

**MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.**



**Maryland/DC Records Committee  
2001 Annual Meeting  
February 24, 2001**

**Meeting Minutes and Annual Business Report**

The 2001 Annual Meeting of the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) was called to order at 10:10 am at the home of Phil Davis in Davidsonville, MD. Members present included Harvey Mudd (Chair), Phil Davis (Secretary), Patty Craig, Mark Hoffman, Michael O'Brien, Fran Pope, and Sherman Suter. Absent were Rick Blom, Gail Mackiernan, Marshall Iliff, and Sam Dyke. Also attending were MOS President, Karen Morley; MOS Vice-President, Paul Zucker; and MD/DCRC Outreach Subcommittee Chair, Paul O'Brien.

**I. Secretary's Report.** The Secretary presented the following report:

**a. Database Status.** Figure 1 summarizes the current contents of the MD/DCRC database and changes from last year:

**Figure 1. MD/DCRC Database Summary as of 02/24/2001 and Changes from Previous Annual Meetings**

State	Category/Status	1998	1999	2000	2001	Delta
MD	Accepted	258	333	365	380	15
	Stewart & Robbins	9	9	100	85	-15
	Accepted: Group	2	2	9	9	0
	ID OK?? Origin	5	6	6	6	0
	Not Accepted	119	124	127	132	5
	Circulating	45	28	9	15	6
	Recirculate	22	21	27	25	-2
	Ready	102	49	64	61	-3
	Reviewable	35	45	36	35	-1
	US Museum of Natural History	-	-	6	26	20
	Hold	11	11	16	15	-1
	Report	0	3	5	0	-5
	Unreviewable	221	224	238	246	8
	Non-Review Species	109	112	119	136	17
	Reopened	-	-	5	5	0
	Withdrawn	4	5	7	7	0
		<b>MD Totals</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>1139</b>	<b>1183</b>
DC	Accepted	14	16	19	20	1
	Stewart & Robbins	-	-	25	8	-17
	Accepted: Group	0	0	0	2	2
	Not Accepted	0	0	0	0	0
	Circulating	1	4	1	2	1
	Recirculate	1	2	4	4	0
	Ready	6	2	3	7	4
	Reviewable	1	7	9	5	-4
	US Museum of Natural History	-	-	4	26	22
	Report	0	10	10	2	-8
	Unreviewable	8	13	17	16	-1
	Non-Review Species	3	3	3	6	3
		<b>DC Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>98</b>
??	US Museum of Natural History				2	2
	<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>1235</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>49</b>

**b. Review Package Status.** Figure 2 presents a summary of calendar year annual and cumulative review package statistics based on the number of packages that began (i.e., “started”) circulation. The table shows the total and average number of all reports circulated, the total and average number of new reports, and the total and average number of decisions reached. Decisions include “Accepted”, “Accepted-Group”, and “ID OK/Questionable Origin” (which also includes “Exotic Origin”).

**Figure 2. MD/DCRC Annual and Cumulative Review Package Statistics**

Start Yr	Annual Totals				Annual Averages				
	#Pkgs	# Rpts	# New	# Decs	Weeks	# Rpts	# New	# Decs	Dec %
1985	2	30	30	7	91	15	15	4	23%
1986	3	30	25	19	35	10	8	6	63%
1987	6	60	30	40	18	10	5	7	67%
1988	5	54	37	38	22	11	7	8	70%
1989	4	40	25	20	29	10	6	5	50%
1990	3	25	10	13	30	8	3	4	60%
1991	3	30	20	11	23	10	7	4	37%
1992	7	66	36	43	19	9	5	6	69%
1993	8	76	42	39	18	10	5	5	55%
1994	3	27	12	21	15	9	4	7	83%
1995	5	62	40	40	30	12	8	8	70%
1996	4	56	41	30	20	14	10	8	56%
1997	5	65	52	46	24	13	10	9	70%
1998	5	75	57	57	21	15	11	11	76%
1999	6	92	68	62	19	15	11	10	68%
2000	5	68	41	42	16	14	8	8	68%
2001	3	37	28	22	29	12	9	7	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>62%</b>

**c. Acceptance Rate.** The committee’s cumulative acceptance rate is 76%. This is the ratio of “Accepts” to “Not Accepts” since inception. Acceptances, in this context, include “Accepted”, “Accepted-Group”, and “ID OK/Questionable/Exotic Origin”.

