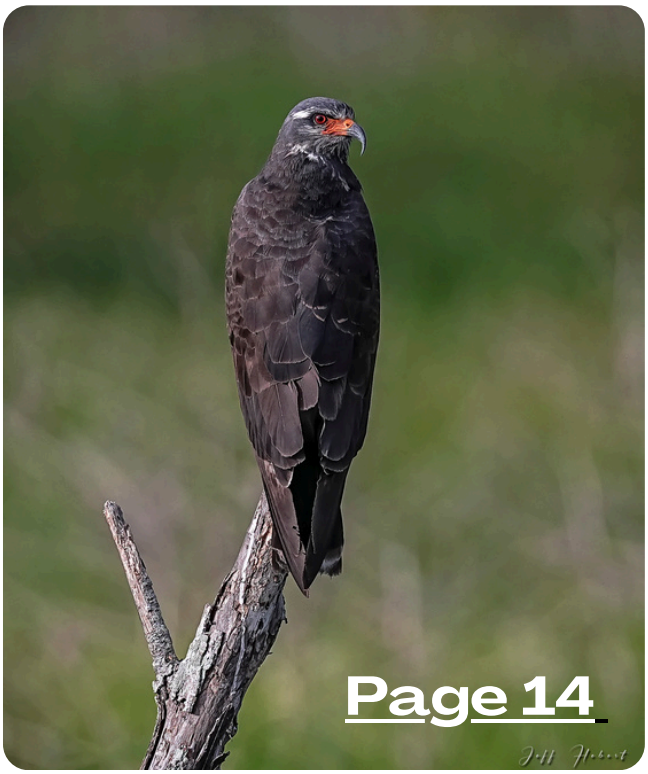
# 2024 Newsletter
## of the Louisiana Bird Records Committee





### First State Records

Two species, Snail Kite and Heermann's Gull, have been added to the State Checklist. Click the links to see further details.

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# Synopsis of the LBRC 2024 Annual Meeting

**By: Paul E. Conover, Secretary**

The annual meeting was called to order at 10 AM on 16 March 2024 at the LSU Museum of Natural Sciences by Steve Cardiff, Chair. Other Members in attendance were Donna Dittmann, Secretary; and Voting Members Paul Conover, John Dillon, Rob Dobbs, Erik Johnson, Larry Raymond, and Casey Wright. Dan Lane could not attend.

The first item on the agenda concerned two Discussion Round records, i.e. records that did not reach resolution following three rounds of review. Following the resolution of these two records, the committee moved on to the discussion of a proposal forwarded by Conover to examine the status of the following species which might have met the threshold for removal from the Review List:

**Cory's Shearwater.** Large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters found on some pelagic trips suggest that the species is not rare in the Gulf of Mexico. However, Dittmann detailed the implications of the impending split of Cory's Shearwater into two species, Cory's and Scopoli's shearwaters—both of which occur in Louisiana—on determining the relative status of each form. The committee voted unanimously to keep Cory's (in the broad sense) on the Review List and to monitor future developments.

**Audubon's (now Sargasso) Shearwater:** As with Cory's, numerous individuals or flocks of Audubon's can sometimes be found by pelagic trips. Dittmann offered the opposing viewpoint that Audubon's is not found on every pelagic trip, and that more data are needed. By a vote of 5-3, Audubon's Shearwater was retained on the Review List.

**White-tailed Hawk.** Members were in agreement that reports of this species are trending upward, and that recurring reports in some areas point to the possibility of breeding in Louisiana. The vote to remove White-tailed Hawk from the Review List was unanimous.

**Couch's and Tropical kingbirds** were the next item of discussion. Records of these species are difficult to quantify due to ID issues as well as the number of records being inflated by returning winterers. It was decided to keep these species on the Review List.

**Brown-crested Flycatcher.** This species is annual in Southeast Louisiana, but the number of records does not meet the threshold for removal. This species was retained on the Review List.

**Black Rail**. Johnson then made a proposal to remove Black Rail from the Review List based on the persistence of populations despite hurricanes, and on recent evidence of breeding within the state. The committee unanimously agreed with the removal of Black Rail.

Following a brief discussion of previously reviewed gull records, the committee moved on to discussion of the state of the LBRC.Dittmann discussed steps to transition LBRC materials to Conover for conversion to digital, and the housing of LBRC materials was considered.

Elections then took place. With Dittmann and Cardiff leaving the LBRC to move out of state, Conover and Dobbs were elected to assume the roles of Secretary and Chair, respectively. The end of Lane's term as a Voting Member in addition to the departure of Dittmann and Cardiff from the committee left three open spaces. Chris Brantley, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, and James Smithers were elected as Voting Members.

Following a visit to the specimen trays to examine various groups including Cory's Shearwaters, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 PM.

# Twenty-seventh Report of the Louisiana Bird Records Committee

**By: Paul E. Conover, Secretary**

The Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) is a branch of the Louisiana Ornithological Society (LOS) that was formed in 1979 in part to evaluate and publish the sightings of rare species in Louisiana. Rarity is determined according to a metric whereby species that are reported fewer than four times per year on average over a ten-year period are considered rare. Species deemed rare by the LBRC are published on the LBRC Review List, which can be found on the menu of the LBRC website (http://www.losbird.org/lbrc/lbrc.htm). Species can be added or removed from the Review List upon the deliberations of the LBRC depending on changes in a species status. Identifiable subspecies that are considered rare in Louisiana are also included on the Review List.

Reports of the LBRC were previously published in the Journal of Louisiana Ornithology. However, in order to take advantage of the more expansive format of a digital medium, the Official Reports of the LBRC were transitioned to the LOS/LBRC website beginning with the Twelfth Report of the LBRC in the 2013 Newsletter of the LBRC. All Reports and all previous Newsletters of the LBRC can be found on the LBRC website.

The LBRC website also seeks to maintain a complete listing of all previously reviewed records, both accepted and unaccepted. While the hard copies of received reports are currently stored at the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, the goal of the LBRC is to eventually migrate all paper copies to a digital format on the LBRC website. To this end, the LOS has funded the purchase of a scanner and digital storage device. This process is ambitious given the volume of data that must be transferred, and the process will be time-consuming and ongoing into the foreseeable future.

The Twenty-seventh Report of the LBRC contains the outcomes of the review of 127 records reviewed in e-rounds e-183, e-184, e-185, e-186, and in the Discussion Round held at the Annual Meeting. Of these 127 records, 110 records (ca. 87%) were deemed Accepted. In viewing the acceptance rate, it must be considered that some reports were from the backlog of historic records that did not include photographs and in some cases were mere 3x5 cards. In terms of modern records, most rarity sightings today generate enough excitement and result in enough photographs that the acceptance rate rises dramatically.

In most cases, the records in the current Report were submitted directly to the LBRC by observers. In some cases, however, the LBRC conducted reviews of reported sightings that were not submitted to the committee (e.g. seen in social media posts, entered in eBird checklists). Note that the LBRC does not actively seek out records on the internet; however, because there is a large overlap between LBRC Members and official eBird Reviewers for the state, many sightings that have "slipped through the cracks" but are housed on eBird are able to be discovered and evaluated. Indeed, in Louisiana and many other states, acceptance of rare species on eBird reports is based on acceptance by bird record committees.

Because of turnover in the committee due to elections and relocations, records in the current Report were reviewed by a varying combination of the following LBRC Members: Steven W. Cardiff, Christopher G. Brantley, Paul E. Conover, John K. Dillon, Donna L. Dittmann, Robert C. Dobbs, Erik I. Johnson, Daniel F. Lane, Larry R. Raymond, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, James Smithers, and Casey E. Wright. A list of the current Members of the LBRC can be found on the back page of this Newsletter.

The publication of the American Ornithological Society's checklist supplement in July 2024 resulted in a few changes that will affect the Official Louisiana Checklist and the Report. In terms of the species total for the state, the only change will result from the split of Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) into Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris borealis*) and Scopoli's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*), both believed to occur in Louisiana waters based on specimens and both provisionally placed on the Checklist pending review. In terms of common names there will be more numerous changes. The former Audubon's Shearwater was split into

five species, only one of which, now known as Sargasso Shearwater, has been recorded from the state. Cattle Egret was split into two species, of which only one, now known as Western Cattle-Egret, occurs in Louisiana. Lesser Sand-Plover, which was previously known as Mongolian Plover, has now been split into two species; presumably the Louisiana specimens belong to the species now known as Siberian Sand-Plover. Barn Owl was split into three species; ours is now American Barn Owl. Our former House Wren is now the Northern House Wren as the house wrens have now been split into seven species. Several other species that occur in Louisiana were also split, but without changes to the names we know them by. Beyond that, all changes were taxonomic and will result in a slightly different order of species on the Louisiana Checklist. With the provisonal addition of Scopoli's and Cory's Shearwater pending the review of specific records, and the acceptance of records of Snail Kite and Heermann's Gull, the Official Louisiana State Bird Checklist now stands at 493 species.

The LBRC would like to express gratitude to all reporters, regardless of the outcome of the review. In the case of unaccepted records, it is the policy of the LBRC to remove the names of reporters. The LBRC welcomes additional reports for all records. If additional information is received that might alter the outcome of a review, the record can be recirculated for review.

Abbreviations used: ca. = circa, Hwy = highway, LDWF = Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, LSUS = Louisiana State University at Shreveport, NWR = National Wildlife Refuge, PAR = parish road, ph = photo, Rd = road, WMA = Wildlife Management Area, compass directions when abbreviated are abbreviated to cardinal direction initials and capitalized (e.g., N, NW).

The LBRC sincerely thanks the following ndividuals who submitted rare bird reports or contributed expert advice for records included in this report: Diana Metrejean Coupel Bailly, Katie B. Barnes, Marcie Blanchard, Christopher G. Brantley, Forest Burks, Michael J. Calamari, Steven W. Cardiff, Paul E. Conover, Jennifer O. Coulson, Holly Cox, Matthew Dell, John Dillon, Cathy DiSalvo, Donna L. Dittmann, Robert C. Dobbs, Margaret Ellender, Shae Freeman, Andrew From, Joan Garvey, Deanna Griggs, Cindy Hardaker, Jeff Hebert, Rob Heffner, Emily Holcomb, Eugene Huryn, David Irons, Erik I. Johnson, John A. Keegan, Christine Kooi, Delaina LeBlanc, Dan Lane, Jennie Leonard, Kirsten Livingston, Debbi Logan, Heydi Lopes, Mary Mehaffey, Pawel Michalak, Steven G. Mlodinow, Holly Morales, Michael J. Musumeche, David P. Muth, B. Mac Myers III, Patrick Palines, Dave Patton, Caleb Persia, H. Douglas Pratt, Frank Praznik, Nick Ramsey, Larry R. Raymond, Kathy Rhodes, Jack Rogers, Esme Rosen, Michael A. Seymour, Jody Shugart, Elizabeth Sigler, James Smithers, Randy Soto, Bob Steele, Paul Stevens, Claire Thomas, Pam Vercellone-Smith, Phillip A. Wallace, Ann Walters, Jon Wise, Paul Wood, Casey Wright.

## Key to the Record Format for the Twenty-seventh Report

The format for the records listed in the Report follow the model below:

**Common Name (*Scientific name*)**
Number of individuals (LBRC Record Number) Day/Month/Year, *Parish*: Specific locality; Reporting **Observer 1** (photo/audio) and Reporting Observer 2.

The photographer for the photograph accompanying the record in the Newsletter is denoted by blue font.

In the case of multiple reports for a record, the finder's name will be **boldfaced** if known.

# Accepted Records

**Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)**

One probable first year (2024-011) on 6-16 February 2024, *Iberville*: North Farm, Sherburne WMA; **Jack Rogers** (ph) and David P. Muth (ph). This represents the second recent occurrence.

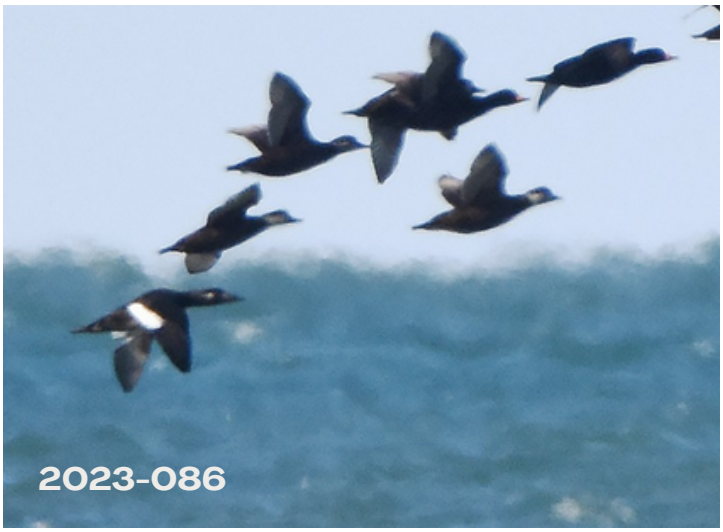
**White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta deglandi*)**

One (2023-086) on 28 November 2023, *St. Bernard*: Breton NWR, Chandeleur Island, approximately N30.00, W88.87 Robert C. Dobbs and Erik I. Johnson (ph).

**Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*)**

One female (2023-098) on 23 December 2023-6 January 2024, *St. Tammany*: Lake Pontchartrain at mouth of Tchefuncte River, south of Madisonville; Christopher G. Brantley (ph) and Erik I. Johnson. eBird reports to 6 January 2023.

Two, female and probable male (2023-103) on 30 January-21 February 2024, *St. Tammany*: Lake Pontchartrain at Sunset; Jack Rogers (ph) and David P. Muth.



# Accepted Records continued

**American Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*)**

One sub-adult (2023-052) on 24 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: S Venice, West Bay, south side of second spillway off the Southwest Pass of the Mississippi River, N29.0329° W89.3572°; Frank Praznik (ph).

One adult (2023-054) on 29 September to 6 October 2023, *Orleans*: New Orleans, Hwy. 90 at Lake Catherine, vicinity N30.089074°, W89.776030°; Michael J. Calamari (ph), Holly Cox (ph) Jennifer O. Coulson (ph), Jon Wise (ph), Esme Rosen (ph), David P. Muth (ph), Holly Morales (ph), Forest Burks (ph), Kathy Rhodes (ph), Paul Wood (ph), Christine Kooi (ph), and Robert C. Dobbs (ph), Erik Johnson (ph). Reportedly discovered by Aimee Thomas.

One adult (2023-062) on 16 October 2023, *Cameron*: flying past over Broussards Beach; Paul E. Conover.

One juvenile (2023-069) on 28 October 2023, *Cameron*: approximately 3 mi. S of Intracoastal Canal on Hwy. 27, N29.884889° W93.077889°; Randy Soto (ph). Photos in eBird to 20 November 2023.

This individual attracted numerous observers but only one observer submitted a report. As a result, there was some concern among Members as to whether a well-known long-roaming escapee might be involved. Luckily, a few photos on eBird reports showed that a juvenile bird was involved.

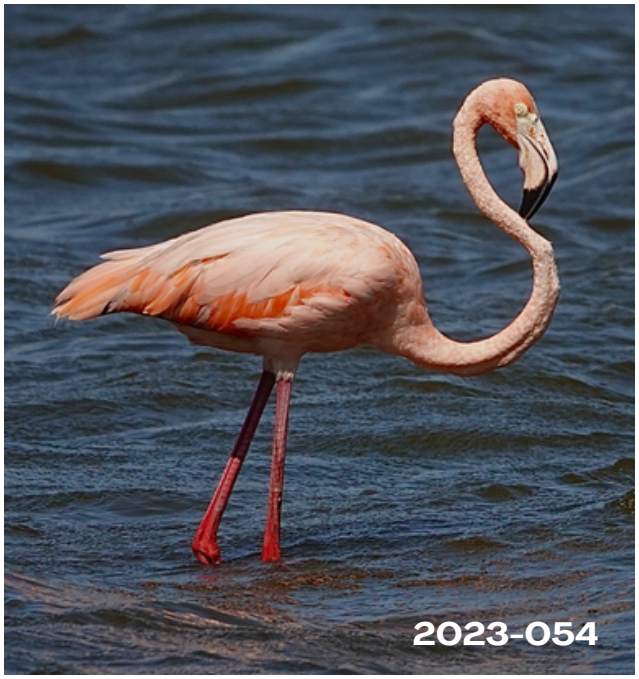
One adult (2023-076) on 7 November 2023, *Terrebonne*: Kathy Rhodes. Quarter mile north of Falgout Canal (ph).

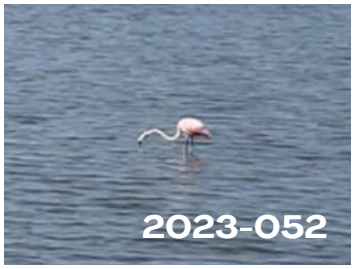
This individual bore an aluminum band on its left leg; however, the unique code of the band was not legible in photographs.

**Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)**

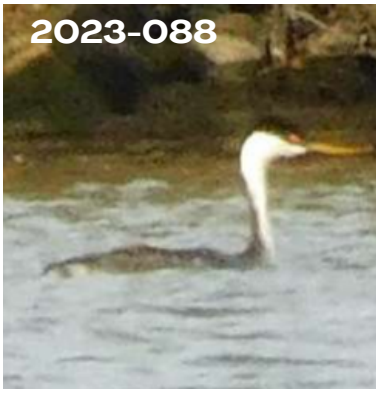
One (2023-088) on 1 December 2023 to at least 24 February 2024, *Caddo*: Shreveport, Cross Lake; Kathy Rhodes (ph). Found by Charlie Lyon.

Photos were sufficient to eliminate Clark's Grebe on what is possibly a returning individual.





# Accepted Records continued

**Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*)**

One (2024-029) on 11 April 2024, *Vermilion:* Highway 82 west of Pecan Island; Esme Rosen.

**Green-breasted Mango (*Anthracothorax prevostii*)**

One immature (2023-089) on 5-28 December 2023 then reappeared 20 January thought 9 February 2024, *Terrebonne*: Schriever, 105 St. George Circle; **Diana Metrejean Coupel Bailly** (ph), Kathy Rhodes (ph), Esme Rosen (ph), Matthew Dell (ph), David P. Muth, and Erik I. Johnson (ph). Banded by Nancy L. Newfield on 28 December. Last eBird photo 9 February 2024.

This was the third occurrence and the first wintering record of this species for Louisiana and was seen by and extensively documented by many observers. This individual, a molting bird with a deformed bill, was also the first Louisiana Green-breasted Mango to remain on site for an extended period of time.

**Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*)**

One female/immature (2001-020) on 7 January 2001, *Cameron*: Cameron; B. Mac Myers III (ph only).

**Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cynanthus latirostris*)**

One male in alternate plumage (2023-112) on 21 February-5 March 2024, *Lafourche:* Thibodaux; Diana Bailly, Kathy Rhodes, Delaina LeBlanc.

One adult male (2024-014) on 21 February-3 March 2024, *Assumption*: Morgan City, Bayou L'Ourse; Jack Rogers (ph) and Kathy Rhodes (ph). Residence of April Gamble with eBird photos to 21 February - 3 March.





# Accepted Records continued

**Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*)**

One, unknown sex, unknown age (2024-028) on 10 April 2024, *St. Charles:* Luling / Lakewood East neighborhood; 29.903672, -90.347012; Paul Stevens. Black Rail was removed from the Review List on 16 Mar 2024; this report was reviewed as a courtesy.

**Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*)**

One (2023-087) on 2-5 December 2023, *Caddo*: Shreveport, Sentell Road; Caleb Persia (ph), Kathy Rhodes (ph), Erik I. Johnson (ph), John Dillon (ph), Esme Rosen (ph), and Pawel Michalak (ph), and Larry R. Raymond (ph). Last photo eBird 6 December. Reportedly in the finding party were Caleb Persia, Shannon Jantz, Becky Amedee, and Michele Giroir. This represents the second state occurrence.

**Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*)**

One (2023-101) on 16 October 2023, *Jefferson Davis*: Thornwell, Donna L. Dittmann (ph) and Steven W. Cardiff.

One female (2023-066) on 24 October 2023, *Jefferson Davis*: Welsh, 12001–12199 Pecan Orchard Rd, N30.26140, W92.80973; Andrew From (ph) and Casey Wright (ph).

All members agreed that this bird was a different individual from LBRC 2023-101.

**Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)**

One juvenal plumage (2023-036) on 3 September 2023, *Richland*: Kennedy Rice Farms; John Dillon (ph).




# FIRST STATE RECORD

**Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*)**

One subadult (2024-050) on 7 July 2024, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle - West Side Beach (29.20968° N, 90.03005°W); Patrick Palines (ph). This represents the first state occurrence.

On 21 July 2024, while out searching for a stakeout Pomarine Jaeger at Grand Isle State Park, Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, Patrick Palines discovered this Heermann's Gull perched on a dredging pipe and snapped photos with his phone through his binoculars. Palines got the word out about his rare find, but the bird was not found by searchers later that day, and the next day construction crews informed would-be searchers that the area was off-limits to the public. A similar Heermann's Gull was photographed on 29 and 30 July 2024 ca. 100 miles away in coastal Mississippi, so the Louisiana bird may have been a bird fortuitously encountered while in transit.

Heermann's Gull, a species of the Pacific Coast, has developed a pattern of vagrancy at both coastal and inland locations throughout the eastern United States, and Louisiana birders have long been confused by the lack of records for the state. However, it is worth noting that there are many more records for the Eastern Seaboard than for the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

# Accepted Records continued

**Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)**

One in first winter plumage (2024-023) on 17 February 2024, *Cameron:* Rutherford Beach; Paul Conover.

One (2024-034) on 25 April 2024, *Cameron*, Holly Beach walking from the end of PAR 504 to the shoreline; Kathy Rhodes.

**Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*)**

One subadult (2024-050) on 7 July 2024, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle - West Side Beach (29.20968° N, 90.03005° W); Patrick Palines (ph). This represents the first state occurrence. See page 11.

**California Gull (*Larus californicus*)**

One basic plumaged adult (2023-077) on 12 November 2023, *Cameron*: Holly Beach; Paul E. Conover (ph).

One (2023-082) on 21-29 November 2023, *Cameron*: Rutherford Beach; Nick Ramsey (ph). Note likely the same bird by Charlotte Chehotsky on 29 November in eBird.

**Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*)**

One (2023-083) on 21 November 2023, *Cameron*: Holly Beach; **Nick Ramsey** (ph) and Paul E. Conover (ph only).

**Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)**

One first winter bird, sex unknown (2024-019) on 11 and 19 January 2024, *Jefferson:* Grand Isle; Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Jennie Leonard.






# Accepted Records continued

**Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)** *continued*

One first or second winter (2024-021) on 27 January 2024, *Acadia:* W of Crowley; Paul Conover.

One adult individual (2024-027) on 4 April 2024, *Cameron:* 3900–4152 Gulf Beach Hwy, Hackberry US-LA 29.76773, -93.50821; Andrew From, Deanna Griggs. Adults of this species are rarely reported from Louisiana.

**Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*)**

One (2023-051) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: about 60 mi S South Pass Mississippi River, N28.258250 W88.553133; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

This sighting provides the fifth accepted state record of this species, and while this may involve an individual displaced northwestward by Hurricane Idalia, two accepted records from 2022 might point to other factors at play. One Member lamented that only two observers submitted reports of this sighting.

**Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)**

One (2024-022) on 15 February 2024, *St. Tammany*: Sunset Point - Mandeville; Jody Shugart. This represents the third state record for this species.




# Accepted Records continued

**Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*)**

Thirteen (2023-042) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: S South Pass Mississippi River, N28'.2437 W88.95375; Paul E. Conover (ph).

One Member noted that photographs appear to represent Scopoli's Shearwater.

Eight (2023-043) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: "end of leg 28.2437639 -88.9519674"; Paul E. Conover and David P. Muth.

One Member felt that one bird was identifiable as Scopoli's Shearwater.

Estimated at 40 individuals (2023-044) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28°13'23.5"N 88°45'53.5"W; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

One Member expressed regret that more effort was not made to break down the ID into Scopoli's and Cory's forms.

Twenty (2023-045) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: leg began at 28°11'23.9"N 88°32'55.2"W; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

One Member noted that the photographs support the ID to the level of the Scopoli's form.

**Great Shearwater (*Ardenna gravis*)**

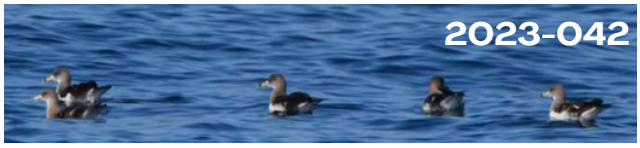
One (2023-046) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: 28'14.622, 88'57.225; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

Two (2023-047) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28.2437639 -88.9519674; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

Two (2023-048) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28°13'23.5"N 88°45'53.5"W, presumably ending at 28°11'23.9"N 88°32'55.2"W based on beginning point of next eBird list.; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

Three (2023-049) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28°11'23.9"N 88°3 2'55.2"W; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

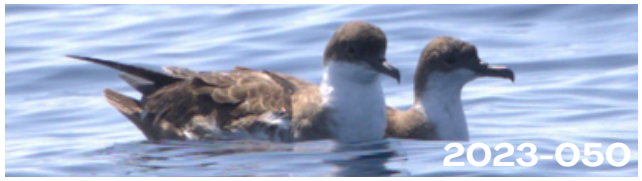
Five (2023-050) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28°15'59.6" N 88°33'50.3" W; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).












