

Birding

Guidelines for Contributors

by Ted Floyd

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1 • Introduction

Birding is the bimonthly flagship publication of the American Birding Association, a non-profit organization that seeks to inspire all people to enjoy birding and to protect wild birds. Major areas of coverage in *Birding* include the following: advances in the identification of North American birds; monitoring, management, and conservation of North American birds; and taxonomic, nomenclatorial, and natural history studies with relevance to the study of wild populations of native and exotic birds in North America. Product reviews, photo quizzes, and birding essays round out the usual offerings in a typical issue of *Birding*.

Contributors to *Birding* include freelance writers, invited authors, and our own staff. *Birding* also publishes letters to the editor. All contributors are hereby advised that the editorial staff at *Birding* looks with special favor upon submissions that adhere closely to the “Guidelines for Contributors”. In particular, authors should give abundant care to the preparation of tables, figures and figure captions, and literature citations. Overlong or incomplete manuscripts shall be automatically rejected.

Please note that all queries and submissions must be electronic. *Birding* does not accept hard-copy submissions of feature articles, department columns, letters to the editor, or any other communications intended for publication. Please note further that *Birding* does not publish anonymous or previously published articles, that *Birding* is not responsible for the return of unsolicited materials, and that *Birding* does not accept articles or other work “on assignment”.

Feel free to make copies and distribute the “Guidelines for Contributors” as you wish, but be sure to acknowledge Ted Floyd, on behalf of the American Birding Association (ABA), as the sole and exclusive claimant to any and all intellectual property rights connected with or arising from the “Guidelines”. Use of the “Guidelines” for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited.

Note: No doubt, the “Guidelines for Contributors” will strike many users as cranky and inflexible. There’s really no other way for such a document to be. But please note that we here on the staff at *Birding* are light-hearted and good-natured. We are flexible. We are helpful. We are charming. We aim to please. And, seriously, folks: Don’t even think about submitting an article without first consulting the “Guidelines”—especially Chapters 5–8.

2 • The *Birding* Audience

Birding is not just another magazine for bird lovers. Neither, by the way, is *BirdWatcher's Digest*. And neither is *The Auk*. Anyhow, let's start out by looking at what *Birding* is not—so as to discourage submissions that have no chance of acceptance for publication. Then we'll take a look at what *Birding* really is—with the basic goal of encouraging contributions that do stand a good chance of acceptance.

- *Birding* is not *BirdWatcher's Digest*. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with *BirdWatcher's Digest*. It is a fine magazine. The articles are well-written and interesting, and all of us on the staff at *Birding* admire *BirdWatcher's Digest*. But *BirdWatcher's Digest* is a magazine for the casual birder, with major emphases on attracting and feeding birds, on basic bird biology and behavior, and on major birding destinations. If your article is about feeding chickadees, building bluebird boxes, or your favorite wildlife refuge, then it probably isn't for *Birding*. If it's about your family vacation to Tahiti (“Oh, yeah—we even went birdwatching one morning”), then it's definitely not for *Birding*.
- *Birding* is not *The Auk*. To be sure, *The Auk* is worthwhile and edifying. But it is a professional journal, whose fundamental objective is to communicate technical information within the scientific community. If your article has an “Abstract” or, worse, a “Materials and Methods” section, then it is not appropriate for *Birding*. Here's a more subtle point: If your prose resembles that which might appear in *The Auk*, then your submission is unsuitable for *Birding*. A related note: If you view your contribution as a *paper*, then it is not likely to be accepted for publication; but if you have conceived it as an *article*, then you're on the right track.
- *Birding* is not necessarily what *Birding* used to be. Or perhaps: *Birding* is not necessarily what you think *Birding* used to be. We are not interested in ponderous, pointlessly overanalyzed manifestos on bare-part variation in hybrid gulls. Note: We are keenly interested in bare-part variation in hybrid gulls. It's the “ponderous, pointlessly overanalyzed” part that we object to. Consider that Watson and Crick's 1953 description of DNA (*Nature* 171:737–738) was 873 words long. There is no excuse—and no chance of acceptance—for a submission to *Birding* that exceeds 4,500 words.
- *Birding* is a magazine for the serious birder. Serious about identification perhaps. Or serious about conservation. Or both. Or something else. Important: By ‘serious’ we emphatically do not mean ‘stern’ or ‘humorless’. Most of all, we do not mean ‘ponderous’ (see previous entry). Thus: *Birding* is a magazine for the reader who goes

birding for the purpose of having serious fun. Let's face it: Birding isn't rocket science, and it's not going to produce a cure for cancer. Birding is for fun. If you're the sort of person who doesn't smile at the sight of a tanager, who doesn't laugh at the antics of a mockingbird, who doesn't jump for joy at the discovery of a drake King Eider, then birding probably isn't for you. Certainly, *Birding* isn't for you.

- *Birding* is suitable for beginners and experts alike. Yes, beginners. Indeed, it is the beginning birder who is often the most excited, the most inquisitive, the most "serious". And it is the true expert who seeks new knowledge and new perspectives. A first-rate submission to *Birding* engages a broad audience by asking cutting-edge questions of fundamental relevance to the entire North American birding community. A top-caliber article in *Birding* appeals to any bright and curious reader, at any level of experience or expertise.
- *Birding* is provocative and influential. It is also persnickety and fun. Many of the central tenets of the modern birding scene were first given voice to on the pages of back issues *Birding*. Much of the groundwork for the future of birding has been laid out in recent issues of *Birding*. There have been some bumps along the way, to be sure, and some false starts. There have been some plain-and-simple dead ends. But the basic expectation of our readership is that *Birding* chart a course toward the future, and that we have fun and ask hard questions along the way.

3 • The Content of *Birding*

Birding is about birds, birders, and birding. And it's tempting to leave it at that. After all, we have published essays and short stories, *fantaisies* and fragments, poems and polemics, and of course treatises on the identification of everything from Abert's Towhee to Zeledonia. We do have our special foci here at *Birding*, though, and we also observe several taboos. We'll dwell mainly on our major areas of emphasis, and we'll treat briefly the matter of several topics that are basically off limits. We'll also touch on several gray-area subjects—certainly within bounds, but with certain caveats.

