
Date: Sun, 28 Jul 2013 20:32:03 -0600

Sender: NBHC ID-FRONTIERS Frontiers of Field Identification <BIRDWG01@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU>

From: Ryan Brady <ryanbrady10@HOTMAIL.COM>

Subject: Request for info on Barnacle Goose

This is off-topic but I thought this group would know as much as any. The Wisconsin rare bird records committee is currently reviewing a record of a Barnacle Goose (potential first state record) seen back in mid-December. I'm wondering if anyone here can direct me to pertinent resources (beyond eBird) on the occurrence and review status of this species in the U.S. during this past year or beyond. I'm aware of the recent observations in Illinois and the Northeast but any info on benchmark overviews, voting results, changing patterns of occurrence, etc. are welcome. Backchannel is fine. Thanks!

Ryan Brady

Washburn, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

ryanbrady10@hotmail.com

Date: Mon, 29 Jul 2013 04:39:10 GMT

Sender: NBHC ID-FRONTIERS Frontiers of Field Identification <BIRDWG01@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU>

From: Alan Wormington <wormington@JUNO.COM>

Subject: Fw: [BIRDWG01] Request for info on Barnacle Goose

Ryan, I will provide an answer, even though it pertains to Ontario (Canada) which seems to be outside the realm of your request? In Ontario, Barnacle Goose is commonly kept in captivity, and they escape on a regular basis. I have personally seen small "flocks" in penned enclosures at two locations, and know of several others. Waterfowl breeders have told me that they are dirt cheap to buy, and literally hundreds are known to be present in Ontario. The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) has a policy where all reported birds are deemed to be escapees, unless it can be demonstrated otherwise. In practice, only if the bird can be PROVEN to have originated from the Old World. And that can be accomplished ONLY if the bird is banded, and if that band can be read and then traced back to the Old World. We only have one record that has been accepted for Ontario. It concerns a bird that was shot by hunter (in far eastern Ontario adjacent to Quebec), and the bird had a band. It was banded as a wild bird in Scotland.

Alan Wormington

Leamington, Ontario

Date: Mon, 29 Jul 2013 20:02:04 -0600

Sender: NBHC ID-FRONTIERS Frontiers of Field Identification <BIRDWG01@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU>

From: Ryan Brady <ryanbrady10@HOTMAIL.COM>

Subject: Re: Request for info on Barnacle Goose

Thanks Alan and sorry for the poorly worded request. This is no doubt a sticky issue resting largely on where one puts the burden of proof. Are you or others here aware of the policies of

other states/provinces and/or an efficient means of finding those out? I've only heard from you and Missouri, both of which provided very helpful replies.

Ryan Brady
Washburn, Bayfield County, WI
<http://www.pbase.com/rbrady>

Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 02:10:04 GMT
Sender: NBHC ID-FRONTIERS Frontiers of Field Identification <BIRDWG01@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU>
From: Alan Wormington <wormington@JUNO.COM>
Subject: Fw: RE: [BIRDWG01] Request for info on Barnacle Goose

Ryan,

You might get more comprehensive information by joining the "Bird Records Committee Forum" listserve and then making another post. It is one of the sites listed in the ABA master list of sites.

As far as being a "sticky issue", in my opinion here in Ontario it is more like filtered water --- crystal clear.

Alan

Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 05:06:23 -0400
Sender: NBHC ID-FRONTIERS Frontiers of Field Identification <BIRDWG01@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU>
From: Lee G R Evans <LGREUK400@AOL.COM>
Subject: Re: Request for info on Barnacle Goose

The provenance of Barnacle Geese in the UK and Low Countries (Europe)

Although not directly relevant, we have a similar problem in Britain when judging the records of Barnacle Geese inland. However, our problems seem to be many-fold worse.

Barnacle Geese nesting in Greenland winter mostly on islands off of the west coasts of SW Scotland and Ireland and the most recent wintering population estimates are of 56,386 birds in March 2003 (Worden et al 2004) and 44,384 in 2010/2011, a very marked decrease.

Meanwhile, the Barnacle Geese breeding on Svalbard winter almost exclusively around the Solway Firth, with smaller numbers at the Loch of Strathbeg (Aberdeenshire) and Lindisfarne (Northumberland). The most recent peak census totals of this population were 28,256 in February 2004 and of 35,640 in 2010/11.

