

California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) CBRC Annual Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting, Moore Lab of Zoology, Occidental College, Eagle Rock, CA

12 Jan 2024

Meeting called to order at 1:07 pm on 12 January 2024 (Chair presiding). Members: Justyn Stahl (Chair), Chris Howard (Vice Chair), Tom Benson (non-voting Secretary), Jon Feenstra, Rob Fowler (online), Kimball Garrett, Marky Mutchler, Gary Nunn (online), Peter Pyle, and Steve Tucker. Welcome and introductory comments by Stahl.

1. Review of Minutes of 2023 Meeting

The minutes from the annual meeting held 13–14 January 2023 (virtually) had been previously approved via email (30 November 2023). No one requested any changes at the 2024 meeting.

2. Minutes Keeping for the 2024 Meeting

Chair requested taking minutes be a shared responsibility. A recording of the meeting by Secretary increased the ease of minute-keeping. Minutes were kept in ~four-hour shifts with Stahl and Feenstra taking minutes.

--CLOSED SESSION--

3. Election of New Members

- a. Election of members (three-year terms). The terms of Rob Fowler, Chris Howard, and Justyn Stahl expire after the 2024 meeting.

Nominations:

Andy Birch

Matt Brady

Emma Cox

Mark Dettling

Jon Dunn

Dessi Sieburth

Matt Brady, Andy Birch, and Jon Dunn were elected.

Nominators agreed to notify nominees whether or not they were elected. A formal email will be sent to each nominee by the Secretary informing them of election results.

Precise wording will be at the Secretary's discretion, but at a minimum should include an introductory comment, a list of nominees, and those elected. Voting details shall not be included.

- b. Election of Chair (one-year term). Kimball Garrett was elected Chair (Stahl/Tucker) 8-0.
- c. Election of Vice Chair (one-year term). Jon Feenstra was elected Vice Chair (Stahl/Howard) 8-0.
- d. Election of Secretary (one-year term). Tom Benson was re-elected Secretary but would like to step-down at some point (Stahl/Tucker) 9-0.
- e. Discussion of member nomination and selection process – Stahl led a discussion of general considerations of potential Committee members. Each member should consider candidates based on their own priorities, but general considerations are:
 - i. Regional balance
 - ii. Age balance
 - iii. Experience balance (new members vs returning members with institutional knowledge)
 - iv. Diversity balance
 - v. Support of the CBRC, both by submission of records and by general support of the CBRC's mission. They need not agree with all CBRC decisions but are supportive of the process.

For the sake of discussion, the Committee reviewed the following criteria for Committee membership considered by the British Bird Records Committee (as published in *British Birds* in April 2017):

1. A widely acknowledged expertise in ID
2. Proven reliability in the field
3. A track record of high-quality submissions to local records committee
4. Experience with record assessment
5. Regional credibility
6. Capacity to handle large volume of record review
7. Capacity to work quickly and efficiently
8. Easy access to the internet

--OPEN SESSION--

2:33 pm

4. Bylaw Proposals

No changes to the bylaws were proposed.

5. Procedural Issues

- a. The code “T” was added to the checklist (joining, e.g., “I” for “Introduced,” and “P” for “At least on record supported by identifiable photograph,” following acceptance of Ainley’s Storm-Petrel, with the definition “Supported only by tracking or remote sensing data.”
- b. The Committee discussed various options for treatment of family names for the checklist, including eBird/Clements and AOS. The decision was made to bring the electronic (web) list in alignment with paper checklist, but no standardized family name treatment was decided upon.

6. Expedited Review

No comments or concerns on the process.