Major topics of interest to us here at *Birding* include the following:

- *Bird Identification*. In many people's eyes, *Birding* is the premier forum for the publication of significant new advances in the identification of North American birds. Many of our major feature articles concern bird identification, and our popular Photo Quiz always emphasizes identification. Please note that we prefer articles which present significant new information on bird identification. Also acceptable are articles that provide valuable perspective on or synthesis of current problems in identification.
- *Bird Conservation*. We birders have had a long and successful record of involvement in the cause of bird conservation—especially in the area of population monitoring. For example, we have played a major role in efforts such as Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Censuses (dating back to the early twentieth century), plus Breeding Bird Surveys and Breeding Bird Atlases (which originated in the second half of the twentieth century). Thus, we welcome articles that emphasize the roles of birders in avian monitoring and inventory.
- *Bird Biology*. A significant new direction for *Birding* has been articles on bird biology—especially behavior, ecology, evolution, and certain aspects of physiology. The key here is aspects of bird biology that are identifiable in the field. At the very least, an article on bird biology should shed light on phenomena that the ordinary birders can observe under ordinary circumstances. Even better is the sort of article that shows the active birder how to make actual contributions to our knowledge of bird biology.
- *Birder Culture*. We birders are members of a culture—a community—of like-minded people who share a common passion and who are divided at times by certain frustrations. A major objective, then, of the flagship publication of the American Birding Association is to give voice to the birding community; send us your letters,

essays, and feature articles on topics such as bird lists and bird tours, on birding ethics and birder mores, and more.

There are certain topics that are potentially appropriate for *Birding* but that are also problematic. (Note: ‘Problematic’ doesn’t mean what most speakers of modern American English imagine.) These include the following:

- *Product Reviews*. *Birding* is a prominent forum for published reviews of bird books, birding software, and optical equipment. So what’s the problem? There’s just one: the possibility of conflict of interest. Obviously, you shouldn’t review your own books or software, and neither should you review the products of your employer or sponsor. If you have questions, contact the appropriate department editor: Derek Lovitch, Tools of the Trade; Eric Salzman, Book Reviews. See Chapter 4 for contact information. Please note that many of our product reviews are by invitation only; there are cases, though, in which it might be appropriate to submit an unsolicited product review for consideration in *Birding*. Again, contact the appropriate department editor for guidance.

- *International Birding*. Articles that have nothing whatsoever to do with the ABA Area (defined as Canada, Greenland, St. Pierre et Miquelon, Alaska, and the Lower 48, plus offshore waters to 200 miles) are generally inappropriate for *Birding*. Conversely, we are very eager to consider articles that attempt to link international issues to “our” own ABA Area. Here are some examples of what might be excellent articles on international birding:
 - Site guides on or natural histories of places such as the Kamchatka Peninsula or northwestern Mexico; both of these regions are potential sources of vagrants to the ABA Area.

 - Articles on what “our” birds do when they’re not in the ABA Area; possibilities might include Bobolinks on their South American wintering grounds, Eurasian Wigeons on their palearctic breeding grounds, or Sooty Shearwaters on migration pretty much anywhere there’s open ocean.

 - Essays on the cross-cultural approach to birding; ideas that come to mind include listing in Japan vs. the United States, eco-tourism in Latin America vs. North America, or identification challenges in Europe vs. the ABA Area.

- *Birdfinding*. A prime function of the ABA is to encourage and assist members in the matter of finding birds, and *Birding* is often a suitable forum for the publication of birdfinding articles. But if your article is *strictly about where to find birds*, then it

probably should be published in our excellent members' newsletter, *Winging It*. And if your article is especially long and covers a fairly large region, then you might want to think about expanding it into a full-fledged ABA birdfinding guide. So what sorts of birdfinding articles are appropriate for *Birding*? Answer: anything that gives the visiting birder the "big picture" for a particular place or region. Birdfinding is a major piece of the puzzle, of course, but you should think about including information on local clubs and organizations, on important local conservation initiatives, and on other opportunities for birder involvement.

- *Bird Populations*. Articles that deal strictly with the distribution and abundance of North American Birds are probably more appropriate for the journal *North American Birds* (also published by the ABA) than they are for *Birding*. In many instances, major articles on identification, conservation, and biology *do* require some treatment of avian status and distribution. Such treatment should be included, to the extent that it is relevant to the major thrust of your article.

Needless to say, there is a fair amount of "gray area" between *Birding* and *North American Birds*, between *Birding* and *Winging It*, between appropriate vs. inappropriate international articles, between biased vs. objective product reviews, etc. If you have questions, then, by all means, you should get in touch with the editor or editors at one or more of the ABA's publications. There are, by the way, certain topics that are simply off-limits, here at *Birding* and presumably at any other ABA publication. These include the following:

- *Polemics against hunting*.
- *Apologia for falconry*.
- *Aviculture and "pet" birds*.
- *Environmental essays that have nothing whatsoever to do with birds, birding, or birders*.

Note that each issue of *Birding* explores in depth a particular theme or topic. For example, vol. 38 (2006) looked at the following: Grassland Birds (January/February 2006), Birding the Old World (March/April 2006), Splits and Lumps (May/June 2006), Topics in Conservation (July/August 2006), Topics in Identification (September/October 2006), and More Topics in Identification (November/December 2006). We cover a broad diversity of themes in *Birding*, and it is likely that any deserving article will find a home in the pages of *Birding* within three years (often much sooner) of submission. Within

broad limits, feature articles must match the theme of the issue in which they appear. Contributions to one of our department columns are not thus constrained, but thematically compliant material is welcome nonetheless. We have a heavy backlog of material in our department columns; expect publication to follow submission by two or more years.

Still not sure if your submission is appropriate for *Birding*? Why not pick up a recent issue and see for yourself what we're all about. If you do not have copies of *Birding* lying around the home or office, then check out our online archives of recent issues <aba.org/pubs/birding/archives/index.html>. Or simply contact the appropriate member of the editorial staff (see Chapter 4). One last thing: Even if you are 100% certain that your manuscript is 100% appropriate for *Birding*, you are nonetheless required to consult Chapters 5–8 before sending us anything.