**d. New Species Added.** No new species were added to the Official MD list since last year’s Annual Meeting. Pacific Loon was added as a new species to the DC list. The current totals are 415 for Maryland and 314 for DC. These totals are from the latest version of the *Official List of the Birds of Maryland* and the *Official List of the Birds of the District of Columbia*. Additions will be reported at all future meetings.

**e. External Communications.** Figure 3 presents a summary of significant communications with people or organizations external to the committee’s normal interfaces.

**Figure 3. MD/DCRC External Communications Summary**

Mon	Year	Contact	State/ Country	Topic
Jul	2000	Halliwell, Tom	NJ	Thanks for providing information on MD/DC records for his article "What's Next in New Jersey: Birds Recorded Within 200 Miles of New Jersey, But Not Yet in the State".
Aug	2000	Golovkin, Alexander	Russia	Exchange of information on Slaty-back Gull hybridism articles.
Aug	2000	White, Tony	DC	Clarification on Official DC List for an upcoming publication.
Sep	2000	Whan, Bill	OH	Requested a copy of the 1994 Burgess Trumpeter Swan article shown on the MD/DCRC ID Article web page for the Ohio Records Committee.
Oct	2000	King, Jon	CA	Status of MD/DC Slaty-backed Gull records for a forthcoming article.
Feb	2001	Dole, John	NC	Details on MD/DC Common Murre records for an upcoming article.
Feb	2001	Mlodinow, Steve	WA	Background on Red-cockaded Woodpecker records for an upcoming article.
Feb	2001	Brady, Alan	PA	Query regarding any MD reports of Fea's Petrel or Masked Booby.
Feb	2001	Lehman, Jay	DE	Query on a 1975 records of a Le Conte's Sparrow that have have crossed the state line into Delaware.

## f. Database Projects.

**1. Projects Completed.** Since the last meeting, the Secretary built automated reports to summarize data associated with each of the review packages circulated since committee inception. Some of the information in the previous tables was generated from that data table.

### 2. Projects In Progress.

**a. Citation Acquisition.** This is a project to obtain all published sight report citations and insert them into the record files. This background, low-priority project is still in progress.

**b. Citation Database.** This is a project to expand how citations are recorded and handled in the committee database. This background, low-priority project is still in progress.

**c. Observer Database.** This is a project to expand how observers are recorded and handled in the committee database. This background, low-priority project is still in progress.

**d. Four Letter Codes.** A common set of four-letter codes has been compiled from the Bird Banding Lab and Breeding Bird Survey codes. This set of codes is ready to be integrated into the Committee's database.

**e. Decision Text From Old Records.** This is a project to cut and paste (electronically) the decision text from earlier letters to observers and place the text into the committee's database so that decision summaries are directly available via the database. This project is ongoing.

**f. Dissect Early Package Decisions.** This project is to dissect the "integrated" ballots of the first few packages and place the specific record comments physically into each appropriate database record file so that all information for each report/record is contained in or associated with the specific database record.

**g. Stewart & Robbins "Extirpated" Species Policy and Research.** Additional research needs to be conducted on extirpated species that were not "rare" during the Stewart and Robbins era (i.e., up until 1958) but are now reviewable. We must now determine which sightings should be entered into the committee's database as historical records. These species include, at a minimum, Bachman's Sparrow and Bewick's Wren.

### 3. Future Database Projects.

**a. Committee Process Flows.** The secretary intends to create process flows of the various "business processes" performed by the committee.

