

California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) Annual Meeting Minutes

Hybrid meeting, H. T. Harvey and Associates, Los Gatos, CA

11 January 2025

Meeting called to order at 8:06 am on 11 January 2025 (Chair presiding). Members present: Kimball Garrett (Chair), Tom Benson (non-voting Secretary), Andrew Birch, Matt Brady, Jon Dunn, Marky Mutchler (online), Gary Nunn (online), Peter Pyle, Steve Tucker. Not present: Jon Feenstra (Vice Chair); note: Feenstra participated remotely (by text) in the election of new members, but not in any other portions of the meeting.

Welcome and introductory comments by Garrett and Benson. The Committee's sympathies and support were extended to the Feenstra family, whose home was destroyed in the Eaton Fire on 8 January.

1. Review of Minutes of 2024 Meeting

The minutes from the annual meeting held 12 January 2024 had been previously approved via email (22 February 2024). No further suggestions for changes or corrections were made.

2. Minute Keeping for the 2025 Meeting

Benson assisted Garrett in keeping minutes for the meeting.

--CLOSED SESSION--

3. Election of New Members

- a. Election of members (three-year terms). The terms of Jon Feenstra, Gary Nunn, and Steve Tucker expire after the 2025 meeting. [Note: Feenstra participated remotely (by text) in the election of new members, but not in any other portions of the meeting.]

Nominations:

Emma Cox

Lynette Williams Duman

Marty Freeland

Dominik Mosur

Adam Searcy

Dessi Sieburth

Dan Singer

Lynette Williams Duman, Adam Searcy, and Dessi Sieburth were elected.

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

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

A discussion followed about potential future CBRC members.

- b. Election of Chair (one-year term). Kimball Garrett was re-elected Chair (Dunn/Tucker) 8-0
- c. Election of Vice-Chair (one-year term). Andrew Birch was elected Vice-Chair (Garrett/Dunn) 8-0
- d. Election of Secretary (one-year term). Tom Benson was re-elected Secretary (Tucker/Brady) 8-0

--OPEN SESSION--

4. Outreach and Public Relations

Diversity and inclusion within the CBRC

Current committee members should be aware of recent criticisms of the CBRC with respect to diversity and inclusion within the CBRC's membership. Kimball distributed a survey to current and former committee members, then compiled and distributed the results of that survey.

5 Bylaw Proposals

- a. Amend bylaw IIIA. As follows:

"The Committee shall consist of at least nine Voting Members, one of whom is the "Chair," and one of whom is the "Vice-Chair," each with one vote. *If the "Secretary" is a Voting Member, they shall also have one vote. If the "Secretary" is a not a Voting Member, they shall still vote on bylaws, procedures, election of new members, or other administrative issues, but shall not vote on records.*

[Added wording in italics]. (Pyle, Birch) 8-0.

Note: This will require another change in the bylaws to require 9 votes to approve bylaw changes, or 8 votes in the case where the Secretary is a Voting Member.]

As a result of the change of this bylaw III.A., the committee also voted by email after the meeting and unanimously approved the following amendments to bylaws VI.B.2. and VI.H.2.:

Bylaw VI.B.2.:

The forms treated will be determined from time to time by the Committee. 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. By vote of at least *eight members (or seven members if the Secretary is a Voting Member)* at a meeting or by other voting procedure, the Committee may, as it sees fit, add other species (such as those whose identification is difficult) or forms (such as superspecies, subspecies, or hybrid combinations) to the Review List. To add or delete a form to/from the Review List shall require at least *eight votes (or seven votes if the Secretary is a Voting Member)*. Records of species not on the Review List, but for which there is no accepted record for California, will be treated.

Bylaw VI.H.2.:

The Committee will maintain an Expedited Review-Eligible Species List consisting of species with at least 20 accepted records and whose identification is relatively straightforward, given high-quality physical documentation. By vote of at least *eight members (or seven members if the Secretary is a Voting Member)* at a meeting or by other voting procedure, the Committee may, as it sees fit, add species to or remove species from this list.