Suggested Additions

- Garganey (31 accepted records, 82% acceptance rate)*
- White-rumped Sandpiper (38 accepted records, 69% acceptance rate)
- Crested Caracara (22 accepted records, 56% acceptance rate)*
- Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (26 accepted records, 90% acceptance rate)
- Blue Jay (20 accepted records, 87% acceptance rate)
- Dusky Warbler (24 accepted records, 100% acceptance rate)*
- Field Sparrow (21 accepted records, 68% acceptance rate)
- Louisiana Waterthrush (25 accepted records, 89% acceptance rate)
- Cerulean Warbler (20 accepted records, 74% acceptance rate)*

Species marked with * were discussed at least briefly, others were not discussed or had unanimous support. All species but Crested Caracara were added to the Expedited Review List (Tucker/Fowler) 9-0, with Crested Caracara not added due to concerns regarding origin.

7. Review List

Additions

Chimney Swift was discussed, given its decline in occurrence in California and its steep decline in the east. No proposal made to add to Review List, but Garrett requested it be added to the agenda for the 2025 meeting.

Removals

Mississippi Kite was **removed** from the Review List (Mutchler/Tucker) 9-0.

White Wagtail was **removed** from the Review List (Stahl/Tucker) 7-2 (Garrett, Pyle voted against removal). Brief discussion, considering it is an interesting bird and a

somewhat iconic west coast vagrant, subspecific ID is often debatable, but are we gaining any new information with 57 records?

Cassin's Sparrow was **removed** from the Review List (Feenstra/Howard) 9-0. With 109 records, and irruptive, now "we're not learning anything" by continuing to review it, some concern regarding confusion with Botteri's Sparrow years ago.

Winter Wren (doesn't meet 50 threshold yet, but currently 39 accepted records). Pyle interested in reviewing all old records as "it used to be, 'it sounds like a song sparrow,' and now we're looking at curly-cues in sonograms." A lot have sounded intermediate, and some prefer to "trust my ear on the issue" as opposed to sonograms that have been recorded on various equipment and are often of poor quality. However, Benson and others agreed it is better to look at objective criteria on the screen. Tucker brought up the lack of confidence in "tweener" identification and effort invested. No motion, but likely to be discussed in 2025.

3:30 pm BREAK until 3:56 pm.

8. Fourth and Final Records

2021-092, Mexican Duck, KER

Feenstra and Howard had no further issues, but agree more photos ideal.

2021-108, Masked Booby, SD

Pyle - Not a total slam dunk based on the submitted photos but after examining more photos in eBird, the greenish feel of the bill, without horn/brown, and bill not concave, would vote to accept, as based in particular on one photo by Mutchler. Main issue here appeared that only 2 photos circulated with the record when better quality images were available on eBird.

2022-025, Glossy Ibis, BUT

Howard and Nunn OK with it after re-review prior to meeting.

2021-146, Winter Wren, VEN

Committee discussed what it sounds like, and House and Feenstra had provided screenshots of sonograms showing clear harmonic bands as ~3kHz. Benson relayed that Nathan Pieplow had told Tom him that (paraphrasing) it's more complicated than his earbirding.com article, but that WIWR always show harmonic bands, and when excited can give PAWR like calls. Whereas PAWR don't give WIWR calls. However it seems more study may be needed on variation in PAWR calls. Pyle discussed appearance, which may show some average differences but many think plumage is not useful for separating these two species. Several members agreed appearance is variable and also dependent on lighting and camera angle in photos.

2022-008, Curve-billed Thrasher, SBE

Known location for this species for multiple winters, a trailer park with rock garden and cactus, and the birds here are fed. Obviously a weak description, but something like this would probably be accepted with “continuing” in eBird.

9. Records Brought to Meeting By Request

2021-170 and 2022-038, Mexican Duck, SD

Feenstra’s request for recirculation withdrawn. There were some potential issues raised by Feenstra regarding identification in summer. Records stand as accepted.

2023-019, Jack Snipe, HUM.

