

REPORTS FROM THE CFO OFFICIAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

Jack Reddall, Chairman
CFO Official Records Committee
4450 South Alton Street
Englewood, Colorado 80110

RUFF/REEVE - - - - Philomachus pugnax

The CFO Official Records Committee has thoroughly reviewed the documentation submitted with regard to the reported occurrence (Colorado Field Ornithologist, Number 9, July 1971, page 22) of a Reeve at the Cherry Creek Reservoir on September 13, 1964. In addition to the submitted written documentation by the observer, the Committee was able to examine four good color photographs, also submitted by the observer. Following an exhaustive study, the Committee ruled to reject this report feeling that the bird in question most probably was an immature Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Therefore, the Ruff/Reeve remains an invalid species for the state of Colorado.

Chairman's comment:

The CFO Official Records Committee spent more than nine months researching this report before rendering its decision since field separation of immature Buff-breasted Sandpipers and Reeves is extremely tricky unless the conspicuous white oval patches on either side of the base of the tail of the Reeve is observed. Normally, the Reeve must be flushed in order to see these oval patches clearly. Unfortunately the four color photographs do not show these patches since the bird was standing in all pictures. The written documentation made no mention of the presence of oval tail patches. The Chairman discussed the report extensively with the observer on several occasions and the observer was uncertain as to whether he noticed any oval patches. Nevertheless, the Committee felt that the pictures were of good enough quality to pursue the matter further. The four photographs were submitted to John Bull, Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, New York City who was kind enough to compare them with the skin collection at the Museum along with Mr. Harold Wellander of Oakdale, New York. Mr. Bull felt convinced that the pictures in question depicted a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Mr. Wellander also requested Dr. Phil Buckley, Head, Ornithology Department, Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York to examine the pictures. Dr. Buckley concurred with John Bull's identification, stating further that he felt the bird was most likely an immature. The Chairman next forwarded the photographs to Van Remsen, Department of Zoology, University of California (Berkeley) who passed them on to Guy McCaskie. Mr. McCaskie stated unequivocally that the bird was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Dr. Joseph Jehl, San Diego Natural History Museum, agreed with Mr. McCaskie's opinion.

The Chairman (who saw exactly a bird in the same plumage at Cherry Creek Reservoir, August 28, 1971--a Buff-breasted Sandpiper without white oval tail patches) and Van Remsen examined the skin collection at the University of California (Berkeley) of both species. While there are a few subtle differences in coloration, fall Reeves and immature (or fall) Buff-breasted Sandpipers bore a remarkable resemblance although there were many size differences among the Reeves. The only evidence speaking in favor of the bird being a Reeve came from Mr. Alan Baldrige of Pacific Grove, California who had considerable experience with Ruffs/Reeves in Great Britain. However, the Committee felt that the evidence was overwhelming in favor of the bird being a Buff-breasted Sandpiper and so rendered its final decision. All documentation, photographs (including a set taken by Van Remsen comparing skins of the two species in question from the Berkeley collection) and correspondence are on file with the Official Records Committee for all to inspect should they so desire. In closing, it should be pointed out that there is a good lesson for all of us as field observers to learn from this report--always attempt to see all field marks for any species suspected of being as rare as a Reeve would be in Colorado. All the observer had to do was flush the bird for positive identification at the time.

June 30, 1973

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VAUX'S SWIFT - - - - Chaetura vauxi

The CFO Official Records Committee has investigated the report of a sighting of a Vaux's Swift five miles west of Delta, Delta County on October 29, 1972. Following a review of the documentation presented to substantiate this report, the Committee voted to reject it as being too sketchy and unconvincing. Therefore, the Vaux's Swift is considered invalid as a species for inclusion on the Official State List at this time.

