

Comments on the thirty-seventh supplement to the *Check-list of North American Birds*



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Barn Owl (formerly Common Barn-Owl) being mobbed by crows. Photograph/ Arthur Morris/VIREO/m17/1/029.

... more changes to your life list, and mine

THE 37TH SUPPLEMENT TO THE American Ornithologists Union *Check-list of North American Birds* appeared in the July 1989 issue of *The Auk*. It contains changes that will affect nearly everyone's bird lists, but none of these changes will reduce the number of species on a list. The supplement includes six species new to the *Check-list* area and three others already on the A.O.U. *Check-list* are assigned A.O.U. numbers. Five new species are added because of taxonomic revision, and the name of a sixth is changed because of a split involving an extralimital species, four are moved or relegated to the "Hypothetical List," and the scientific and/or English names of 17 others are changed for a variety of reasons. In *Check-list* sequence, here are the changes (for brevity I will refer to the A.O.U.'s Committee on Classification and Nomenclature as "the A.O.U."):

The Southern Fulmar (*Fulmarus*

glacialoides) (included on a single, old record from "Mexico") is moved from the Main List to the "Hypothetical List" (Appendix B) because there is no way to verify the locality data for any North American reports, and there is a significant possibility all were mislabeled or misidentified.

The Tahiti Petrel (*Pterodroma rostrata*), Phoenix Petrel (*Pterodroma alba*), and Solander's Petrel (*Pterodroma solandri*) are moved from the "unsubstantiated list" (Appendix A) to the "Hypothetical List" (Appendix B). One or both of the first two species has been seen in Hawaiian waters but no reports are identifiable to species. Solander's Petrels have been reported from Hawaii and off the Pacific coast of the United States, but a recent Hawaiian specimen and many Pacific coast sightings all have proven to be Murphy's Petrels (*Pterodroma ultima*); the identity of a possible Solander's Petrel photographed off Califor-

nia is still being evaluated.

Some authorities treat the two subspecies of White-necked Petrel (*Pterodroma externa*), as separate species. Both have occurred in Hawaiian waters. The A.O.U. continues to recognize a single species but changes the English name of the *externa* subspecies group to Mas Atierra Petrel to make the English name Juan Fernandez Petrel available for *Pterodroma defilippiana*, which is added to the "Hypothetical List" (Appendix B) because of a dubious sight report from Hawaii. To my knowledge, there is no evidence that *P. defilippiana* ranges outside the Humboldt Current, but the similar Cook's Petrel has been reported off Alaska, California, Hawaii, and Mexico.

The Stejneger's Petrel (*Pterodroma longirostris*), is moved from Appendix A to the Main List and assigned A.O.U. number 100.3 based on a specimen found dead in Hawaii. The

species has been collected 160 miles off California and has been seen closer to shore on at least one occasion.

The English name of *Oceanodroma tristrami* is changed to Tristram's Storm-Petrel from Sooty Storm-Petrel. The latter name should be used by those who treat this form as a subspecies of *O. markhami* and for indeterminate observations.

The scientific name of the Northern Gannet becomes *Morus bassanus*, based on extensive morphological evidence.

The scientific name of the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron becomes *Nyctanassa violacea*, based on both morphological and biochemical traits.

The scientific name of the Green Sandpiper should be corrected to *Tringa ochropus*.

The Black-tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*), is added to the *Check-list* following the Band-tailed Gull and is assigned A.O.U. number 54.1, based on substantiated records from Alaska. The origin of a specimen from southern California is still being debated.

The Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), is added to the *Check-list* and is assigned A.O.U. number 315.4, based on populations introduced into the Bahamas and spreading into Florida.

The scientific name of the Gray-chested Dove should be corrected to *Leptotila cassini*.

The Cuban Macaw (*Ara cubensis*) is recognized as a species separate from the Hispaniolan Macaw (*Ara tricolor*). Alas for birders, the latter was extinct by 1820 and the Cuban Macaws were last reported in 1864.

The Pearly-breasted Cuckoo (*Coccyzus julieni*), is added to the *Check-list* after the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, based on a specimen from the Lesser Antilles long misidentified as a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. This species is listed as *Coccyzus euleri* in most books on South American birds, but that scientific name is antedated and supplanted by the specific epithet *julieni*.

The English name of *Tyto alba* is changed to Barn Owl to bring it into accord with international usage. The English name of *Tyto glaucops* is changed to Ashy-faced Owl and the English group-name "Barn-Owl" no longer is recognized, which implies that corresponding changes should be made to the names of several other

Tyto species which sometimes are called "Barn-Owls." This change will also adversely affect the four-letter banding code names used by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and several other agencies, because it produces a collision with the code name for Barred Owl. Presumably these code names will revert to BAOW for Barn Owl and BDOW for Barred Owl, as they were prior to publication of the 6th edition of the A.O.U. *Check-list*.

The Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*), is assigned A.O.U. number 367.1, based on a record from Texas.

The English name of *Surnia ulula* is changed to Northern Hawk Owl (no hyphen) as there is no group of "Hawk-Owls."

The English name of *Nyctidromus albicollis* is changed (back) to Pauraque, as the modified "Common" is no longer needed due to the name change of *Siphonorhis americana* to Jamaican Poorwill and of *Siphonorhis brewsteri* to Least Poorwill. The latter changes were made to reflect better the taxonomic affinity (and vocalizations) of the genus *Siphonorhis*.

The Ruby-topaz Hummingbird (*Chrysolampis mosquitos*), is moved from Appendix A to the Main List, based on substantiated records.

Brace's Emerald (*Chlorostilbon bracei*), is recognized as a species distinct from the Cuban Emerald (*Chlorostilbon ricordii*). Only a single specimen of Brace's Emerald taken in 1877 on New Providence Island in the Bahamas and two subfossil wing bones are known, and the species probably is extinct. A technical description of this form may be found in *The Auk* 104(2):296-302; 1987. Cuban Emeralds occur in the Bahamas on Grand Bahama, Abaco, and Andros Islands. Any emerald hummingbird from New Providence or other nearby islands outside the range of Cuban Emerald should be observed and described carefully, photographed if possible, and reported in the ornithological literature, but collecting should be deferred until a viable population is discovered.

The English name of *Lochimias nematura* is changed to Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper. I applaud such changes, because use of the generic name as an English name (except when the taxonomic affinities of a bird are uncertain) really evades the

job of providing formal English names for birds.

The Greenish Elaenia (*Myiopagis viridicata*), is assigned A.O.U. number 471.1, based on a record from Texas.

The Western Flycatcher is split into two species, the Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) (A.O.U. number 464.1) and the Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*), (A.O.U. number 464) based on research primarily by Ned K. Johnson and his co-workers. A review of this research may be found in *Birding* 19(5):26-27; 1987. The new English names were adopted after much arduous discussion by the A.O.U. *Check-list* committee. Cordilleran comes from Spanish and technically the double-'l' should be pronounced as a 'y' but the word has been Anglicized (in geology) and "kor-dil'-ler-an" is an acceptable pronunciation. Pacific-slope Flycatchers nest west of the crest of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada from southern Alaska south into Baja California, and Cordilleran Flycatchers nest from the Great Basin and the Rocky Mountains of southwestern Canada south into south-central Mexico. Their breeding ranges barely overlap in northeastern California and perhaps in adjacent Oregon. The distribution of migrants is poorly reported but both occur in Nevada and Arizona, at least. Not enough wintering birds have been taken north of Mexico to establish which occasionally appears on Christmas Bird Counts. Field marks for silent birds are unknown if they exist at all, and the slight differences in size and color may be outweighed by age and sex differences and through plumage wear. The two differ in vocalizations much as do the Alder and Willow flycatchers, but I know of no recording birders can use to compare the repertoires of these species directly (both are in the *Field Guide to Western Bird Songs*, but only as noncomparable calls). It probably will be best to use the name Western Flycatcher for nonbreeding birds for some time to come.

The California Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila californica*) (A.O.U. number 753) is recognized as a species separate from Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila melanura*), based on research by Jon Atwood and published as A.O.U. Monograph No 42. North of

Mexico, the California Gnatcatcher is the gray-bellied "California race" illustrated in most recent field guides, but birds from southern Baja California are less distinct and some females are separable only by vocalizations and range. The ranges of these species meet and narrowly overlap at several localities from southern California (formerly) to northeastern Baja California. In the contact zone, the two differ in all vocalizations and in habitat preference, California Gnatcatchers preferring denser, more mesic brush than Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, and never hybridize. The main reason these two were not split when the sixth edition of the A.O.U. *Check-list* was

rus is changed to Eyebrowed Thrush because it has eyebrows, not brows that are eyes.

The Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*) is removed from the *Check-list* and replaced by American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*), as a result of a taxonomic split. Soviet ornithologists have discovered that these two pipits overlap in southern Transbaicalia without evidence of interbreeding. In the overlap zone the two prefer slightly different habitats. *Anthus rubescens* ranges into central Siberia and northern China, but is hardly the first species in the *Check-list* whose English name is not fully descriptive of its range (cf. Tennessee and Cape May warblers), and

Abert's Towhee, and this is reflected in their new status. Both towhees are regularly illustrated in field guides, and a more comprehensive treatment of their field marks may be found in *Birding* 20(3):129-136, 1989.