**b. 42<sup>nd</sup> AOU Supplement Update.** The database has yet to be updated to reflect the most recent AOU changes. The scope of these changes is minor as far as Maryland is concerned, the most notable being renaming of "Oldsquaw" to "Long-tailed Duck".

**c. Data Management.** Two projects are on the horizon with regard to the elements in the committee's database:

i. **Data Dictionary.** The building of a formal data dictionary to describe the format and definition of each data field.

- ii. **Data Normalization.** Some database elements are not consistent in naming conventions or format. The Secretary intends to clean this up at some point in time.

**d. Final QA Review of Earlier Files.** This is a plan to perform a final physical inspection of each package and ensure that all database fields are correct. This step will occur before digital archiving and the moving of the physical files into controlled MOS storage.

**e. Extinct Species Research.** A file of written information is being collected on extinct species (Heath Hen, Carolina Parakeet, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, etc.). This purpose of this project to determine if any records can be added to the committee database for historical purposes.

**f. Reports from the DC Records Committee.** This is a project to extract specific records accepted by the now defunct DC Records Committee database and add these reports and records to the MD/DCRC database.

**g. "Imprecise" Date Issue.** Currently the committee database uses "date fields" for items such as start and end dates. Exact days of the month and even complete dates are not known for some historical reports. Currently, the Secretary assigns an artificial day of the month (such as the 15<sup>th</sup>) for these types of records. Technically, this process introduces erroneous data into the database that may not be noticed during certain operations and reports. The Secretary identify a project to modify the database to replace or add a non-date field for start dates.

**h. Automated Forms Linkage.** This project is to simplify data input operations by improved database forms.

**k. Unsubmitted Reports and Outstanding Documentation Status.** The status of the project to track down published or broadcast reports (such as on e-mail listservers) of reviewable species that have not been submitted to the committee was reviewed with the members.

#### **I. Internet Projects.**

**i. MOS MD/DCRC Web Site Updates.** The MD/DCRC web pages continue to be updated periodically. The secretary forwards the data to the MOS Web Site Director, Fran Saunders, who formats the data and updates the server.

**ii. On-line Web Publishing of Databases.** The plan is to eventually migrate the data, or copies of the database, directly to the web servers, so that all information is available to interested parties in near-real time.

**iii. On-line Acknowledgement of Observer Reports.** The Secretary plans to migrate to e-mail acknowledge notification to observers in lieu of the current postal mail process.

**iv. Policies on Digital/Scanned Photos.** As digital images become more common, the committee will need to adopt some guideline or policy on digital documentation standards.

## II. Subcommittee/Project Reports.

**a. Outreach Subcommittee.** Paul O'Brien presented a report from the Outreach Subcommittee. Paul and Sue Ricciardi have given the committee presentation to many of the local MOS chapters and other organizations.

**b. Subspecies/Distinct Forms Subcommittee.** Michael O'Brien reported on the progress that he and Marshall Iliff have accomplished to date. A recommendation for changes to the MD/DCRC Review List is not ready for this annual meeting, but should be ready for next year's meeting.

**c. Qualitative Status System.** Phil Davis reported and distributed a report using this new system, as modified by suggestions from last year's annual meeting. A copy of this report will be distributed separately and posted on the MD/DCRC web site.

**d. USNM Specimens.** Phil Davis reported on the status of the canvass of reviewable MD and DC US National Museum specimens. He is working with Mary Gustafson to locate and photograph extant skins so that the committee can review them.

**e. Loss Prevention Plan.** Phil Davis reported that until the committee's files are digitized, the data will probably not be moved to the MOS' secure, controlled storage. This is still, however, an important priority for the committee.

## III. Action Item Review

**a. DC Review List.** At the last meeting, a draft DC Review List was presented to the committee by Paul Pisano. This was in response to a committee exploratory initiative to separate the MD and DC review lists. Additional work and coordination remains to be accomplished on this project. Paul will plan to have this ready no later than next year's Annual Meeting.