4 • Proposals and Submissions

Recall that there are three types of contributors to *Birding* (Chapter 1), viz., freelancers, staff, and invited authors. If you are a staff writer or an invited contributor, then you can pretty much skip this chapter. But please do pick up again with Chapter 5—mandatory reading for all contributors.

Proposals to *Birding* should be short 'n' sweet. State clearly what you intend to write about, and keep the verbiage to fewer than 300 words.

We welcome unsolicited feature articles and letters to the editor, as well as unsolicited contributions to our “Sources”, “Dimensions”, and “Traditions” columns. Please send proposals to the following persons:

- Feature Articles, Ted Floyd <tedfloyd@aba.org>
- Letters to the Editor, Ted Floyd <tedfloyd@aba.org>
- Sources, Rick Wright <rwright@aba.org>
- Dimensions, Sheryl DeVore <sheryl.devore@comcast.net>
- Traditions, Paul J. Baicich <paul.baicich@verizon.net>

We run three columns that have tended in recent years toward invited contributions but that are not by any means closed to freelancers. If you think you have a good idea, please send a proposal to the relevant person from the list below:

- Book Reviews, Eric Salzman <esalzman@aba.org>
- Tools of the Trade, Derek Lovitch <columbarius33@yahoo.com>
- Photo Quiz, Christopher L. Wood <clw37@cornell.edu>

And several columns are pretty much restricted to staff or invited contributors. Contact information, just for the sake of completeness, is as follows:

- Editorial, Ted Floyd <tedfloyd@aba.org>
- Flight Path, Ted Floyd <tedfloyd@aba.org>
- News and Notes, Paul Hess <phess@salsgiver.com>

Note that acceptance of a proposal does not necessarily result in the eventual acceptance for publication of the proposed article. That is to say, *Birding* does not accept articles “on assignment”, a practice that is observed by many other periodical publications. Following acceptance of your proposal, send your completed article, via e-mail, to the appropriate editor. In case it is not obvious: ‘Completed’ means ‘completed’. Your submission should

include the entire body of the article, plus tables, references, figures, captions, and any other portions of the manuscript that you intend to have published. Incomplete manuscripts shall be automatically and unceremoniously rejected.

Ready to submit? Before doing so, please confirm the following:

- Your article is appropriate for *Birding* (Chapters 2 & 3).
- Your article is properly formatted (Chapter 5).
- Literature citations (Chapter 6), tables and sidebars (Chapter 7), and figures and captions (Chapter 8) are in good order.
- You have observed our general standards of style (Chapter 13) and our specific conventions of orthography (Chapter 14), and you have employed good grammar (Chapter 15) and diction (Chapter 16).

Finally ready to submit? We're getting there, but:

- Check your spelling. Not with a spellchecker, which has the annoying habit of querying, say, 'ffrench', a word that is well known to most readers of the ornithological literature. Recent issues of *Birding* have featured such words as 'Caithamer', 'O'odham', 'Quagga', 'wumizusume', and 'Xiphidiopicus'. Please make sure they're spelled correctly.
- Check your facts. Make sure that every bird is absolutely, positively correctly identified. Confirm spatio-temporal details such as date and location. Review any technical material. Does your article present material on Crassulacean Acid Metabolism, bioaccumulation of polychlorinated biphenyls, or ice-free isopleths?—to cite a few examples from a recent issue. Make sure it's right.

Are we there yet? Read Chapter 5 first.

5 • Formatting Your Article

By far the easiest way to approach the matter of formatting is to request from the Editor the *Birding* Document Template. Simply type your article into the template. It's that easy. And to make things even easier, here is a quick checklist of formatting *dos* and *don'ts*:

- Use Microsoft Word.
- Deactivate Microsoft Edit-Tracking, which creates all sorts of file-conversion problems for us.
- Set the top and bottom margins at one inch; set the right and left margins at 1.25 inches.
- Left-justify the manuscript throughout.
- Use the Times Roman 12-point “font” throughout (‘font’ is incorrect, but the battle has been lost).
- Double-space the manuscript throughout.
- Include a title for your article.
- Include your name and mailing address exactly as you would like for them to appear in the article.
- Include a short autobiography (50 words—no more, no less), written in the third person.
- Use 0.125-inch paragraph indents, except for section headers and in the Literature Cited section.
- Use 0.125-inch hanging indents in the Literature Cited section.
- Use boldface for, and do not indent, section headers.
- Use ‘◆ ◆ ◆’ to denote section breaks that are not indicated by a section header.
- Type only one space, not two, after periods, colons, and other forms of punctuation.
- Use formatting (italics, boldface, etc.) as necessary, but don't overdo it.
- Get rid of any and all footnotes, endnotes, running headers and footers, etc.
- Use ‘×’, not ‘x’ or ‘X’, to denote hybrids, e.g., ‘Mallard × Gadwall’.
- Use curly-quotes, not straight quotes, e.g., “Brewer’s Duck”, not "Brewer's Duck".
- Use hyphens (-), en-dashes (–), and em-dashes (—) correctly.
- Never, ever, use four-letter words (also known as banding codes).
- Always—well, almost always—comply with the nomenclature and linear sequence of the ABA *Checklist*.

For more detail, check out the rest of the *Guidelines*, especially Chapters 6–8 & 14.

6 • Literature Citations

Would you like to have \$100 automatically added to your honorarium? All you need to do is be the first person to submit a feature article with an error-free Literature Cited section. That's right—\$100 for nothing more than a little common courtesy and a little common sense. Let's take a look now at how to waltz off with some cold cash.

Nearly all literature citations fall into the following four categories: (1) journal articles; (2) books; (3) book chapters; and (4) websites. Here's how to format them:

- *Journal Articles.* For all citations of articles in journals and/or magazines, you must include all of the following: all of the authors' names, the year of publication, the title of the article, the title of the journal, the volume number of the journal, and the page numbers of the article. Here is an example of an acceptable literature citation for a journal or magazine article:

Brinkley, E.S., and B.J. Patteson. 1998. Gadfly petrels in the western North Atlantic. *Birding World* 11:341–354.

