

Annual Report of the ABA Checklist Committee: 2007

Bill Pranty

8515 Village Mill Row
Bayonet Point, Florida 34667

Jon L. Dunn

R.R. 2
Box 52R
Bishop, California 93514

Steven C. Heinl

P.O. Box 23101
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Andrew W. Kratter

Florida Museum of Natural History
P.O. Box 117800
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611

Paul E. Lehman

P.O. Box 379
Cape May, New Jersey 08204

Mark W. Lockwood

402 East Harriet Avenue
Alpine, Texas 79830

Bruce Mactavish

37 Waterford Bridge Road
St. John's, Newfoundland A1E 1C5

Kevin J. Zimmer

1665 Garcia
Atascadero, California 93422

This is the 18th published report of the ABA Checklist Committee (CLC), covering Committee deliberations during the period July 2006 – July 2007. There have been no changes to the membership of the Committee since our previous report (Pranty et al. 2006): In October 2006, Mactavish and Zimmer were elected to their second terms (to expire at the end of 2009) and Pranty was re-elected to serve as Chairman for a second year.

During the preceding 13 months, the CLC finalized votes on eight species, of which two votes were re-evaluations of records previously rejected by the CLC on the basis of uncertain provenance. Seven species were accepted and have been added to the ABA Checklist, while one was not accepted. The CLC chose to defer voting on recent reports of a ninth species, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, to give field workers additional time to gather potentially conclusive evidence of species persistence. The CLC follows all taxonomic decisions made by the American Ornithologists' Union. The AOU (Banks et al. 2007) recently "split" the Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*) into two species, Taiga Bean-Goose (*A. fabalis*) and Tundra Bean-Goose (*A. serrirostris*), and this split adds another species to the Checklist, as both bean-geese have been recorded in the ABA Area (Banks et al. 2007). Through July 2007, the ABA Checklist contains 947 species.

Pranty is working with David Hartley, the ABA's webmaster, to create web pages for the CLC on the ABA's website <aba.org/checklist>. We anticipate posting the following features within the next few months: (1) a list of the 947 species currently on the ABA Checklist, along with their occurrence codes; (2) the current CLC bylaws, as amended in 1997; (3) PDFs of 17 previous CLC reports, dating back to 1985 (prior to 1985, the CLC did not publish analyses of Committee deliberations); (4) the recently revised criteria for determining when an exotic bird is considered to be established (and thereby "countable" on lists submitted to the ABA); and (5) the names and addresses of current CLC members, along with the names and duration of service of all previous CLC members.

New Species Accepted

Light-mantled Albatross (*Phoebastria palpebrata*). ABA CLC Record #2006-08, a re-evaluation of CLC Record #1997-01. One adult in the Pacific Ocean at Cordell Bank, 40 miles off Point Reyes, Marin County, California, on 17 July 1994 (Stallcup and Ter-rill 1996, Robbins et al. 2003). Discovered by Rich Stallcup on an organized pelagic trip and photographed extensively. The original CLC vote in 2002 was one of the most criticized decisions made by the Committee (e.g., Wilson 2004). The identification of this stunning species was straightforward, but three CLC members chose to place the albatross record in the newly created "Origin Hypothetical" category because there were no previous observations in the Northern Hemisphere and no history of vagrancy (Robbins et al. 2003, 2004).

Not only was the original CLC vote of this record controversial, but the CLC's decision to re-evaluate the record in 2006 also was questioned by some. Our bylaws require that additional evidence be presented before a record that was rejected by the



The identification of this **Light-mantled Albatross**—to date the only record for the ABA Area—has never been questioned. Questions of provenance and procedure, however, have hounded this record for more than a decade. The species is now on the ABA Checklist. *Cordell Bank, California; 17 July 1994. © Scott Terrill.*

CLC be re-evaluated. There have been no subsequent observations of the Light-mantled Albatross in the Northern Hemisphere. However, in the ensuing 12 years, several other Southern Hemisphere pelagic species have been documented in ABA-area waters—from Cordell Bank in some cases—including Shy Albatross, Great-winged Petrel, and Ringed Storm-Petrel. The CLC decided that observations in subsequent years of additional southern pelagic species in the ABA Area met the definition of “additional evidence” despite the lack of subsequent reports of Light-mantled Albatross. But not all CLC members agreed completely with this procedural stance, and CLC member Jon Dunn expressed his feelings in the following manner:

Without new records of this species, I’m really not sure there is basis for re-review. Yes, I completely disagree with [the 2002 vote], but that’s the way the vote went. I’m uneasy about having a re-vote on this. So what to do? All decisions seem bad to me, but now that it is presented to me for a vote, continuing an “unacceptable” situation seems to be the worst choice, so reluctantly I vote yes.