Chairman's comment:

Differentiating Chimney Swifts from Vaux's Swifts in the field is a most challenging task at best and even in good light under ideal conditions, it can be quite tricky. In a letter dated October 2, 1971 from Guy McCaskie of Imperial Beach, California to Dr. William A. Davis (then of Grand Junction), Mr. McCaskie, discussing field identification of these two species, writes:

"The Chimney Swift most closely resembles the Vaux's Swift, but it is a slightly larger and darker bird. A Vaux's Swift, when seen in good light, is a dusky brown bird; it has a very pale

throat, cheeks and upper breast, with this paleness often extending well down towards the belly; the top of the head is darkest (sometimes appears to have a cap); the rump is always noticeably pale, and contrasts sharply with the blackish tail. The Vaux's Swift flies with a very rapid wing-beat and does very little gliding. One rarely hears the Vaux's Swift calling, for the voice is less intense than that of the Chimney Swift, the notes are all run together, and it is on a higher pitch. The Chimney Swift appears blackish, and the pale chin and throat area contrasts sharply with the blackish upper breast (I have never seen such sharp contrast on a Vaux's Swift); the rump area is only slightly paler than the rest of the back, and there is never the conspicuous pale rump present on most Vaux's Swifts. In flight the Chimney Swift does much gliding on wings that appear curved backward and downward in 'bow shape', and the wing-beats are much less rapid than those of the Vaux's Swift. The call of the Chimney Swift is quite loud; it is a series of clearly detached 'pwi - pwi - pwi - pwi' notes, and frequently heard when the birds are present."

Mr. McCaskie concludes by saying:

"Here in California we see many hundreds of Vaux's Swifts in April and May, and therefore become very familiar with them; their manner of flight, flight silhouette, calls and general plumage patterns and colors are deeply entrenched in our minds by late May. When a Chimney Swift puts in an appearance, it looks larger and flies with less hurried mannerisms. However, positive identification of a Chimney Swift requires caution and care, and there are still small unidentified dark swifts seen in southern California during the summer months. There is always the danger of a soiled Vaux's Swift (one roosting in chimneys) looking like a Chimney Swift as far as plumage characters go, but flight mannerisms and call notes should be diagnostic."

Dr. Davis, in his Birds in Western Colorado (1969), makes reference (page 21) to Chimney and Vaux's Swifts as follows:

". . . status and identification by sight uncertain; short gray swifts seen migrating with White-throated Swifts on three occasions could be either species."

Certainly all Colorado field observers should be on the alert for small Chaetura swifts in the western part of the state. It is not impossible that both Chimney and Vaux's Swifts occur here. Hopefully it will not be too long until the Committee receives a well-documented sighting which will validate the occurrence of the Vaux's Swift in our state.

July 4, 1973

BLACK-EARED BUSHTIT - - - - Psaltriparus melanotis

The CFO Official Records Committee has examined all documentation submitted in connection with the reported occurrence of a Black-eared Bushtit in the Canon City area (Fremont County) during July of 1971. An account of the occurrence of this species was published in the Colorado Field Ornithologist, Number 10, November 1971, page 19. Following two rounds of voting and direct discussion at its meeting in Durango on May 18, 1973, the Committee decided not to accept this report on the basis of the confusion surrounding this being a distinct and separate species from the Common Bushtit (Psaltriparus minimus). Therefore, the Black-eared Bushtit is not considered as valid for inclusion on the Official State Bird List.

Chairman's comment:

This was a most difficult decision for the Committee as evidenced by the voting. Obviously the Committee can not establish what is and what is not a legitimate species. This is left for the professional ornithologists to wrestle with. Currently the Black-eared Bushtit enjoys the distinction as a full and separate species on the A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds, Fifth Edition (1957). However, there is a good deal of controversy as to its exact status among some of the professionals with some claiming it to be conspecific with P. minimus. The next edition (or possibly a future supplement) to the North American Check-List probably will settle this issue. Based on the detailed documentation submitted by and the experience of the observer involved, the Committee readily accepted the fact that a "black-eared" variety was indeed seen. However, until more is learned about these varieties and conclusions are made to determine its exact status, the Committee felt obligated not to accept the Black-eared Bushtit at this time. Probably the taking of a specimen some time in the future will be necessary to provide the answer as to the status of "black-eared" forms in our state. The Official Records Committee encourages and welcomes further documentation being submitted regarding this matter.