Please note the following: (1) there are no spaces between the author's initials; (2) the title of the article is capitalized as though it were an ordinary sentence; (3) the title of the journal is italicized, and it is capitalized as though it were a compound proper noun; (4) the volume number is followed immediately by a colon, which is followed immediately by the page numbers of the article; (5) the first and last page numbers of the article are separated by an en-dash; and (6) the citation is formatted as a 0.125-inch hanging indent.

- *Books.* Book citations are easy. Just supply the authors' names, the year of publication, the title of the book, the publisher, and the city of publication. Here is an example of an acceptable literature citation for a book:

Sharpe, R.S., W.R. Silcock, and J.G. Jorgensen. 2001. *Birds of Nebraska: Their Distribution and Temporal Occurrence*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Please note the following: (1) there are no spaces between the author's initials; (2) the title of the book is italicized, and it is capitalized as though it were a compound proper noun; (3) the name of the publisher is followed by the city (but not the state or country) in which the book was published; and (4) the citation is formatted as a 0.125-inch hanging indent.

- *Book Chapters*. Citations for individual chapters within edited volumes are a little trickier. In addition to all of the information that you need to provide for a book citation, you need to supply the name and author of the book chapter, plus the page numbers for the book chapter. Here is an example of an acceptable literature citation for a chapter in an edited volume:

de Kock, W.C., and C.T. Bowmer. 1993. Bioaccumulation, biological effects, and foodchain transfer of contaminants in the zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*), pp. 503–533 in: T.F. Nalepa and D.W. Schloesser, eds. *Zebra Mussels: Biology, Impacts, and Controls*. Lewis Publishers, Boca Raton.

Please note the following: (1) the chapter authors' names come first, with no spaces between their initials; (2) the title of the chapter is capitalized as though it were an ordinary sentence; (3) the page numbers for the chapter are preceded by the abbreviation 'pp.'; (4) the first and last page numbers of the chapter are separated by an en-dash; (5) the editors' names are preceded by the little word 'in' and a colon; (6) the editors' initials, like the chapter authors' initials, are not separated by spaces; (7) the title of the book is italicized, and it is capitalized as though it were a compound proper noun; (8) the name of the publisher is followed by the city (but not the state or country) in which the book was published; and (9) the citation is formatted as a 0.125-inch hanging indent.

Note that *Birds of North America* (“BNA”) accounts should be cited as book chapters, but without page numbers. Thus:

Falls, J.B., and J.G. Kopachena. 1994. White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), in: A. Poole and F. Gill, eds. *The Birds of North America*, no. 128. Academy of Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington.

Note further that the *BNA* series, which required more than 10 years to publish, was the work of multiple publishers and editorial teams. Therefore, if you are citing more than one entry from the *BNA* series, you shouldn't assume that you can copy and paste from one account to another.

- *Websites*. Cite the following: the name or names of the author(s); the date of “publication”, if known; the complete URL (Universal Resource Locator) except for the <http://> prefix; and the date on which you consulted the website. Here is an example of an acceptable website citation:

Szantyr, M. 2004. Juncos: What do we know?

<www.oceanwanderers.com/JuncoID2.html>. Website visited 5 August 2006.

Please note the following: (1) the URL is enclosed within pointy-brackets (“less-than” and “greater than” signs); (2) the URL is case-sensitive and should never be hyphenated or otherwise “broken” for considerations of typeflow; (3) the date on which you accessed the website (one word, by the way) includes the day, month, and year of your most recent visit thereto; and (4) the citation is formatted as a 0.125-inch hanging indent.

What about abbreviations, unpublished data, and non-English citations? Here’s what to do.

- *Abbreviations*. Do not abbreviate the names of journals and publishers. If the “author” of a publication is an organization, rather than a person or persons, you should write out the full name of the organization and its abbreviation. Check out the following:

National Geographic Society [NGS]. 1987, *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, second edition. National Geographic Society, Washington.

A special case involves the AOU *Check-list* and supplements thereto. Each edition (there have been seven thus far) of the *Check-list* is cited in just the same manner as the NGS *Field Guide*:

American Ornithologists’ Union [AOU]. 1998. *The A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds*, seventh edition. American Ornithologists’ Union, Washington.

(Not once, by the way, have we received a manuscript in which the seminal *Check-list* was properly cited. Not even from authors of the *Check-list* itself. Get this one right, and you will have the editorial staff of *Birding* dancing in the streets.)

Check-list supplements (there have been forty-seven thus far) are cited differently. In a nutshell, a *Check-list* supplement should be cited in exactly the same manner as an ordinary journal article. Thus:

Banks, R.C., C. Cicero, J.L. Dunn, A.W. Kratter, P.C. Rasmussen, J.V. Remsen, J.D. Rising, and D.F. Stotz. 2006. Forty-seventh supplement to the *American Ornithologists’ Union Check-list of North American Birds*. *Auk* 123:926–936.

- *Unpublished Data*. We're dealing here with material that cannot be found in public libraries or on the internet. Stuff such as:
 - *In press*. Should be used only for manuscripts that have been accepted for publication.
 - *In review*. Should be used sparingly, for manuscripts that have been submitted but not accepted for publication.
 - *In preparation*. Should not be used at all; just call it 'unpublished data'.
 - *Personal communication*. Should be used sparingly, and judiciously.
 - *Personal observation*. Should be used sparingly; after all, isn't it easier to write *I observed a Sora* than *A Sora was observed by me (personal observation)*?

Bottom line: Go easy on the citations of unpublished data. Do you really need them? Can they be incorporated into the text in some unobtrusive, unpretentious way? Let's look at two ways of handling the situation. First, the stilted, verbose way. You could produce a clunky sentence such as the following:

- As yet unpublished results point to non-random winter habitat selection by the different subspecies-groups of the Dark-eyed Junco (Dyolf in review).