Ultimately, the re-vote to accept the species as a native vagrant was unanimous during our first round of voting. CLC member Mark Lockwood noted, “The seemingly routine appearance in recent years of unexpected pelagic species off both of our coasts serves to underline how little we know and understand about these long-lived species and their potential to stray well away from what we think of as their normal ranges.”

Light-mantled Albatross is a cold-water species that breeds on sub-Antarctic islands and winters (during our summers) from the edge of the Antarctic pack ice north along the Pacific coast of South America to Peru (Stallcup and Terrill 1996, AOU 1998). The CLC’s decision to accept this record brings the CLC into conformity with the decisions made by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) and the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU 1998). The CLC vote thereby reduces by one the number of species on which the ABA CLC and the AOU’s *Checklist* Committee differ (see Pranty 2007).

Light-mantled Albatross is added to the ABA *Checklist* as a Code 5 species, placed between Black-browed Albatross and Wandering Albatross.

Parkinson’s Petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*). ABA CLC Record #2006-09. One individual in the Pacific Ocean near Cordell Bank, 17.6 nautical miles northwest of the Point



This **Parkinson’s Petrel** was well-photographed and a straightforward addition to the ABA Checklist. *Cordell Bank, Marin County, California; 1 October 2005. © Eric W. Preston.*



Gray Heron has been added to the ABA *Checklist* on the basis of this specimen. There had been prior records of the species from New World sites outside the ABA Area, so Gray Heron was a not-unexpected addition to the ABA *Checklist*. *Lear's Cove, Newfoundland & Labrador; 11 October 1996.* © Royal Ontario Museum.

Reyes headlands, Marin County, California, on 1 October 2005 (Howell 2006, Stallcup and Preston 2006). Discovered by Rich Stallcup on an organized pelagic trip and well-photographed. Accepted unanimously by the CBRC and by the CLC.. The photographs rule out the similar but larger Westland Petrel (*Procellaria westlandica*), which is less likely to occur on geographical grounds (Howell 2006).

Parkinson's Petrel breeds on Great Barrier Island and Little Barrier Island off New Zealand, and winters widely (during our summers) in the central Pacific Ocean from southern Mexico to northern Peru, west to Australia (Jehl 1974, Harrison 1983, AOU 1998, Stallcup and Preston 2006), with a world population estimated at 10,000 birds. The species was therefore a likely candidate for vagrancy to the California coast. In fact, Howell (2006) and Stallcup and Preston (2006) discuss two other recent reports off California of birds thought to be Parkinson's Petrels

Parkinson's Petrel is added to the ABA *Checklist* as a Code 5 species, placed between Bulwer's Petrel and Streaked Shearwater.

Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea*). ABA CLC Record #2007-04. One individual found moribund at Lear's Cove, Newfoundland & Labrador, on 11 October 1996 was sent to Salmonier Nature Park, where it died. Initially misidentified as a Great Blue Heron, the specimen was prepared as a study skin in the teaching collection at Municipal University of Newfoundland. Six years later, the specimen was correctly identified and was moved to the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM #104256; Renner and Linegar 2007). Accepted unanimously by the Newfoundland Bird Records Committee and by the CLC.

Gray Heron is a widespread resident in much of the Old World except for Australasia, breeding from Britain and Scandinavia east through Sakhalin and much of Eurasia, south to South Africa and the East Indies, wandering widely within this range after breeding (AOU 1998). There are

several previous records of Gray Herons in the New World, so the species was expected to be documented as a vagrant to the ABA Area. Gray Herons are regular visitors to Iceland (more than 50 per year), they stray frequently to Barbados (annual since 1997, with up to six birds in one year) and Greenland (at least 15 reports, mostly during fall), and they have been reported elsewhere at Bermuda (once), Martinique, Montserrat, and Trinidad and Tobago (Renner and Linegar 2007). In the ABA Area, there are previous reports from Alaska (Burton and Smith 2001) and Florida (Pranty 2004). Several Gray Herons found in the New World made at least some of the journey across the Atlantic Ocean by riding on ships. Most notable of these ship-assisted records was one of three birds that survived the 2,000-kilometer



This **Intermediate Egret** was salvaged in the course of field research and constitutes the first accepted record for the ABA Area. *Buldir Island, Alaska; 30 May 2006.* © I. L. Jones.

voyage from near the Azores to Newfoundland in 2002 (a record that was not evaluated by the CLC).

