

# THE THIRTY-NINTH SUPPLEMENT TO THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION CHECK-LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

by Paul A. DeBenedictis

The July 1993 issue of *The Auk* will contain the 39th Supplement to the A.O.U. Check-list. It is the last expected supplement to the 6th Edition, which should be supplanted by a 7th Edition in 1994. The majority of changes in this supplement affect birds restricted to Middle America. The changes fall into two broad categories, nomenclatural/taxonomic and distributional. In the summary that follows, the number in square brackets after each new species' scientific name is its A.O.U. number.

**White-chinned Petrel** (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*) is added to Appendix B (the A.O.U.'s "hypothetical list") based on a bird, originally identified as a Sooty Shearwater, captured and photographed in Texas. This is the first report of the species from the Northern Hemisphere, and the possibility that it may have arrived ship-assisted cannot be completely excluded. It probably will require additional records of birds found at sea in our area to settle the question.

The English name of *Procellaria*

*parkinsoni* becomes **Parkinson's Petrel**, to agree with general usage in Australasia. Incidentally, this is a bird to seek in warm waters off southern California, where it most likely would be found feeding on fish driven to the surface by schools of (spinner) dolphins.

**Himalayan Snowcock** (*Tetraogallus himalayensis*) [2143.] is added based on a population introduced and apparently established in the Ruby Mountains of Nevada. This Asian species is illustrated in the National Geographic Society *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

The English name of *Ardea cocoi* is changed to **Cocoi Heron**, to agree with general usage in South America. The name formerly used for it is often also applied to an Australasian species, now called generally Pacific Heron (*Ardea pacifica*), so this change minimizes possible confusion as to what heron is meant.

**Green-backed Heron** is split into **Green Heron** (*Butorides virescens*) [201.1] and **Striated Heron** (*Butorides*

*striatus*) [1014.1], which barely enters the A.O.U. Check-list area in Panama and as a vagrant to Costa Rica and Bermuda. These forms were combined following a comprehensive review of the genus by Robert Payne (*Bull. British Ornithological Club* 94:81-88;1974), who thought these forms intergraded in Panama. Burt L. Monroe, Jr. and M. Ralph Browning (*Bull. British Ornithological Club* 112:81-85;1992) re-examined the specimens that Payne claimed to form an intergrading series of specimens, and they decided that the series divided rather cleanly into gray-necked birds (some with varyingly intense washes of brown) and rufous-necked birds (some with varyingly intense washes of gray). All birds taken in the nesting season from western Panama north are rufous-necked birds and all taken from central Panama south are gray-necked birds. The few specimens that had the wrong neck color for the area from which they were taken all were collected in the non-breeding season, and appear to be wandering or wintering birds. There is no evidence of hybridization where the two contact in Panama, and no mixed pair has ever been found. Apparently the same holds in the Lesser Antilles, where gray-necked birds in Trinidad abruptly give way to rufous-necked birds on Tobago and elsewhere in the Antilles and Caribbean.

The English name of *Agamia agami* is changed to the shorter **Agami Heron**, to agree with general usage in Latin America.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** is moved from the main list to Appendix B, because the natural origin of all North American reports, several of which are documented by photographs, is open to question.

**Hawaiian Goose** is transferred to the genus *Branta*, in which its closest relative appears to be Canada Goose, based on morphological considerations and on studies of its biochemical genetics. Its scientific name becomes *Branta sandvicensis*

**Orinoco Goose** (*Neochen jubata*) is added to Appendix B. I am not familiar with the report.

**Rufous-fronted Wood-Quail** is replaced by **Black-eared Wood-Quail** (*Odontophorus melanotis*) [1068.1] as the result of a taxonomic split. The former species does not enter the A.O.U. Check-list area. These forms approach each other's range closely near the Panama-Colombia border without signs of intergradation, but apparently are not known actually to overlap ranges.