# Accepted Records continued

**Sargasso Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*)**

Seven (2023-037) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: 28'14.622, 88'57.225; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

Four (2023-038) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28.2437639 -88.9519674; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth.

Two (2023-039) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: presumably ending; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth.

Eighteen (2023-040) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28°11'23.9"N 88°32'55.2"W; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

Five (2023-041) on 9 September 2023, *Plaquemines*: Gulf of Mexico: Leg began at 28°11'23.9"N 88°32'55.2"W; Paul E. Conover (ph) and David P. Muth.

**Sargasso Shearwater was formerly known as Audubon's Shearwater.**

**Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)**

One immature (2023-072) on 29 October 2023, *Richland*: Kennedy Rice Farm; Pawel Michalak (ph).

One immature (2023-096) on 17 December 2023, *Jefferson Davis*: Thornwell, Arceneaux Road; Esme Rosen (ph).







# FIRST STATE RECORD

**Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*)**

One male (2024-049) on 5 July 2024, *Ascension*: McElroy Swamp Area; Jeff Hebert (ph). This represents the first state occurrence.


On 5 July 2024, Jeff and Mona Hebert were visiting the McElroy Swamp in Sorrento, *Ascension*, when they noticed a perched raptor. An experienced wildlife photographer, Jeff knew that this raptor was not typical for the area. After snapping stunning photos of the bird perched and in flight and comparing the photos to photos online, the Heberts confirmed that the raptor was a Snail Kite, not just unusual but unknown for the state. After the bird flew, they never relocated it despite return searches. A fortunate crossing of paths between a rare bird and a savvy photographer with a keen eye resulted in the addition of a species to the Louisiana Checklist.

While understanding the root causes of vagrancy can sometimes be a challenge, with the recent introduction and explosive spread of the Giant Apple Snail (*Pomacea maculata*) into Louisiana, many birders had speculated that Snail Kites would follow Limpkins as visitors to the state. In the case of Limpkins, the visitors began nesting and the breeding range of of the species was expanded by hundreds of miles. It remains to be seen if Snail Kite will follow the same arc, but there is certainly ample habitat and the supply of apple snails remains abundant.

# Accepted Records continued

**White-tailed Hawk (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*)**

One probable adult (2023-034) on 29 August 2023, *Calcasieu*: Fruge Rd., right angle turn N of Nunez Rd; B. Mac Myers III.

One adult (2023-057) on 7 October 2023, *Calcasieu*: between Fruge Road between Hwy. 14 and Lionel Derouen Rd. (30.101736, - 93.038554); Erik I. Johnson (ph).

One juvenile (2023-063) on 16 October 2023, *Cameron*: Peveto Woods Sanctuary; Paul E. Conover (ph).

Two (2023-102) on 12 November 2023, *Calcasieu*: T of Fruge and Lionel Derouen roads, near Holmwood; Paul E. Conover (ph).

One juvenile/immature (2023-081) on 22 November 2023, *Cameron:* Johnsons Bayou area; Paul Conover, Dave Patton (ph only).

One adult (2023-094) on 19 December 2023, *Calcasieu*: Bell City; Wesley Fruge Road, ca. 0.5 mi. from Pine Pasture Road; Michael A. Seymour (ph).

One subadult (2024-106) on 1 January and presumably the same individual on 27 January 2024, *Cameron*: Chalkley Road and Fruge Road near intersection of Lionel DeRouen; Paul E. Conover (ph).

One adult (2024-010) on 14 January 2024, *Calcasieu*: Fruge Rd. just N Duhon Road; Phillip A. Wallace (ph).

**White-tailed Hawk was removed from the Review List based on the regular occurrence of this species in the Fruge Road area of Calcasieu and Cameron parishes, the annual or near-annual sightings of the species along the Cameron coast, and the possibility that the species is nesting in the state.**

**Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)**

One (2023-095) on 15 December 2023 to at least 19 February 2024, *Cameron*: Rutherford Beach, 29.76109, -93.12897, Paul E. Conover (ph), David P. Muth (ph), and Kathy Rhodes (ph).








# Accepted Records continued

**Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*)**

One (2023-068) on 28 October 2023 and presumably the same individual 11 & 29 Nov, 24 Feb 24, *Plaquemines*: Diamond, Esme Rosen (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

One (2023-090) on 7 and presumably the same individual 21 December 2023, *Plaquemines*: Morel's Woods, Jack Rogers (ph and audio) and David P. Muth (ph).

One (2024-003) on 15 January 2024, *Plaquemines*: Jump Basin Woodlot; Jack Rogers (ph).

One (2024-008) on 27 January 2024, *Plaquemines*: cemetery north of Venice; Nick Ramsey (ph).

**Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)**

One (2023-035) on 2 September 2023, *Cameron*: Trosclair Road, Esme Rosen (ph).

One adult, probable female by measurement (2023-111) on 30 September 2023, *Cameron:* Holly Beach area; Paul Conover (specimen to LSUMNS).

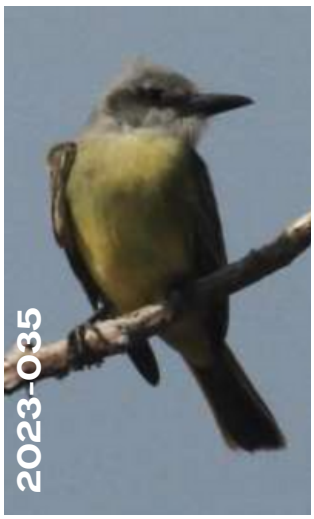
One (2023-084) on 18 November 2023 to at least 3 March 2024, *Orleans*: New Orleans, Bayou Sauvage NWR--Pointe aux Herbes; David P. Muth (ph) and Elizabeth Sigler (ph).

One (2023-091) on 10 December 2023, *Plaquemines*: Venice, Cypress Cove Marina; Esme Rosen (ph).

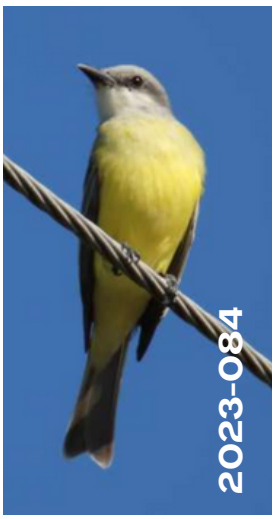
This bird was reportedly calling, and the photographs show a large-billed kingbird.












# Accepted Records continued

**Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*)**

One (2023-023) on 13 May 2023, *Calcasieu*: Ellis Moss Road, N30.092466, W93.407711; Katie B. Barnes (audio).

One (2023-073) on 28 October- 12 November 2023, *Caddo* and *Bossier*: C. Bickham Dickson Park (Caddo) and Red River NWR Headquarters Unit (Bossier); Larry Raymond (ph) and Emily Holcomb (ph).

One (2023-085) on 24 November 2023 to at least 25 February 2024, and presumably the same individual 1 February 2024, *St. Mary*: approximately 0.5 miles before Berwick Boat Launch on River Road; Michael J. Musumeche (ph), Andrew From (ph), and Kathy Rhodes (ph). This individual was well-documented with photographs and was heard calling. The bird was presumably a returnee.

One (2023-097) on 22 December 2023, *Natchitoches*: Hwy 71 at Saline Bayou; John Dillon (ph, audio).

**Tropical/Couch's kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus/couchii*)**

One (2023-059) on 10 October 2023, *Orleans*: New Orleans, The Fly (park between Audubon Zoo & the river, Rob Heffner (ph).

One (2023-114) on 28 October- 12 November 2023, *Caddo* and *Bossier*: C. Bickham Dickson Park (Caddo) and Red River NWR Headquarters Unit (Bossier); Larry Raymond (ph) and Emily Holcomb (ph). This individual was initially submitted (with LBRC 2023-073) as a Couch's Kingbird. However, Members felt that documentation only confirmed one kingbird as a Couch's, and separated the birds into separate records.

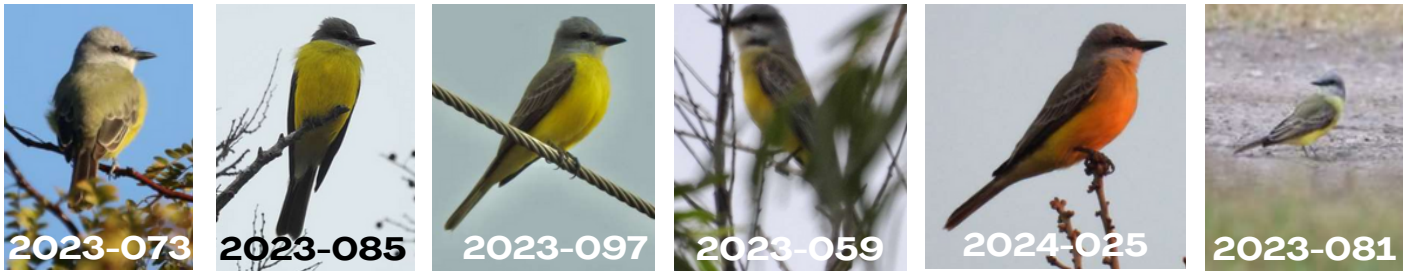
One, apparent adult, sex undetermined (2024-025) on 24 February 2024, *Plaquemines*: Diamond ball field; Dan Lane.

One (2023-081) on 12 and 15 November 2023, *Plaquemines*: Diamond; John A. Keegan (ph). and Jody Shugart (ph).

**Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*)**

One adult male (2023-060) on 14 October 2023, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle, Grand Isle State Park; Kathy Rhodes (ph). This represents the fourth state record of Cassin's Kingbird.

One (2023-071) on 29 October 2023 to at least 24 February 2024, *Plaquemines*: Diamond; **Marcie Blanchard** and **Ann Walters** (photo below on right), Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion (ph), .Joan Garvey (ph), Mary Mehaffey (ph), Jody Shugart (ph), Esme Rosen (ph), and David P. Muth (photo below on left).






# Accepted Records continued

**Gray Kingbird (*Tyrannus dominicensis*)**

One (2024-031) on 19 April 2024, *Lafourche*: Oak Ridge Community Park, Boat Launch area, Golden Meadow; Kathy Rhodes.

One (2024-035) on 27 April 2024, *Cameron:* Peveto Woods; James Smithers.

One (2024-037) on 10 May 2024, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle State Park; Jack Rogers, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Kathy Rhodes.

One (2024-040) on 11 May 2024, *Jefferson*: Landry Lane just past the Cemetary and Landry B&B; Kathy Rhodes.

**Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*)**

One (2022-054) vocalizing on 22 May 2022, *Cameron*: Peveto Woods Sanctuary: Paul Conover (audio).

One hatch-year, sex unknown (2023-110) on 23 September 2023, Cameron: Willow Island; Paul Conover (specimen to LSUMNS).

**Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*)**

One banded (2023-053) on 24 September 2023, *East Baton Rouge*: Baton Rouge, BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp; Erik I. Johnson (ph, banded USFWS 2970-85955)

Members agreed with this identification based on measurements and the report of a call note.

One (2023-075) on 5 November 2023, *Plaquemines*: Morel's Woods; Esme Rosen (ph) and David P. Muth (ph).

One (2023-105) on 21 December 2023, *Plaquemines*: Triumph; David P. Muth (ph).


2024-031


2024-035


2024-037


2024-040


2022-052


2023-053


2023-075


2023-105

# Accepted Records continued

**Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*)**

One adult male (2024-032) on 20 April 2024, *Jefferson:* Kayak Landing, Grand Isle; Debbi Logan.

One (2023-019) on 24 April 2023, *Cameron*: Hollister Chenier Preserve: Katie B. Barnes.

One (2024-038) on 11 May 2024, *Jefferson*: Grilletta Tract -- Grand Isle; Jack Rogers, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion.

One (2024-039) on 11 May 2024, *Jefferson*: LSU Tract -- Grand Isle-- Grand Isle; Jack Rogers, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion.

**Rock Wren *(Salpinctes obsoletus*)**

One (2023-093) on 14 December 2023 to at least 9 February 2024, *Vermilion*: Liberty Farm x N Halloway roads; **Esme Rosen** (ph), Erik I. Johnson (ph), David P. Muth (ph), and Kathy Rhodes (ph). This represents the sixth occurrence for Louisiana.

**Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*)**

One (2023-065) on 22-26 October 2023, *St. Tammany*: Madisonville, 1999 Main St., T's Bar and Grill; **Claire Thomas** (ph), Esme Rosen (ph), Christine Kooi (ph), Kathy Rhodes (ph), Andrew From (ph), David P. Muth (ph), and Shae Freeman (ph).

**Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*)**

One (2024-007) on 22 January 2024, *Calcasieu*: Lake Charles, 2834 Addison loop; **Kirsten Livingston** (ph) and Jack Rogers (ph). This represents the sixth occurrence for Louisiana. One Member noted that this is a first year male of the nominate "Black-backed" subspecies, not *hesperophilus*, as conjectured by some.