Gray Heron is added to the ABA *Checklist* as a Code 5 species, placed between Great Blue Heron and Great Egret.

Intermediate Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*). ABA CLC Record #2006-06. One recently dead adult male in nuptial

plumage salvaged by Stephan Lorenz and colleagues at Buldir Island, Aleutian Islands, Alaska, on 30 May 2006 (Lorenz and Gibson 2007). The specimen (University of Alaska Museum #22603) was prepared by Dan Gibson and determined to be of the nominate subspecies (Lorenz and Gibson 2007). Accepted unanimously by the Alaska Checklist Committee and by the CLC.

The Intermediate Egret is a largely resident native of Africa, South and East Asia, and Australia. The nominate subspecies breeds from Pakistan east through China to Honshu, Japan (Hancock and Kushlan 1984). The Alaskan egret was found on Buldir Island during a season when specimens of two other Old World wading birds were salvaged: four adult Black-crowned Night-Herons of the nominate race and two adult Great Egrets of the race *modesta* (Lorenz and Gibson 2007).

There are two previous records of Intermediate Egret in the New World, but both are clouded by uncertainty. A specimen from Vancouver, British Columbia, before 1923 may have been collected elsewhere (AOU 1998). An egret photographed at Midway Atoll, Hawaii, on 25 June 1997 that was identified as an Intermediate Egret (Richardson 1999) may instead refer to an Asian (*coromandus*) Cattle Egret (Banks et al. 2007).

Intermediate Egret is added to the ABA Checklist as a Code 5 species, placed between Great Egret and Chinese Egret (Banks et al. 2007).

Swallow-tailed Gull (*Creagrus furcatus*). ABA CLC Record #2007-02, a re-evaluation of a previous record. One adult in alternate plumage discovered by Alan Baldrige at Pacific Grove, Monterey County, California, on 6–7 June 1985, then rediscovered by Ed Harper and others 15 miles north, at Jetty Road State Park, Moss Landing on 8 June 1985. Photographs were obtained at both locations. The second California report was an adult observed by Larry Spear 15 miles west of Southeast Farallon Island, California, on 3 March 1996. The vote of the first Swallow-tailed Gull record was perhaps the most contentious decision ever reached by the CBRC, requiring four rounds of voting over *nine* years before the record was rejected on the basis of provenance.

The CLC evaluated the Monterey Swallow-tailed Gull record in 1995 and followed the CBRC's decision to reject the record on the basis of questionable provenance; the record received too few votes to add it to the CLC's "Origin Uncertain" list (DeBenedictis 1996). Four years later, the CBRC unanimously accepted Spear's report in two rounds of voting, even though it was a single-observer sighting not



Originally rejected on the basis of questionable provenance, **Swallow-tailed Gull** has been re-evaluated—and accepted—by the ABA Checklist Committee. Decisions by the Checklist Committee are not etched in stone! As birders and ornithologists learn more about the causes and patterns of vagrancy, bird records committees often re-evaluate decisions from years earlier. *Pacific Grove, California; 7 June 1985.* © Peter LaTourrette.

supported by verifiable evidence. The CLC apparently never reviewed this report despite its stated intention to do so (Dunn et al. 1999). In 2007, the CLC re-voted on the Monterey record (Spear's observation could not add the species to the ABA Checklist because it was not supported by verifiable evidence). In stark contrast to the deliberations of the CBRC and to the earlier CLC votes, our discussion was non-controversial and speedy: We unanimously accepted the Monterey Swallow-tailed Gull as a natural vagrant during our first round of voting. The re-evaluation of this record partly reflects an increased awareness of vagrancy in gulls, along with other seabirds. Because the AOU (1998) did not accept the Monterey record as representing a natural vagrant of Swallow-tailed Gull, the CLC's recent decision creates a discrepancy with the AOU's Checklist. However, AOU's committee will likely re-evaluate this record now that the CLC has changed its vote.

The Swallow-tailed Gull is a near-endemic breeding resident of the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, with small numbers breeding also at Malpelo Island, Colombia. It spends the nonbreeding season in the Humboldt Current, ranging south to Chile. There are apparently one record and an additional "unsatisfactory" report from Panama (AOU 1998).

Swallow-tailed Gull is added to the ABA Checklist as a Code 5 species, provisionally placed between Sabine's Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake. Placement is provisional pending acceptance of Swallow-tailed Gull to the AOU Checklist.

European Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*). ABA CLC Record #2006-07, along with a re-evaluation of an earlier CLC record and one additional record that had not yet been



Along with numerous sightings from Atlantic Ocean islands, there are records of **European Turtle-Dove** from three widely scattered sites in eastern North America. All three records may have involved ship-assisted vagrancy. *St. Pierre Island, France; May 2001.* © Thierry Vogenstahl.

evaluated by a local committee. Three records of singles: one photographed at Lower Matecumbe Key, Monroe County, Florida, 9–11 April 1990 (Hoffman et al. 1990), a record that was relegated to the CLC's short-lived "Origin Uncertain" list (DeBenedictis 1994); one photographed in-hand at St. Pierre, St. Pierre Island, France, sometime between 15–20 May 2001 (Maybank 2001; R. Etcheberry, personal communication); and one thought to be of the nominate race that was run over by a vehicle (Museum of Comparative Zoology #336150) at Tuckernuck Island, Nantucket County, Massachusetts, on 19 July 2001 (Veit 2006). The Florida record was accepted by Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) and by Stevenson and Anderson (1994) but was never reviewed by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; the St. Pierre Island record has not been reviewed by a local committee; and the Massachusetts record was accepted 8–1 by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. The CLC voted unanimously to add the European Turtle-Dove to the ABA *Checklist* on the basis of the Massachusetts record, but not all members specified that the Florida and St. Pierre Island records also represented vagrants. In 1993 the AOU accepted the Florida record as representing a natural vagrant, so the CLC's recent decision reduces by one the number of species on which the ABA CLC and the AOU's *Check-list* Committee differ (see Pranty 2007).

The European Turtle-Dove is a widespread breeder in Eurasia and northern Africa. Northern populations are highly migratory, wintering in Sahelian Africa, and in the case of the nominate subspecies straying off course frequently. There are more than 100 reports from Iceland since 1970, with other reports from the Azores and from the Canary, Cape Verde, and Madeira islands (Veit 2006). European Turtle-Doves are inveterate ship-riders, and Hoffman et al. (1990) considered "ship-assisted vagrancy" to

represent the most likely scenario for the Florida record. Indeed, all three of the ABA Area records of European Turtle-Dove could have been ship-assisted.

European Turtle-Dove is added to the ABA *Checklist* as a Code 5 species, placed between Oriental Turtle-Dove and Eurasian Collared-Dove.

Pallas's Warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*). ABA CLC Record #2007-03. One of the nominate race at the "Circular Boneyard" at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, on 25–26 September 2006 was discovered and photographed by Paul Lehman and Gary Rosenberg (Lehman and Rosenberg 2007). Accepted unanimously by the Alaska Checklist Committee and by the CLC.

Pallas's Warbler breeds in eastern Asia and winters south to Indochina. Like other leaf-warblers, the taxonomy of Pallas's Warbler is in flux. It is composed of four or five subspecies that many authorities consider to represent as many as four species (see Lehman and Rosenberg 2007). The nominate race breeds northeast to the Sea of Okhotsk, Russia, approximately 1,900 kilometers southwest of Gambell. It is highly migratory, wintering from southeastern China to southern Indochina and Hainan (Lehman and Rosenberg 2007). Pallas's Warbler is a rare but regular migrant to Japan and northern Thailand, it often strays to Europe (Lehman



This bird was the first of its kind in the ABA Area and was unanimously accepted by the ABA Checklist Committee. It is currently classified as *Phylloscopus proregulus*, but its standard English name and placement on the ABA *Checklist* are provisional, awaiting assessment by the AOU Check-list Committee. *St. Lawrence Island, Alaska; 25 September 2006.* © Gary H. Rosenberg.

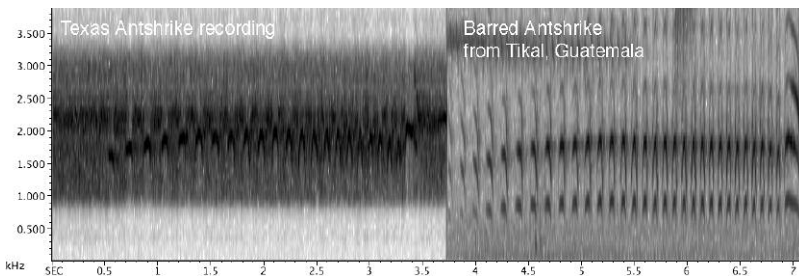
and Rosenberg 2007), and it was earlier suggested as a potential stray to Alaska (Tobish 2000). The AOU's committee has not yet reviewed this record, and may select an English

name different from the provisional name given here.