In addition to these two natural populations, we have the thorny issue of 'naturalised populations', originally catered for by escapes from captivity. Barnacle Goose is following both Atlantic Canada Goose and Greylag Goose in being hugely successful as a semi-resident species on inland gravel pits and parks in England. They regularly occur at over 200 locations and numbers have increased from just over 1,000 in December 2003 to just under 2,000 in

December 2012 (per WeBS counts). In addition, a flock of up to 260 birds survives at Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland.

In the Netherlands, there is an enormous naturalised population of Barnacle Geese, estimated to be in the region of 40,000 birds, these being augmented in winter by 'wild' wintering birds. The two populations mix together and from ringing/neck-collar recording, it has been proven that some 'wild' birds are now becoming resident and nesting. In severe weather, large numbers of Dutch birds cross the North Sea in winter and further augment/dilute the English population, with Suffolk's resident flock of 900 or more frequently being augmented by a mixture of both genuinely wild birds and naturalised birds from The Netherlands.

Barnacle Geese are very strong fliers and generally long-lived and with such numbers now here in NW Europe, the odd straggler from any of the populations is probably quite high in North America, certainly from the more northerly or east coast States.

Very best wishes

Lee G R Evans, Little Chalfont

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Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 23:18:51 +0200

Sender: NBHC ID-FRONTIERS Frontiers of Field Identification <BIRDWG01@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU>

From: Norman Deans van Swelm <Norman.vanswelm@WXS.NL>

Subject: FW: [BIRDWG01] Request for info on Barnacle Goose

The Dutch breeding population is not naturalized. On the contrary, it is the result of conservation measures. In the 1950's Barnacle Geese were in a very poor state due to shooting. They were then fully protected over it's complete flyway. It took a while before the results of the non-shooting policy became visible but when it did the Barnacle's more or less exploded jumping from there sole breeding refuge (Novaya Zemlya) to the northern coasts of Russia to the Baltic (Gotland) and finally to there main winter quarters in The Netherlands from where abmigration from Dutch born males to North Russia has been established (Van der Jeugd, in litt). On a number of cases escapees, released decoys and/or cripple-shot have proven to be no longer fertile.

Norman Deans van Swelm

From: Ryan Brady <ryanbrady10@hotmail.com>

To: "BRCF-L@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>

Date: Mon, 29 Jul 2013 20:16:26 -0600
Subject: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Hi all, I'm Chair of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology's Records Committee and have been inappropriately spamming up the ID-Frontiers list with questions about Barnacle Geese. This list doesn't seem to get much traffic but I figured I should give it a whirl. We are reviewing a Barnacle Goose seen here in WI in mid-December 2012 at Horicon Marsh, the largest goose staging site in the state. I'm trying to learn how other RC's are currently dealing with this species. Ontario has a "must be proven wild" policy and Missouri indicated they currently reject all records until a pattern of proven wilds can be demonstrated away from the east coast and in the Midwest. Clearly, however, the tide appears to be turning with more folks accepting of possible wild origins for various reasons. This seems to be an issue that rests largely on where one puts the burden of proof. Are there enough escapees and so few wilds such that a bird is an escapee until proven wild. Or have things changed enough, at least in the east, that proof of wild origin is no longer necessary if one builds a case of high probability based on location, time of year, behavior, associated species, lack of captive markings, etc.? I'd very interested in discussion of this topic and how other states are dealing with this species. Thanks!

Ryan Brady
Washburn, Bayfield County, WI
<http://www.pbase.com/rbrady>

From: "Geoff Malosh" <pomarine@earthlink.net>
To: "'BRCF-L@indiana.edu'" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 00:16:00 -0400
Subject: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Ryan,

The Pennsylvania committee's approach to this species was detailed in a 2009 article that appeared in the journal Pennsylvania Birds, archived here:
<http://www.pabirds.org/PABIRDS/BackIssues/PBV22N4.pdf>.