**Cassin's Sparrow (*Peucaea cassinii*)**

One (2023-056) on 5 October 2023, *Cameron*: vicinity of Peveto Beach Sanctuary, beach side of Sarasota Drive; Heydi Lopes (ph). This represents the third occurrence for Louisiana.






# Accepted Records continued

**Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (*Junco hyemalis oreganus*)**

One (2023-107) on 3 January 2023, *Morehouse*: Lake Irwin Road; Cindy Hardaker.

**Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*)**

One (2024-033) on 21 April 2024, *Lafayette*: Lafayette; Andrew From, Robert C. Dobbs.

**Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*)**

One (2023-108) on 28 February 2023, *Ouachita*: D'Arbonne National Wildlife Refuge; Cindy Hardaker.

**Spotted X Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus* x *erythropthalmus*)**

One male (2024-036) on 30 April 2024, *Bossier*: Red River NWR- Headquarters Unit; Pam Vercellone-Smith.

**Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*)**

One (2024-015) on 25 February to at least 3 March 2024, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle, vicinity of Landry and Hector Lanes; **Jennie Leonard** (ph), Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, and Kathy Rhodes (ph).

**MacGillivray's Warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*)**

One immature (2022-056) on 6 December 2022, *Plaquemines*: Fort Jackson Woods; Esme Rosen.

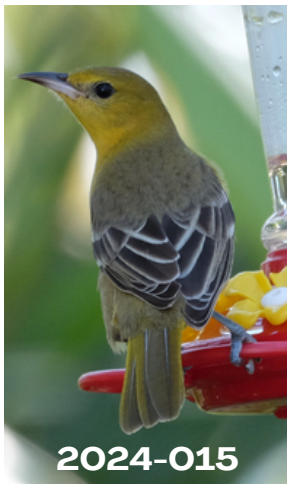
One adult male (2023-061) on 14 October 2023 to at least 5 March 2024, Cameron: Peveto Woods Sanctuary; Esme Rosen (ph). This likely is the same individual that appeared at this location beginning October 2021 with LBRC 2021-070.

One female (2024-108) on 15 February 2024, *Plaquemines*: Buras, woodlot on River Road; David P. Muth.

One adult male (2024-030) on 15, 21 April 2024, *Cameron*: Peveto Woods Sanctuary; Bob Steele, James Smithers. This bird is assumed to be a returning individual first reported in October 2021 (2021-070).










# Accepted Records continued

**Tropical Parula (*Setophaga pitiayumi*)**

One immature male (2023-099) on 30 December 2023, *Lafourche*: Hwy. 307 in Kraemer; Erik I. Johnson (ph). Excellent photographs allowed Members to examine the bird closely for signs of hybridization with Northern Parula, a known issue with about half of the state's previous Tropical Parula reports. Although the observer expressed minor concerns with possible pale feathering below one eye, the paleness seems more likely the result of lighting. The observer also expressed concerns with the greenish wash on the crown; however these are perhaps due to greenish feather tips of juvenile plumage that had not worn off.

**Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*)**

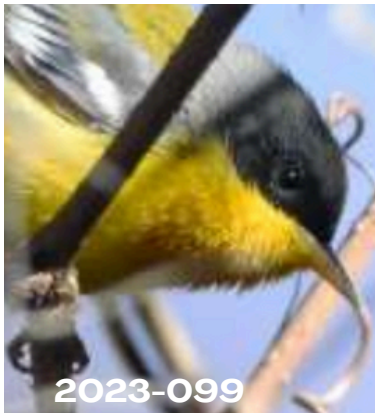
One immature female (2023-078) on 12 November 2023, *Cameron*: Johnsons Bayou; Paul E. Conover (ph).

One adult female (2023-104) on 21 and 24 December 2023 and presumably the same individual on 24 February 2024, *Plaquemines*: Triumph; David P. Muth (ph).

One adult male (2023-100) on 31 December 2023, *St James*: Oak Alley Plantation; Emily Holcomb (ph).

One (2024-009) on 27 January to at least 6 March 2024, *Plaquemines*: Port Sulphur, (29.4767457, -89.6925481); Nick Ramsey (ph).








# Accepted Records continued

**Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga flava*)**

One immature male (2023-064) on 16-18 October 2023, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle, between Landry and Cemetery lanes; **David P. Muth** (ph), Paul E. Conover (ph), and Kathy Rhodes (ph). This represents the third record of this species for Louisiana and the first since 1983. Members considered the possibility of the presence of two birds as some reports and eBird checklists suggested but found that one of the tanagers pictured in some images was a Scarlet Tanager and that all photos of Hepatic Tanagers appear to be the same individual.

One (2024-002) on 6-21 January 2024, *Jefferson*: Harahan, Mississippi River batture at Colonial Club Drive, 29.92675*N,90.20937*W; **Cathy DiSalvo** (ph), Kathy Rhodes (ph), Claire Thomas (ph), and David P. Muth (ph). This represents the fourth state occurrence of this species, a mere three months after the third record broke a 40-year Louisiana drought for the species.

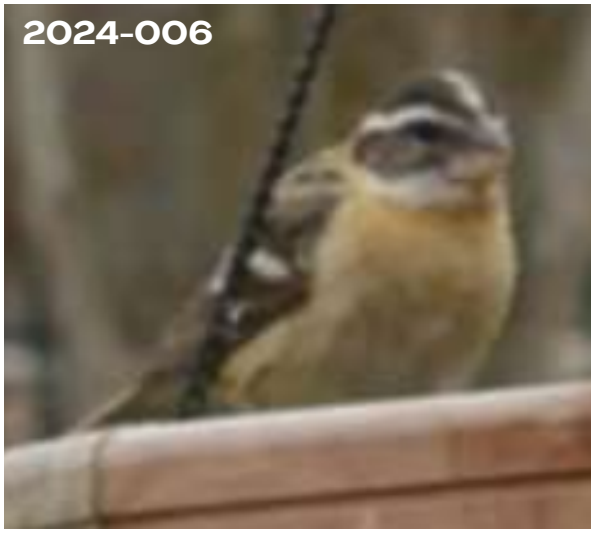
**Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)**

One (2024-012) on 17-23 February 2024, *East Baton Rouge*: Baton Rouge, Cherokee Street; Christine Kooi (ph). This is a courtesy review; Western Tanager was removed from the Review List on 16 March 2013.

**Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)**

One (2024-006) on 20-22 January 2024, *Terrebonne*: Houma; Margaret Ellender (ph). This is a courtesy review; Black-headed Grosbeak was removed from the Review List on 13 March 2021.



**American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*)**

One male shot by a hunter (2023-004) on 25 January 2023, *Cameron*: Lacassine NWR; reported second-hand (photos obtained from hunter).

The available photographs were not detailed enough to rule out a hybrid.

**Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*)**

One adult (1974-014) on 2 April 1974, *Cameron*: Cameron at Calcasieu Pass; (card only); published AB28(4):812 "ad. winter, the second for LA was seen well."

Following a discussion of the observer's details provided on a 3 x 5 card, most Members felt that not enough detail was present to warrant acceptance of what would represent the second state record.

**Sandwich Tern x Elegant Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis* x *elegans*)**

One definitive adult (2023-025) on 6 June 2023, *St. Bernard*: Chandeleur Island, northern end, N29.9795o, W88.8386o; (ph).

Members agreed with the assessment that Elegant Tern was one parent line of this individual; however, despite the fact that this bird resembled known hybrids of Elegant and Sandwich, and even with the knowledge that these species are known to hybridize in Florida, it was ultimately decided that the parentage of this individual was impossible to fully determine.

**Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)**

One subadult (2024-001) on 3 January 2024, *Morehouse*: Mollicy unit of Upper Ouachita NWR.

The reported fieldmarks were consistent with Golden Eagle; however, the short duration of the sighting proved problematic for most members.

**White-tailed Hawk (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*)**

One (2024-013) on 19 February 2024, *Calcasieu*: Lake Charles, 2221 E Ward Line Rd, N30.21310 W93.12882.

The bird was seen naked-eye only, and other species could not be eliminated.

**Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*)**

One (2022-055) on 14 October 2022, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle Landry Leblanc Woods.

This sighting, which occurred during the Red-legged Honeycreeper chase, drew mixed identifications from observers present, with opinions divided between Brown-crested and Great Crested flycatchers. The available photos were also equivocal. Although the tertial edges seemed narrow as in Brown-crested, the tertials of a late-molting or worn first-year Great Crested would show similarly narrow edges, and the photos showed signs of extreme wear in the wings. Members felt that the bird was best left at the generic level.

**Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*)**

One (2024-004) on 15 January 2024, *Plaquemines*: Diamond.

The report rested on a short vocalization that some Members felt might have come from a different species given the high density of various kingbirds present in the area.

**Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*)**

One (2021-099) on 23 October 2021, *St. Mary*: Cypremort Point: (ph).

Although some Members felt that the seemingly darker hood of this individual favored Cassin's Kingbird, other Members expressed reservations about lighting and the fact that the tail was not seen. The committee has previously reviewed at least one photographic report for this species with photos that strongly suggested Cassin's based on head coloration and throat contrast that upon closer examination proved to be a Western Kingbird in poor lighting. Separation of Cassin's and Western kingbirds can be difficult, and Members were divided on this report. Ultimately, a majority of Members felt that the caveats were too strong to ignore for what would have represented a third state record.

**Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*)** continued

One adult bird (2023-071G) on 16 December 2023, *Plaquemines*: Diamond.

Given the dusk lighting, the reporter expressed uncertainty about whether the bird in question was indeed the Cassin's Kingbird being seen in the area, or one of the multiple Western Kingbirds returning to the evening roost. The photographs were of poor quality given the circumstances and the record was not resolvable to species.

**Greater Pewee (*Contopus pertinax*)**

One (2023-055) on 1 October 2023, *Orleans*: New Orleans, City Park - Scout Island - N30.000750° W90.094639°; (ph).

Unfortunately, poor angle prevented the observer from capturing definitive photographs of what would have represented a first state record.While some members felt that this individual looked promising for Greater Pewee, others felt that Eastern Wood-Pewee was a better fit.

**Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*)**

One (2023-070) on 29 October 2023, *Cameron*: Oak Grove Sanctuary (ph).

Most Members felt that Least Flycatcher was not eliminated.

**Cassin's Vireo (*Vireo cassinii*)**

One (2023-079) on 12 November 2023, *Orleans*: Bayou Sauvage lake levee.

The separation of Cassin's Vireo from Blue-headed Vireo is one of the most difficult bird identification challenges in North America and the overlap in appearance between some individuals of the two species make some identifications impossible. One member noted that this individual fell within the range of immature female Blue-headed Vireo, and others noted that the lighting of the photographs made assessment of the true color of the bird difficult. Also noted was that only one observer submitted a report, limiting the amount of material Members had for review.

**Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco (*Junco hyemalis oreganus*)**

One (2023-20) on 21 January 2024, *Caddo*: LSUS Campus - Pioneer Heritage Center.

Members agreed that the description sounded good for this form, but junco subspecies identification is notoriously complicated, and the absence of photos made resolving this identification impossible.

**Lucy's Warbler (*Leiothlypis luciae*)**

One adult male (2023-030) on 15 August 2023, *St. Mary*: 3.2 miles south of Intracoastal Canal bridge on Hwy. 317 (Burns Point Rd).

Members agreed that such an outstanding record, which would have represented the fourth state occurrence of this species, and the unprecedented early date were concerns given the absence of photographs.

**Tropical Parula (*Setophaga pitiayumi*)**

One adult male (2023-058) on 8 October 2023, *Cameron*: about 3km east of Grand Chenier, St. Martin de Porres Cemetery.

Most Members felt that the brevity of the sighting did not allow for the elimination of the sometimes very subtle signs of hybridization with Northern Parula.

**Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*)**

One (2023-074) on 5 November 2023, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle, LDWF kayak launch.

One (2024-017) on 28 January 2024, *Jefferson*: Grand Isle, Grand Isle State Park.

Photographs were inconclusive for both of these records.