- b. [To be discussed in conjunction with diversity and inclusion issues] Increase hiatus between terms from one year to two (or more) years. Bylaw III.C.1(c) would be changed as follows: “Voting Members may serve only one full term, after which they must retire ~~until the next annual meeting and are ineligible to be re-elected at the next annual meeting before they may be considered for reelection.~~” [Added wording in italics]. (Pyle, Dunn) 8-0.
- c. [To be discussed in conjunction with diversity and inclusion issues] Solicit nominations from WFO members or the general birding community, to be elected by current voting members. This would require a revision to bylaw III.C.2. See also Procedural issues below for another alternative.
[No motion to adopt a by-law change.]
- d. [To be discussed in conjunction with diversity and inclusion issues] Expand the number of voting members to 12 (or 15), while still allowing only nine members to vote on each batch of records. Effectively, this creates a rotating pool of three (or six) alternate voting members for each batch. This would require minor revisions to multiple bylaws.
There was a long discussion of this issue, with an alternative proposal to simply expand the size of the committee to 12 members, with all members voting on all records. If this expansion were to occur there was a majority consensus that records would still require all or all but one accept votes to be accepted (or, for natural occurrence issues, all or all but one or two accept votes to be accepted). Other issues would need to be addressed, such as how the expansion would be rotated in and how many committee terms would expire each year. It was decided that this will be addressed at the next annual meeting, with more groundwork to be done in the interim.

There were no other proposed changes to bylaws.

6. Procedural Issues

- a. [To be discussed in conjunction with diversity and inclusion issues] Solicit suggestions for nominations from the birding community, to be nominated and elected by current voting members. This should not require any bylaw changes. [The committee briefly discussed this issue; the committee already does this informally, but there was agreement to make more of an effort to solicit names of potential nominees from those outside the committee. It was suggested that published CBRC reports could also include wording about soliciting names of potential nominees from the public.
- b. [To be discussed in conjunction with diversity and inclusion issues] Establish a discounted WFO membership for CBRC (or other committee) members who request it. This would require additional discussion with and approval from WFO board. [This issue was discussed. It was noted that there are highly discounted membership fees for students, and the possibility of asking WFO or committee members to subsidize membership fees for nominees who cannot afford WFO membership if they are elected. There was a consensus (8-0) that some form of relief from WFO membership dues for incoming members who could not afford membership should be pursued. The Chair will reach out to the WFO Board to discuss establishment and implementation of a discount for CBRC (and HBRC) members. (Dunn also requested that the Chair discuss with the WFO president what exactly it means to be a Committee of the WFO organization)].
- c. Pyle asked the Committee to consider expediting circulation of first and perhaps certain other significant records. "I realize in some cases awaiting all documentation is preferable, but these days things move very quickly and documentation on the initial date is quickly vetted and is usually adequate for our review. Recent examples include the White-tailed Eagle and Blue Rock-thrush in SF; given their circumstances there seems to be no reason not to have gotten them in the next circulating batch (see more on this below). We have also voted on other birds before final observation; if not, for example, we'd still be awaiting circulation of Northern Gannet after 13 years! The ABA is wrestling with our becoming out of step with eBird and young birders, and have requested that the ABA-CLA comes to quicker decisions on new species for the ABA Checklist. The same applies to CBRC decisions, not only on first or other significant records but acceptance of established populations such as Swinhoe's White-eye. As Blue Rock-thrush is a ABA-CLC-review species I thank Tom for getting it out at the first opportunity, and also was happy to see the CBRC expedite Ainley's Storm-Petrel (another ABA-CLC review species) for other reasons. Why not also the White-tailed Eagle or any other first state records?"

This issue was discussed and it was agreed that we will make more of an effort to expedite review of such records if sufficient documentation (including opinions from experts outside the Committee, if applicable) has been received by the Secretary. For

acceptance of naturalized populations, we have by-laws that outline criteria (more on this under Introduced Birds Sub-Committee below).

- d. Dunn asked about cases where a documentary photograph submitted with a record clearly shows the wrong species and whether we should have a way of clearly flagging that for researchers who might study this record in the future. Benson indicated that it is not a simple matter to annotate the cover sheet for a record, but that he will find a way to make such an annotation if this case comes up.
- e. Future Winter Wren Re-evaluations. Ethan Monk and Marty Freeland are currently researching and writing a paper that seeks to elucidate the challenge of aurally and visually identifying Winter Wrens in California. They don't expect to finish their analysis until summer 2025, but have provided a preliminary list of eight CBRC records that they are recommending for re-evaluation. We can deal with these now or wait until next year (after their paper is published), but this information may influence our decision to remove Winter Wren from the review list, and we may want to consider deferring adjudication of some records currently in circulation until they publish their conclusions. At the very least we should consider whether to recirculate the three 2022 records that are set to be published in the 48th report.

