

Minutes of the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee: Annual Meeting on 14 January 2024

Present: Geoff Williamson (Secretary), Steve Huggins, Davida Kalina, Adam Sell (Vice Secretary), Terry Walsh, Dan Williams, Kyle Wiktor

Absent: none

This meeting of the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee (the "Committee") was called to order at 9:30 AM at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. There being seven voting members present, quorum was met to transact business.

The minutes of the 14 January 2023 meeting were corrected and then approved by unanimous consent.

Members whose terms were expiring were Adam Sell and Terry Walsh. Walsh was eligible to serve another consecutive term, but Adam Sell was not. Geoff Williamson nominated Terry Walsh as a candidate to fill a vacant position. Adam Sell and Terry Walsh nominated Nathan Goldberg to fill a vacant position. These two candidates were elected by unanimous vote.

Steve Freed, Jason Newton, and Jude Vickery were added to a list of candidates for consideration for future nomination as potential IORC members.

Davida Kalina, Terry Walsh, and Dan Williams nominated Geoff Williamson to serve as Secretary for 2024, and Williamson was elected by unanimous vote.

Geoff Williamson nominated Davida Kalina for the position of Vice-Secretary. Kalina indicated willingness to serve and was elected by unanimous vote.

The next Annual Meeting was scheduled tentatively for 18 January 2025, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Geoff Williamson indicated that his Secretary's Report for 2023 had been distributed to the Committee.

Geoff Williamson updated the Committee on the status of organizing the IORC archives. He noted that the main efforts are (1) cataloguing (and potentially scanning) the paper archive material currently housed in the Field Museum, (2) obtaining material from Doug Stotz from his years of service as IORC secretary and incorporating it into the archives, and (3) establishing a formal agreement with the Field Museum regarding storage of the IORC archives at the museum, along with a inventory of materials stored at the Field.

Adam Sell moved and Terry Walsh seconded that IORC establish an eBird account for the purpose of entering information for all accepted IORC records. The motion passed by a vote of seven in favor and none against. The Committee's understanding is that Nathan Goldberg has already been entering into eBird some accepted IORC records so that this initiative can build on his initial work. The Committee noted that accurate records of what has been entered should be kept and that standards for consistency of the entries be adopted and followed and including in the IORC operations manual.

The Committee considered changes to the Review List.

1. Williamson moved and Sell seconded to remove the Siloam Springs State Park exception for Bewick's Wren from the Review List. After discussion, the motion passed by unanimous vote.
2. The Committee discussed the present situation with Limpkins. Despite the number of accepted records for Limpkin, the Committee's sense was that keeping the species on the Review List was warranted.

The Committee was informed of records added to the Suspense File during 2023.

Record 2023-056 (Cinnamon Teal) was discussed in preparation for its 2nd circulation.

In preparation for the circulation of a number of jaeger records (2023-049, 2023-052, 2023-055, 2023-058, 2023-075, 2023-076, 2023-082, 2023-084, 2023-100, 2023-116, 2023-117, and 2023-118), the Committee discussed the general quality of jaeger documentation, especially in cases where the only documentary information is what has been entered into eBird. Williamson noted that Illinois's eBird reviewers abide by decisions of IORC regarding jaeger records, as is done with all eBird Review List entries, with all confirmed eBird observations of jaegers (and other Review List entries) eventually being reviewed by IORC. Also as is the case with all entries of Review List records into eBird, the current practice of the Illinois eBird review team is to confirm such entries when the reviewer feels the evidence is convincing about the observation, without waiting on an IORC decision. Williamson further noted some shortcomings of eBird-only documentary material of jaeger sightings, particularly that (a) time of observation of the bird is generally not specifically noted within the period of observation covered by an eBird checklist, which often makes determination of when different observation should be assigned to the same IORC record number; (b) observer experience with jaeger identification; and (c) in many instances the comments in an eBird checklist include nothing about, or a limited amount of information about, what was observed. Prompts in the IORC documentation form encourage the inclusion of information that would address these shortcomings. After discussion, the Committee determined to take the following two actions. First, Williamson will approach the eBird review team and encourage an approach in which no jaeger records, or no Lake Michigan lakefront jaeger records, are confirmed prior to IORC review, with messages sent to each eBird observer encouraging submission of a completed IORC documentation form. Second, IORC will prepare an article on this issue for publication in Meadowlark along with broad availability via IORC's various web page presences. The article will articulate the concern (gathering information necessary to ascertain the status and occurrence of all jaeger species in Illinois), the importance of good quality documentation for addressing the concern, the difficulty that jaegers pose for correct identification (including in situations in which birds are seen at close range), and the fact that the understanding of how to identify jaegers is under continuous development. The article is also to provide a bibliography of important and helpful resources for learning about jaeger identification. Terry Walsh will lead the effort to draft such an article.

The specimen evidence for record 1936-002 (King Eider) was examined by the Committee.

The specimen evidence for record 1919-002 (Bohemian Waxwing) was examined by the Committee.

The specimen evidence for record 1906-002 (Pine Grosbeak) was examined by the Committee.

The specimen evidence for record 1933-001 (Pine Grosbeak) was examined by the Committee.

The Committee discussed the question of establishing guidelines for when to review of out-of-season records of regularly occurring species. The seasonal documentation chart used by the Indiana Audubon Society for this purpose was examined as an example, and IORC's 8 July 2016 draft of such a document for Illinois was distributed to the Committee. Several Committee members pointed out that currently the temporal distribution of many regular occurring species in Illinois is in a period of ongoing change, which complicates the setting of any standards. The consensus was that no action need be taken now regarding this issue.

Williamson reviewed a list of areas of activity and potential projects for the improvement of IORC's work, including the following.

- Review/revision of the documentation form in all its versions, including the Word document and web form versions, and making all versions consistent with one another. The Committee's consensus is that the updated documentation form will no longer request a mailing address for the documenter.
- Addressing issues associated with the functioning of the web-based documentation form (mainly with respect to attachments to the form).
- Acquire a domain name and web host for the site at <http://geoffwilliamson.info/iorc/>
- Put print archive material into electronic form.
- Updating the contents of the database at <http://iorc.herokuapp.com/>
 - Finding an appropriate permanent home for it.
 - Include decisions from recent reports.
 - Update the taxonomy.
 - Improve the information at the home page so that it explains the contents.
 - Develop a system to provide links from the database contents to pages at <http://geoffwilliamson.info/iorc/>

The Committee discussed the impact of observer reliability in the evaluation of records. The fact that there have been instances within the Illinois birding community of falsification of evidence regarding formal and informal documentation of bird records was noted.

Williamson updated the Committee on the status of Mew Gull records following the split into Short-billed Gull and Common Gull. The situation remains unchanged from last year's annual meeting. IORC has received formal submissions at the new species level for three past records: 2005-007 (as Short-billed Gull), 2008-007 (as Common Gull), and 2012-003 (as Common Gull). Once a complete set of votes/comments documentation from earlier reviews are assembled, these will go out for review.

Dan Williams moved, and Terry Walsh seconded, a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 2:26 PM.