

MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.



**MD/DC Records Committee
1997 Annual Meeting
February 22, 1997**

Meeting Minutes and Annual Report

The 1997 Annual Meeting of the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee meeting was called to order at 9:20 a.m.. Present were Bruce Peterjohn (Chair), Phil Davis (Secretary), Bob Dixon, Mary Gustafson, Rob Hilton, Mark Hoffman, David Holmes, and Paul O'Brien. Absent were Harvey Mudd and Marshall Iliff.

1. Secretary's Report

Database status report. The table below summarizes the contents of the committee's database:

**MD/DCRC Database Status
As of February 21, 1997**

State	Decision	Number	Totals	Definition
MD	Accepted	217		ID accepted (species)
	Circulating	39		Currently in review
	Accepted/genus-only	2		ID accepted (genus)
	Accepted/? Origin	4		ID OK, questionable origin
	Not Accepted	106		ID not accepted
	Not Reviewable	95		Not on the review list
	Pending	158		Waiting to be reviewed
	Recirculate	24		Waiting to be recirculated
	Unreviewable	38		Not enough data to review
	Withdrawn	1		Withdrawn by observer
	MD Totals		684	
DC	Accepted	11		ID accepted (species)
	Circulating	1		Currently in review
	Not Reviewable	3		Not on the review list
	Pending	17		Waiting to be reviewed
	DC Totals		32	
Total			716	

Package status. Package activity from the past several years' is summarized below.

Production was low due to slow member responses.

Package Review Status:

Annual Mtg	Package	Start	End	Duration (wks)	# Items	# New	# Decisions
1994	42	04/20/93	06/20/93	8.7	4	0	4
1994	43	06/10/93	10/01/93	16.1	13	7	9
1994	44	11/03/93	03/14/94	18.7	10	5	8
				14.5	27	12	21
1995	45	04/18/94	11/12/94	29.7	4	0	4
1995	46	04/18/94	11/21/94	31.0	12	7	8
1995	47	04/18/94	09/27/94	23.1	13	8	8
1996	48	11/14/94	06/06/95	29.1	16	12	10
1996	49	11/14/94	07/22/95	35.7	17	13	10
1996	50	03/01/95	07/01/95	17.4	15	15	4
				27.7	77	55	44
1996	51	07/24/95	12/16/95	20.7	15	10	9
1996	52	09/25/95	03/09/96	23.7	15	10	7
1996	53	11/13/95	03/11/96	17.0	11	6	10
1996	54	02/14/96	09/20/96	31.3	14	13	11
				23.2	55	39	37
1997	55	04/05/96	10/23/96	28.7	11	8	5
1997	56	08/23/96			14	8	
1997	57	10/13/96			12	10	
1997	58	12/01/96			14	13	
				28.7	51	39	5

Review of Secretary's processes for handling reports. The Secretary reviewed the processes for handling reports and records:

- a. Each new report is logged into the database.
- b. Acknowledgments are sent to each observer.
- c. After a decision is reached, the Secretary summarizes the voting into a short summary. This summary is now being entered into the database.

- d. After a decision is reached, the observer is sent a decision notice, including the summary.

Status/plans for the database. Projects in the queue include:

- a. "Year 2000" conversion of the database. Conversion will be made to accommodate 4-digit years.
- b. Revised numbering system: nomenclature and process. The Secretary will convert the report/record nomenclature ASAP. All "pending" reports will be converted to an SS-YYYY-xxxx format using 1997 as the year and the current "XX" number as the xxxx portion. For example, pending report XX-472 will be converted to MD-1997-0472. All previous decisions and circulating reports will be renumbered, but, in the same format. The current yy-nn format will be converted to SS-YYYY-NNNN, so there will be a one-to-one mapping of the record numbers. For example, MD record 96-36 will be converted to MD-1996-0036. DC record DC012 will be converted to DC-1997-0012. Records will no longer be consecutively numbered in first round circulations. The original report number will now remain constant throughout the report/record life cycle. From this point forward, the "year" will refer to the year the report was received and the sequential number will refer to the order that reports were received during that year.
- c. Decision summaries. Text decision summaries are now being entered into the database. This text is now provided in the package summaries that are sent to members for review after a package is complete. If members have comments on these summaries, they should advise the Secretary within the two-week period for comments and corrections. All new decisions will be captured in the database. Old decisions may be captured on a low priority basis.
- d. Linked observer fields. This feature is partially implemented. Currently, only two observers and an "et al." can be entered into the database. This will be expanded (via a linked table) for an indefinite number of observers. Also, observers "initials" will be included in the near future.
- e. Future MD/DCRC web site. A long-range goal includes the development of a MD/DCRC web site. Currently, some MD/DCRC information is hosted on the MOS site, however, access to the committee's database on-line is the ultimate goal.

