

## Alberta Bird Record Committee

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# *Principles of Adjudication*

The following process should be adhered to when adjudicating records of Alberta bird rarities.

1. To the extent possible, the documentation on records to be adjudicated will be made available to all *Committee* members simultaneously.
2. Each member will make a decision as to what category to place the record in, based on the accompanying documentation. At this point the only categories will be:
  1. *Accepted* as the species indicated.
  2. *Not accepted*, as documentation does not eliminate other species.
  3. *Rejected*, as the documentation clearly identifies another species.
3. Any record that fits into category 2 or 3 must be accompanied by clear reasons as to why it does.
4. A member of the *Committee* may abstain from adjudicating a record if he/she feels that he/she has insufficient knowledge to make a valid decision, or feels uncomfortable adjudicating his/her own record.
5. A maximum of one dissension and a minimum of four accepting votes are necessary for the record to be placed in a particular category and moved on to the next phase of the process. This allows for up to two abstentions on any particular record.
6. If fewer than 5 votes are cast on an individual record, additional voters, preferably from a list of candidates agreed to by the *Committee*, must be called.
7. With some records the *Committee* may feel that, before a final decision is made, the evaluation of an outside expert is needed. The expert may then be asked to assign a category from **2** to the record.

**8.** If after enough members of the *Committee* have voted on a particular record the record has not been placed in a single category by all members of the committee, the documentation should be sent around for another review, with particular attention paid to the reasons why some members ranked the record in a lower category. This may be done one additional time, but after a third round, if there still is more than one dissenting vote, the record must stand in the lower category applied.

**9.** If the *Committee* deems it is necessary, certain "problem" records may be discussed at a meeting to sort out how to categorise them. This may circumvent the need for step **8** above.

**10.** Once the above process has been completed, the final code may be applied to the record as laid out in the "*Rules of Code Assignment*".

### **Code of Conduct of Members**

**11.** *Committee* members should refrain from discussing records that are being, or will soon be, adjudicated by the *Committee*, particularly with respect to the veracity of an observation and/or its likelihood of being accepted by the *Committee*.

**12.** *Committee* members should also exercise caution in seeking the opinion of observers present at the time of the observation of a rare bird who did not file a rare bird report. The exchange should be limited to a discussion of specific features of the bird observed, and of the conditions of the observation. The purpose of such contacts should be to elicit further factual information on the sighting, not to obtain an opinion as to its validity. In all cases, an independent report by the other observers should be encouraged.