We will pull three records felt to have been wrongly adjudicated from the 48th report; others may be re-evaluated after Monk and Freeland complete their analysis.

7. Expedited Review

There were no concerns expressed about the process, and the two expedited review batches in 2024 (24Fx, 24Lx) went smoothly. There were no suggestions for additions or deletions to the expedited review list. Dunn stated that he might wish to write comments on some records in Expedited Review batches; Benson asked that such comments be submitted to him within the two-week expedited review period. Benson also agreed to send a one-week reminder for those wishing to provide comments.

8. Review List

In general, review species are those that have occurred in California 50 or fewer times or have averaged fewer than two occurrences per year over the past 10 years. To add/delete a form to/from the Review List requires at least seven votes. No additions or removals were adopted at this meeting (see below).

Additions

Chimney Swift (33 accepted eBird records 2015-2024, 3.3 records/year over the past 10 years) was discussed, but there was no motion to add the species to the review list.

Removals

Short-tailed Albatross (57 accepted records total, 1.6 records/year over past 10 years, ~50 records since 2000) (Pyle). No motion made to remove.

Thick-billed Kingbird (38 “accepted” records total, 1.7 records/year over past 10 years; with returning birds 75 total occurrences, 2.5 occurrences/year over past 10 years). Nunn moved to remove this species, but there was no second.

Greater Pewee (51 “accepted” records total, 0.9 records/year over past 10 years; with returning birds 72 total occurrences, 1.8 occurrences/year over past 10 years). No motion made to remove.

Winter Wren (48 accepted records total, 3.1 records/year over past 10 years). No motion for removal, in light of ongoing analysis (see above) of CBRC decisions on this species.

Northern Cardinal (Brady); no motion, but discussion of issues posed by naturalized populations and escapees. It was suggested to review minutes of past meetings where this issue was discussed, then propose for addition at next year’s meeting if desired.

9. Fourth and Final Records

The following record without a decision after three rounds of voting was discussed and will be circulated in the final 2024 batch (24M).

2023-001 Winter Wren, Mokelumne River Day Use Area, SJ, 1 Jan–23 Feb 2023
(additional new commentary from Monk and Freeland in record folder)

10. Records Brought to Meeting by Request

Records held for/brought to meeting

2012-018A Slaty-backed Gull, Fort Baker, MRN/SF, 7–9 Feb 2012. Not accepted (4-5) during second round of voting; needs motion and second to continue to third round. (Birch). Motion by Birch and second by Tucker to continue to a third round.

2024-027 Swallow-tailed Kite, Encino, LA, 22 Apr 2024. Record circulated and was accepted as one individual, but observer reported seeing two birds. Does the committee want to endorse two individuals? Also, does this change the vote on the same bird issue for **2024-030**, VEN, 27 Apr 2024 or **2024-034**, MRN/SEFI, 3 May 2024? A straw vote showed six votes leaning to two birds, two (Birch, Nunn) leaning to accepting only one bird. The purported second bird will be circulated as a new record in Batch 24M, with decisions about “Same Bird” issue for 2024-030 and 2024-034 postponed until the second LA bird has been adjudicated.

2024-047 Alder Flycatcher, Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, SD, 5 Jun 2024. (Pyle). Pyle showed a PowerPoint comparing primary spacing between Alder and (eastern) Willow Flycatchers, using the character discovered by Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch involving the ratio of exposed p7 to p6 on the folded wing. This record will proceed to a second round of voting in Batch 24M.

1957-101 and 1926-101 Great Kiskadee, San Jose, SCL, 1 Nov 1957–9 Jun 1959 and Inglewood, LA Sep 1926. Both not accepted (2-7) due to questionable natural occurrence during first round of voting; needs motion (but no second) to continue to second round. Brady expressed concern that this species may be more of an austral migrant than thought; he will investigate ABA area records north of the species' regular range. No motion to recirculate either record, but the subject may be raised at the next annual meeting.

2020-160 Willow Warbler, Neary Lagoon, SCZ, 8 Oct 2020. From the 2022 meeting minutes: "Soundly rejected in the first round with vote of 1-8. Written opinion from experts was supportive of Dusky Warbler, however. A motion was made to re-evaluate this as a Dusky Warbler (2020-160A), after soliciting further expert opinion (Stahl/McCaskie), motion passed 9-0." (Benson). This record will be given a new circulation in Batch 24M as a Dusky Warbler without further expert commentary.