**b. Reopened Common Gull Narrative.** Previously, members of the committee moved to reopen the MD/1995-033 Common Gull record. Additional information will be provided before the review begins. Mark Hoffman will provide photos and analysis from a later sighting that was determined to be a Ring-billed Gull rather than a Common (Mew) Gull.

**c. PWRC Card Files.** Mark Hoffman provided a copy of the PWRC card on an eastern shore Trumpeter Swan sighting. This will be added to the database.

## IV. Committee Procedures Review

**a. Goals Document.** Phil Davis reported that the task is still open to experiment with separating the committee's current "Goals and Procedures" document into at least two separate documents. The intent of this project is to pare the current nine-page document down into one document that focuses on information that committee members need to know and another document that is more oriented to the Secretary and the Chair. Next year's annual meeting will be the target for completion of this effort.

**b. Official Lists of the Birds of Maryland and DC.** Phil Davis reported that he had experimented with reformatting each of the Official Lists into a main checklist and several appendices. The committee discussed this and agreed that this makes sense. A draft will be prepared for the next Annual Meeting.

**c. Review List.** The following issues/topics were discussed concerning the Review List.

**1. Species Status Changes.** The committee did not make any changes to the Review List at this time.

**2. Subspecies and Forms Common Names.** It was decided to make no changes at this time to the Review List with respect to Category 4, Subspecies or Unusual Forms. When the Subcommittee dealing with this topic completes its work, the impact to the Review List will be determined. However, the committee did agree to restrict the current subspecies/forms listed in Category 4 to those that have been accepted by the committee. This means that only Audubon's (Yellow-rumped) Warbler and Common (Green-winged) Teal will be shown in this category at this time.

**3. Exotics Review Policy.** This committee discussed the issue of developing guidelines for either the review or non-review of "exotic" species (e.g., Black Swan). No policy changes were implemented at this time.

**4. Historical/Temporal Summary of Review Species Status Changes.** Phil Davis reported that he still intends to compile a historical summary of when species were added to or deleted from the Review List. This summary could then be used to retrospectively determine when species were or were not in a review status.

**5. Third MD/DCRC Decision Report.** The work to prepare the committee's third decision report had not yet begun, but will shortly. Michael O'Brien will be the senior author.

**6. Review Policies:**

**a. Multiple vs. Single Records Policy.** The committee discussed the issue of whether annually "returning" birds should be considered to be one or multiple records. (An example is the Ellicott City Harris's Sparrow that was present for three winters—the bird was banded and recaptured, so it is known to be the same bird). The committee agreed that in such cases, where the bird is presumed to have left Maryland and then returned, the case would be treated as separate records rather than combined into one record.

**b. Identification of Original Finders.** Phil Davis reported that the policy to record the name of the original finder in the database has been implemented.

**c. Genus/Group/Complex Only Votes.** The committee reevaluated its policy of accepting records on the basis of a group of species (perhaps a genus, or perhaps some other group of species, as defined by the members). The committee felt that although this process is somewhat awkward, it probably would be no more difficult than for the "selasphorus-like" hummingbird complex that was dealt with last year. The committee agreed to continue the policy.

**d. Exotic/Questionable Origin Votes.** The committee discussed the issue of votes that were split between "exotic" and "questionable" origin. The current committee policy requires discussion and then a revote to resolve any non-unanimous decision, applying an eight-vote criterion. The committee decided that any vote that ends up with a combination of nine votes of any combination of exotic or questionable origin will all be officially reported as "ID OK / questionable origin". However, any split of those votes between exotic and questionable will be reported in the decision summary to indicate the member's views of this subject. Previous "origin" votes will also be reclassified as "questionable" to make the policy consistent (again, reporting the split of the two types of origin votes in the decision text).

**e. Photo-only and Retrospective Requests for Details.** The secretary reminded the members of two committee policies that raised some discussion during the prior year. The first is the committee policy to review "photo only" reports (with an indication of the date, location, and photographer). The second is that the committee will not retrospectively solicit field mark details from observers.