Which would require a clunky citation such as the following:

- Dyolf, E.A. Winter habitat selection by Dark-eyed Juncos. In review.

Or you could deal with the matter in a more economical and more civilized manner, as follows:

- Current research by Edward A. Dyolf points to non-random habitat selection by the different subspecies-groups of the Dark-eyed Junco.

The sentence is shorter, it reads better, and it doesn't require an entry in the Literature Cited section.

- *Non-English Citations*. Nothing fancy here: Just keyboard them in directly, with no attempts at translation into English. The formatting should be the same as for English-language translations. Here's an example:

Stresemann, E., and V. Stresemann. 1966. Die Mauser der Vögel. *Journal für Ornithologie* 107:1–448.

The astute reader may question the capitalization of ‘Mauser’ and ‘Vögel’. In German, all nouns are capitalized, so we follow that convention in the citation. Which brings up the following three matters:

- *British English “translations”*. Don’t do it. Just leave it as is. Thus, ‘colonisation’, ‘colour’, etc. For an exception to this rule, check out the next entry.
- *Non-standard nomenclature, Part 1*. The British write ‘Grey-cheeked Thrush’ for *Catharus minimus*, but we write ‘Gray-cheeked Thrush’. Go with the “official” U. S. orthography; thus, ‘Gray-cheeked Thrush’. And in the American publication *BirdWatcher’s Digest*, it is ‘gray-cheeked thrush’. Again, go with the “official” version: Change it from ‘gray-cheeked thrush’ to ‘Gray-cheeked Thrush’.
- *Non-standard nomenclature, Part 2*. Do not “translate” an old or alternative name. Thus, ‘Olive-backed Thrush’ (an old name) does not become ‘Swainson’s Thrush’ (the current name). Also, ‘Arctic Skua’ (the current British name) stays as is; do not change it to ‘Parasitic Jaeger’ (the current American name).

We’ve been dealing thus far with the matter of the entries in the Literature Cited section. There’s also the matter of the citations themselves, in the main body of the text. It couldn’t be simpler: Within the main body of the text, you need only provide the authors’ last names and the year of publication. From various of the examples above, then, the text citations would read as follow:

Brinkley and Patteson (1998) –or– (Brinkley and Patteson 1998)

Sharpe et al. (2001) –or– (Sharpe et al. 2001)

de Kock and Bowmer (1993) –or– (de Kock and Bowmer 1993)

Szantyr (2004) –or– (Szantyr 2004)

NGS (1987) –or– (NGS 1987)

It ought to go without saying, but just in case:

- Anything that is cited in the text must appear in the Literature Cited section. Before submitting your article to *Birding*, make sure that all of your text citations are properly cross-referenced in the Literature Cited section.
- Conversely, authors often include references in the Literature Cited section that do not appear in the text—also a no-no. Anything that is referenced in the Literature Cited section must appear in the main body of the text (or accompanying tables, sidebars, and figure captions).

Occasionally, e.g., in book reviews or in letters to the editor, you will wish to include literature citations but not a Literature Cited section. That's fine, and we allow a fair bit of leeway in the matter—so long as the citations are short and unobtrusive. Here are some possibilities:

- ... in a 1998 article by E. S. Brinkley and B. J. Patteson (*Birding World* 11:341–354) ...
- ... in a 2001 book (*Birds of Nebraska*, University of Nebraska Press) by R. S. Sharpe and coauthors ...
- ... from W. C. de Kock and C. T. Bowmer's chapter in *Zebra Mussels* (Lewis Publishers, 1993), edited by T. F. Nalepa and D. W. Schloesser, ...
- ... in a 2004 online note by M. Szantyr <www.oceanwanderers.com/JuncoID2.html> ...
- ... as depicted in the second edition (1987) of the NGS *Field Guide* ...

One last thing. After you have drafted the Literature Cited section, please proofread it, and please check in particular for the following:

- Is everything properly formatted?
- In particular, are all references to the AOU *Check-list* and to the *BNA* series correctly formatted?
- Is everything spelled correctly?
- Are the entries in alphabetical order?
- Is there perfect concordance between the citations in the text and the entries in the Literature Cited section?

Now you can step forward and claim your one hundred dollars!

7 • Tables and Sidebars

First, the most important point: Tables and sidebars should be formatted like ordinary text. Do not use lines, boxes, goofy headers, and the like. Whatever you do, do not use the *Table* option in Microsoft Word to create a table or sidebar. Start off a table with the word 'Table' and a sidebar with the word 'Sidebar'. That's all. Delineate entries with hard-returns and tabs as necessary. If there are lines in your table, we will return the whole manuscript to you. It's that simple.

Now, a quasi-philosophical matter: What are the functions of tables and sidebars? As it turns out, they serve rather different purposes. (The reason that we're dealing with them together is because of their formatting similarities.) Let's take a look.

- The function of a *table* is to convey basic information more efficiently than would be possible in the main body of an article. The content of a table is closely allied with that of the main text. Indeed, a well-conceived table is so well integrated with the text that it is possible to read straight from the text to the table and then back into the text. Here are some examples of the sorts of material that might make for a handy table:
 - Status and distribution data, e.g., species, plumage, location, reference.
 - Comparison of plumage characters, e.g., breast, belly, flanks, vent.
 - Specs for close-focus binoculars, e.g., mass, magnification, color, price.
- The function of a *sidebar* is to present material that is ancillary to the main body of an article. The content of the sidebar presumably has some relevance to the main text, but it differs significantly in its focus or rhetoric. It is the sort of material that would be disruptive in the text but which stands well on its own. A few examples:
 - In an article on grouse displays, a sidebar on ethics and etiquette at leks.
 - In the same article, a sidebar on how to produce and interpret sonograms.
 - Also in the same article, a sidebar on terminology used in the text.

