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By-laws of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union (NOU) Records Committee

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The following procedural guidelines, or "by-laws", were revised and approved by the NOURC and the NOU Board of Directors (2010).

**BY-LAWS OF THE NEBRASKA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION
(N.O.U.) RECORDS COMMITTEE**

- I. **NAME.**
The name of the committee is the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (N.O.U.R.C.), hereafter referred to as "the committee".

- II. **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY.**
This committee exists to serve the ornithological community of Nebraska, not vice versa. It exists to promote and help maintain a high degree of quality and integrity in Nebraska ornithology. All Nebraska ornithologists should understand this and realize that for the committee to achieve these goals, it needs the support of all interested persons. The committee should be regarded as a logical, convenient clearinghouse in regards to records of Nebraska birds. All ornithologists, professional and amateur, are invited

and encouraged to use it as such. The committee should not necessarily regard itself, nor be regarded by others, as infallible, and committee decisions should not be seen as reflecting in any way upon the competency of individual observers. Any of its decisions are subject to review upon submission of new evidence. Both individual observers and the committee should feel free to engage in an ongoing dialogue in the open literature. Individuals are also free to independently publish their findings and the committee should welcome this as an alternate way of contributing to Nebraska ornithology.

III. PURPOSES.

- A. To provide a standardized systematic procedure for routinely reviewing and documenting unusual reports of birds in Nebraska in a fair and impartial manner.
- B. To compile and keep current an official list of the birds of documented occurrence in Nebraska and to assemble and maintain a file of the documentary evidence, to be available for use by researchers in the future.
- C. To provide guidance and assistance in methods of improving identification and documentation, with the goal of improving both the quality and quantity of our knowledge of the birds of Nebraska.

IV. DUTIES.

- A. The committee shall publish an "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska".
- B. The official list will include all those species whose occurrence has been reported in Nebraska, the species categorized as specified in paragraph VII, D.
- C. The committee shall keep the official list current.
- D. The committee shall publish a list of species for which details are requested with every sighting reported.
- E. The committee shall publish a summary of reports submitted and actions taken on those reports at least annually.
- F. The committee shall establish and maintain a file of substantiating evidence documenting the occurrence and identification of the birds reported.

V. MEMBERSHIP.

- A. The committee shall be composed of at least seven members.
- B. If possible, members shall be chosen from across the state, to help avoid a regional bias.
- C. Members shall be persons familiar with the birds of Nebraska and experienced in field identification.
- D. New members shall be appointed by the committee with the approval of the N.O.U. Board of Directors.
- E. The committee shall select its own officers, to include at least a chairperson.

- F. Members shall serve 3-year terms, with one-third of the members' terms expiring each year so that continuity of membership is maintained. A member may serve no more than two consecutive terms, followed by a year off before being re-elected to the committee.
- G. The chairperson will not be subject to term limits, but may be removed from the committee by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.
- H. The chairperson shall be allowed to vote on records.
- I. The chairperson shall be a member of the Board of Directors.
- J. Two-thirds of the members shall constitute a quorum for voting on procedural matters.
- K. Since the business of the committee must be conducted in a timely fashion, if a member is consistently unable to work within the schedule, that member may be replaced.
- L. By a two-thirds vote, the committee may remove a member for failure to review records or other just cause.
- M. The committee may make and amend its rules as necessary, so long as they do not conflict with the rules and by-laws of the N.O.U.

VI. PROCEDURES.

- A. All reports submitted shall be referred to the chairperson.
- B. The committee prefers that reports be submitted on committee forms, although this is not absolutely necessary.
- C. The chairperson will review the report and assign it accession and file numbers.
- D. The chairperson may request additional information from the reporter, but if submitted it will be identified as such to keep it separable from the original report.
- E. The chairperson will submit copies to the committee members to review. The original material will be retained in the file.
- F. The members will individually review the material, make comments on it and return it to the chairperson. Members may indicate their vote on a written ballot sheet or vote electronically, returning their votes and comments to the chairperson promptly.
- G. If the vote is inconclusive, or if new evidence is submitted, the report may be recirculated for another vote or discussed at a meeting.
- H. When voting has been completed and a decision reached, the chairperson shall notify the reporter and the committee members of the decision reached and of the reasons for the decision.
- I. Decision on reports submitted will be published in the Nebraska Bird Review at least annually.
- J. A permanent file shall be maintained by the committee, which shall include all reports submitted, actions taken by the committee, comments, documentary evidence, photos, etc. The original material will be placed in a file in the N.O.U. library archives and maintained for use by anyone with a legitimate research interest. The chairperson should keep and maintain a notebook of record information for his/her own use.
- K. Any record, present or past, may be submitted to the committee for review. Reports already acted upon by the committee may be re-submitted if new evidence becomes available.

- L. The committee may send material to an outside authority for an opinion or evaluation.
- M. The committee may meet as necessary. A meeting may be called by the chairperson or by two-thirds of the members.
- N. The committee recommends as strongly as possible that specimens of rare birds taken in Nebraska be prepared and retained as voucher specimens in a public college or university museum collection in the state, where they will be assured proper curation and be available for study by researchers. The committee recommends the State Museum of Natural History at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln as the logical repository for such specimens.

VII. VOTING.

- A. All records need a minimum of six votes to be categorized.
- B. To be placed in a Class I, II, or III, a record must be voted 6-0, 6-1, 7-0, 7-1, 8-0, 8-1, etc., in that category.
- C. Only those species classified as I, II, or III will be recognized as accepted records on the "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska".
- D. In compiling the official list, as well as voting on individual reports, the following categories will be used:

Class I: A record for which there is an adequately labeled, diagnostic specimen, photograph, or recording available for study.

Class II: A sight record for which there is acceptable documentation provided independently by three or more observers.

Class III: A sight record for which there is acceptable documentation provided independently by one or two observers.

Class IV: A record which is probably correct, but not beyond doubt.

Class V: A record with insufficient evidence submitted to support the stated identification.

Class VI: Probably a released or escaped bird, probably mistaken identification, or otherwise unacceptable record.

- E. Records will be assigned to the highest category agreed upon by the committee with no more than one dissenting vote. If a record is circulated among 8 committee members and receives 2 votes as Class III, and 6 votes as Class IV, it will be categorized as a Class IV record. Similarly, if a record receives 3 Class III, 4 Class IV, and 1 Class V vote, it will also be categorized as a Class IV record. If it receives 3 Class III, 2 Class IV, and 2 Class V votes, it will be categorized as a Class V record.
- F. Members of the committee may vote upon their own records.

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