Pyle pointed the Committee to a video of Jack Snipe (not of the bird in question) feeding and matched the unique bobbing behavior of this species that was described for this bird. Most agreed the description sounded good, but that the distance and lack of photo (or attempted photo given the time of observation) made it tough to accept a third state record. Nunn pointed out they typically don’t forage in the open as this bird appeared to be doing. Even with rejection, Pyle asked that the video be linked in the account and be mentioned in the CBRC report.

<https://media.ebird.org/catalog?assetId=201078021>

2023-055A, Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrel, ORA

Stahl had issues with this perhaps being something else since it was on the coast on first day. Tucker noted that there were more (Accepted) birds the next morning. Will be recirculated. Stahl likely to accept.

2023-049, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, VEN

Reviewed photos and discussed tail length and relative size to BVSH, had been ID’d from photos after the fact. Garrett’s request for recirculation withdrawn. Record stands as accepted.

2023-099, White Wagtail, HUM

Weird call, but Garrett had found a match of an “advertising call” in the literature, which is given year round, will add sonogram image to record. Nunn and others concerned that it wasn’t immediately identified given how showy of a bird it is. Will be recirculated.

1990-039, Rufous-backed Robin, SBE

Initially rejected, but original field notes discovered and the issue with the year (had been incorrect, as is often the case in January) had been corrected by the observer. The correct year was a “flight year” for that species. Will be re-evaluated based on recent notes that indicate a change in date. Stahl/Tucker, 9-0

2008-161, Oriental Greenfinch, SF

Given three intervening records (Oregon, BC, and Humboldt), this record from SEFI will now be recirculated. Benson to track down (WFVZ?) photo that Brady had attached to the record. Stahl/Feenstra, 9-0

10. Date issues with unpublished records

2023-009, Tundra Bean-Goose, LA

Tucker wanted to discuss date range, given rumors that bird was moved from the Antelope Valley to Earvin Magic Johnson Recreation Area in Willowbrook. No motion to change, just suspicion and innuendo.

2023-109, Louisiana Waterthrush, SD

Committee was only given documentation for first day, but bird was supposedly present from 5–9 November. Reports from 8 November were dubious (some observers heard other playback, one submitted OCWA calls, etc.), but 9 November report from Jimmy McMorran was compelling. No motion to recirculate, record stands as Accepted for the full date range.

11. Date issues with published records

No issues.

Break for dinner 5:51 to 6:50pm

12. Same Bird Issues

2023-014, Common Black Hawk, RIV

Present 16 Apr–23 Jul 2023. Same as 2022-011/027, present 13 Apr–10 Aug 2022? Circumstantial evidence, no noticed plumage differences, but same place at same time in two consecutive years. 9-0 same bird.

2023-048 and 2023-050, Wedge-tailed Shearwater , SCZ

Pyle thought the poor photos (light morph?) in 2023-050 didn't match the description (dark morph), a feeling echoed by Nunn. Some thought perhaps a Pink-footed Shearwater had been photographed by accident. Description is clearly of a dark morph. No motion to re-evaluate same bird. Stands as is, accepted and same bird. Pyle suggested excluding photo as evidence for this record in the annual report.

13. Arctic/Kamchatka Leaf Warbler records

Reviewed Pyle and Tietz's leaf warbler Powerpoint slides, in which they had attempted to rank the identifiability of a number of records, based on a variety of characters. Although they rated some as "probably" identifiable, outside opinion warranted caution, and we opted to only re-evaluate the SLO record (1996-158, already awaiting circulation based on previous discussion at the 2022 meeting) which has a description of the call from Curtis, in addition to positive plumage and vocal characters per Pyle/Tietz. The other 4 records proposed (1995-106, 2005-204, 2007-177, and 2012-149) lacked any first hand description of call, and no motion was made to recirculate any of these four records, although they could be re-evaluated if 1996-158 is accepted..