**Black-shouldered Kite** is replaced by **White-tailed Kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) [328.], because of a taxonomic split from a species that is confined to the Old World. All but one Australian form of *Elanus* kite were combined into a single species by several prominent ornithologists during the period 1960-1980, because they are generally similar in appearance and do not overlap in distribution. William S. Clark and Richard C. Banks (*Wilson Bulletin* 104:571-579;1992) noted that the American forms differ markedly from all other kites of this complex in their proportionally longer tail (longer instead of shorter than the wing tips in perched birds), apparently correlated with their habitual hunting by active hovering. The Old World forms mostly hunt from perches and hover infrequently. There are a number of other less conspicuous behavioral differences, and they differ in a number of other size and coloration characteristics as well.

**Red-backed Hawk** (*Buteo polysonma*) is added to Appendix B based on a bird that nested with a Swainson's Hawk in Colorado during at least three successive summers. I have seen this species, which is thought not to be migratory, flown by falconers in New York State, but the actual origin of the Colorado bird probably never will be determined.

**Crested Caracara** gets a new scientific name, *Caracara plancus*, for purely nomenclatural reasons.

**Hawaiian Coot** (*Fulica alai*) [220.1]

is split from American Coot and should be listed before the latter species in checklists. Douglas Pratt reviewed the status of both forms in Hawaii, and concluded that they should be treated as separate species, because they are as different as are other coot species, even though they don't actually overlap in nesting distribution.

**Lesser Golden-Plover** is split into two species, **American Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis dominica*) [272.] and **Pacific Golden-Plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*) [272.1]. There have been suggestions that these forms are separate species since the 1950s, but the first strong support for this idea was a report by Peter G. Connors (*Auk* 100:607-620; 1983). He found that birds from extreme western Alaska fell into two groups, corresponding to *dominica* and *fulva*, with very little evidence of intermediate birds and considerable range overlap. In the Arctic, weather fluctuations can make a big difference as to what birds settle in a particular area, and it was not clear to what extent these two forms overlapped on a year-by-year basis and how they assorted when they did occur together. Still that evidence was sufficient to convince many ornithological organizations to adopt the change, but the A.O.U. Check-list Committee wanted (and expected) better evidence. Recently, Connors, Brian J. McCaffery, and John L. Maron (*Auk* 110:9-30;1993) reported that, in the overlap zone, the two forms mate assortively and are as interspecifically as they are intraspecifically territorial even though they prefer slightly different tundra types. Vocalizations of the two, especially the male's butterfly flight-song and nest alarm calls, are different. American Golden-Plover calls tend to be shorter and to have a more complex structure than do corresponding calls of Pacific Golden-Plovers. With practice the two can be distinguished by voice even in migration. Both species are highly migratory. American Golden-Plovers are

widespread in North and Middle America, while Pacific Golden-Plovers occur mostly along the Pacific Coast and in Hawaii. Both are famous long-distance vagrants. Field identification of these plovers is treated in the most recent edition of Peterson's *Field Guide to Western Birds* and especially well in *The Macmillan Guide to Bird Identification*.

**Yellow-legged Gull** (*Larus californicus*) [2254.] is added based on a specimen from Canada and birds photographed in Newfoundland and in the vicinity of the District of Columbia, of which the latter apparently returned in two successive winters. Full details of these records eventually will appear in the *Wilson Bulletin*. Field identification of the species, especially in immature plumages, is still being worked out by European experts. It was frequently treated as a subspecies of Herring Gull (which it follows in checklist sequence), but mixed colonies (also with Lesser Black-backed Gull) are now known in France.

**European Turtle-Dove** (*Streptopelia turtur*) [2289.] is added based on a bird photographed in Florida. This is sure to be a controversial report unless additional records of this migratory species are obtained.

The English name of *Forpus cyanopygius* is changed back to the traditional name **Mexican Parrotlet**.