# A Review of Identification and Occurrence of the Cory's Shearwater complex in Louisiana

Donna L. Dittmann & Steven W. Cardiff

Historically, taxa comprising the Cory's Shearwater complex have been variously treated as species or subspecies. But, in 2006, the AOU Checklist Committee (in the 47th Supplement) officially split Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*) from Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*), followed by the 2024 split (in the 65th Supplement) of Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris borealis*) and Scopoli's Shearwater (*C. diomedea*). Separation of these three taxa into full species was based on various combinations of morphological, genetic, behavioral, ecological, uropygial chemical, and vocal characteristics. In general, most Cory's nest on islands of the central eastern Atlantic Ocean (e.g., Azores, Canary groups), Scopoli's nest on islands within the Mediterranean Sea*, and Cape Verde Shearwaters nest on the Cape Verde Islands, the southernmost group of eastern North Atlantic islands. Breeding ranges are largely allopatric, but where Cory's and Scopoli's do breed sympatrically at the mouth of the Mediterranean on Almeria and Chafarinas islands, genetic and phenotypic differences are largely maintained. Breeding season is similar among species - generally, adults at sea return to colonies in February, with fledging of young and departure by late October. In the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, Cory's and Scopoli's shearwaters generally occur May through November, mainly represented by immatures that don't return to breeding islands until 2-3 years old, or adults that can skip a breeding season during any given year. There are two accepted US records of Cape Verde Shearwater (North Carolina and Massachusetts, both in August). Figure 1 shows maps of species breeding and non-breeding distributions.

*A few pairs have nested on the Atlantic mainland of France.

For more information visit: *Birds of the World* online:

Cory's Shearwater: https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/corshe1/cur/introduction
Scopoli's Shearwater: https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/scoshe1/cur/introduction
Cape Verde Shearwater: https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/cavshe1/cur/introduction

Vocal differences play an important role in teasing apart species relationships. Informative and historical discussions by Magnus Robb and lovely identification plates by Killian Mullarney are available at The Sound Approach.

https://soundapproach.co.uk/species/corys-shearwater/
https://soundapproach.co.uk/species/scopolis-shearwater/
https://soundapproach.co.uk/species/cape-verde-shearwater-2/

The focus is *vocalizations*: so, take the time to listen to their amazing recordings! Also available following this link: *The Sound Approach: Petrels Night and Day* – webbook: https://soundapproach.co.uk/petrels-night-day/

**Field mark review.**

Morphological characters used to separate the Cory's complex are few and presented below in order of usefulness in the field or from photos. Figure 2 reviews characters and illustrates four "Types" numbered 1-4 (referred to below by Type 1, Type 2, etc.) based on size and outer primary pattern ("hand") characters. Although considered "field" marks, these characters are better assessed using photographs. Lighting conditions can affect how field marks are interpreted, whether in the field or from a series of photos. Sibley Guides Blogpost (2015) provides a cautionary example. An interesting blog by Shorebirder presents the problem of identification using a small series of photos.

**1-Underwing pattern.** Underwing characters involve the extent and pattern of white on primary vanes, dark spots on the greater primary coverts, and amount of dark flecking on underwing linings. Murphy (way back in 1926) pointed out that Scopoli's (then *C. d. diomedea*) is most distinctive in possessing a "large white field on the inner vanes of the primaries, diagnostic markings which are lacking both in *edwardsii* and *borealis*." Murphy's "white field" is also variably described as white tongues, vanes, or (here) as a "sunburst" pattern. The sunburst is created by white on the inner vanes of the outer primaries, which send rays of white towards

the wing tip. The sunburst varies among individuals (see Fig. 2, 1-4), and rays may be long (Type 3) or short and barely extending beyond the underwing lining/coverts (Type 4). Some rays are blurry, others are crisp and well-defined. In flight, a long sunburst appears as a white wedge extending almost to the wingtip (Fig. 2, 3A: compare to 2A). Various authors have reiterated, and most agreed on, the usefulness of this pattern to identify Scopoli's as well as agree that if a bird has a dark hand (Fig. 2, Types 1 and 2) lacking white tongues, then Scopoli's is eliminated from consideration. However, not all authors agree that all Cory's lack a sunburst. Howell and Patteson (2008) reported that Cory's Shearwaters with distinct white tongues in the outer primaries are not rare (e.g., on the Selvagens <=Savage> Islands*), but Cory's typically have P10 all dark or have only a small diffuse whitish area at its base beyond the distal limit of the white greater primary coverts (visual length of the primary). The most recent paper to address utility of underwing pattern is Flood & Gutiérrez (2021) who assess reliability of white vanes, as well as two other characters (number of dark primary covert spots and amount of speckling on wing lining). To evaluate white in the hand, they measured length of white on the outer three primaries (P10-P8). Because a small percentage of breeding Cory's have some white at the base of P10 and some breeding Scopoli's lack any white in P10, they proposed diagnostic patterns as follows: Scopoli's Shearwaters must have a distinct white tongue in P10 greater than 20% of the visible primary length; and Cory's Shearwaters must lack white tongues in P8–P10. Individuals intermediate in this character (with white on 5%–20% of the length of P10) are best treated as Cory's/Scopoli's shearwaters unless other supporting identification characters suggest otherwise. Supporting characters include number of spots (none, one, or two) in the greater primary coverts 9 and 10 (Fig. 2: 2C, and 3C), and the amount of mottling on the underwing coverts (ranging from mostly white to lightly speckled to somewhat more heavily marked; their Figure 5 shows range of variation). Greater primary covert spots can be difficult to assess in the field or from photographs because coverts move/overlap or are difficult to isolate on the wing, and intensity and size of spots also varies from large and dark to small and vague (see their Fig. 4, which illustrates number of spots). Bottom line: most (but not all) Scopoli's show zero or one dark spot, and Cory's typically have one or two dark spots. As for speckling on the lesser secondary coverts, Cory's averaged more dark flecking creating a darker pattern on the underwing (see their Fig. 5, which is also a good exercise to count dark spots on the primary coverts and assess sunburst pattern). Again, they ultimately concluded spots and speckling are best considered "supporting characters."

*The Selvagen Islands have an interesting history and now support the World's largest breeding population of Cory's Shearwaters.

**2-Size and shape.** Within species, size varies by sex, with males averaging larger than females. Within Cory's and Scopoli's shearwaters, there is also some variation in size (sex-for-sex) between individuals from different breeding colonies. Even though female Cory's can overlap in size with male Scopoli's, relative size can still be useful as a field mark. Cory's is overall larger and more robust in proportions than Scopoli's; Scopoli's tends to look smaller-headed, longer- and slender- winged, and lankier. Cape Verde is reported to be more delicate and proportionately longer winged and is usually smaller than Scopoli's. However, size and shape are subjective, and perception of size and proportions can be influenced by many factors including angle of view, lighting, stage of molt or wear, and observer bias. Zidat et al. (2017) used mensural characters (five bill measurements, wing length, and tarsus length) to separate species where breeding in sympatry but, unfortunately, did not also include underwing analysis.

**3- Bill coloration.** This character is only useful to help pick out a Cape Verde Shearwater, which generally has a darker, more olive-colored bill versus the more colorful yellow bill with black terminal band of Cory's and Scopoli's shearwaters.

**4- Upperparts coloration.** Although the grayer head and neck of Scopoli's (compared to browner Cory's) has been cited as useful by some authors, due to variation in plumage wear, age differences, and effect of lighting conditions, coloration is best used as a supporting character for Cory's vs. Scopoli's; it perhaps is more useful for confirming Cape Verde, which tends to be darker and more gray-brown on the head and nape with little contrast between the nape and mantle.

**Occurrence in Louisiana**

Louisiana has about 40 accepted records of the Cory's Shearwater complex, spanning late April through mid-October, with the majority from August and September; all have supporting photo or specimen documentation. Best documentation for these species is from occasional LSUMNS pelagic surveys between 1998 and 2012, occasional organized LOS/birder-organized trips, and observers on oil platforms during the Migrants over the Gulf Project (1998-2000). Cory's have been reported on various other Gulf of Mexico surveys (e.g., GULFCET for cetaceans, Deepwater Horizon oil spill surveys) but such observations can be difficult to pinpoint in terms of date or location within Louisiana waters and publications lack associated documentation to support identification (either to species or complex). Although the overall number of Louisiana occurrences is still relatively small (at least partly due to limited offshore coverage), frequency and abundance seem to be on the increase, with more individuals observed per trip in recent years (e.g., 13 on 14 August 2012, about 18 on 10 September 2016, and 40 counted at one stop on 9 September 2023!). This uptick may reflect a shift in non-breeding destination (e.g., Dias et al. 2011) rather than strictly resulting from spotty coverage, birds shifting location in the Gulf due to sea surface or prey conditions or, alternatively, simple luck being at the right place at the right time.

Louisiana-collected specimens fall into four ID categories as identified by Type numbers (see Fig. 2) based on size and hand pattern (e.g., dark in Fig. 3). Anticipated genetic analyses hopefully can further confirm the identification of these specimens. Figure 4 shows females (and a male Type 1) of Types 1-4. Figure 5 compares males of Types 3 and 4. Figure 6 shows all birds with white in primaries.

**1-Small Cory's type.** Two males (August and October) have a dark hand but are substantially smaller than typical Cory's (Fig. 3) and fit within measurements for Cape Verde Shearwater. Neither individual had a dark olive bill (in the field) or markedly darker cap, characters typically associated with Cape Verde.
**2-Cory's Shearwater.** Two (male and female, June and July) that fall within Cory's size range, are large and robust, and with the dark hand typical of that species.
**3-Scopoli's Shearwater.** Six (one male, five females from August, one from October) that have a prominent sunburst pattern with white on P10 extending 1/3 or more of the visible primary length. These individuals are smaller sex for sex than the two Cory's specimens.
**4-Scopoli's/Cory's Shearwater.** Five (four males, one female from August, one from October) are the same size/proportions as Scopoli's but have a much-reduced sunburst pattern in the hand. Based on size we suspect that these are also Scopoli's, but genetic confirmation is desired (for Scopoli's above as well). If these are Scopoli's, then it supports a limited sunburst as a character for Scopoli's. See variation among individuals from same date (Fig.5). Figure 6 separate Types 3 and 4 for comparison (note bill size and shape). For the time being, some of these are probably best left as "slash."

Identification of photo-documented individuals is more problematic. Photos can only be evaluated using the currently known identification criteria. So, most useful are images of the underwing. Also useful are images of individuals sitting on the water in direct comparison to each other as size is considered an important supporting character by Flood & Gutiérrez (2021) and could be helpful identifying otherwise ambiguous/intermediate individuals. See Figure 2: 2B and 3B (assembled from eBird photos from a recent pelagic trip). For Louisiana observers who don't get a lot of exposure to shearwaters (and can't confirm a bird's sex), direct comparisons are important, especially when birds are sitting on the water. Two eBird checklists, one from 10 September 2016 (https://ebird.org/checklist/S31530955), and the other from 9 September 2023 (https://ebird.org/checklist/S149657069) document birds on the water that show size (sexual dimorphism/species) differences among individuals. Of course, photos of the same individuals both on the water and in flight showing the full underwing pattern would be optimal, but this is understandably difficult to achieve during a pelagic trip. Series of high-quality photographs are most useful for confirming that perceived characters observed are not affected by lighting conditions. Using Flood & Gutiérrez (2021) as summarized in

Figure 7, accepted and currently pending records supported by photographs fall into ID categories Types 2-4 (Fig. 2). Photos of many of the accepted (and pending) records are archived at eBird/Macaulay or by the LBRC; some photos are published in the LBRC Newsletter (e.g., 15th Report <LBRC Newsletter 2012)>; 16th Report <LBRC Newsletter 2013>;; 20th Report of the LBRC <LBRC Newsletter 2017>; 21st Report of the LBRC <2018>; and 22nd Report of the LBRC <LBRC Newsletter 2019). The LBRC will eventually re-review accepted "Cory's complex" records for possible reassignment from Cory's/Scopoli's to Cory's or Scopoli's. Given the difficulties of identification and proper documentation and that identification characters are still being refined and learned, many records lacking diagnostic evidence will undoubtedly have to remain as Cory's/Scopoli's, and many other records in eBird or published elsewhere as outright Cory's or Scopoli's will likely be eventually reclassified. In other words, for the time being, be cautious accepting published evidence at face value. EBird provides helpful reference pages for all species of the complex in addition to a Cory's/Scopoli's page (see Louisiana has about 40 accepted records of the Cory's Shearwater complex, spanning late April through mid-October, with the majority from August and September; all have supporting photo or specimen ). So, now that we all have the necessary ID tools after reading this article, here's a quiz: what is the ID of the shearwater featured at the Cory's/Scopoli's eBird page? Good luck!