July 4, 1973

CACTUS WREN - - - - Campylorhynchus brunneicapillum

The CFO Official Records Committee has investigated the reported sighting of a single Cactus Wren from near Campo, Baca County on June 11, 1968 (Colorado Field Ornithologist, No. 6, Summer 1969, page 26). During the course of its investigations the Committee contacted the two observers involved and subsequently received reports in writing from both. Unfortunately, neither observer kept any notes at the time of the sighting and thus were unable to provide adequate documentation to substantiate their report. Therefore, the Committee was forced to reject this report due to the lack of sufficient supporting details. The Cactus Wren remains to be added to the Official State List for the time being.

Chairman's comment:

This is a classical example of an age old problem of not recording good field notes at the time of an observation. There is a strong possibility that both observers saw a Cactus Wren in the Campo area (certainly the habitat was good), but in view of the lack of timely and adequate details, the Committee had no choice but to find as it did. The Cactus Wren should be looked for and expected in the drier areas of the southern part of our state and it should be only a matter of time before good records are presented to the Committee for consideration. For those field observers who are uncertain as to what is rare or unusual in our state, they should refer to the Official State List of the Birds of Colorado as published in issue No. 17 of the Colorado Field Ornithologist. All species earmarked with a double asterisk ** have been designated as rare or unusual and for which the Committee is interested in receiving written (and photographic) documentation. Anything not on the list obviously would be new for the state. In both cases, any sightings should be well documented with good and timely details.

July 8, 1973

"LAWRENCE'S" WARBLER - - - - Vermivora "lawrencei"

The reported sighting of a hybrid "Lawrence's" Warbler in the Golden (Jefferson County) area on May 14, 1963 has been reviewed by the Official Records Committee. Based upon the documentation submitted, the Committee has ruled to reject this report and as such should not be included on the Official State List of the Birds of Colorado.

Chairman's comment:

Hybrid warblers (Vermivora chrysoptera x pinus) resulting in "Brewster's" Warbler (Vermivora "leucobronchialis") and "Lawrence's" Warbler (Vermivora "lawrencei") pose a very complex situation and considerably more work is required into the intricate relationship of these forms. The subject is discussed in some detail by John Bull in his Birds of the New York Area (1964) pages 365-368 and by Richard H. Pough, Audubon Land Bird Guide (1946) pages 152-155. Both Blue-winged Warblers and Golden-winged Warblers are quite rare and irregular migrants in the western United States and as such the occurrence of either of the extremely rare hybrids in our state most certainly would be a noteworthy record. To emphasize this point, consider these sets of statistics (Bull, 1964):

During an 18-year breeding census (1916-1933) at Wyanokie-Wanaque (Passaic County, New Jersey), a hilly region averaging 500 feet with elevations up to 1200 feet, the Golden-winged Warbler outnumbered the Blue-winged Warbler by more than 2 to 1 and the "Brewster's" Warbler (dominant) outnumbered the "Lawrence's" Warbler (recessive) by more than 3 to 1. The following figures represent "total" breeding adults during the 18-year period: Golden-wing, 948; Blue-wing, 445; "Brewster's", 13; and "Lawrence's", 4.

October 16, 1973

OLIVE WARBLER - - - - Peucedramus taeniatus

The CFO Official Records Committee has reviewed documentation submitted to support the sighting of an Olive Warbler from the vicinity of McCoy, Eagle County on May 23, 1970 (Colorado Field Ornithologist, No. 9, July 1971, p. 32). Based on the documentation supplied, the Committee has ruled to reject this report. The Olive Warbler, therefore, is not included on the Official State List for Colorado.