**Crowned Woodnymph** is split into three species, **Mexican Woodnymph** (*Thalurania ridgwayi*) [1271.], **Violet-crowned Woodnymph** (*Thalurania colombica*) [1271.1] and **Green-crowned Woodnymph** (*Thalurania fannyi*) [1271.2], none of which are known to occur together. The Mexican Woodnymph is confined to humid forests of west central Mexico, and differs from the other two in size and in its less deeply forked tail as well as coloration; it is illustrated in Peterson and Chalif's *Field Guide to Mexican Birds*, and in a recent review of the Middle American forms by Patricia Escalante-Pleigo and A. Town-

send Peterson (*Wilson Bull.* 104: 205-219; 1992). The Violet-crowned Woodnymph inhabits the Caribbean slope of Middle America from eastern Guatemala south, both slopes of Costa Rica, western and central Panama, and disjunctly in interior western Colombia. Males have more deeply forked tails and bluish crowns. They are replaced by the Green-crowned Woodnymph, which is indeed green-crowned, in extreme eastern Panama and along the humid Pacific Choco region of Colombia. The only known instance in which two *Thalurania* species occur together involves species which also differ in crown color, and it is assumed that these forms would behave similarly if they lived together.

**White-fronted Swift** (*Cypseloides storeni*) [1220.1] is a newly discovered species from western Mexico. It is known from a total of five specimens from Jalisco, Michoacan, and Guerrero. It closely resembles the White-chinned Swift (*Cypseloides cryptus*), from which it differs in having a white forehead and in distribution. It is easily confused with Black Swift, and three of the specimens were found misidentified in series of that species. Evidently it is scarce everywhere, and its nesting grounds, distributional limits, and habits are unknown. In fact, it has never been identified free-flying in life. It should appear after White-spotted Swift (*Cypseloides cherriei*) in checklists.

**Chestnut-collared Swift** is transferred to the genus *Streptoprocne* and its scientific name becomes *Streptoprocne rutila*.

**Pearly-breasted Cuckoo**, a vagrant to the A.O.U. Check-list area, gets back its more familiar scientific name, *Coccyzus euleri*, thanks to a ruling of the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature.

**Barred Puffbird** is returned to the genus *Nystalus*, and its scientific name becomes *Nystalus radiatus*. **White-necked Puffbird**, **Black-breasted Puffbird**, and **Pied Puffbird**

are returned to the genus *Notharchus*. The scientific name of the first become *Notharchus macrorhynchos*, that of the second becomes *Notharchus pectoralis*, and that of the third becomes *Notharchus tectus*.

**Rufous-winged Woodpecker** (*Piculus simplex*) [1391.1], which ranges from Honduras to western Panama, is split from White-throated Woodpecker (*Piculus leucolaemus*), which occurs from central Panama into South America. The two differ in facial pattern, are reported to differ rather conspicuously in vocalizations (which have not been described well), and show no signs of intergradation where their ranges approach in Panama, although actual contact or overlap is unknown.

**White-ringed Flycatcher** is transferred to the genus *Conopias* based on anatomical and behavioral characteristics. Its scientific name becomes *Conopias albovitatus*.

**Blue-and-gold Tanager** is returned to the genus *Bangsia*, and its scientific name becomes *Bangsia arcaei*.

**Rosy Finch** is split into three species, **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*), **Black Rosy-Finch** (*Leucosticte atrata*) and **Brown-capped Rosy-Finch** (*Leucosticte australis*), primarily to correct an "error" in the 6th edition of the A.O.U. Check-list. The policy of the A.O.U. Check-list Committee is never to adopt a taxonomic change until the details have been published, and no strong argument for lumping these species with the Asiatic *Leucosticte arctoa* has ever been published. Field characteristics of these finches are treated in all field guides covering the birds of western North America.

The formal English names of four Hawaiian honeycreepers are changed from names which actually were in English to their respective native Hawaiian names: *Oreomystis bairdi* becomes **Akikiki**, *Paroreomyza montana* becomes **Mau Alauahio**, *Paroreomyza flammea* becomes **Kakawahie**, and *Paroreomyza maculata* be-

comes **Oahu Alauahio**.

The A.O.U. Check-list Committee has made some preliminary decisions that will affect the sequence of families of birds in checklists, but those changes won't become official until the new A.O.U. Check-list is published next year. And as new taxonomic revisions appear, the possibility of other changes to the A.O.U. Check-list is ever present. *American Birds* and the American Birding Association's Checklist Committee as a matter of policy adopt taxonomic and nomenclatural changes which the A.O.U. has adopted, but the latter group evaluates distributional records independently; supplements to their checklist appear annually in *Birding*.

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