Loss prevention plan/permanent storage status. This is a long-term project. The plan is to store originals in fireproof files at Cylburn Mansion. Eventually, the committee would like to digitize all data for storage on CD-ROM.

MOS By-Laws status. This action is still open. The Secretary will work with the MOS By-Laws Committee Chair to draft a MOS By-Laws change to accommodate the committee's process that allows a non-voting Chair.

2. Status of Previous Action Items

Birds of the Chesapeake Bight. The Committee had been trying to obtain a copy of “Birds of the Chesapeake Bight” for the Committee’s reference files. Several people promised to send copies. Paul O’Brien will copy and send his.

DC Record Committee files. The Secretary retrieved the DC Records Committee’s files last summer. Rob Hilton volunteered to research the DCRC files and see what is required to be done to merge this into the MD/DCRC files. Also, the Audubon Naturalist article by Dave Czaplak will be analyzed for use as the Committee’s DC baseline.

3. Committee Procedures

“Origin/exotic” votes. The committee changed its procedures to decouple the questions of identification and origin. Now, the first question will be of ID--to accept or not accept. Members must vote to either accept or not accept the report on the basis of the ID submitted. With each vote to accept, members may cast a separate “vote” on origin. If a record is rejected (on the basis of ID), then the question of origin is moot. When a record achieves acceptance based on ID, then votes on the question of origin will come into play. If an ID-accepted report receives five or more votes indicating questionable origin, then the record decision will be “Accepted/? Origin.” Due to the ambiguity of definitions, the committee eliminated the use of the term “exotic”.

Genus-only votes. Genus-only votes are treated as a subset of “accept.” A vote to accept as “genus-only” means that the member finds that the bird is a member of the genus submitted, but not of the species submitted. This vote should be used only when all members of the genus would be unusual in Maryland. Votes of *Myiarchus*, sp. or *Icterus* sp. would, therefore, not be acceptable since some members of those genera occur regularly in the area. The normal “accept” vote (unqualified) is a vote to accept the species, and therefore, by definition, also is a vote to accept the genus in case of mixed (genus/species) votes. The committee’s procedures will be modified to provide the decision rules for mixed genus/species votes. A majority rule will apply. Genus-only votes are also used to “accept” reports that were submitted on a genus-only basis (e.g., *selasphorus*, sp.; *fregata*, sp.).

Timely review of records. The committee concurred that the Chair has the authority to take needed measures to ensure the member’s timely review of records. If a trend of exceeding the committee’s review time limit is seen developing, a written warning will be issued to the member (for example, after two packages). If no improvement is noted, then the Chair may take action to ask for a resignation, or remove the member from the committee. This process will be explained to new members.

Mid-term replacement of members. Members will be replaced at the Chair’s prerogative. Consideration will be first given to former committee members, then to the nominees from the last annual meeting elections.

Members who leave, and then return. After any resignation, the committee’s rule of “one year” of non-voting membership still applies.

Confidence experiment. This experiment will continue for another year. The word “believable” will be stricken from Category C.

Review list “official map.” Even though there are minor differences between the maps used in the Yellow Book, the Atlas, and the Review List, the committee will continue to use the existing Review List map. For clarity and ease of interpretation by observers, the western boundary of the area roughly corresponding to the Piedmont will be redefined as the Washington/Frederick county line.

Committee review of Stewart & Robbins reports. The committee will review Stewart & Robbins records for species that have not subsequently been reported in Maryland. These include approximately 5-10 records of such species as Masked Duck, Chestnut-colored Longspur, Corn Crane, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, etc. Some are based on specimens in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and other locations (e.g., the Corn Crane is in the Academy of Natural Sciences Museum in Philadelphia). Reports that are reviewable, but are not first state records will also be reviewed, but will be deferred as lower priority business. Mary Gustafson will research this list of species and related documentation.