2008-161A Oriental Greenfinch, Southeast Farallon Island, SF, 11 Oct 2008. Accepted 8-1 during second round of voting; needs motion and second to continue to third round. (Dunn). Motion by Dunn to continue circulation to a third round failed to get a second.

Date issues with unpublished records

2024-055 Alder Flycatcher, Piute Ponds, LA, 12-13 Jun 2024 (Birch). There were some issues with the second date (13 Jun) of this record, so it will recirculate in Batch 24M for a vote on this latter date.

2023-132 Winter Wren, Mountain Lake Park, SF, 19 Dec 2023–5 Jan 2024 (Birch/Feenstra); additional new commentary from Monk and Freeland available in record folder. No motion to re-review date span.

*****Lunch break at 1300 hr; re-convened at 1330 hr.*****

2023-109 Louisiana Waterthrush, Santa Ysabel Preserve, SD, 5–9 Nov 2023 (Lehman). This record was discussed at the 2024 meeting as well: "Committee was only given documentation for first day, but bird was supposedly present from 5–9

November. Reports from 8 November were dubious (some observers heard other playback, one submitted OCWA calls, etc.), but 9 November report from Jimmy McMorran was compelling. No motion to recirculate, record stands as Accepted for the full date range.” See also arguments from Lehman in Dropbox folder. This record was discussed again; the Committee voted 7-1 (Dunn dissenting) to retain the entire original (5-9 Nov) date range.

Date corrections to published records

2009-238 King Eider, Cabrillo Beach, LA, 27 Dec 2009–10 Jan 2010; extend date to 19 Jan 2010 based on photos in eBird? <https://ebird.org/checklist/S15691830>

2011-212 Little Gull, Prado Regional Park, SBE, 14–18 Dec 2011; extend date to 30 Dec 2011 based on description from Howard King in eBird and date range in NAB 66:344? <https://ebird.org/checklist/S9447269>

2013-179 Blue-footed Booby, Anacapa Island VEN, 18 Sep–5 Oct 2014; extend date to 25 Oct 2014 based on photo from Justyn Stahl in eBird? <https://ebird.org/checklist/S20354133>

2015-164 Field Sparrow, Aspendell INY, 27 Dec 2015-18 Mar 2016; extend initial date to 26 Dec based on documentation in record folder.

1991-211 Streak-backed Oriole, Gene Pumping Plant SBE, 9–18 Dec 1991; extend date to 19 Dec 1991 based on description in eBird by Steve Goodbred? <https://ebird.org/checklist/S163926030>

The committee voted 8-0 in each case above to extend/correct the date ranges as outlined.

Same bird issues

2023-102 Common Greenshank, Fort Ord National Monument, MTY, 25 Oct 2023; same bird (7-2) as 2023-082, Lake Earl, DN, 19 Sep–17 Oct 2023. (Dunn). After viewing photos which appear to show feather damage similarities in both individuals, the Committee voted 7-1 (Dunn dissenting) to consider both records to pertain to the Same Bird.

2024-035 and 2024-060 Tropical Parula, San Gabriel Mountains, LA, 12-14 May and 4 Jul-26 Sep 2024. The Committee spent considerable time comparing images of both birds; a vote to consider both records to pertain to the Same Bird passed 6-2 (Dunn and Pyle dissenting).

Date changes to historical records based on eBird observations

There are numerous instances (mostly historical) of eBird observations of CBRC review species that fall outside the date ranges endorsed by the CBRC. In general, the committee (Secretary) has accepted that these discrepancies exist and made no effort to resolve them unless specific records were brought to the attention of the committee. Does the committee want to continue in this fashion, or does the committee want to make some effort to search eBird for dates that fall outside our endorsed date ranges and make those corrections? For the time being there will be no systematic effort to identify and correct date discrepancies.

Other issues

2023-118 Winter Wren, Putah Creek, YOL/SOL, 26 Nov 2023–3 Mar 2024 (Benson). Apparently pertains to records of two different individuals about 1 km apart, 26 Nov 2023–11 Feb 2024 and 30 Nov 2023–3 Mar 2024. Recordings of both individuals were included in the record when circulated. Recommend that we split record into two, maintaining 2023-118 for the 30 Nov–3 Mar 2024 bird at FA#2 (same bird as 2022-120) and a new record number (2023-142) be assigned to the 26 Nov–11 Feb 2024 bird at FA#3. It was agreed that both records from the original split record will stand as accepted, with no additional circulation necessary.

