

# EDITORS' NOTEBOOK

## The Forty-fifth Supplement

By now, most readers have heard that the American Ornithologists' Union's Check-list Committee has published the forty-fifth Supplement to the A.O.U. Check-list. There are numerous changes to the Check-list in the new document, many being minor updates of scientific names in order to make the (linguistic) gender of species match that of genus. As is typically the case, the changes that interest most field observers are the additions to the list and the "lumps" and "splits." The new additions to the list include Great-winged Petrel, Greater Sand-Plover, Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, and Spotted Flycatcher. Cuban Pewee is officially added as a vagrant to the United States. (Readers will recognize most of these names from past articles in this journal!) There were no species lumped, and only a few of the splits pertain to species regular in the United States and Canada, those being of Canada Goose and Yellow Wagtail. Caribbean observers will be interested to see that Gray-fronted Quail-Dove has been split, while another taxonomic rearrangement means that Panama's Pygmy Antwren is now called Moustached Antwren.

Birders have long known that there are two "size classes" of Canada Goose, and anyone who has seen one of the small forms next to one of the large forms probably has wondered why these two incredibly different beasts were considered a single species. The similarity in plumage but dissimilarity in size mirrors the situation, for instance, in Ross's and Snow Goose, or in Lesser and Greater White-fronted Geese, which have long been considered separate species. The smaller taxa of Canada Goose are now known as Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*); the large ones are still known as Canada Goose (*B. canadensis*). Ornithologists have been aware that, in addition to differences in size, these two groups differ in their breeding habitat (Cackling breeds largely in tundra), migration routes, wintering areas, voice, and other characters. However, a new set of data has emerged from a series of papers that focuses on molecular

(genetic) attributes of the genus *Branta*. Not only are Cackling Geese clearly separable as a different and old lineage from Canada Goose—it also appears that the closest relative of Cackling Goose is actually Barnacle Goose (*B. leucopsis*)! The radiation of Hawaiian geese, of which the only remaining member is the Nene (*B. sandvicensis*), is an offshoot of the Canada Goose (in the strict sense) lineage.

Two issues emerge from this reorganization that may concern birders. First, "Cackling Goose" is a name that has been traditionally used to refer only to the subspecies *minima*, and so using this name for the newly separated species—which includes *minima*, *leucopareia*, *taverneri*, *asiatica*, and *hutchinsii*—is bound to cause some confusion. Perhaps a new name ("Tundra Goose"?) should have been considered for the small taxa. Also a complicated matter, two taxa that have been thought difficult to tell apart and that have been considered intermediate between the large and small Canada geese—Lesser (*parvipes*) and Taverner's (*taverneri*)—are placed in different species: *taverneri* is assigned to Cackling Goose, while *parvipes* becomes part of Canada Goose. The genetic distinction between these two taxa, however, is unambiguous. The confusion between *taverneri* and *parvipes* appears to have arisen for several reasons: 1) observers have confused the two on the wintering grounds; 2) there has long circulated an unsubstantiated notion that there is a cline (or zone of intergradation) between large and small Canada Goose taxa in Alaska and the Yukon; and 3) some literature has incorrectly listed Taverner's as a breeder in the interior of Alaska rather than on the north coast of Alaska. Now that Cackling Goose has been split from Canada Goose, much work lies ahead for committees to sort out errors in the older literature and archived records—and to help clarify the field identification of these species, still a challenge in many cases.

The other three splits are likely to have less impact on our readers. If you have seen the Yellow Wagtails that breed in Alaska and the Yukon, then you have

seen the Eastern Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla tschutschensis*). The systematics of the Yellow Wagtail complex are quite involved, but several lines of data, including genetics, argue for this split from the Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*). There may well be more splits within the other Yellow Wagtail taxa in time, and records from Newfoundland and from Alert, Nunavut should be reviewed as possible examples of Yellow Wagtails (in the new sense) in North America. Another split, of White-fronted Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon leucometopia* of Hispaniola) from the Gray-fronted Quail-Dove (*G. caniceps* of Cuba), furthers the splitting trend in the systematics of West Indian fauna. Finally, the Pygmy Antwren complex (*Myrmotherula brachyura*) has been reorganized: the species found from Panama to Ecuador (west of the Andes) is now known as Moustached Antwren (*M. ignota*).

The Supplement makes several English name changes. One breeder in this journal's area of coverage, Red-vented Woodpecker (*Melanerpes pygmaeus*), is now sensibly known as Yucatan Woodpecker, a name already in wide use. Those who bird the Bering Sea Islands in spring (and anyone reading the Alaska spring report in this issue) will want to take note that Siberian Flycatcher (*Muscicapa sibirica*) is now called Dark-sided Flycatcher, and that its relative, Gray-spotted Flycatcher (*M. griseisticta*), is now known as Gray-streaked Flycatcher. Another vagrant or rare visitor to the A.O.U. Area, the bird we once fondly called Mongolian Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*) is now known by the more pedestrian name of Lesser Sand-Plover (similar to the name used in Eurasia, but with the addition of a hyphen). Ironically, there is the distinct possibility that Mongolian Plover (in the narrow sense: the easternmost breeding taxa of Lesser Sand-Plover) will be recognized as a species distinct from Lesser Sand-Plover—so we may be hearing Mongolian Plover (Mongolian Sand-Plover?) again some time in the future. All these gymnastics to standardize the English names of birds do make one wonder why we rearrange them so often, when the scientific names (if not the taxonomic rank-

ings!) are already relatively well standardized around the English-speaking world.