## V. Decision Issues: Fourth Rounds/Other Open Issues

a. **Fourth Round Discussions.** The committee discussed the following pre-fourth-round reports:

1. **DC/1997-096 Little Gull (DC)** [Vote 6-3-0]. This report was discussed by the committee and will be recirculated as a separate single-record package to this year's committee members.

b. **Other Issues:**

1. **MD/1998-032 European Goldfinch** [exotic vs. questionable origin]. Because of the change in policy of "Exotic/Questionable Origin Votes" earlier in the meeting (see above), no further action was necessary for this record. The decision will be classified as "ID OK/Questionable Origin."

2. **MD/1999-029 Monk Parakeet** [exotic vs. questionable origin]. Likewise, because of the change in policy of "Exotic/Questionable Origin Votes" (see above), no further action was necessary for this record. The decision will be classified as "ID OK/Questionable Origin."

3. **Record Reopenings.** One record reopening was discussed. It is the MD/1987-013 Greater Flamingo of 1972. The text of a message from Marshall Iliff on this subject is included, below.

From: [Miliff@aol.com](mailto:Miliff@aol.com)  
Date: Fri, 16 Feb 2001 09:53:08 EST  
Subject: Flamingo re-open  
To: [pdavis@ix.netcom.com](mailto:pdavis@ix.netcom.com)

Phil,

If you have time, perhaps you can include this w/ the Annual Meeting packet...the McNair paper (which I sent to you several months ago) might be included as well, or could be pulled out at the meeting if people are interested.

MJI

MD/DCRC members,

I am writing to suggest a re-open of [1987-013], a Greater Flamingo reported from Assateague Island, MD. In 1987 the MD/DCRC reviewed only the black-and white photos printed in Maryland Birdlife, along with the accompanying article (MB 28(4):148-149). The committee decided unanimously on the first round that the flamingo could not be identified to species based on the photos. Without being able to identify it to species, the committee could not even start to grapple with the question of origin.

Several years ago Harvey Mudd acquired over 100 slides from Richard Rowlett, and among them were several slides of the flamingo in question. The slides show a bright pink bird that seems to be consistent with the Caribbean subspecies (*roseus*) of Greater Flamingo, the only likely vagrant along the East Coast. With this new information the record should be re-opened to at least provide an opinion on the identification of the photos.

The origin question will obviously be a sticky one. I note several things that MAY support its origin as a wild bird:

- American *roseus* are kept in captivity in much lower numbers than Chilean, Lesser, and African (*ruber*) Greater Flamingos.
- Rowlett discusses the very wild behavior and bright plumage of this individual
- The habitat seems appropriate for a wild bird - at least it is not in a freshwater area like the escapee seen a year prior at Chincoteague
- Rowlett ties its appearance to the passage of a Tropical Storm. A recent paper by Doug McNair (McNair D.B. & J.A. (1998). Assessment of occurrences of Flamingos in northwest Florida, including a recent record of the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) Florida Field Naturalist 26(2): 40-43) discusses the correlation with the passage of Tropical Storms and the appearance of

Greater Flamingos in Florida. This may be a very strong piece of evidence given that recent paper. The same storm that may have brought the MD bird brought another to St. Marks Light, FL.

- Bermuda has at least four records (as of 1991) including: one 5 Dec 1969-8 May 1970; one 30 Aug 1980. Given that island's remote location and the (presumed) lack of captive flamingos there, it serves as good evidence for vagrancy in this species. Less convincing support comes from Veit & Petersen's (1993) Birds of Massachusetts, which lists 11 records, which they present as wild with the caveat "some of which may represent escaped aviary birds". Interestingly though, their records are concentrated in late May and August-mid-September, with only 3 records outside of those time frames. They also note that while aviaries have increased since 1967, there have been no flamingo reports, all of which have been concentrated between 1964-1967. It is unclear whether all these birds were confirmed as *P. r. roseus* though.

The re-opened record would hopefully include comments from other East Coast committees that have grappled with the question of flamingos; some inventory of captive flamingos (preferably now vs. 1972); a complete list of records of other *roseus* Greater Flamingos on the East Coast. I volunteer to help compile some of this information.