Official state lists. Since the committee, at its inception, did not establish official MD and DC state lists and since the committee is still researching previously unreviewed reports, official state list “baselines” are not yet solidly defined. Mark Hoffman will review the current working-version preliminary “official list” of Maryland birds and comment. Rob Hilton will do the same for the preliminary DC list.

Preparation of next summary of MD/DCRC decisions for Maryland Birdlife. Mark Hoffman has agreed to author the next MB report. It will include packages 56 (?) through 58. It will be at least a few months until the current packages are completed and the Secretary has been able to complete the automation of the observer fields.

4. Fourth Round Circulations

In the future, the Secretary will circulate/send copies of third round comments to the committee members prior to the Annual Meeting.

92-29 Vermillion Flycatcher. Issues discussed include: the possibility of an escaped male Red Bishop--they are very inexpensive in pet stores; the observers may not have been familiar with this possibility since Bishops are not pictured in field guides; there are documented cases of misidentifications between these two species; timing--October thru April is more normal (vs. July) for vagrant Vermillion Flycatchers; how many records exist for wandering two year old females?--probably not many since most wanderers tend to be young birds; this bird would represent the rarest age/class for a wandering bird.

93-05 Arctic Tern. Issues discussed include: little is known about first year molt patterns (timing may be nutrition-related); the pattern of secondaries; personal communications from Jon Dunn to Mary Gustafson; and the conditions of the sighting (distance, optics, sunlight, etc.).

94-05 Common Raven. The timing delay between the sighting and the write-up (11 months) was the primary issue discussed.

These three records will be circulated in the next package, with the outgoing members first in the lineup.

5. Old Business

Changes to Review List. The following species were discussed but were not changed:

- a. Painted Bunting
- b. Northern Shrike
- c. Swallow-tailed Kite
- d. Selasphorus hummingbird
- e. Pine Grosbeak
- f. White-winged Crossbill
- g. Loggerhead Shrike.

The following changes were made:

- a. Henslow's Sparrow - Added to category 5E: "East of Allegheny County" (5-2 vote).
- b. Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows - Moved from category 5D to 5C (5-2 vote). (Maryland specimens are in the NMNH so the species is added to the Maryland list). **Action: The Chair will review decisions and pending reports submitted prior to the split (the 90-19 decision and the XX032, XX373 reports).**
- c. Bicknell's Thrush - Added to category 5D. (Maryland specimens are in the NMNH so the species is added to the Maryland list).

Criteria to stop reviewing species reports. This topic was briefly discussed but no action was taken at this time.

Outside review requests. The committee felt that there are two types of requests for outside reviews. The first case involves species that are generally unknown to the committee membership (such as the Yellow-legged Gull). In these cases, the Secretary and the Chair should solicit an outside opinion before the report is placed into review. The second case deals with regularly occurring North American species. In such cases, members should raise identification questions/issues in their first round ballot comments. Other committee members can then respond to these issues in the next round. After three circulations, the committee can solicit an outside expert opinion, if deemed necessary, during the discussions at the annual meeting and prior to the fourth round.

Problem species/subspecies.

Thayer's Gull. It is believed that the AOU will not be taking a position on the Thayer's/Iceland Gull problem anytime in the neat future. It was decided to try to find a good photographic report of an adult Thayer's Gull for circulation to establish Thayer's Gull as a Maryland species. The Secretary will submit a notice to the Yellowthroat Editor to solicit photos of Maryland/DC adult Thayer's Gulls.

Dark-eyed Junco subspecies. The committee will attempt to obtain a copy of the Alton Miller

monograph on the Junco complex so it can be included with any recirculations. Action: Mary Gustafson will check on this.

Review of previous decisions. The issue of “what constitutes “new” information?” was discussed. It was mentioned that members should bring up any new information in a timely manner.