14. First-cycle Slaty-backed Gull Records

Historically, the CBRC has been reluctant to endorse first-cycle Slaty-backed Gull records. After initially being rejected, 2017-006 was recirculated (2017-006A) following new information (photos of birds from Japan by Alvaro Jaramillo). Then at the 2023 meeting, the committee agreed to bring all photographed first-cycle records to the 2024 meeting to discuss recirculation. In the meantime, Jaramillo and Pyle had provided opinion on whether or not they were good candidates for Slaty-backed Gulls. Specific details of these records were not discussed at the 2024 meeting, but the Committee opted to recirculate six records recommend by Jaramillo and Pyle: 2011-258, 2012-018, 2017-022, 2017-027, 2018-086, and 2019-209. The other six records were not recommended for recirculation: 1998-209, 2008-146, 2009-058, 2011-247, 2013-292, and 2014-010. Motion to recirculate (Pyle/Stahl), voted 9-0 to recirculate the six records recommended by Jaramillo and Pyle.

15. eBird Exotics

At the 2023 meeting, the committee discussed whether or not it should formally review reports of exotics from eBird that had the potential to reach California naturally. The Introduced Birds Subcommittee, along with Justyn Stahl, discussed the issue and concluded that formal review was not necessary, and that the committee's treatment of exotic species in Rare Birds of California (and the IBS's future Exotic Species document) were sufficient to address the issue. No further discussion was had at the meeting.

16. Other Issues

There was discussion about encouraging people to submit documentation rather than it having to be mostly mined from eBird. Request for Secretary to include "more documentation in eBird" on Cover Sheet.

17. Annual Reports

47th report (2021 records): R. Terrill is close to having it circulated to committee members for comment.

48th report (2022 records): Benson taking over lead author from Stahl, as it hadn't been started.

49th report (2023 records): Garrett, Mutchler, Benson to contribute (lead author not discussed).

18. Budget

Members are encouraged to donate to cover the costs of page charges for publication of reports in *Western Birds*. The 2024 budget includes \$1600 for the 47th and 48th reports, and \$200 for CBRC expenses (e.g., Dropbox, other costs). In 2023, the Committee only spent \$120 for dropbox. WFO file maintenance costs are covered by WFO's annual donation of \$250.

19. Introduced Birds Subcommittee Report

Garrett said Pin-tailed Whydah and Swinhoe's White-eye will be something to watch in the future for consideration on the state list, though they may currently fall short of the minimum breeding requirement of 15 years. Egyptian Goose and Mute Swan are possible future considerations, as well.

20. Outreach and Public Relations

Nothing prior to the conclusion of the 2024 meeting.

21. Website

Login info for the member resources section of californiabirds.org was shared in person.

22. Secretary

Spoken about at the top of the meeting (and at the 2022 and 2023 meetings), but CBRC needs to find a replacement for Benson. Naresh Satyan and Matt Brady were mentioned as possible options. Attempts to recruit Chris Dean and Char Glacy in 2023 were unsuccessful.

23. Next Meetings

WFO conference, San Diego, CA, 9–13 Oct 2024. Garrett, Pyle, and Benson will be there and one could present CBRC update.

CBRC annual meeting, 11 January 2025. Scheduled for Northern California, although HT Harvey may be downsizing and their office may not be available. Committee should search for alternative venue. Given the success of this one-day meeting, the next meeting is scheduled for one full day as well.

24. Acknowledgements

- John McCormack, Jenny Wong, Alana Pizarro and the Moore Lab of Zoology for hosting
- Rob Fowler, Chris Howard, and Justyn Stahl for their service to the CBRC
- Tom Benson for his critical work as Secretary
- Joe Morlan for his work updating the CBRC website
- Jim Tietz for maintaining updates to "Rare Birds" on our web site

- WFVZ and Linnea Hall for their archiving services
- Phil Unitt and Western Birds reviewers for editing and publishing CBRC reports
- Cliff Hawley for operating our Facebook crowd-funding campaign

Meeting adjourned by Stahl at 8:13 pm

Group photo (Feenstra) included those in person, will need to add Fowler and Nunn.