—Alvaro Jaramillo

### Moves

We have, as ever, new peregrinations and colonizations to report. Colorado & Wyoming regional editor Chris Wood has migrated to the Midwest and can now be contacted at:

**Christopher L. Wood**  
1301 Brian Place #3  
Urbana, Illinois 61802  
(clw@insightbb.com)

He will continue to write the regional report with Doug Faulkner. David Trochlell, longtime regional editor for the Idaho–Western Montana region, is moving to Oregon. The new regional editor for that region will be Harry Krueger, contactable at:

**J. Harry Krueger**  
5107 West Ponder Street  
Boise, Idaho 83705  
(hkrueger@cableone.net)

David will continue to edit with Harry for a few seasons, so please send sightings to both regional editors for the time being.

For the fall season only, seasonal regional editor Steve Kelling will pass his duties to Michael Powers, also at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Mike can be contacted at:

**Michael Powers**  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850  
(mep42@cornell.edu)

Finally, for the spring season only, seasonal regional editor Roger McNeill will be moving to New Zealand; we will announce the new spring editor for the Iowa & Missouri region in the next issue. Thanks to Steve and Roger for their hard work in their respective regions.

### Cozumel Thrasher's return

We were delighted to see that the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) proclaimed this spring at a major joint press conference with Conservation International in Mexico City that the Cozumel Thrasher was in fact still hanging on (*Bird Calls* 8 [2]: 1). On hearing the good news, we assumed that our reports of the species

from 1998 and 2001 in this journal—in the Mexico regional report (*N.A.B.* 56: 114)—had provided the impetus for the search, though we were surprised to read in the ABC press release that the species had not been reported in “ten years.” When we contacted ABC to let them know of persistent records from Cozumel, we learned that the organization was unaware of the persistent records of the species. How much more timely it might have been, for the thrasher's sake, if we had managed to get out the word of the thrasher's continued existence sooner! The recovery project might have begun years ago.

What is the lesson of this missed opportunity to be of help to the professional ornithologists and bird conservationists of North America? We started by sending a complimentary subscription to the ABC, of course, and we have begun to assemble a short list of organizations that might also benefit from the view this journal provides on basic bird distribution, a field that has fallen out of favor in much of the academic world, for understandable reasons. We hope that subscribers to this journal can help us by encouraging local, regional, and university libraries to restart their *North American Birds* subscriptions—many of which have lapsed owing to widespread budget cuts. Bird clubs, conservation groups, and bird observatories might also consider subscribing on behalf of the officers or directors, who will want to keep abreast of changes in bird distribution. We cannot, after all, have much impact in the world of bird conservation if we're not read by people charged with conserving North America's birdlife!

—Edward S. Brinkley

### Errata

In the paper by Paul W. Sykes et al. on the first Mangrove Swallow for the United States (*N.A.B.* 58: 4–11), a citation was inadvertently omitted on page 11 (Gill, F. B. 1990. *Ornithology*. Freeman, New York), and one reference on page 9 for Howell and Webb (1995) contained a typographic error in the date of publication. Mary Gustafson points out that the Lark Sparrow depicted in *N.A.B.* 58: 45 represented the second, not first, photographic record for Delaware. Phil Davis notes that the Maryland Bird Records Committee continues to deliberate on state specimens of Western Wood-Pewee from 1961 and 1967 (*contra* *N.A.B.* 58: 57). 🐦

## STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THE REGIONAL REPORTS

*	specimen collected
+	bird(s) seen through end of period
†	written details on file
A.F.B.	Air Force Base
acc.	accepted by records committee
A.R.C.	Avian Records Committee
b.	banded
B.B.S.	Breeding Bird Survey
B.O.	Bird Observatory
B.R.C.	Bird Records Committee
C.A.	Conservation Area
C.B.C.	Christmas Bird Count
C.P.	County Park
cm	centimeter(s)
Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
G.C.	Golf Course
G.P.	Game Preserve
Hwy.	Highway
I. (Is.)	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
Jct.	Junction
juv. (juvs.)	juvenile [plumage]; juvenile(s)
km	kilometer(s)
L	Lake
mm	millimeter(s)
m.ob.	many (or multiple) observers
Mt. (Mts.)	Mount/Mountain (Mountains)
N.A.	Nature Area, Natural Area
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.S.	National Seashore
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
p.a.	pending acceptance
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
ph.	photographed (by + initials)
Pt.	Point (not Port)
R.	River
R.A.	Recreation(al) Area
R.B.A.	Rare Bird Alert
R.P.	Regional Park
R.S.	Regional Shoreline
Res.	Reservoir
Rte.	Route
S.B.	State Beach
S.F.	State Forest
S.G.A.	State Game Area
S.P.	State Park
S.R.A.	State Recreation Area
S.R.	State Reserve
S.W.A.	State Wildlife Area
S.T.P.	Sewage Treatment Plant/Pond
subad. (subads.)	subadult(s)
Twp.	Township
v.r.	voice recording (by + initials)
vt.	videotape (by + initials)
W.A.	Wildlife Area
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area
W.T.P.	(Waste)water Treatment Plant/Pond