Chairman's comment:

This report unquestionably was the most difficult for the Committee to handle since its inception. After two rounds of consideration and voting, unanimous agreement from all seven Committee Members could not be attained. As a result the Olive Warbler report was discussed in detail at the Committee's first meeting in Durango on May 18, 1973. Since unanimous agreement (a basic criteria for acceptance of a species new to the state) still could not be attained following this discussion, the report had to be rejected. The primary stumbling blocks connected with acceptance centered around the following facts:

- 1) This is a species of the open coniferous forests of the mountains of the southwestern United States, and so far as can be determined has never before been observed or recorded outside of its normal range. As such, one of the members (the Chairman) felt that all basic and diagnostic field marks should have been observed and recorded. Unfortunately, if observed, the following key marks were not reported:
 - a) No mention made whether there were any flank markings or not (the Olive Warbler has none).
 - b) No mention made of the decidedly forked tail.
 - c) No mention made as to whether the back was marked with striping or not (it is unmarked in the Olive Warbler).
 - d) No mention made of whether the rather conspicuous white areas in the end of the tail (not at all unlike that displayed by the Hooded Warbler) were seen or not.
- 2) Neither of the observers had had previous experience with the bird.
- 3) The observers did not provide any basis for eliminating any other closely appearing species or discuss what other species it might have been.

The Committee recognized the observers involved as reliable and experienced. It is regrettable more clearly defined details were not submitted on such a rare bird.

July 8, 1973

TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD - - - - Agelaius tricolor

The CFO Official Records Committee has reviewed documentation presented to support the sighting of one male Tricolored Blackbird present in the Colorado Springs area from April 18 through April 20, 1969. The Committee voted to reject this report as far too unconvincing to establish the occurrence within Colorado of a species with such a restricted range. Therefore, the Tricolored Blackbird is not acceptable for inclusion on the Official State List based on this report.

Chairman's comment:

A verified occurrence of such a colonial and restrictive species within the boundaries of our state would be truly astonishing. With the exception of the white borders to the red epaulets, other differences between A. tricolor and A. phoeniceus are minor and quite subtle -- tricolor having a glossy blue-black plumage with a silky luster, dark red epaulets, shorter bill and primaries. Several experts also feel that the color range of the area bordering below the red epaulets within phoeniceus is large enough to encompass that of tricolor thus making the collection of a specimen almost a must in order to satisfactorily accept the occurrence of the Tricolored Blackbird anywhere outside of its normal range.

July 8, 1973

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE - - - - Cassidix mexicanus

The Official Records Committee has completed investigation of documentation (written and photographic) submitted to substantiate the observation of a Boat-tailed Grackle from Gunnison, Gunnison County (specifically on and near the campus of Western State College) commencing with the summer of 1970 and each subsequent summer through 1973. Based on the documentation submitted, the Committee has ruled to accept this record and include it on the Official State List of the Birds of Colorado. An adult male of this species was first observed and reported on May 16, 1970 by Dr. A. Sidney Hyde, Mr. Don Radovich and Dr. R. E. Marquardt, all of Gunnison. The bird remained in the Gunnison area until about mid-August of 1970 when it disappeared. It, or another bird, reappeared in May of 1971 and took up residency in the same general area, remaining throughout the summer (specific details not available). The bird again summered in the same place in 1972 (specific details again not provided). During the two years, 1971 and 1972, there is some question, as yet unanswered, as to whether or not a female was also present. On April 18, 1973, probably the same bird took up residency almost in the exact same locale as in previous years. This time, Mr. David Galinat of Palisade, Colorado, was able to secure a number of excellent color photographs which were forwarded to the Committee to enhance the reports already received from the three Gunnison observers.

Chairman's comment:

The Official Records Committee wishes to express its deep appreciation to the three original observers, Dr. A. Sidney Hyde, Mr. Don Radovich and Dr. R. E. Marquardt for their patience and understanding in dealing with the Committee on this report. Unquestionably the Chairman pestered these three gentlemen unmercifully for supporting documentation of this first record of a Boat-tailed Grackle in Colorado. The Committee is grateful for their endurance and cooperation. The Committee is also appreciative of the efforts of one of its charter members, Dr. William A. Davis now of Tucson, Arizona, for his perseverance and assistance in pursuing this report with the Gunnison observers.

For those who like to be up-to-date, the Gunnison bird is now listed as the Great-tailed Grackle (Cassidix mexicanus) in accordance with the "Thirty-second Supplement to the A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds". This species can be differentiated from the Boat-tailed Grackle (Cassidix major) by at least one reliable field mark - its yellow eye (C. major has a brown or dark eye).