Now let's return to the matter of formatting. We'll deal first with tables, which are often rendered far more complex than they need to be. Then we'll deal more briefly with sidebars, which are blessedly next-to-impossible to over-format. Here are some tips on producing tables:

- Your table (or tables) should come at the very end of the article, after the Acknowledgments or Literature Cited section. Start the table on a new page.
- See if you can start your table with a very short title (≤ 5 words), capitalized and boldfaced. If you need more than five words, go for a complete sentence, without capital letters (except for the first word of the sentence) and not boldfaced.
- Indicate column headers, i.e., the x-axis, with boldface. But don't indicate row headers, i.e., the y-axis, with boldface; instead subsume them under a separate column header.
- In the main body of the article, provide a clear cross-reference to the table, e.g., "see Table" (if there is only one table), "see Table 1" (if there is more than one table).
- No footnotes, please.

Here is an example of a table as it should be formatted for submission to *Birding*:

Table 2. Differences Between Wood-Pewees.

Character	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Western Wood-Pewee
Overall color	brown-olive	brown-gray
Wing bars	relatively high-contrast; relatively broad	dull; low-contrast; narrow
Breast band	gray-olive; often broken in middle	grayish; often complete
etc.	etc.	etc.

(An aside to mathematically minded folks: Yes, a table really is a two-dimensional array of data. Here, X =species, Y =Character, and the ns are the $X \cdot Y$ entries in the table. We've given the matter some thought, and the present configuration seems to us to be the cleanest and clearest way of conveying fundamentally quantitative information in the fundamentally non-quantitative venue of a popular magazine.)

Now, a few words about sidebars:

- As with tables, start your sidebar (or sidebars) on a new page, at the end of the article.
- Dispense with the title and any other prefatory as quickly as possible, and get right into the main text of the sidebar.
- And as with tables, the main body of the text should include a cross-reference to the sidebar, and the sidebar should be free of any footnotes.

8 • Figures and Captions

We come now to the last of the major elements of an article for *Birding*—figures and their accompanying captions. What is a figure? Well, it's not a table or a sidebar, and it's not part of the main body of the text. So what's left over? Photographs and drawings, obviously. Graphs and maps are other examples of figures. Basically, a figure is any object that conveys information through some medium other than (but not necessarily exclusive of) words, numbers, or symbols.

Let's start off with some major points of overview:

- In many instances, you are not responsible for submitting all of the figures for your article. Rather, the task of rounding up some or all of the figures will fall to the Photo Editor, to the Mapmaker, or to some other member of our staff. In any event, you will work closely with the editorial staff in the matter of figure selection, captioning, and layout.
- Whereas tables and sidebars (and for that matter, the main text of the article) get completely reformatted for publication, figures do not. Instead, they go into the article as is. What this means is that your submissions of figures must be of camera-ready original files or high-quality reproductions thereof. More—much more—on the matter, in a bit.
- Figures should be relevant to the text of the article. If your figures are numbered (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, Fig. 3, etc.), then it is a requirement that each figure be cross-referenced to in the text of the article. Even if your figures are unnumbered, it is expected that they contribute directly to the usefulness of the article. *Birding* does not publish figures for the purpose of “window dressing”.
- All figures require captions. For photographs, you will need to provide us with the following:
 - *What*. For example, what species is depicted? How old is it? Male or Female? Write the caption in complete sentences.
 - *Where*. If the photograph was taken in the ABA Area, please supply the town and state or province. For photographs taken outside the ABA Area, supply the town and country.

- *When*. At the very least, give us the month and year. If you know the actual day on which the photograph was taken, that's great.
- *Who*. Who took the photograph? Unless advised to the contrary, our assumption is that the photographer holds the copyright to the photograph.
- For non-photographic figures (e.g., maps, graphs), you can skip *Where* and *When* but we still need to know *Who*. As with photographs, our assumption is that the copyright holder is the person who created the figure. Of course, you need *What*, too, and in complete sentences, please.

Now let's return to the matter of the actual figures themselves. We'll work our way from easy to hard.

- *Art*. This is easy. Just mail the original art to us. Take appropriate precautions, making sure that the art is properly packaged and adequately insured. Contact us for mailing instructions (including FedEx billing references and account numbers) at the time of submission.
- *Graphs, charts, maps, etc.* Presumably, you will have created such figures using PowerPoint, CricketGraph, ArcGIS, and the like. Just e-mail us the file itself. If we have a problem with the file, we can always go to Plan B (viz., make a PDF). But $\approx 99\%$ of the time, Plan B is unnecessary. Never, ever, embed a graph, chart, or map (or any other sort of figure) within the text. Again, just send us the file or files. Exercise common sense in the production of graphs, charts, maps, etc. Thus:
 - Use large, legible, sans-serif typefaces.
 - Clearly label all legends, headers, and axes.
 - Employ calm, discreet color schemes, or, better yet, black-and-white.
- *Digital photographs*. "But it looks great on my computer screen!" We need more than that. Specifically:
 - The image needs to be scanned, full-size, at a resolution of 300 dpi or higher.
 - Best to save it as a .jpg file. Also acceptable are .tif and .bmp files.
 - If relevant, create the file using CMYK, not RGB.

For your initial submission (i.e., at the time of manuscript submission), please send us the digital photographs as low-resolution (<1.0M) files. Later, we will request that you send the high-quality scans to our production office in Colorado Springs. If the files are

very large (>10.0M), we will ask that you mail them to us on a CD. Otherwise, you will e-mail them to our production office. And remember: Never, ever, embed a digital photograph (or any other sort of figure) within the text.

You can expect all sorts of problems if you're not familiar with terminology such as 'dpi', '.jpg', and 'RGB'. Get someone to help you, or ask us for help, or think about submitting photographs that are not digital.

- *Film and other antediluvian media.* In theory, there's nothing wrong with slides, prints, daguerrotypes, etc. Indeed, many of the most beautiful figures in *Birding* originated as slides or other transparencies. The hitch involves getting the photographs transmitted, reviewed, selected, edited, and returned. It can be done. And it is best done on an article-by-article basis. If you are going to be submitting your own hard-copy photographic material, please be in touch with both the Editor and the Photo Editor early on. We'll figure out what your needs are, and what ours are, and we'll take it from there.