11. Reference Library for Members

The CBRC Member Dropbox contains a folder for Reference Materials that contains a rather limited selection of identification articles. Additionally, the CBRC website contains a password-protected page with a number of older identification articles. Is there any interest in developing a research library for voting members, especially for identification articles that are not easily obtained online? Expanding the existing Dropbox folder seems like the easiest approach. (Brady)

12. Annual Reports

- **47th report** (2021 records) – authored by Terrill, Fowler, House, Rinkert, Searcy and Benson. To be published in *Western Birds*, vol 55, no. 4.
- **48th report** (2022 records) – authored by Benson, Feenstra, House, Stahl, and Terrill. Currently in late stages of review, likely to be published in *Western Birds*, vol 56, no. 1.
- **49th report** (2023 records) – authored by Garrett, Mutchler and Benson. Initial draft nearly complete and ready to be reviewed by Committee. Likely to be published in *Western Birds*, vol. 56, no.2 or no. 3.
- **50th report** (2024 records) – Benson, Brady, and Birch volunteered to co-author this report.

13. Budget

The 2025 budget includes \$1600 for page charges for the 48th and 49th reports and \$200 for the CBRC's miscellaneous expenses (e.g., Dropbox, other costs). In 2024, the CBRC's expenditures included \$810 for page charges for the 47th report and \$120 for Dropbox. WFO file maintenance costs are covered by WFO's annual donation of \$250.

We ran a fund-raiser in early 2024 through WFO on Facebook, raising \$331, well short of our \$2000 goal. We'll try again in early 2025 for the 49th report.

Donations are strongly encouraged, no matter the amount. The simplest way to donate, if you'd like to do so, is through the WFO website:

<https://app.aplos.com/aws/give/WesternFieldOrnithologists/PageCharges>. In the "Note" section indicate you are donating to the CBRC annual report.

14. Introduced Birds Subcommittee Report

Report from the Introduced Birds Subcommittee – Kimball Garrett, Adam Searcy, John Garrett, Jon Feenstra, and Tom Benson. Nothing to report, but we should be considering writing proposals for Pin-tailed Whydah and Swinhoe's White-eye.

Tentative sub-committee for 2025 to include K. Garrett, Searcy, and Benson. It was agreed that listing packages will be prepared for Swinhoe's White-eye and Pin-tailed Whydah during 2025, although circulation to the Committee may be delayed until the 15 year minimum breeding period has been met or can be confidently inferred.

15. Website

Any concerns or comments regarding the CBRC website? [None expressed]

16. Secretary

Tom does not wish to be Secretary forever. Any recommendations for a suitable replacement or a way of recruiting one are appreciated. [Noted. Some avenues for identifying a new Secretary candidate were discussed.]

17. Next Meetings

- WFO conference – Yakima, WA, 4-8 Jun 2025. Volunteer needed to present a CBRC update? Benson not likely to be at the meeting, and Garrett uncertain.
- CBRC annual meeting – 10 Jan 2026; to be held via Zoom

18. Appreciations

- Scott Terrill and Steve Rottenborn at H. T. Harvey and Associates for hosting
- Jon Feenstra, Gary Nunn, and Steve Tucker for their service to the CBRC
- Tom Benson for his critical work as Secretary

- Joe Morlan for his work updating the CBRC website
- Jim Tietz for maintaining updates to “Rare Birds” on our web site
- WfVZ and Linnea Hall for their archiving services
- Phil Unitt and Western Birds reviewers for editing and publishing CBRC reports
- Cliff Hawley for operating our Facebook crowd-funding campaign

19. Additional Business item

Dunn brought up the record of Stejneger’s Scoter (2014-187) from Watsonville SCZ 15 January 2014 which he felt was wrongly rejected. He showed evidence (from the submitted photos) why he felt the bird was clearly that species, and noted that an additional diagnostic character (shape of the nasal saddle on the bill) was not known or appreciated when the record was reviewed and could be construed to fill the requirement of “new and substantial evidence.” There was a consensus by the Committee that the record should be reexamined, but by-laws require a written justification for re-review at the Annual Meeting and a unanimous (or single dissent) vote to re-review. It was agreed that a justification for re-review could be circulated to the 2025 Committee for an e-mail vote on re-review.

Adjournment and Group Photo

Meeting adjourned at 1534 hr; group photo taken.