I saw your post and Alan Wormington's response over on ID-Frontiers. The Ontario bird mentioned by Alan that was banded in Scotland and shot in Ontario in 2005 was proof that Barnacle Goose does indeed occur as a vagrant in the interior of northeastern North America. This was a turning point for the Pennsylvania committee's stance on the species, and I suspect for a number of other committees too. Up to that point, Pennsylvania had a long and growing catalog of Barnacle Goose records that could have been of wild birds, but the Pennsylvania committee always judged them conservatively, and all records of unbanded, "wild-looking" Barnacle Geese from the 1990s and early 2000s were not accepted on grounds of unknown provenance, despite the fact that many committee members thought that the species was establishing a pattern of natural occurrence in the region in those years.

Once the Ontario bird became known, however, the Pennsylvania committee decided in 2008 to reevaluate all records of Barnacle Goose in light of their newly proven vagrancy to North

America. In the end, Pennsylvania adopted a less conservative policy than Ontario's, and accepted nine previously rejected records of the species, all of which had been rejected only on questions of provenance. Going forward, they began to evaluate Barnacle Geese like any other vagrant waterfowl, for example, Cinnamon Teal and Black-bellied Whistling Duck. Both of those species are very rare vagrants to Pennsylvania and are also both kept in captivity, yet both have long been accepted to the Pennsylvania list despite the fact that none of the records of either species in Pennsylvania involved banded, "proven" birds. In general, the existence of a known pattern of natural vagrancy in the region (which was now proven for Barnacle Goose) was enough for the Pennsylvania committee to consider any vagrant waterfowl as potentially wild. In practice, Pennsylvania's committee usually approached all vagrant waterfowl (in my time on the committee, anyway) as "wild until proven otherwise", which came to include evaluations of Barnacle Geese.

These days Barnacle Goose is nearly annual in Pennsylvania between November and March, and is still a review species here. The article linked above also lists the Pennsylvania committee's standing criteria for acceptance of a record of Barnacle Goose.

Regards,
Geoff Malosh
Pittsburgh, PA

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From: "Alan Wormington" <wormington@juno.com>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 04:36:44 GMT
To: brcf-l@indiana.edu
Subject: Fw: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Geoff,

This is a well-written account with good rationale, but unfortunately it has one major flaw.

You are zeroing in on the single, proven wild, bird in Ontario, but you fail to even mention the "hundreds" that are known to be in Ontario *right now* in captivity. In Ontario we have records of free-flying birds for every single month of the year, although most are concentrated in spring and fall.

If a bird (or birds) escapes --- NUMEROUS proven instances in Ontario --- where do you think such birds go? If I was a lonely Barnacle Goose, I would team up with a flock of Canada Geese and tag along wherever they might go -- north, or south, or whatever. That might explain why the majority of PA records of Barnacle Goose are for the time period of November to March ---

exactly the time when Canada Geese are abundant in the state. Even ONE escaped bird from Ontario, if it was long-lived, could account for multiple sightings in both PA and adjacent states, based on the fact that it will travel north/south on multiple occasions until it passes away.

Alan

From: "Kurt Radamaker" <kurtrad@mexicobirding.com>
To: "'Ryan Brady'" <ryanbrady10@hotmail.com>, "'BRCF-L@indiana.edu'" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Mon, 29 Jul 2013 21:48:48 -0700
Subject: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Hi Ryan,

This subject is one that I have railed about over the years and one I'm biased about, so keep that in mind as I rail against conservative bird committees.

If a committee cannot decide on the provenance of a species, and that is the only hindrance to accepting it, accept it, that is all there is to it.

I cite the case of the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail in New Mexico. You and I and committees can argue all day about the provenance of the Wood-Rail, but in the absence of any real evidence to the contrary, I think it would be arrogant to reject the species because of uncertain origin.

My fundamental argument for accepting uncertain origin birds like Rufous-necked Wood-Rail is; let the reader decide. Don't presume that you "the committee" are smarter or more knowledgeable than the reader or consumer of the list. One argument I have heard for not accepting an uncertain origin species, is to err on the side of conservatism. What does that even mean? Does it mean don't accept because we don't understand? Does it mean, keep it off the list because we can't decide?