What sorts of photographs are we looking for? Here are some broad guidelines:

- Transparencies ($\geq 35\text{mm}$) are preferable to prints.
- Black-and-white photographs are rarely suitable for *Birding*.
- Photographs are chosen for sharpness, exposure, and composition.
- "Action shots", e.g., of birds courting or catching food, are preferable to flat, two-dimensional portraits of birds on twigs or rocks.
- Photographs of birds in natural settings are greatly favored. For articles with a heavy emphasis on identification, however, we acknowledge that photographs of captured or killed birds may be appropriate.
- We endorse the *Principles of Ethical Field Practices* promoted by the North American Nature Photography Association <nanpa.org/ethics.htm> and encourage our photographers to adopt NANPA standards.

By the way, the preceding guidelines—except for the bit about transparencies and prints—apply to digital photographs, too.

It was noted at the beginning of this chapter that not all figures will be created or vetted by the author. Neither is it the case that all figures are generated in-house. In other words, certain figures—usually, art and photographs—come to *Birding* via freelancers. Indeed, much of our finest art and photography is the work of freelancers. If you are a freelance artist or photographer, please be in direct contact with the Editor and Photo Editor about

our current editorial needs, which vary from article to article, from issue to issue, from freelancer to freelancer.

Before we move on, here are four last pearls of wisdom:

- Always be mindful of the matter of the integration of the figures with the text. Resist the temptation to compartmentalize—to view the figures and tables as isolated from the text, as fluff or filler.
- Stay organized. Fig. 1 comes before Fig. 2, which precedes Fig. 3, etc. Label everything. Write down dates, locations, and credit information.
- Keep in touch with the Editor, pretty much from the get-go. Figures and captions, if left till the eleventh hour, will create considerable headache and hassle.
- Be flexible. Yes, there are some basic standards that apply to the preparation and submission of all figures; at the same time, we recognize that each article has its own special needs vis-à-vis figures. Don't get bogged down in the details.

9 • Editing and Review

The editing-and-review process can be painless. Or it can be agonizingly painful. It's entirely up to the author. The key to pain prevention?—Submit a manuscript that is clean and complete, up front, and you're already 90% of the way there (see Chapter 4). The remaining 10%?—Just follow directions during the editing and review of your article.

Here's how the process works:

- Immediately following e-submission of your manuscript, you'll receive e-confirmation of its receipt.
- Later, you'll receive a (heavily) reformatted and (lightly) edited second draft of your article. You will note the following:
 - Your original text is in *black*.
 - Edits are in *blue*.
 - Queries are in *red*.
 - Internal format-tracking that you don't have to worry about is in *yellow*.

Your responsibilities at this point are (1) to confirm that the edits (*blue*) are acceptable to you, (2) to reply to the queries (*red*), and (3) to introduce any additional changes or corrections. Now is the time to do (3)—not later. The nitty-gritty:

- Indicate your changes clearly on the new/current version of the manuscript that you have just received. Do not work from any older/other version.
 - Do not use Microsoft Edit-Tracking.
 - Just keyboard your changes in directly, and, again, indicate them clearly, using some nice, obvious color like *magenta* or *lime* or something.
- Now your manuscript is ready to go to our team of in-house technical reviewers. In case you're curious, the reviewers are James J. Dinsmore, Donna L. Dittmann, Jon L. Dunn, Bill Pranty, Macklin Smith, and Noah K. Strycker. In exceptional cases, we will send your manuscript to an additional expert or experts.

- In about two or three weeks, you'll get to see the technical reviewers' comments. Same drill: Edits in *blue*, queries in *red*, ignore the *yellow*, and don't use Edit-Tracking. At this point, basically, you are either accepting or rejecting the reviewers' changes; you are not introducing significant new material to the manuscript.
- And about two weeks later, you'll get one last chance to go over the manuscript. At this stage, we're dealing with minor stuff: typos and factoids, a sentence that doesn't read quite right, a last-minute acknowledgment—that sort of stuff.
- Now for the fun part—Pageproofs. About three weeks after you've submitted your final manuscript edits, you'll receive the camera-ready pageproofs for your article. By this time, it is way too late to even think about making any substantive changes to your article. Your objective, instead, at this stage is to check for bad line-breaks, clunky kerning, dropped type, etc. And it is your final chance to make sure that you've spelled *macgillivraii* and *MacGillivray's* correctly, that you've correctly distinguished among *Birding World*, *Birder's World*, and *Birders* (without the apostrophe) *Journal*.

Your pageproofs will arrive electronically, in the form of a high-resolution PDF file, and they will be accompanied by a checklist of possible problems to be on the lookout for: Did diacriticals and scientific symbols import correctly? Is all of the author contact information current and correct? Etc. Please note that the turnaround time for the pageproofs is very short—always less than 72 hours. This is absolutely your last chance to get it right.

As many writers know, the editing-and-review process differs greatly from publication to publication. Here are some things that you should know about how we do it at *Birding*:

- The editorial team works closely with the authors throughout the entire process, from the first submission, through the multiple revisions, right through to the pageproofs.
- We are excessively diligent about documenting every change that we make to each and every draft of your manuscript. There are no surprises. The process is transparent. You get to see everything.
- We take deadlines very seriously. If you don't meet a deadline, one of two things will happen: Either your manuscript will get panned, or we'll keep on going without you. Just waiting around till the next issue is not an option. It's now or never.
- Yes, sometimes the editorial team will make a change that, at a subjective, stylistic level, just rubs you the wrong way. Tell us what you don't like, and we'll given serious

consideration to the matter of restoring the original text. In rare instances, we will—inadvertently, one assumes—introduce an honest-to-goodness error. By all means, let us know if we've made a mistake.

- Conversely, please accept that we really do know what we're doing. We know our objectives better than you do. We know the audience better than you do. In many instances, we know the subject matter better than you do. Don't even think of trying to sneak in a "vanity publication".
- Finally, be assured that we at *Birding* are unfailingly cheerful, that we are conscientious to a fault, and that we are, in the end run, highly flexible. Hope we can expect the same of you?