October 2, 1973

HOARY REDPOLL - - - - Acanthis hornemanni

The Official Records Committee has reviewed written documentation surrounding the reported sighting of three Hoary Redpolls in the Golden area of Jefferson County on February 21, 1964. Based upon the documentation presented, the Committee has ruled not to accept this record as a new species to be added to the Official State List of the Birds of Colorado.

Chairman's comment:

This is another one of those extremely tricky observations - field separation of "look-alike" (Common Redpoll vs. Hoary Redpoll) species. Although these two species are not impossible to distinguish in the field, it requires a most careful and critical examination under excellent viewing conditions in order to segregate the two, even when both species are present in the same flock. In rejecting this report, the Committee was not necessarily questioning the observers' abilities; rather the Committee was simply not convinced of the accuracy of this sighting based on the details submitted. It should be noted that the Committee has set a high standard for itself in order to accept a new species for Colorado where the area of doubt has been reduced to a bare minimum (acceptance requires a unanimous vote). It is felt that it is far better to reject a Sight Report where there is an element of doubt than to grant acceptance for the sake of building an impressive State List. In this way, and only in this way, can the credibility of the Colorado State List be ensured. This may appear very arbitrary to many, but nevertheless this is the posture the Official Records Committee has established for itself. In conclusion, the Chairman would like to point out once again that convincing documentation must be submitted for all Sight Reports as acceptance hinges on this contingency. Hoary Redpolls should be expected in Colorado. Unquestionably a convincing report of a sighting within our boundaries will be forthcoming in the future.

September 27, 1973

SMITH'S LONGSPUR - - - - Calcarius pictus

The Official Records Committee has completed its review of the reported sighting of "several" Smith's Longspurs along U.S. Highway #385 near the crossing of the Republican River in Yuma County on April 29 and 30, 1966. Based upon the documentation submitted, the Committee has ruled to reject this report thus excluding it from the Official State List of the Birds of Colorado.

Chairman's comment:

This is a clear case of good probability of a species occurring in the right place and at the right time, but unfortunately only very meager documentation to substantiate the sighting was presented to the Committee. Key field marks either went unnoticed or were noted but went unreported. The Committee had no alternative but to turn down the report.

October 2, 1973

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WAXBILL - - - - Estrilda sp.

The CFO Official Records Committee has examined documentation presented to support the presence of an apparent pair of Waxbills (genus Estrilda) in the Colorado Springs area from about May 1, 1970 to about July 20, 1970. The birds were observed and reported by Mr. and Mrs. Dominic A. Bartol, Jr. in the vicinity of their home at 2718 North Prospect in Colorado Springs. Mr. Bartol was able to obtain several excellent color photographs of these birds which frequented his feeders periodically during the summer of 1970. Mr. Bartol also reported that both birds exhibited brood patches indicating that they nested in the area. However, from the pictures supplied by Mr. Bartol, brood patches were not readily apparent to the Committee. Regarding the birds' habits, Mr. Bartol reported, "It may be that these birds (2) were escapees from an unknown importation. However, may it be mentioned that during the month or so of fairly regular daily observations, the birds were not tame and a blind was set up to get them used to it and to enable me to get somewhat close to them. Communal feeding with House Finches was compatible, but arrival of any other species such as Robin, Grackle, Scrub Jay, Starling and House Sparrow triggered the Waxbills to flee. They ate solely white millet and disregarded sunflower seeds, peanut butter mix and suet. A nearby bird bath was frequently used for drinking and vigorous

bathing when unmolested. The birds were about two inches shorter (tip of beak to end of tail) than a House Finch."

Based upon the written documentation and color photographs (which are on file with the Official Records Committee) submitted by the Bartols, the Committee has accepted this report and has ruled that the Waxbill be listed as an "Escape". It is however, not acceptable for inclusion on the Official State List of the Birds of Colorado.