I'm sure many of you on this listserv have formed your own opinions about the Sungrebe that was accepted from Bosque del Apache in New Mexico a few years ago. I personally don't think a Sungrebe has much of chance of making it to New Mexico on its own, but at least now I can look at the checklist and formulate my own decision. I don't have to go digging through years of committee decisions to figure out what species have been excluded from the checklist. I also don't think any of us believe that the New Mexico committee is a bunch of dumb asses for accepting it. We may disagree with the decision, but we understand why they accepted it. Okay, what if we find out next year that an exotic bird collector in New Mexico had Sungrebes and Rufous-necked Wood-Rails in his collection that escaped. Fine, take them off the list, is that so horrible?

If I'm pouring over the checklist of birds for Wisconsin and I see Barnacle Goose listed as a review species, I get it, I know the issues surrounding the Barnacle Goose in the US, Eastern states have been debating Barnacle Goose reports for years. So let us debate the Wisconsin bird. Don't just kick it under the rug as if it never existed, like so many BRCs in the east have done over the years.

Thanks for listening to my tirade.

Kurt Radamaker
Arizona Bird Committee member.

To: brcf-l@indiana.edu
From: Steven Mlodinow <sgmlod@aol.com>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 01:07:47 -0400 (EDT)
Subject: Re: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Greetings All

I would take Alan's comments most seriously. There are multiple records for nearly all of the Lower 48 States. When Michael O'Brien and I wrote "America's 100 Most Wanted Birds," we did not include Canada. AK, HA... so I am less familiar with patterns there, but I'd bet there have been Barnacle Geese in all w. Canadian provinces as well.

I have a friend in WA who, in the same fall, watched a Barnacle Goose fly south along the shores of the Puget Sound... and a nice fat Graylag, too.

To really identify a pattern, a current thorough record of all sightings "in the wild," including known escaped and wild birds, would need to be done as a starting point. If you find that Wisconsin has the same number of reports as Oklahoma, you know you have a problem...

Cheers
Steven Mlodinow

From: "Geoff Malosh" <pomarine@earthlink.net>
To: <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 02:07:51 -0400
Subject: RE: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Alan,

You are correct that the PA committee's analysis zeroed in on the single banded Ontario bird, but the committee interpreted that record as representative of a larger phenomenon, reasoning that the Ontario bird was very likely not the only Barnacle Goose ever to make it to inland North America from Europe, even if it can't be quantified exactly how many actually have. The Pennsylvania committee (PORC) made an assumption (yes, an assumption) that the number of vagrant Barnacle Geese occurring in North America is not negligible, and that Pennsylvania in winter lay within a reasonable envelope for that occurrence despite the confusion introduced by escaped birds; meanwhile Ontario is choosing not to make such an assumption, or at any rate not to attempt to quantify it with the acceptance of records of unbanded geese. Which approach is correct? Well, since this whole business is highly subjective anyway, I suppose reasonable minds may disagree.

PORC, for its part, does not reject records of other vagrant waterfowl for merely lacking a band. You are also correct, of course, in that there are hundreds of Barnacle Geese in captivity, in

Ontario, and in many other places. There are also many (hundreds?) of Cinnamon Teals, whistling-ducks, and the like also in captivity. PORC reasoned that although wild Cinnamon Teals are known to occur in the northeast by natural means, any one particular Cinnamon Teal observed in the northeast may have escaped. Yet despite this, PORC had accepted multiple records of unbanded Cinnamon Teal (and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, etc.), and later took the same approach with Barnacle Goose once it was shown that Barnacle Goose can occur as a vagrant in the region.

Does Ontario have any accepted records of other commonly held captive species besides Barnacle Goose that involved unbanded birds, and if so, how does Ontario reconcile those records with its treatment of Barnacle Goose? Is it the high number of Barnacle Geese in captivity compared to other potential escapees? This is an honest question not meant to be argumentative, because it certainly illuminates the thinking of the committees taking the opposite approach of PORC.

In other replies, Steve Mlodinow said, a pattern of occurrence must be established (both wild and escaped) before a decision can be made on birds like Barnacle Goose. Unfortunately, this is really not possible to quantify unbanded birds with absolute certainty as one or the other, even here in the northeast. In the meantime, we do have Barnacle Geese here. I suppose it could be said that PORC chose to quantify which of those that have appeared in Pennsylvania were reasonably likely to be natural vagrants and, as Kurt Rademaker put it, "let the reader decide". Ontario and perhaps other committees take a different approach. Wisconsin will be joining the list of committees to decide on the same.

