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Stuart Mackenzie
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June 5, 2019

Dear Stuart Mackenzie,

I'm writing on behalf of the Ontario Bird Record Committee (OBRC) of 2018, a committee of the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) regarding the report you submitted to us of a Hermit Warbler that was photographed by Brandon Holden.

Our 2018 secretary, Mike Burrell, began circulating reports such as yours for review this past fall. Our review process consists of three rounds of voting by a seven member committee, this year consisting of Barb Charlton, Paul Pratt, Amanda Guercio, Don Sutherland, Blake Mann, Bill Lamond and myself. The initial round is completed anonymously, ensuring no voting member can influence the decisions of others. Each member can cast their vote for one of three options:

- a) Accept
- b) Not Accept, insufficient evidence
- c) Not Accept, identification acceptable, origin uncertain

A majority of 6 or more tallies for one criterion can become the final outcome for the record; however, if a split vote occurs the record is moved to a second round of voting. In the second round, the same voting options are available; however, the members may now consult with one another as well as solicit expert opinion. This typically helps solve any disagreements, yet every year we reach a third and final round on some records where they are reviewed in person at our annual general meeting at the Royal Ontario Museum. At this point, any record that does not reach a 6 vote majority for "Accept" is then not accepted.

I have the unfortunate task of writing today to inform you that your Hermit Warbler record was not accepted after a majority vote under category b) Not Accept, insufficient evidence. Your record, numbered 2018-044, reached the second round of voting with a final vote of 0-7-0 after the initial round had a split decision of 3-4-0. In the end, committee members felt that the quality of the photos was not sufficient to be completely positive that Hermit Warbler was the only possible identification of this bird, and the possibility of a hybrid could not be definitely eliminated given the conditions. Lighting and observation conditions can have a significant effect

on the appearance of plumage features in photos, and the committee agreed that low resolution images are particularly susceptible to this.

In our goal to create a scientific record of bird sightings, we sometimes have to set the bar unfortunately high. We certainly understand that this is a rather dissatisfying outcome for someone who has voluntarily spent time and energy to supply us with documentation as you have, and we truly hope that this does not deter you from making submissions in the future. We cannot function without the help and support of birders such as yourself. If you have any more questions about your record, our policies and procedures, or any other inquiries please do not hesitate to contact us at obrc@ofc.ca.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Vandermeulen". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Josh Vandermeulen

2018 OBRC Chair