Pallas's Warbler is added to the ABA *Checklist* as a Code 5 species, provisionally placed between Yellow-browed Warbler and Arctic Warbler. Placement is provisional pending acceptance of Pallas's Warbler to the AOU *Check-list*.

Species Not Accepted

Barred Antshrike (*Thamnophilus doliatus*). One individual heard singing at Harlingen, Texas, on 1 September 2006 by two persons. The bird sang at night for 20 minutes (beginning at 10 p.m., two hours after twilight) in a lighted residential yard, but was never seen because it would not leave the dense hedge in which it was singing; playback of its song made the bird sing more frequently, but it did not leave the hedge. A five-minute analog recording of several songs made with a portable tape player provided the verifiable evidence



In order for a species to be added to the ABA *Checklist*, there must be physical evidence of its occurrence. Such evidence is usually in the form of a photograph or specimen, but a sonogram is also acceptable. The sonogram of an animal vocalization at left was insufficient evidence for addition of **Barred Antshrike** to the ABA *Checklist*. Sonogram by © Chris Benesh.

needed to submit the record to the Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) and to the CLC. The songs were converted to a digital format and a sonogram of one song was created, and that was provided to the CLC.

This is a most curious record: a bird identified from a tape recording of a species that belongs to a large family of birds (210+ species of antbirds), none of which is known to sing at night. The TBRC voted 6–3 and then 8–1 to accept the record after concluding that the identification was correct, that the record was legitimate (i.e., not a hoax, fraud, or “joke”), and that the species is unlikely to be kept captive.

After reviewing the evidence and the comments of the TBRC, the CLC rejected the record by a vote of 2–6. The fact that the bird was not seen at all troubled most CLC members, especially given that it was a potential first record for an entire family. In addition to the night-singing, CLC members were concerned with the following aspects of the record: (1) Barred Antshrikes are sedentary and occur no closer than 250 kilometers from Texas, with primarily agricultural land between their native range and the border (al-

though patches of stop-over habitat do exist); (2) the reaction of the bird to having its song played back does not accord with typical Barred Antshrike behavior of approaching the playback device; (3) the bird could not be found the next morning; and (4) the bird was never seen, despite being as little as 10 feet away in an illuminated yard. CLC member Jon Dunn summed up his feelings as follows: “They are close by and perhaps eventually expected. I’ll wait for another.”

Status Unchanged

Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*). ABA CLC “#2007-A.” We apologize for the confusing statement in our previous report (Pranty et al. 2006) that we had not “decided” whether to vote on the recent reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker persistence in the ABA Area. The CLC will evaluate the claims and counter-claims of Ivory-billed persistence in the ABA Area, but we may wait another year or two before we do so, either after formal surveys in some areas cease, or at least after another year or two of data have been gathered. We have received copies of the deliberations of the Arkansas Bird Records Committee, which voted in September 2006 to accept the claim (see Fitzpatrick et al. 2005, 2006; Rosenberg et al. 2005) that at least one Ivory-billed Woodpecker persists in the “Big Woods” of Arkansas, but some of the Arkansas votes were cast before alternative hypotheses were published (Jackson 2006, Sibley et al. 2006, Jones et al. 2007). To date, the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee has not accepted any claims of recent occurrences along the Choctawhatchee River (see Hill et al. 2006) or elsewhere in the state. In the opinion of the CLC, none of the data presented to date proves the continued persistence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the ABA Area. For now, we will continue to treat the Ivory-billed Woodpecker as a Code 6 species that definitely or probably is extinct.

Votes in Progress or Anticipated

The CLC is currently deliberating the status of two species: re-evaluation of a White-chinned Petrel photographed in Texas and a Song Thrush from Québec. We expect to vote soon on recent records of Loggerhead Kingbird from Florida and of Brown Hawk Owl, Sedge Warbler, and Yellow-browed Bunting from Alaska, once they have received state review, and we hope to vote on records of several other potential additions to the ABA *Checklist* within the next 12 months.



The ABA Checklist Committee has not formally evaluated recent reports of **Ivory-billed Woodpecker** from Arkansas, Florida, and elsewhere. However, the Committee will soon begin review of the tantalizing evidence (such as the immense cavity shown here) for the persistence of the species. For now, the Ivory-bill remains a Code 6 species, meaning that it is definitely or probably extinct. *White River National Wildlife Refuge, Arkansas.* © Paul W. Sykes.

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