Geoff

From: "Alan Wormington" <wormington@juno.com>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 15:16:51 GMT
To: brcf-l@indiana.edu
Subject: Fw: RE: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Geoff

I am fully aware of all the variables involved in this subject matter.

But at the end of the day, I consider it "wishful thinking" that one (anyone) is capable of correctly assigning any one particular bird into the "natural occurring" category knowing full well that there are escaped birds regularly flying about at the same time. And that would apply to all states and provinces that lie to the east of Pennsylvania as well. Unless a bird is banded, and its origin can be determined, the situation is essentially hopeless in my opinion.

Two springs (?) ago a bird was reported here in Ontario on OntBirds. It created a lot of excitement of people were driving considerable distances to see the bird. After about a week someone came onto OntBirds stating it was one of his birds (he lived about 10 miles away if I recall) and asked where the bird was last seen, as he wanted to try to get his bird back and put it back into his enclosures. There was never another post made about that bird again!

Alan

Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 12:01:09 -0400
From: Matt Garvey <mattpgarvey@gmail.com>
To: Alan Wormington <wormington@juno.com>
Cc: brcf-l@indiana.edu
Subject: Re: Fw: RE: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Massachusetts recently dealt with this issue, and while still accepting most birds as wild, we do think it's important to review all records including known escapes, so that folks can have as many relevant facts if they want to delve into the thorny (some may say hopeless) issue of provenance. We dealt with two accepted and a rejected Barnacle Goose record here: <http://www.maavianrecords.com/report-15>. Note that we had similar issues to deal with regarding Common Shelduck that year, with two records that ultimately did not get accepted by a narrow margin.

Best,
Matt Garvey
Secretary, Massachusetts Avian Records Committee

Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 09:52:11 -0700 (PDT)
From: Kurt Rademaker <kurtrad@mexicobirding.com>
To: Alan Wormington <wormington@juno.com>, "brcf-l@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Subject: Re: RE: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Hi Alan,

In Arizona we had a Double-striped Thick-knee show up at a golf course pond in Yuma. Lots of birders went to see the bird and lots of debate and argument was bantered around about origin. The Thick-knee finally made it to the local newspaper. Allegedly, the owner of the Thick-knee saw the article in the paper and went to the pond to fetch his bird.

Kurt

From: "McCormac, Jim" <Jim.McCormac@dnr.state.oh.us>
To: Alan Wormington <wormington@juno.com>, "brcf-l@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 17:14:58 +0000
Subject: RE: RE: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

The issue of escaped vs. wild waterfowl is certainly a difficult one, and I side with Alan on adopting a conservative approach to apparent extralimital records of free-flying birds, and agree that a skeptical attitude is warranted. We've had "wild" Barnacle Geese appear in Ohio at times when wild migrants might be expected to appear, and there is even at least one specimen. A Barnacle Goose was collected in Ottawa County in January 1974 in a region that teems with wild fowl in winter and migration, along the south shore of Lake Erie. I thought someone was going to do stable isotope work on this bird in an attempt to decipher its origins, but

not sure whatever came of that. On that note, I also believe that people have looked at isotopes from Barnacle Goose specimens elsewhere in North America, and results indicated that at least some had originated in far northerly latitudes.

The big problem is that these attractive geese are often kept in captivity. In fact, the diversity of waterfowl species that are kept as captives is astonishing, as is the frequency of many species in captivity. A cursory google search will reveal the extent of the captive breeding and trade in fowl of many species, including about all of the ones that are routinely considered vagrants, such as Eurasian Wigeon and Tufted Duck. Some of these species are surprisingly inexpensive, too, although a pair of Barnacle Geese will set you back about \$325.00 at www.efowl.com

We have lots of breeders and keepers of wild fowl in Ohio, and I doubt our state is unique. One time, I and another birder were scoping waterfowl on a marsh in March, when an apparent nonbirder rolled up and asked what we saw. Turned out he was indeed a nonbirder, but to our amazement he knew every species of duck on the water, and had most of these species in captivity at one time or another. We picked his brain for a while about the extent of captive waterfowl breeding, the types of species involved, and the number of enthusiasts out there. We were stunned by the scope of the hobby as reported by this gentleman. Another time I crested a hill in eastern Ohio and was surprised to see several Hawaiian Geese in a fenced yard, along with Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Cinnamon Teal and other fare that is relatively frequent in captivity. While that's the only time that I've encountered "Nene" in captivity, it does show the range of species that people keep.

