 15d-11 The possibility of having the CBRC formally vote on records to species groups (when it is obvious that a review species was seen but when the documentation does not distinguish among several taxa) was discussed. Most members did not want to have such species groups voted on and included in the CBRC database; "White/Black-backed Wagtail" remains the only species group in which specific records (that have not been identified to species) are placed. The issue will likely be readdressed at a later time.

## **16. Closing**

### **16a) Site and date of next meeting**

Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo, 16 January 1999

### **16b) Appreciations**

The CBRC expressed its appreciation for the service of Pyle and Terrill on the Committee for the past six years and thanked Terrill, Rottenborn, Larry Spear, and H.T. Harvey & Associates for providing facilities and services for the 1998 meeting. [An informative gathering primarily devoted to gull slides and discussion was hosted the previous evening by these individuals at the H.T. Harvey office. Attendees included the entire CBRC; nominees Heindel, Jaramillo, and Lethaby; and Linda and Ryan Terrill.] The Committee thanked David Blue for his hard work on a variety of secretarial duties and for creating the database. The entire Committee (including Blue and Heindel) signed "thank you" notes (including the prototype wagtail logo) for Blue, volunteer Peg Stevens at WFVZ, and John Green, Stacy Peterson, Steve Sosensky, Adam Winer, and Joel Weintraub for transcribing RBAs and requesting that documentation of review species to be sent to the CBRC.

### **16c) Adjournment at 1945**