The committee felt that the Rowlett color slide, now available, constitutes "new information" as defined by the committee (that is, direct information on the observation, as opposed to general new species identification or taxonomic information). Therefore the Secretary/Chair under the "new information" policy will reopen the record.

## VI. Circulation Issues/Identification Issues/Skins Meeting:

**a. Kelp Gull [MD/1999-035].** Harvey Mudd brought the committee members up to date regarding the status of the Kelp Gull. Last year, Donna Dittman of Louisiana (who has extensive experience with the Louisiana population of Kelp and hybrid Kelp x Herring Gulls) provided the committee with a position paper on the Maryland Kelp Gull. Her statement basically indicated that the Maryland bird could possibly be a hybrid and she suggested the Committee try to have a DNA analysis performed from the two shed feathers that were collected. Harvey indicated the long chain of events to pursue such an analysis, including discussions with the French ornithologists that had been active in this field. However, the path leads back to the National Zoo here in Washington, DC. The feathers had been analyzed and DNA material was taken from the feathers and analyzed. The first attempt focused on the wrong end of the DNA chain, but the information necessary to correctly perform the test has been located and the final test and results should be available soon. The committee will wait to see what these results yield before the next step(s) can be determined. Patty Craig volunteered to take the thick file on the gull and sort through it and organize it in preparation for circulation.

**b. Slaty-backed Gull [MD/1999-052].** The committee now has all of the photos and written descriptions of this bird. A review package will be prepared for two outside expert opinions before the report is circulated. Michael O'Brien volunteered to take the 64 Bob Augustine photos and review them to select a smaller number that would be suitable for review.

**c. White-winged Crossbill Review Issues.** The committee discussed how to handle the White-winged Crossbill reports from the 1997-1998 "invasion" winter. Six reports were submitted to the committee. The committee decided to go ahead and review all of the submitted reports.

**d. Skins Meeting.** Members were asked to think about skins that should be reviewed and forward suggestions to the secretary. In general, it is not expected that committee will study the specimens that are being photographed and "worked up" (i.e., measured) since they will become formal data packages for review. Some suggestions were put forward for the review of skins for the next month's workshop.

- Slaty-backed Gulls
- Kelp Gulls
- Herring Gulls
  - Vega

- European
- Common Gulls
- Pacific, Arctic, Common and Yellow-billed Loons

**VII. Old Business:**

**a. Administrative Voting by the Chair and Secretary.** As discussed at last year's meeting, Harvey Mudd proposed that the Chair and Secretary be given the right to participate in administrative voting of the committee (as opposed to voting on records). No objections were voiced and this policy was implemented.

**b. Official Lists Inception Dates.** As Phil Davis reported earlier, a folder of information dealing with extinct species is being collected. In the course of the discussion it was suggested that "beginning" dates be associated with the Official Lists of the Birds of Maryland and DC. These dates will thus document the earliest records and set the bounds for dealing with issues such as pre-historic species. The Secretary will accommodate this change.

**VIII. New Business.** None

**IX. Elections:**

**a. New members.** At this meeting, the terms of members Sam Dyke, Gail Mackiernan, and Michael O'Brien ended. The committee thanked these members for their efforts and support. Elections were held and three new members are Jonathan Alderfer, Paul O'Brien, and Bob Ringler.

**b. Chair.** As previously announced, Harvey Mudd is retiring as the committee Chair. The committee extended it thanks and sincere appreciation to Harvey for many years of hard work for the committee, include may hundreds of hours of effort to obtain notes and photos from historical records. Paul O'Brien was elected as the new Chair.

**X. Next Year's Meetings Dates. The dates for next year's meeting are:**

<b>Annual Meeting:</b>	Saturday, February 23, 2002	(firm)
<b>Skins Workshop:</b>	Saturday, March 30, 2002	(tentative)

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Davis  
 MD/DCRC Secretary  
 March 23, 2000