Last year, on June 22, a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck appeared on a pond in Mt. Vernon, Ohio and quickly made the rare bird alerts. It would have been only the third state record, and thus attracted lots of visitors. There was little or no discussion of escapees initially, as this species clearly is on the rise with an ever-increasing number of extralimital records. On June 28, the whistling-duck was joined by a Ringed Teal, a South American species and one that few if any would try and make a case for as a wild vagrant. Now, I and perhaps a few others were quite suspicious of the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck's provenance, but most birders seemed to dismiss the possibility of the whistling-duck being anything but a wild vagrant, in spite of the red flag of the Ringed Teal's appearance.

The bird persisted into December, and I think most people had accepted it as a wild occurrence. Finally, in mid-December, someone sent me documentation of the bird's point of origin - it was part of a captive flock of native North American fowl that were kept on a property within one-half mile of where the whistling-duck appeared. This farm was also the source of the Ringed Teal, not surprisingly. This was one of those relatively rare situations when the "smoking gun" turned up - we definitely learned the source of the bird. One more Ohio case I can't resist mentioning involved a Harlequin Duck that appeared in mid-March 1999 on the Muskingum River, one of our largest streams. Harlequin Ducks are rare in Ohio, and incredibly rare away from Lake Erie, so it was a big deal. It stuck around a park on this slackwater river and was easy to closely approach - its behavior and habitat were distinctly unharlequinlike. In spite of this, the bird was nearly universally considered wild, and the one or two skeptics were soundly hooted down. By May and on into June, the bird was eagerly taking bread scraps from the

hand, and most people had come around to the fact that it probably wasn't wild (they keep Harlequin Ducks in captivity, too!).

All too often it seems that birders - and sometimes records committee members - take the approach that we should prove why a vagrant bird (most notably waterfowl) IS NOT wild, when of course we should be approaching it from the other direction, in my view - proving it IS wild. This is especially true of waterfowl, for obvious reasons. Once a clear pattern of indisputable vagrancy is established, the burden of proof perhaps lessens and it becomes less of a big deal. It seems like plenty of hard evidence remains to be collected in the Barnacle Goose situation before we can start assuming these birds are truly wild.

Jim McCormac
(former Ohio Bird Records Committee secretary)

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Keep Ohio Wild, learn how you can help @ Wildlife Legacy Stamp
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From: Ted Floyd <tedfloyd57@hotmail.com>
To: Kurt Radamaker <kurtrad@mexicobirding.com>, "Ryan Brady" <ryanbrady10@hotmail.com>, "BRCF-L@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 10:31:17 -0700
Subject: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

I'm 100% in agreement with Kurt on this.

If a bird shows up in the wild, the "scientific" question, it seems to me, is: "Can we convincingly demonstrate that it's not wild?"

There are various ways of doing so. If the bird is wearing a band that says "Property of the San Diego Zoo," there's a nearly 100% probability it's not wild. If it's not banded, but shows various characters indicative of captive origin (tameness, unusual feather wear, unusual molt timing, etc.), then we might well suspect captive origin. Or maybe it's a species that's some combination of common in captivity, not especially prone to vagrancy, and native to somewhere far, far away; a White-rumped Shama currently in Colorado, USA, would seem to fit the bill. Many of us would say we're highly certain that that shama is an escape from captivity.

As to Barnacle Geese, though, I'd be inclined to go easy on those. They're all over. Some are human assisted, some are not. No biggie. They're here. Let's document them. Let's get them into the record.

You know, assuming bird records committees are about the science.

Or they about the purity and integrity of listers' lists? Nothing wrong with that--but if that's what BRCs are about, they oughtta say so.

And why are we so uptight about human assistance and captive origin? I mean, how many rare hummingbirds in the East aren't at feeders? And how do we know they weren't captured at some point? And even if they're "naturally occurring vagrants," they're really nothing of the sort, as the entire phenomenon of East Coast hummingbirds is widely ascribed to human agency: changing climate, exotic plants, millions of hummingbird feeders... My policy: Count 'em all. Every one of 'em. All those hummingbirds at feeders, yes, and all those Barnacle Geese.