Chairman's comment:

This is an interesting record supported by good photographic and written evidence. Mr. Bartol reported that Mrs. Julia Wagner had the birds identified by Chandler Robbins who stated they were "St. Helena Waxbills" (no genus or specific names supplied). Based upon a cursory check made by the Chairman, the birds were probably Red-eared Waxbills (Estrilda astrild) which are small (4 1/2") finch-like birds and which are "resident, often abundant, throughout the greater part of Ethiopian Region, including East and Central Africa. Occurs in flocks in neglected cultivation, lush grasslands and in rank grass and bush, often near water".⁽¹⁾ Another reference to this species relates to its appearance in Great Britain, "a small finch-like cage bird from Africa with whitish breast, pink belly, wax-red bill and conspicuous red eyestripe, frequently escaping but not establishing itself".⁽²⁾ Although a check of local pet shops in the area by Mr. Bartol revealed that none of them handled this particular species, it is highly probable that it could have escaped from nearby Fort Carson with its highly mobile population. The treatment of escapes poses a very perplexing problem when compiling a list of birds. For those interested in a brief dissertation on the subject, it is suggested that they refer to the Birds of the New York Area by John Bull (1964) pages 468-474.

October 14, 1973

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- (1) A Field Guide to the Birds of East and Central Africa by John G. Williams (first American Edition, 1964) pages 257 and 266.
 - (2) Collin's Pocket Guide to British Birds by R. S. R. Fitter and R. A. Richardson (1952) page 31.

RARE AND UNUSUAL RECORDS ACCEPTED BY
THE CFO OFFICIAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

Jack Reddall, Chairman
CFO Official Records Committee
4450 South Alton Street
Englewood, Colorado 80110

WHIMBREL - Numenius phaeopus

One, observed at CF&I Lakes, Pueblo County, May 14 through 16, 1972 by Van Truan, who submitted written documentation which is on file with the Committee. (File No. 19-72-15)

WHIMBREL - Numenius phaeopus

Four, observed at CF&I Lakes, Pueblo County, September 3 through 5, 1971 by Van Truan, Lois Schultz and Mike Schultz. Written documentation along with color photographs submitted by Van Truan and on file with the Committee. (File No. 19-72-13)

Chairman's comment: Fall records for this species are very few; thus the sighting and photographing of four at one location is noteworthy.

WHIMBREL - Numenius phaeopus

Two, observed at CF&I Lakes, Pueblo County, May 18, 1971 by Van Truan. Written documentation provided by Van Truan and on file with the Committee. (File No. 19-72-14)

FLAMMULATED OWL - Otus flammeolus

One female, a road-kill, from the Montrose area, Montrose County about November 1, 1972 reported by Dr. A. Sidney Hyde of Gunnison. The skin is in the collection of Western State College. (File No. 28-72-23)

PHILADELPHIA VIREO - Vireo philadelphicus

One, observed near the Gunnison River about five miles northeast of Gunnison, Gunnison County by Dr. A. Sidney Hyde. Written documentation supplied by Dr. Hyde which is on file with the Committee. Observed on August 18, 1972. (File No. 51-72-24)

CORRECTION

This is a correction to the article "Rare and Unusual Records Reviewed by the CFO Official Records Committee", published in the Colorado Field Ornithologist, No. 16, June 1973, p. 24.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER - Toxostoma curvirostre

Under "Chairman's comment", the Chairman erred in reporting that there are no specimens for the State of Colorado. Indeed, there is one specimen, an adult male collected two miles southwest of Granada, Prowers County, by L. Turner on March 25, 1951 which is in the collection of Western State College. (File No. 43-72-19)

June 30, 1973

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CFO MEMBERSHIP LIST -- ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

compiled by

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NEW MEMBERS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

CORRECTIONS

General Membership

- Blomberg, Goren - change of address to: Central Plains Experimental Range, Nunn, Colorado 80648.
Creighton, Dr. Phillip D. - change of address to: Dept. of Biology, Towson State College, Baltimore, Maryland 21204.
Hendricks, Mrs. Philip - change of address to: 305 East Maplewood Avenue, Littleton, Colorado 80121.
Porter, David K. - change of address to: Box 43A, Star Route, Willow, Alaska 99688.
Whorton, Mrs. Helen - change of address to: 1020 Green St., Apt. 809, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.