

FOOTNOTES

1. The species definition is basically that of A. E. Emerson, "Taxonomic Categories and Population Genetics," Ent. News 56 (1945), with various minor modifications suggested by points made in more recent literature.
2. Morphological characteristics are, roughly, those characteristics which remain obvious in preserved museum specimens -- study-skins, skeletons, or even eggs! Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri) was originally distinguished from other gulls on the basis of an unusual egg coloration.
3. So says Ernst Mayr, former curator of the Museum of Comparative Zoology in his book Animal Species and Evolution (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 139).
4. See Footnote 2.
5. Physiological characteristics are those relating to the life processes of the individual, e.g., blood type, susceptibility to disease or injury, allergenic reactions, "normal" temperature, tolerance to external heat or cold, etc.
6. R. S. Palmer, Handbook of North American Birds, Vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 463.

SO WHAT DO WE COUNT?

I'm sure this question is raised whenever the AOU Check-list is revised. I'm also sure every lister has pondered the matter, not only as a beginner but time and again as his proficiency in the sport grows.

Of course, organizations such as ABA have specific rules as to what one can list. But where does that leave the millions of other birders who have never heard of ABA or of any other formal organization? As for me, I'll count any species, race, or morph that can be reliably identified through field marks, voice, or habitat.

For most birders, listing is as personal as choosing a brand of toothpaste. I feel we should not become preoccupied with the fine points of taxonomy, but rather with what we are able to recognize in the field. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle must have been a good birder, and I am sure Sherlock Holmes could have distinguished an Oregon Junco from a Slate-colored.

That is not to say that Mr. Leverich's excellent review should be taken lightly -- to the contrary, it should be most carefully studied. For only by doing so will a birder gain an appreciation and understanding of what he is looking at.

Yet, if everyone were to lump the two largest herons in North America, we would never know the relative abundance and distribution of the Great Blues and the Great Whites; also, we would not be aware of how many Common (Eurasian) Teals cross the Atlantic to North America; and we would not be so keen to appreciate the subtle differences of the Red-shafted, Yellow-shafted, and Gilded Flickers.

All of these birds will stay on my personal life list. And to me that's the name of the game -- PERSONAL.

L.J.R.