**Figures.**

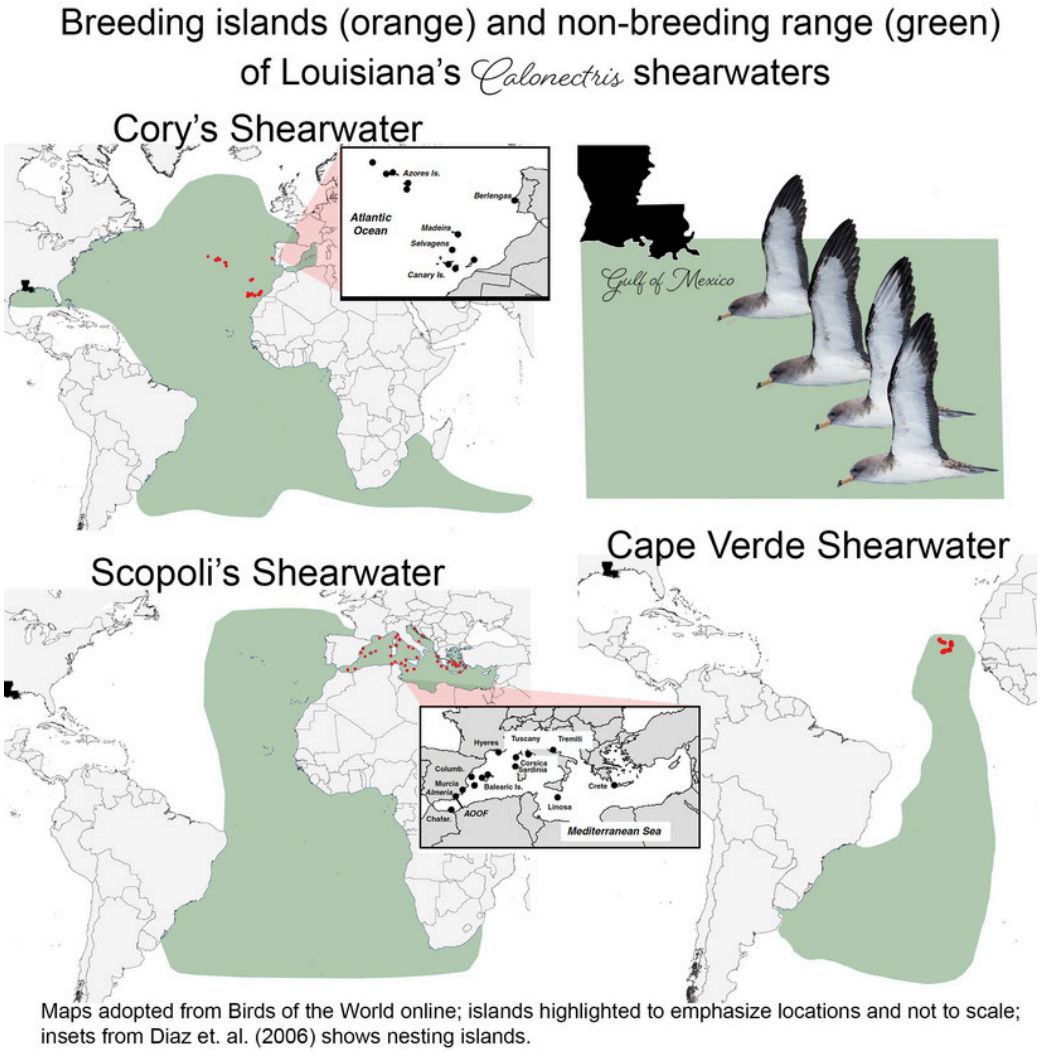



Fig. 1. Map shows breeding and non-breeding distributions of Cory's, Scopoli's, and Cape Verde shearwaters based on Birds of the World online (map for Scopoli's does not show non-breeding range in western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico).

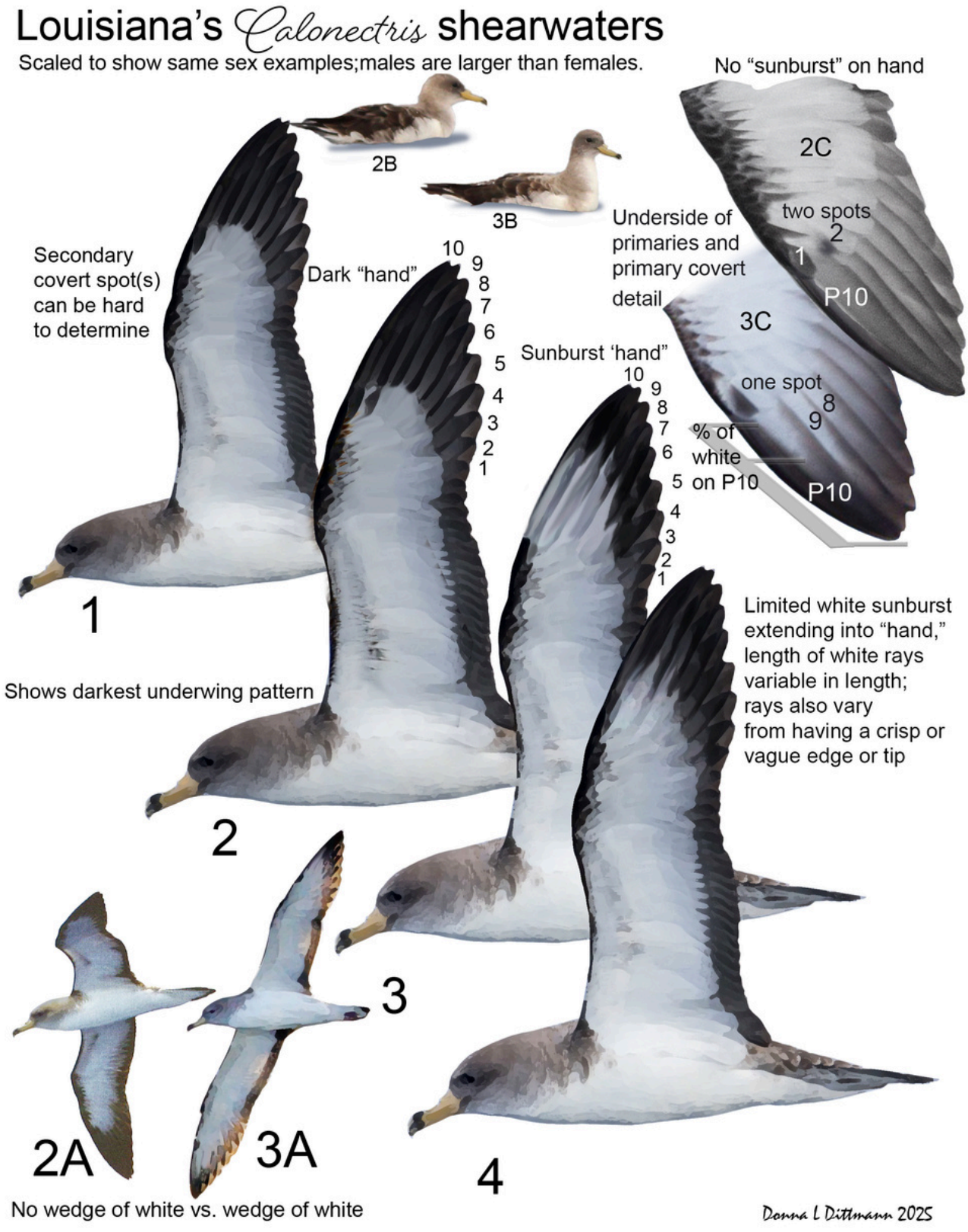



Fig. 2. Illustration shows identification characters of the Cory's complex and with four Types (1-4) that have been recorded in Louisiana.

Fig. 3. Comparison of two "dark handed" individuals, identification Type #1 and #2. Upper = LSUMZ 173807, male, a Type #1 that is a small individual that falls within the mensural range of Cape Verde Shearwater. Lower = LSUMZ 173611, male, a Type #2 that can be classified as a classic large Cory's Shearwater. Note the dramatic size difference between specimens, especially bill shape and size.


Fig. 4. Comparison of LSUMZ specimens of Cory's complex, Types 1-4. Top is Type #2, a typical female Cory's with a large, heavy bill. Beneath that for size comparison is a Type #1, LSUMZ 165965, male (size within the range of Cape Verde Shearwater). Below those are Types #3 and #4, all females. Note that bill size is variable among #3's and #4's but, in general, they have more slender bills compared to Cory's at the top.


Fig. 4. Comparison of LSUMZ specimens of Cory's complex, Types 1-4. Top is Type #2, a typical female Cory's with a large, heavy bill. Beneath that for size comparison is a Type #1, LSUMZ 165965, male (size within the range of Cape Verde Shearwater). Below those are Types #3 and #4, all females. Note that bill size is variable among #3's and #4's but, in general, they have more slender bills compared to Cory's at the top.


Fig. 5. Comparison of LSUMZ specimens of Cory's complex. Immature males, all collected on the same date, that have similar molt range and represent Types 3 and 4 and variable bill sizes.

Fig. 6. Comparison of LSUMZ specimens of Cory's complex with white in hand. Left column = specimens with 1/3 or more visible white on P10 (Type 3); right column = specimens with less than 1/3 visible white on P10 (Type 4). Notice especially the variation in bill size among individuals.

Key to characters to separate
Cory's from Scopoli's shearwaters (Flood & Gutiérrez (2021)

1) If P8–P10 lack white tongues = Cory's Shearwater.
2) If white tongue on P10 is greater than 20% of length of the visible primary = Scopoli's Shearwater.
3) If white tongue on P10 is 5–20% of length of the visible primary = Cory's/Scopoli's shearwater.
But, if:

4) There is a mark/spot on both greater primary coverts 9 and 10 (so, two spots visible), *and* lesser secondary coverts are visibly mottled, *and* it has a robust bill, blocky head, bull-neck, heavily built body, and broad wings, then = Cory's Shearwater.

5) Or, if there are no spots on greater primary coverts 9 and 10, or just one spot on greater primary covert 10, *and* lesser secondary coverts are more vaguely marked, *and* is relatively slight in proportions, including somewhat slimmer bill, smaller head, thinner neck, and narrower wings = Scopoli's Shearwater.

Identification characters 4 and 5 (above) are "supporting characters" rather than "diagnostic characters." These *may* help resolve identification of individuals that fall within the range of number 3 (above). An example of such is shown in the photograph by Donna L. Dittmann on 14 August 2014, which is a Type 4 (Cory's/Scopoli's, see Fig. 2) but by using 5 above, is *probably* a Scopoli's Shearwater.

Fig. 7. Flood & Gutiérrez (2021) summary of field characters of Cory's and Scopoli's shearwaters.

Literature cited (without hyperlink) or recommended reading for complex. References included below (in chronological order) focus on recent literature dealing with species limits or identification of Cory's type shearwaters.

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# A Proposed Change to Revise the Review List

**Paul E. Conover**

*The following proposal will be presented for consideration at the 2025 LBRC meeting:*

The LBRC uses the following criterion to determine whether a species merits placement on the Review List:

> In general, the Review List will consist of species that have been recorded within Louisiana and adjacent ocean an average of four or fewer times per year averaged over the ten year period immediately preceding revision of the Review List.

Over the years, several proposals to revise these guidelines have been forwarded and rejected. In order to understand how the figure used to determine inclusion on the List was selected and whether the guidelines are in need of revision it is useful to compare our Review List rule to the standards used by other states.

The Florida Ornithological Society's Records Committee (FOSRC) uses the following guidelines for determining inclusion:

> FOSRC review species or subspecies (=Review List) are mostly those taxa on the Official State List for which the FOSRC has previously reviewed and accepted 10 or fewer reports (but see below). In a few cases, species or distinctive subspecies are included in the Review List when Committee members seek further information on their status in the state.

The Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) uses the following criterion:

> These species, in general, include birds that have occurred four or fewer times per year anywhere in Texas over a ten-year average.

Most importantly, the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) currently follows the general rule stated in the preface to its Review List: :

> In general, review species average two or fewer occurrences per year in California over the most recent ten year period.

The added importance of the standards used by California stems from the fact that the standards initially adopted by the LBRC were based on the California rule.

According to the minutes of meetings of the CBRC, the California Review List has changed its standards for inclusion on its Review List many times. The original standard, dating from 1973, was "20 records or less." By 1975, that standard was revised to "four or less records per year based on a 10-year average," a standard that was still in place in 1980 when the LBRC was founded. However, by 1981, the California standard was revised to "two accepted records per year average for the last 10 years, and 20 or fewer published specimen records or sight records accepted by the Committee." Currently, the CBRC bylaws define the standard specifically as:

> In general, the Review List will consist of species that have occurred within California and the adjacent ocean 50 or fewer times in total, or an average of two or fewer times per year during the ten-year period immediately preceding revision of the Review List.

The fact that the LBRC followed the lead of California when adopting its Review List standards does not mean that the LBRC must slavishly follow further revisions to that state's standards. However, the various changes to California's rules highlight the arbitrary underpinnings of these numerical standards.

It is enlightening to compare the Louisiana standard to the standards of the other states cited above relative to other factors, such as the area of each state and the size of each state's birding population.

In total area by square kilometers, Texas has an area of about 695,000, California about 424,000, Florida about 170,000, and Louisiana about 136,000. In other words, Louisiana is about five times smaller than Texas, over three times smaller than California, and is about 80% the size of Florida.

Florida is unique among these states with a standard based simply on total number of accepted records.