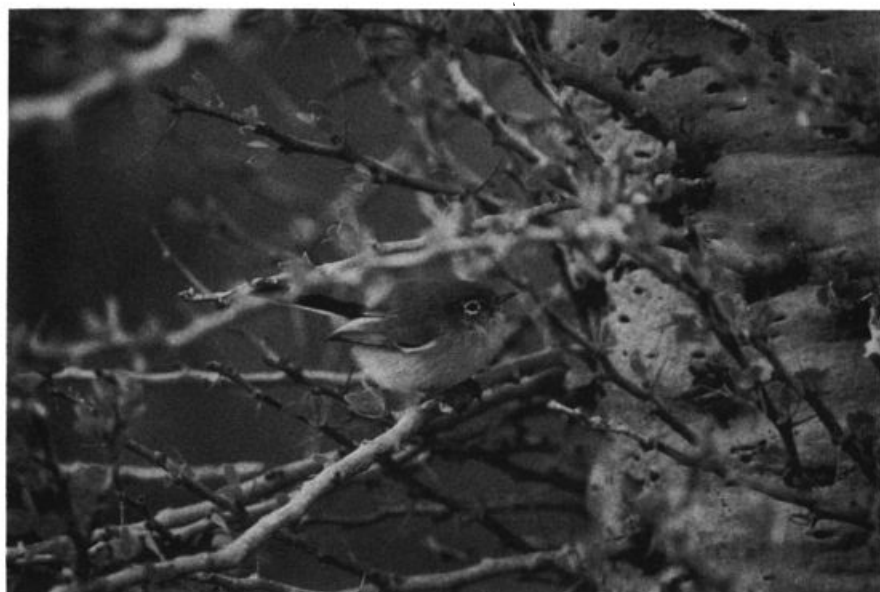
The Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*), is added to the *Check-list* based on a specimen from Alaska and is assigned A.O.U. number 535.6.

The English name of *Caryothraustes canadensis* is changed to Yellow-green Grosbeak.

The Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*), is assigned A.O.U. number 496.1, based on records from southern Florida.

The A.O.U. *Check-list* committee works in close cooperation with the A.B.A. Checklist Committee and with local checklist committees when considering new additions to the A.O.U. *Check-list*. However, this can delay the A.O.U.'s action on many records, when local checklist committees act slowly but thoroughly. For this reason, a number of well-publicized reports of species new to the A.O.U. *Check-list* area that have been obtained during the past five or so years are still under consideration by the A.O.U. One such record, Cox's Sandpiper (*Calidris paramelanotos*), poses a special problem because the putative species is so poorly known (only two specimens and a few photographs and sightings from Australia, and a juvenile bird from Massachusetts have been referred to it). The A.O.U. *Check-list* committee has decided to defer formal treatment of this bird until its status as a species is confirmed by the discovery of more specimens (and especially a breeding population, presumably in Siberia) and until it can be established that the Massachusetts bird was a member of this species and not a similar-appearing hybrid. Any evidence concerning these records or other additions or significant (distributional records of species already on the main *Check-list* usually are not considered to be significant by the A.O.U.) corrections to the A.O.U. *Check-list* should be sent to Burt L. Monroe, Jr., Department of Biology, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292.

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Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila melanura*). Photograph/Dale and Marian Zimmerman/VIREO/z01/20/047.

published is that the key study had not been published. A fine account of the field marks of these two gnatcatchers (as well as Blue-gray and Black-capped Gnatcatcher) appears in *Birding* 19(1):17-30; 1987.

The English name of *Muscicapa dauurica* is changed to Asian Brown Flycatcher to bring it into conformity with the rest of the world. The former English name adopted by the A.O.U. is the only name that has ever been used for the South American species *Empidonax griseipectus*, so this change also resolves an unfortunate duplication of formal English names in world checklists.

The English name of *Turdus obscu-*

is more compact than the name "Buff-bellied Pipit" proposed by European ornithologists (who I hope will follow the A.O.U.'s decision).

The Brown Towhee is split into two species—the California Towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*) (A.O.U. number 591.1) and the Canyon Towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*). The two do not occur together anywhere, but plumage differences (which, as in California/Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, are less distinct in southern Baja California) and vocal differences have been long known. A recent analysis of genetic differences by Robert Zink, reviewed in *Birding* 19(5):27-28, 1987; shows the two to be nearly as distinct as either is from