

## THE VERNACULAR NAMES OF BIRDS.

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BOTH the general public and professional ornithologists constantly make use of the vernacular names of birds. This statement is also true of nearly all forms of animal life which are of any economic importance. In fact, vernacular names are perhaps more often employed even by scientists than formerly, and the subject is one of growing importance.

Since this is true, it is important, first, that these vernacular names be correct, that is, formed in accordance with some established principles of construction; and, secondly, that the same name be always applied to a particular species. Though there will generally be several names in use for our commoner animals, especially our game-birds, the same name ought not to be applied indiscriminately to several different birds, as is often done. There ought to be some means of knowing also just what animal is designated by any particular vernacular name: or there ought to be in convenient form for reference a list of all the commoner names applied to any particular species. The whole subject of vernacular names ought to be put upon a scientific basis.

These considerations have led the writer to undertake the preparation of a work which shall give (1) the vernacular name of every bird found in North America, written in correct form, with special reference to the proper compounding of names;<sup>1</sup> and (2) a synonymy of all the vernacular names, with the most common, or most suitable one indicated. This is intended to secure uniformity in writing the common, or popular, names, especially as to the correct compounding of the words; and also to secure, as far as possible, the adoption of a single suitable name for each bird, or at most a limited number of well-selected names. Many birds, especially game-birds, have from five to twenty names, some even more than fifty names. This multiplicity of names produces great confusion.

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<sup>1</sup> The author has prepared also a work on 'The Compound Vernacular Names of Insects.' See article in 'Entomological News' for Nov., 1902.

The importance of this subject is manifest to all. One of the most noted ornithologists in this country recently in a private letter to the writer said: "It is a subject which has been much neglected, and I am glad you are taking it up. The matter of compound names has given me not a little bother, and the question of hyphens still more." If the subject has given trouble to men of the highest rank, certainly younger and less skillful workers will find still more trouble.

There is not only a great lack of uniformity in writing the compound vernacular names of birds; but, with regard to many names, a majority of the ornithologists seem to have selected incorrect forms. This statement may seem paradoxical, as correct form in speech is determined generally by the majority of the best speakers and writers. However, that does not necessarily mean a majority of the best ornithologists, or best entomologists, but a majority of those who give attention to the selection of correct forms of speech in accordance with certain underlying language-principles.

The design of this paper is to get at the source of not a few incorrect forms by calling attention to what seems clearly a misapplication, or lack of application, of language-principles in many vernacular names in the A. O. U. 'Check-List of North American Birds.' There are about one hundred seventy-five of these names which are manifestly incorrect in form. As this 'Check-List' is the standard for all ornithologists, even in regard to vernacular names, that seems the proper place to begin, though the writer is not unmindful of the great array of ornithological talent he is controverting at the outset.

It is necessary to lay down certain fixed principles and to formulate certain rules as a standard with which to compare these forms which appear to be wrong. The rules given below do not necessarily govern in the formation of all vernacular names of birds, as it seems best to leave the full discussion of the subject to another paper, which will appear later. These are intended to apply especially to the selections from the 'Check-List' which follow; but they are sufficient for all names of the same nature.

The 'Standard Dictionary,' in the Introduction, lays down three general principles for compounding English words. The second, the only one needed for the present purpose, is as follows:

“That abnormal association of words generally indicates unification of sense, and hence compounding in form.”

In accordance with this *principle* I have formulated the following

*Rules for Compounding Vernacular Names of Birds.*

*Write as a compound word:—*

1. A general name, used with any other name prefixed for specification and denoting food or prey (cherry-bird, sparrow-hawk);
2. A general name used with any other name prefixed for specification denoting, —
  - a. similarity (quail-dove);
  - b. habit (butcher-bird);
  - c. characteristic (song-sparrow);
  - d. habitat (house-sparrow).
3. Any two or more names or words in joint arbitrary use (road-runner, turnstone).
4. A phrase consisting of an adjective and a noun, together used as a mere name: generally written without the hyphen (redpoll, yellowlegs, goldeneye).