Texas and Louisiana on the other hand share a one to one match in terms of a forty records per decade standard. Because Louisiana could fit into Texas five times, each Louisiana-sized chunk of Texas would need to register only a fraction of a record each year for Texas to meet this threshold. Looked at another way, because Louisiana shares the same absolute numerical standard of four birds per year as the much larger Texas but has an area five times smaller, Louisiana in effect requires five times more records per unit of area; four records per year in Texas is the equivalent of twenty records per year in Louisiana. This inflated ratio is even more tilted to Louisiana's disadvantage given the overwhelmingly larger number of birders residing in or visiting Texas each year.

The relatively small number of birders and the smaller relative area of Louisiana—as well as the lack of accessibility of many ecosystems—suggest that the number of Louisiana records per year of a species is in part a sampling artifact rather than an accurate measure of rarity.

That brings the discussion back to California. California is three times larger than Louisiana and is a powerhouse in terms of number of birders yet requires half the number of records per decade as Louisiana. If those records were evenly distributed over the state, every Louisiana-sized chunk of California would require only two-thirds of a record per year to meet the standard. Alternatively viewed, if the Louisiana standard was applied to California on an area to area basis, the yearly standard for California would increase sixfold.

Adopting the California standard made sense in 1980 when the LBRC was getting its footing and needed a model to emulate. However, given the disparity in area and birding population between the two states, the fact that Louisiana never modified the standard to fit its own unique conditions is difficult to understand. The current California standard, even though it does not offer a one to one match in terms of area and birder effort, is nonetheless a better fit for Louisiana: A species that is officially recorded twenty times per decade or fifty times total in a state as small as Louisiana and with such a modest birding population is probably being under-sampled, and should not be considered rare.

The proposed change to the relevant LBRC bylaw would thus state that:

> In general, the Review List will consist of species that have been recorded within Louisiana and adjacent ocean an average of ~~four~~ two or fewer times per year averaged over the ten year period or fewer than fifty times immediately preceding revision of the Review List.

Past objections to similar proposals have focused on a perception that such a change would sever the continuity of the data that have been generated by review over the course of the history of the LBRC. However, the value of continuity regarding the review and compilations of these records is in determining underlying patterns of occurrence or vagrancy. The species that would be affected by adopting the proposed revisions are species whose patterns have already been determined and for which very little new can be learned. For these species, the existing standard spells redundancy.

Moreover, the majority of Review List species would not be affected. The Review List species that would be subject to removal on the basis of having twenty or more accepted records over the past ten years are Long-tailed Duck, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Iceland Gull, Sargasso Shearwater, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Couch's Kingbird, and Black-whiskered Vireo. Although all of these species meet the proposed numerical standard, individual species such as Brown-crested Flycatcher whose records may pertain to annual returnees can be individually considered for retention on the Review List.

The Review List species that would be subject to removal on the basis of at least fifty accepted records are White-winged Scoter, Broad-billed Hummingbird, California Gull, Glaucous Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Gray Kingbird, and Black-whiskered Vireo.

## Agenda Discussion Item: Review Hybrids?

LBRC Bylaws state the review is limited to rare species, and to subspecies that are listed on the Review List (e.g. Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler, Great Blue "Great White" Heron, various junco subspecies) or are relevant to the official State List. In recent years, the LBRC has also unofficially expanded its review process to include reports of presumed hybrids whose lineage is believed to include either Review List species or species that would be new to the state list, such as Tropical X Northern parula warblers and Elegant X Sandwich terns, respectively. However, the subject of hybrids has never been added to the Bylaws, and there has never been a stated objective in reviewing hybrid records.

While the review of such records might uncover "good" records mistakenly presumed to be hybrids, or could create a repository of reference material for future reviews, it also demands time and serves an uncertain purpose. This item has been placed on the Agenda for clarification as to whether the review of presumed hybrids aligns with the mission of the LBRC, and whether the review of hybrids should be added to the Bylaws or simply discontinued.



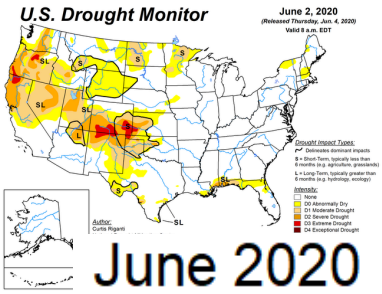
The two records at left were submitted and accepted as Tropical Parula X Northern Parula hybrids. Both provide excellent illustrations of hybrid phenotypes, but at present LBRC Bylaws give no justification for their review. Photo at left by Patricia Rosel and Scott France; photo at right by Phillip A. Wallace.

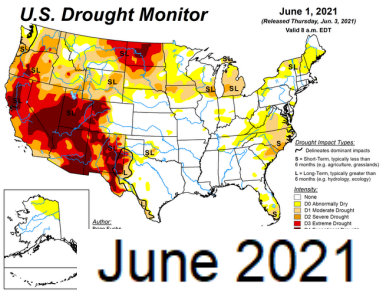

The bird at left was submitted as a possible Elegant Tern X Sandwich Tern hybrid, and while it appears to match the appearance of known hybrids of this pair of species, reviewers left its parentage as uncertain. Elegant Tern is not on the Louisiana Checklist, so the presence of such a hybrid in the state is of great interest, but such birds don't fall into categories defined by the Bylaws. Photo by Erik I. Johnson.

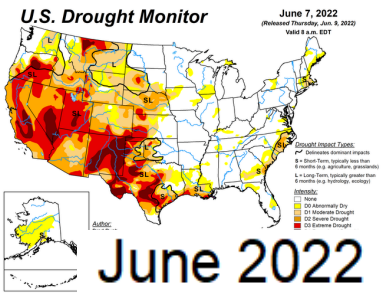
# Examining Vagrancy

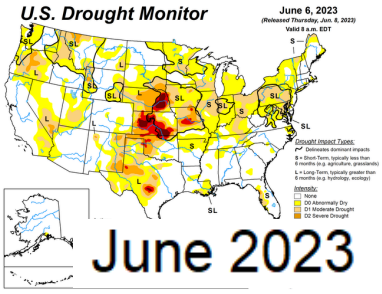
Part of the study of rare birds involves trying to make meaning of the appearance of vagrants in our state. Over time, repeated occurrences of individuals of a species can reveal a pattern, and at times those patterns can point to possible reasons for a species' vagrancy. The causes might not be easy to divine, and some cases might be unique or random. Whatever the case or cause, it is always instructive to contemplate reasonable possibilities.

The winter of 2023-2024 produced a bumper crop of reports of Review List birds from the West, including species that had previously been reported fewer than five times from Louisiana. While we can only guess as to whether there were connections among these sightings, some birders had predicted an above-average number of western rarities based on the sudden relief from extreme droughts brought on by waves of heavy rainfalls in many parts of the West. In hindsight, does this conventional birder wisdom seem plausible?



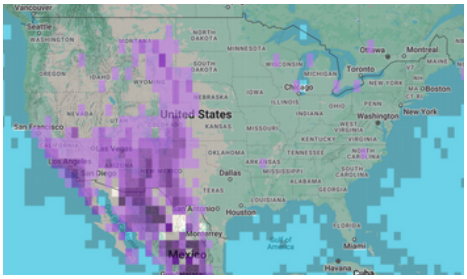



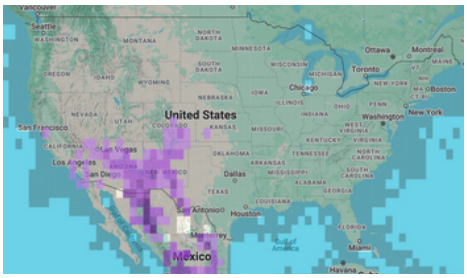




The U.S. Drought Monitor (https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/) maps, left, show the annual progression of drought as measured in June from 2020 to 2023 with the areas of drought expanding to cover almost the entirety of the West by June of 2022. Areas of Severe, Extreme, and Exceptional drought were widespread in a shifting mosaic throughout this span. However, the map for June 2023 shows a dramatic decrease in drought activity with large parts of California, the Desert Southwest, and the Great Basin showing no drought at all. That decrease suggests increased nesting productivity, and a greater pool of birds available for vagrancy.

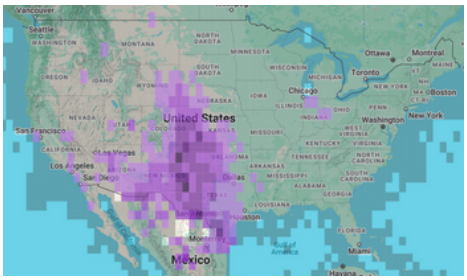
Compare the drought maps with the breeding ranges (June-July; eBird) of the following Review List species, all of which except for Western Flycatcher had previously been recorded fewer than five times in Louisiana.



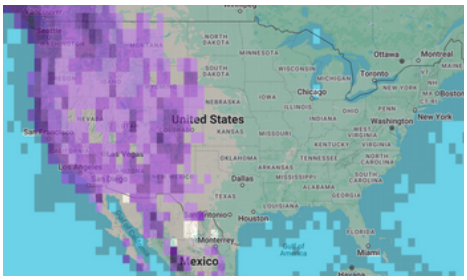

Cassin's Kingbird



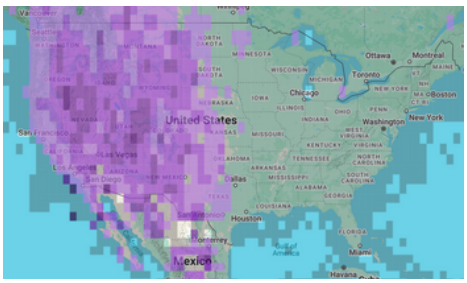

Hepatic Tanager



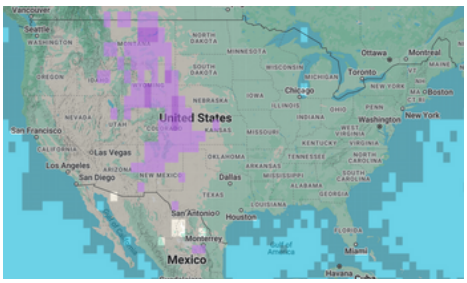

Cassin's Sparrow




Western Flycatcher



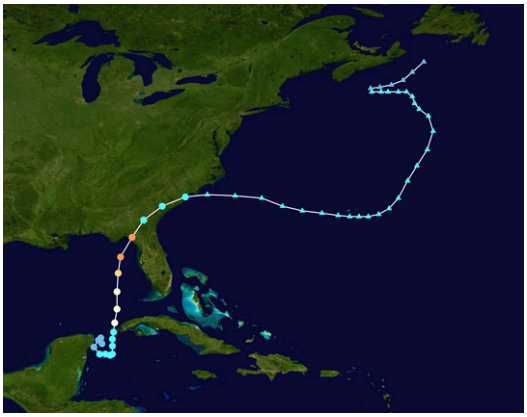

Rock Wren




Mountain Plover

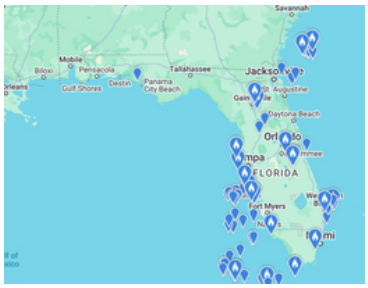
Because large parts of these breeding ranges lie within areas that had recently found relief from drought, the connection with vagrancy does seem plausible. However, as inviting as the clues seem, the connections remain conjecture and similar weather conditions to test the pattern might not occur again for decades. Still, the data for winter 2023-2024 are on the record should similar conditions occur again.

# Examining Vagrancy continued

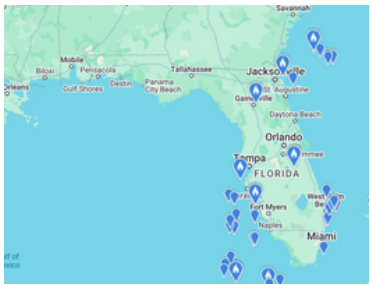


Much has been said of the effects of hurricanes on vagrancy; the widespread occurrence of American Flamingos across the eastern United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Idalia, for instance, generated excitement far beyond the community of birders. Idalia, which maintained tropical status from 26-31 August 2023, seemed perfectly designed to transport birds, building slowly in an area of flamingo colonies and then pushing across the Gulf of Mexico, where it rapidly intensified into a hurricane that would have pushed airborne flamingos ahead of it. That much, anyway, is the conventional wisdom of birders, and the unprecedented appearance of Red-legged Honeycreepers along the northern Gulf coast following Tropical Storm Karl less than a year before the passage of Idalia provided a strong advance argument in support of the idea that birds normally found on land can be swept across the Gulf by storms

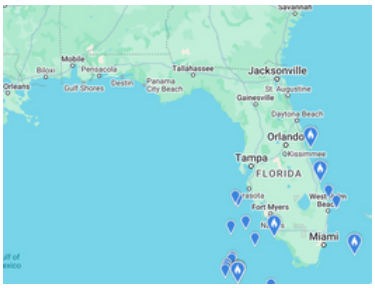
But what of the effect of Idalia on seabirds? Compare the August 2023 eBird maps below for four pelagic species:



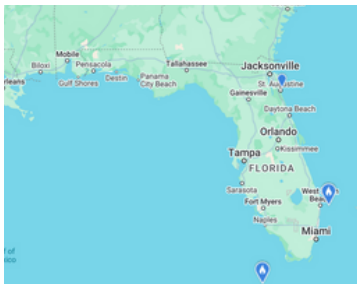

**Sooty Tern**




**Bridled Tern**




**Brown Noddy**




**Cory's/Scopoli's Shearwater**

Looking at these maps points out something that storm-bird chasers know fairly well; Sooty and Bridled Terns often get tossed onshore by hurricanes, but Brown Noddies and "Cory's" Shearwaters seem much better able to hang on to the Gulf. Are these seabirds stronger fliers, able to maintain a safer altitude, or do they simply evacuate in a safe direction well ahead of the arrival of stronger winds?