Request to combine records. During the year, several members commented on combining reports/records. These were:

- a. Common Gull (Conowingo) (95-31, 95-32, 95-33)
- b. Ross’ Goose (Blackwater) (92-35, 92-39)
- c. Swallow-tailed Kite (PG County) (96-07, 96-08)

The committee decided that records will be kept separate until all relevant reports have been decided (accepted or rejected). Members can recommend, as Annual Meeting agenda items, that accepted records be combined. Currently, there are no such issues on the table.

The Maryland/DC philosophy adopted is different from that of other states (e.g., California) where returning birds are considered to be one record. We also are more likely to separate multi-observer reports and multi-bird reports. The Secretary will strive to make annotations in the database regarding where records may be related.

6. New Business

Yellowthroat “plea” for additional documentation. An article will be prepared for the Maryland Yellowthroat to seek additional documentation for old reports. [Action: Chair/Secretary] This request will also be submitted for inclusion on the MOS web site. We will keep tabs on the success rate of this project. Some anecdotes from the recent research would be a good idea. An article would be great!

Coordination with Patuxent Wildlife Research Center Waterfowl Harvest Section (95-29 BAGO). This was suggested during the discovery/reporting of Maryland’s first Barrow’s Goldeneye (95-29). Close coordination with the Waterfowl Harvest Section has begun. Mary Gustafson is handling this liaison with Woody Martin. (Virginia’s first Barrow’s Goldeneye has since been discovered, also from a wing return).

Final Ballots. The issue was discussed that members never get to see the final round comments of other members (as does the Virginia committee). It was agreed that if any member wishes to review final round ballots, that member can notify the Secretary who will copy and mail them to the member.

7. Skins Meeting/Identification Issues

The arrangements for this year's Skins Workshop are not 100% final, yet, but we will assume it will be held on March 29, 1997--unless we hear otherwise. Willem Maane will again serve as our host. Plan to meet him at the Constitution Ave entrance at 9:30.

Skins of interest include:

Murres (both)
Frigatebirds
Redpolls
"Northern" Orioles

8. Election of New Members and Chair

Members completing their terms are: Mark Hoffman, Bob Dixon, and David Holmes. Bruce Peterjohn is relinquishing his position as Chair. The committee extends a great deal of thanks for the service provided by these members.

Elections were held. New term members will be Paul Pisano, Sue Riccardi, and Mary Ann Todd. Harvey Mudd was elected as the new Chair to succeed Bruce Peterjohn.

Bob Dixon relinquished his membership for the remaining duties of his term. Bruce Peterjohn will serve out the remainder of his voting duties.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p. m.

Next year's meetings are scheduled as follows:

Annual Meeting	Saturday	February 14, 1998
Skins Workshop	Saturday	March 28, 1998

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Davis
MD/DCRC Secretary
April 6, 1997

cc:
MOS President
MOS Vice-President
MOS Executive Secretary

MOS Publications Committee Chair
MOS Library Committee Chair
MOS By-Laws Committee Chair

Attachments

**Miscellaneous Items
("Off-Agenda"/ "As Time Permits" Items)
Not Formally Discussed**

Outreach to MD/DC birders. The Secretary plans to widely distribute the Committee review list and documentation guidelines to field birders, including:

- a. Local MOS chapters.
- b. Count Compilers (Christmas Counts, May Counts, Mid-Winter Counts, and Fall Counts).
- c. Pelagic Tour Operators
- d. Nature Centers, including local, state and Federal Parks, National Wildlife Refuges.
- e. Nature and "wild bird" stores.
- f. MOS Annual Convention

Review/status of unsubmitted reports. A copy of the current list of unsubmitted reports was distributed to the members (attached).

Email connectivity among members. The Secretary encourages email connectivity among all members.

Reminders re policy on seeking "old" documentation. Members were reminded that the committee decided years ago to not make a policy of routinely seeking additional documentation from observers. If any member wishes to contact an observer to see if any additional documentation may exist, he or she is free to explore this avenue.

Reminder re policy on "photographs only" records. Members are reminded that the committee decided several years ago that a photograph without text is an acceptable report format.

Future state lists/database expansion. In the future, the Secretary would like to adopt and include the following items in the official state list databases:

- a. Status ("abundance") codes
- b. Breeding status
- d. A species nomenclature "numbering" system, similar to California's system (a draft is attached).