For additional information on these various word-forms and the underlying principles, see ‘The Compounding of English Words,’ by F. Horace Teall. The literature on this subject is very meager.

I have selected from the ‘Check-List’ representatives of the various incorrect forms, giving also the corresponding numbers in a column at the left. At the right is given a reference to the foregoing rule which governs each case. In some cases two or three rules apply. Many words are followed by “etc.” to indicate that several other words of the same group are compounded in accordance with the same rule; for example, all the different kinds of screech-owl, humming-bird, song-sparrow, etc.

LIST OF NAMES.

15	rhinoceros- auklet	2a
29	pigeon- guillemot	2a
39	ivory- gull	2a
51	herring- gull, etc.	1
56	mew- gull	2c
113.1	red- tailed tropic- bird	3
144	wood- duck	2d

147	canvas-back	2a, 3
148	lesser scaup-duck, etc.	2d
151	American goldeneye, etc.	4
162	king-eider	2a
164	velvet-scoter	2a
166	surf-scoter	2d, 2b
169	lesser snow goose, etc.	2a
171.1	bean-geese	2a
175	barnacle-geese, etc.	2a
176	emperor-geese	2a
188	wood-ibis	2d
202	black-crowned night-heron	3, 2b
206	sand-hill crane	3
208	king-rail	2a
211	clapper-rail, etc.,	2c
217	corn-crake	2d
233	stilt-sandpiper	2a
244	curlew-sandpiper	2a
253	greenshank	4
255	yellowlegs, etc.	4
275	ring-plover, etc.	2c
281	mountain-plover	2d
282	surf-bird	2d, 2b
292	mountain partridge	2d
294a	valley-partridge	2d
298a	Labrador spruce-grouse, etc.	2d
301	willow-ptarmigan, etc.	2d
305	prairie-hen, etc.	2d
309	sage-grouse	2d
315	passenger-pigeon	2c
320	ground-dove	2d
325	turkey-vulture	2a
330	everglade-kite	2d
331	marsh-hawk	2d
337b	Saint Lucas redbird	4
350	harpy-eagle	2a
351	gray sea-eagle	2d
355	prairie-falcon	2d
356	duck-hawk, etc.	2d
365	American barn-owl	2d
373	screech-owl, etc.	2c
377	hawk-owl, etc.	2a
381	elf-owl	2a
386	mangrove-cuckoo	2d
417	whippoorwill, etc.	3
420	night-hawk, etc.	2b

423	chimney-swift	2d
428	ruby-throated humming-bird, etc.	3, 2c
444	king-bird, etc.	2a
461	wood-pewee, etc.	2d
490	fish-crow	1a
498c	Florida redwing	4
501	meadow-lark, etc.	2d
506	orchard-oriole	2d
515	pine-grosbeak, etc.	2d
519	house-finch, etc.	2d
533	pine-siskin	2d
540	vesper-sparrow	2b
543	lagoon-sparrow, etc.	2d
546	grasshopper-sparrow, etc.	2a
552a	western lark-sparrow	2a
559	tree-sparrow, etc.	2d
581	song-sparrow, etc.	2c
584	swamp-sparrow	2d
585	fox-sparrow	2a
598	indigo-bunting	2a
604	dick-cissel	3
605	lark-bunting	2a
612	cliff-swallow, etc.	2d
613	barn-swallow, etc.	2d
619	cedar-waxwing	2d
635	Bahama honey-creeper	1a
636	black-and-white warbler	3
653	mangrove-warbler, etc.	1b
669	hermit-warbler	2c, 2a
681	Maryland yellowthroat, etc.	4
698	meadow-pipit	2d
702	sage-thrasher	2d
703	mocking-bird	2c
713	cactus-wren	2d
717a	cañon-wren	2d
724	short-billed marsh-wren, etc.	3, 2d
738	mountain-chickadee	2d
759	dwarf hermit-thrush, etc.	2a, 2c
768	mountain-bluebird	2d, 4