On 9 September 2023, just over a week after the passage of Idalia and 250 miles to the west, a Louisiana pelagic trip encountered unprecedented numbers of Cory's/Scopoli's (estimated at >80), Sargasso (36), and Great (13) shearwaters. Whether the high number of seabirds in Louisiana waters was a result of birds that had evacuated from the path of a storm 250 miles to the east is unknown and may be completely unconnected, but at the very least the event might provide one point that can be used to look for a pattern in the future.

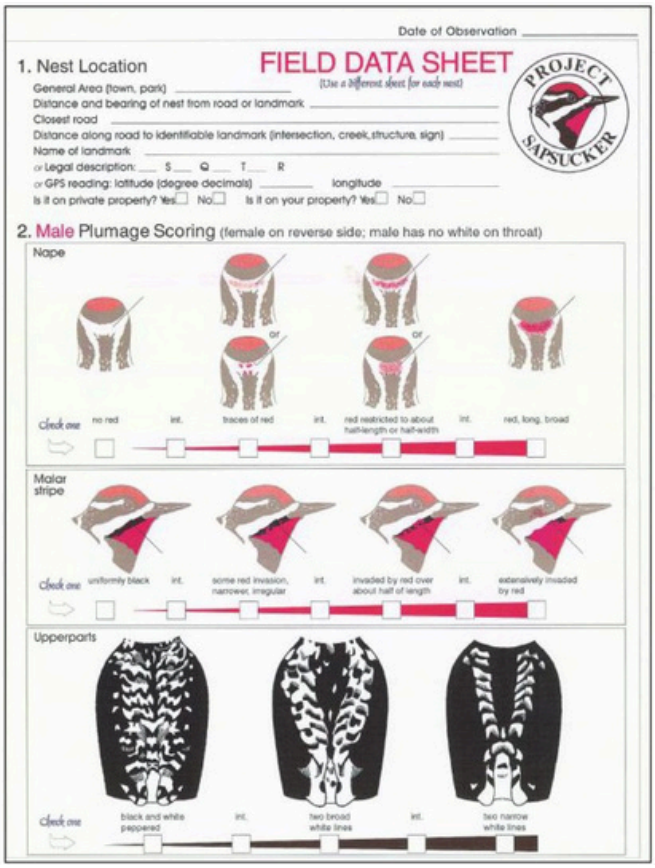
Of note, the trip also encountered the state's fifth record of Brown Noddy, a species that nests in the Florida Keys and ranges offshore in the same general area of Idalia's passage. However, the fact that Louisiana had two documented Brown Noddy records from August 2022 make the Idalia connection more tenuous. Although Hurricane Ian traced a similar path in 2022 to Idalia in 2023, the Louisiana Brown Noddy reports preceded Ian by a month.

# Field Guides and Individual Variation

Field guides are an excellent tool for learning the fundamentals of separating groups and species. However, every field guide has its limitations. Typically the biggest enemy is space; there simply isn't enough room in a portable book to provide every detail on age, sex, season, wear, and molt. Many Review List species show great individual variation that field guides simply can't cover, and the limited information that field guides can provide for these species can compact the identification into a misleadingly narrow frame. Here are a couple of quick, simple examples.

## Classic Red-naped Sapsuckers

Few species are as misunderstood at the ID level as Red-naped Sapsucker, a fact reflected in its classification history: These sapsuckers were once considered hybrids between Yellow-bellied and Red-breasted sapsuckers due largely to the great variation among red-naped birds. The eventual elevation of this group to full species status had interesting consequences.




Initially, field guide portrayals of Red-naped appeared to be reworkings of Yellow-bellied images with red napes and paired dorsal stripes painted in, using an "average" appearance to create what is now considered the "classic" Red-naped Sapsucker. Over the years other narrow fieldmarks were added to the ID canon. In the process, the fact that variation in Red-naped Sapsucker is the rule rather than the exception was lost, and many red-naped sapsuckers that are not "classic" are dismissed as hybrids or as aberrant Yellow-bellieds. For example, the Project Sapsucker chart at left was used to score potential hybrids based on intermediate characters between Red-naped and Yellow-bellied where their ranges meet in Alberta. However, a scan of breeding season photos of Red-naped Sapsuckers from far beyond the contact zone show that many undoubtedly pure Red-napeds would be scored as intermediates according to the chart.

Adding to the issue for Louisiana birders, the classic image of the Red-naped Sapsucker is based on summer birds. Red-naped Sapsuckers molt in new body feathers before fall migration and fresh winter birds can look very different from the images in field guides. The dorsal rows of white feathers on the back are at their brightest and widest in winter and look much different from the wispy, worn summer versions shown in some field guides. The same is true of the extent and width of white feathering on the face. A winter vagrant to Louisiana might be anything but average, but might be a Red-naped nonetheless.

**Little Big Gulls**

Pictured above, left to right, are Glaucous, Great Black-backed, and Herring gulls. On a species basis, if average mass is used as the criterion to put these birds in order from smallest to largest, the normal order would be Herring, Glaucous, and Great Black-backed. However, size variation within species of gulls is broad. Data available on the Birds of the World website show that Herring Gull body mass ranges from 600-1650g, Glaucous Gull from 1232-2180g, and Great Black-backed Gull from 1033-2272g. In other words, depending on the individuals involved, a large Herring Gull might dwarf both Glaucous and Great Black-backed gulls in mass.

If length from tip of bill to tip of tail is the criterion used to order the species, according to Howell and Dunn's Gulls of the Americas the range of length in Herring is 56-67 cm, in Glaucous is 55-74 cm, and in Great Black-backed is 63.5-78.5 cm. Again, birds of these species might line up in any order including the opposite of conventional wisdom.

The range in measurements can be due to factors including sexual dimorphism (female gulls average smaller than males), subspecific differences, or simply individual variation based on genetics, nutritional history, or health, but field guides typically don't discuss these differences. Standard field guides tend to compress their information into simple averages rather than space-eating ranges.

While few birders would misidentify adults of the three species above based on size, younger birds might be a different matter. Using the common Herring Gull as a benchmark to judge the size of other gulls, for instance, might pose issues. Consider that California Gull has a length range listed at 45.5-58 cm.

# Farewells and Greetings

Photo by Maryann Eastman

## Farewells to Departing Members

This Newsletter would be incomplete if it didn't recognize the enormous contributions of Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittmann to the LBRC.

The LBRC survived a lot in the decades that Steve and Donna guided it, from the logistical nightmare of shepherding bulging snail mail folders to Members across the state in the days before the internet, to the changes in documentation practices due to the rise of eBird. Despite these huge challenges, the tireless efforts of Steve and Donna have increased the stature of the LBRC within the Louisiana birding community.

Whether sharing their expertise with individuals seeking input on sightings or with the birding community as a whole through their ID articles and beautiful Newsletters, Steve and Donna have made us all better birders.

I have been fortunate to have them as mentors, and I am not alone. Thank you, Steve and Donna, for your immense contributions to the LBRC and to Louisiana birding! Good birding--and pack plenty of boudin for the trip west.

The LBRC would also like to recognize Dan Lane for his service to the committee. Simply put, Dan is one of the best birders in the world, and he has been a tremendous asset to the LBRC. Unfortunately Dan's day job of leading birding tours across the planet keeps him busy, so he decided to step down. In addition to his birding bona fides, Dan is also a lover of bad puns, cool word facts, good food, and he tells some pretty good stories. In short, Dan is a great guy whose presence and knowledge will be missed.

Thank you, Dan, and hasta la vista!

## And Greetings, New Members!

The LBRC would also like to welcome three new members, all of whom are active and excellent birders.

Chris Brantley is a Consulting Ecologist who received his undergrad degree at LSU, his Master's at SELA, and his PhD at LSU. Chris has been active with Breeding Bird Surveys, the Breeding and Winter Bird Atlas, and is an eBird reviewer for southeast Louisiana. Chris is a member of Orleans Audubon and is a member of, and holds a certification as Wildife Biologist from, the Wildlife Society. Chris lives in Mandeville.

Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion is Audubon Delta's Coastal Bird Technician for Southeast Louisiana, coordinates the Audubon Coastal Bird Survey in Louisiana and runs the New Orleans Rooftop-Nesting Bird Program in partnership with Orleans Audubon, for which she also serves as an executive board member. She volunteers at banding stations for the Louisiana Bird Observatory to build on her knowledge of morphology and ecology. Raised by birders, Chloe has been actively interested in birds all her life. Chloe lives in New Orleans.

James Smithers was raised and currently resides in Southwest Louisiana. He is a graduate of McNeese State University. James is a part time guide for Texas and Louisiana Birding Guides and is currently serving as the President of the Louisiana Ornithological Society. Though he didn't grow up birding, he discovered his love for birds in his 20's and dedicates most of his free time birding Calcasieu and Cameron Parish.

# Secretarial Musings

This is the first Newsletter since its creator, Donna Dittmann, left the LBRC, and putting it together has made me appreciate even more the time and effort that Donna put into it every year. I hope that the finished product looks OK; certainly the beautiful and excellent piece on "Cory's" shearwaters that Donna and Steve Cardiff contributed will be looked at for years to come. I hope that they'll continue to contribute in the coming years.

As I was writing the Newsletter, a lot of the issues that come to me as I review records returned to mind. I added short notes about some of them, such as the drawbacks of field guides, in this copy, but there are other topics that I hope to mull over in the future.

One thought that often comes to mind is that, for all of the shortcomings of field guides and the birders who grew up with them, a different set of shortcomings is sometimes evident in the generation of birders that have come of age in the "post-field guide era" on the near side of the digital divide. Everything from learning to play the guitar to separating flycatchers seems easy to master with YouTube nowadays, and while technology can prefab just about everything, sometimes the advanced ideas are addressed but the fundamentals get bypassed. I'm not judging birding styles, merely remarking; there are certainly pros and cons to birders of both eras that would interesting to explore.

That observation ties in to some extent with another frequent thought that comes to mind during reviews, the rise and reliance on soft field marks. "Jizz" birding has been around forever, and every birder uses their initial reactions to build an ID, but the elevation of subjective and personal impressions to the level of true fieldmarks is not always as easy or sure as it is presented. The perching posture of pewees, the plumage of yellow-bellied kingbirds, and the citrus-eating habits of dowitchers can change with posture or wear, but those caveats aren't always stressed enough by the authors of soft fieldmarks. Such marks are probably fair indicators of a species at times, but they can be completely useless in describing the sighting to others. I think an objective look at different soft fieldmarks would be a useful topic for future discussion as well.

In terms of more nuts-and-bolts LBRC matters, I have also debated whether the LBRC should reverse its policy on publishing the reports behind unaccepted records on the historical pages of the website. Many birders submit records feeling that the details of their sightings would be useful to others even if their report is not accepted, but at the current time, while the outcomes and synopses of unaccepted records are published, the reports themselves become invisible. I would appreciate hearing feedback on whether to make such reports accessible, and I might consider adding an opt-in/opt-out box on the report submission form to address the situation for future records.

The LBRC website, especially the Photo and Record Gallery, needs to be updated. That will be the work of the summer for me, and I hope to get it brought up to date and possibly revamped at that time. It will be a lot of work, so "pardon the progress."

Special thanks to Robert C. Dobbs for proofing the Newsletter. If anyone notes any errors, please let me know and I'll correct them.

Thank you,

Paul Conover
LBRC Secretary and Webmaster

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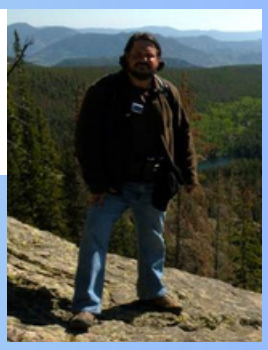

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