Ted Floyd
tedfloyd57@hotmail.com
Lafayette, Boulder County, Colorado, USA

Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 10:34:39 -0700 (PDT)
From: Kurt Radamaker <kurtrad@mexicobirding.com>
To: Matt Garvey <mattpgarvey@gmail.com>, Alan Wormington <wormington@juno.com>
Cc: "brcf-l@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>, Gary Rosenberg <ghrosenberg@comcast.net>
Subject: Re: Fw: RE: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

BRC folks

Thought experiment:

Let's say I'm doing scientific research to determine all of the elements found in a moon rock that fell to earth. In the moon rock I find minute traces of oxygen. However, after several experiments, I'm not certain if the oxygen is from contamination or naturally occurring.

What should be done with the element oxygen.

- a. Select a committee to vote on whether the oxygen is naturally occurring or contamination
- b. Include oxygen as one of the elements in the moon rock.
- c. Include oxygen as one of the elements with a caveat or footnote.
- d. Exclude oxygen as one of the elements.

Option d seems to be my least favorite of the choices :-)

Cheers
Kurt Radamaker
Cave Creek, AZ

Cc: Kurt Radamaker <kurtrad@mexicobirding.com>, Ryan Brady <ryanbrady10@hotmail.com>, "BRCF-L@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
From: Steven Mlodinow <sgmlod@aol.com>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 11:45:31 -0600

To: Ted Floyd <tedfloyd57@hotmail.com>
Subject: Re: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Greetings All

Being friends with two aviculturalists in WA, I can show you fabulous photos of Barnacle Geese.. And Red-breasted Geese, and Tule GWFG, and Spectacled Eider. Yes, Spectacled Eider. Now these gents are high end collectors who take great care to avoid escapes, but not all are like them, and even they are not perfect.

So, I think that such species should be assessed on ID first. If ID felt to be correct, then vote on more-likely-than-not basis regarding origin, realizing that such is imperfect. This approach allows all properly identified sightings to go on record AND record the committees best assessment as to origin.

Note that establishing the pattern of ALL free-flying Barnacle Geese would be a start to see if a pattern resembling wild vagrancy exists (I am sure it does for n Atlantic at least) and where such apparent pattern exists. Fraught with potential for error, yes. But a starting point.

And sorry, to me the burden of proof on a Spectacled Eider, even in WA, would be to show that it is not an escape

Cheers
Steve Mlodinow
Sent from my iPhone

From: Ted Floyd <tedfloyd57@hotmail.com>
To: Steve Mlodinow <sgmlod@aol.com>
CC: Kurt Rademaker <kurtrad@mexicobirding.com>, Ryan Brady <ryanbrady10@hotmail.com>, "BRCF-L@indiana.edu" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 10:58:31 -0700
Subject: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Hi, Steve & everybody.

And sorry, to me the burden of proof on a Spectacled Eider, even in WA, would be to show that it is not an escape.

Guilty until proven innocent.

And non-falsifiable.

That's good for list purity, not so good for science.

All the best,
Ted Floyd
tedfloyd57@hotmail.com
Lafayette, Boulder County, Colorado, USA

From: "Alan Wormington" <wormington@juno.com>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 18:39:25 GMT
To: brcf-l@indiana.edu
Subject: Fw: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

"Science":

Known presence of Spectacled Eider in Washington: some known to be in captivity

Known records of Spectacled Eider in Washington that are naturally occurring: apparently none

Ted: Does your rationale to accept also extend to a Spectacled Eider that might show up in either Venezuela, India or New Zealand, or is it just limited to the state of Washington?

Alan Wormington
Leamington, Ontario

From: Ryan Brady <ryanbrady10@hotmail.com>
To: "'BRCF-L@indiana.edu'" <brcf-l@indiana.edu>
Date: Tue, 30 Jul 2013 21:05:20 -0600
Subject: RE: [BRCF] Barnacle Goose Records

Thanks to all for this discussion. The resources and opinions that have been shared so far have been really, really helpful.

Ryan Brady
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