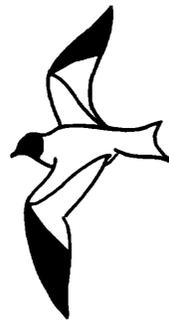


# CALIFORNIA BIRDS



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## THE CALIFORNIA RARITIES COMMITTEE

Because of their migratory behavior and high mobility, birds frequently appear in areas far outside their normal ranges. Essential to understanding the significance of these extra limital individuals is the accumulation of accurate data concerning their distribution and status (wild or non-wild).

In the last three decades there has been a substantial increase in the number of field observers. With the improvements in modern field identification techniques (Griscom, *Modern Bird Study*, 1945) much information concerning range extensions, population dynamics, incursions, and extra limital occurrences of birds has accumulated. Much of this data is based on sight records, but some on photographic evidence. The scientific acceptability of sight records, particularly of extra limital birds, has long perplexed ornithologists because such records usually lack substantiating documentation. Consequently, most serious ornithologists ignore such records. Some sight records are undoubtedly correct and, if properly documented, could constitute a valuable source of distributional data. Erroneous records appearing in print seriously confuse the problem and perpetuate the accumulation of inaccurate data. The problem most distributional workers face is differentiating the good from the bad.

The committee system of reviewing records has been in existence in Europe for more than a decade. Wallace (*British Birds*, 63:113-128, 1970) recently reviewed the activities of the British Birds Rarities Committee and concluded the system was working successfully. The Rarities Committee of the California Field Ornithologists (*Calif. Birds*, 1:2-3, 1970), has been established to help researchers evaluate records of unusual birds occurring in California. It is hoped that all records of rarities found in California will be submitted to the committee, which will review each record individually. All records, along with editorial comments when deemed pertinent, will appear in the Rarities Committee's annual report to be published

in CALIFORNIA BIRDS. Researchers utilizing these records can be assured that they have been thoroughly reviewed, and that the documenting evidence is on file.

To properly document an observation a detailed description along with other pertinent data should be submitted to the Rarities Committee at the address listed on the inside cover of CALIFORNIA BIRDS. The following information, preferably typewritten on 8½" x 11" white bond paper, should be included:

1. SPECIES (the name of the species and number of individuals involved).
2. LOCALITY (the exact locality of the observation - "2 miles S.W. of Olema, Marin Co. Calif." not "near Olema, Calif.").
3. DATE (include the time of day and the duration of the stay as well as the date).
4. OBSERVERS (include the names of others seeing the bird).
5. OPTICAL EQUIPMENT (include the type of optical equipment as well as power).
6. HABITAT (describe the habitat in which the bird was observed).
7. LENGTH OF TIME BIRD OBSERVED.
8. DESCRIPTION (include a detailed description of the bird's appearance with emphasis on the color and pattern of the plumage, size and shape, behavior, voice, and other pertinent diagnostic data).
9. CONCLUSIONS (reasons for identification).
10. EXPERIENCE (familiarity with the reported species and those similar).
11. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL (attach drawing, photographs, tape recordings etc. if available).

Enclosed in this issue of CALIFORNIA BIRDS is a field list of the birds of California. Records of those species marked with an asterisk will be accepted by the Rarities Committee for review and publication in CALIFORNIA BIRDS as will records of birds new to the state list. The committee currently consists of nine members - Eugene A. Cardiff, Theodore Chandik, Laurence C. Binford, Alan M. Craig, David DeSante, Clifford R. Lyons, Guy McCaskie, G. Shumway Suffel and Jon Winter (Secretary). We urge anyone interested in field ornithology to submit their records of extra limital birds found in California to the Rarities Committee. Hopefully the committee will be able to prepare a report for 1972, but the success of this will depend on the participation of the observers in California.

*Jon Winter*