10 • Some Legalese

Tempted to skip past this chapter? Okay, but this chapter is about money. It's also about liability and insurance, about copyrights and permissions, etc. Let's get started. First, we'll deal with authors. (Photographers and artists?—a little further down.)

- *Our Rights.* We have the right to publish your article in *Birding*, to e-publish it in part or in whole on the ABA website, and to use it in part or in whole for promotional purposes. We do not have the right to authorize the republication of your article in any other forum, e.g., in a non-ABA magazine or newsletter, without your written permission to do so.
- *Your Rights.* You have the right to distribute, as you see fit, print or electronic copies of your article. You further have the right to have the text your article republished, in part or in whole, in commercial or non-commercial media such as newsletters, print journals, and e-zines. We recommend, but do not require, that you state clearly that your article originated in *Birding*.
- *A Restriction.* Although you have the right to have the text to your article republished, you do not necessarily have the right to have accompanying photographs and other figures republished. Check with the Editor for permission.
- *Permission to Print.* When you receive the camera-ready pageproofs to your article (Chapter 9), you will also receive a “Permission to Print” form. You need to fill out this form (it's simple) in order for us to publish your article. Read this form: It further spells out some of your rights as an author, plus it contains information on acquiring *gratis* copies (print and electronic) of your published article.
- *Final Say.* We have the right to alter the content of, or to postpone or cancel the publication of, any manuscript, with or without notifying the author. (But see Chapter 9, which explains why it is almost always unnecessary for us to exercise this right.)
- *Schedule of Payments.* You will receive a one-time, lump-sum payment at the time of publication of your article. No further royalties, honoraria, or other payments will be made to you.
- *Determination of Payments.* We do not have a fixed formula for determining payments. Payment for feature articles tends to run in the \$200–300 range, and payment for department columns tends to range in the \$100–200 range. Payments are slightly higher

for great articles by charming authors, and payments are slightly lower for satisfactory articles by annoying authors. Yes, it really is that subjective.

Now, photographers and artists. The basic philosophy here is the same as it is with authors. But there are some differences in detail and emphasis, outlined below.

- *Payments to Photographers and Artists.* In contrast to our method for determining payments to authors, we tend to follow a fairly fixed formula for payments to photographers and artists. Here's how it works:
 - Smaller-than-full-page reproduction, \$50.
 - Full-page reproduction, \$80.
 - Cover photograph or painting, \$200.
 - Photo Quiz photograph, \$45 per use (thus, \$90; that's because we print the photograph in the New Photo Quiz and then again in the Photo Quiz Answers).

If more than 10 of your photographs or paintings appear in a single issue of *Birding*, we pay you the base rate per figure for the first 10 figures and then \$30 per figure for the remaining figures. Example: In the current issue of *Birding*, the cover photograph is yours, and so are three full-pagers and nine quarter-pagers; you get \$200 for the cover, plus \$240 ($\80×3) for the full-pagers, plus \$300 ($\50×6) for the first six of the quarter-pagers, plus \$90 ($\30×3) for the last three of the quarter-pagers, for a total of \$830.

You will receive three *gratis* copies of the issue of *Birding* in which your cover photograph or art appears. You will receive one *gratis* copy of the issue of *Birding* in which any other type of figure appears.

- *Rights.* Our rights and your rights are the same as they are with authors (see above). Please note that we clearly indicate copyright information for each and every figure which appears in *Birding*, and please further note that we advise authors that each and every figure is the property of the photographer or artist. In this digital age, though, it is difficult to detect and prevent infringement upon your rights as a photographer or artist. Accordingly, *Birding* is not responsible for, and does not wish to involve itself in any matters pertaining to, the unauthorized transmission or reproduction of your work.
- *Liability.* We acknowledge liability for transparencies, prints, maps, and other art for the duration of their holding by the ABA. When we receive figures from photographers or artists, transparencies and other originals are examined by ABA staff and the applicable color-separation house prior to scanning. Any scratches, spots, or other damaged areas

are noted. In the rare case that during the publication process a slide, irreplaceable print, or piece of art is damaged such that it is not publishable, ABA will replace it with an electronically created duplicate. If that outcome is not possible, we will negotiate compensation, but in no case will the amount of compensation exceed \$500. Figures are returned approximately two weeks after publication.

Our liability during return shipment is limited. We return figures at our expense by certified mail. Should a package be lost during return shipments by the U. S. Postal Service, claims will be limited to the cost of materials only. In the case of other returns, compensation will be limited to whatever the carrier pays for lost-item claims.

Birding does not accept responsibility for figures lost or damaged in transit to the ABA, and *Birding* further does not accept responsibility for unsolicited figures. *Birding* does not pay holding fees. It is the responsibility of the photographer or artist to package figures securely. Transparencies should be protected in plastic sleeves. Please do not use staples or paper clips when packing and shipping transparencies and other figures. We do not accept responsibility for damage to figures that occurred prior to our receipt of them.

Photographers and artists residing outside the United States should note that our postal authorities do not allow certified international mail. Where insurance is available, the value of the product is not insured; rather, only the cost of the materials or the cost to duplicate the materials is covered. Photographers and artists are encouraged to protect their interest by making duplicates of their originals before submitting them to *Birding*.

11 • The *Birding* Index

The *Birding* Index is a search engine that can be used to find the specs for any article that has been published in *Birding*. It can be searched by title or by author, and it can be customized so as to search for articles that were published within a certain time period.

Are you proposing to write an article about listing? About Empid ID? About cats or collecting? Chances are, someone else has already written about the matter, at some point, way back when, in *Birding*. So check out the *Birding* Index, for thoroughness' sake, and to prevent redundancy. (Oh, and are you really thinking of writing about cats or collecting? Um, might want to think twice about that...)

Please note that the *Birding* Index, in its current guise, appears to contain a few bugs. The search engine is a bit on the ambitious side and sometimes returns more results than you are looking for. It is our understanding that the tech guys are working on this one.

For more information on the whys and wherefores of the *Birding* Index, please check out Paul J. Baicich's introduction to and overview of this resource (*Birding*, April 2002, pp. 121–122).

Oh, and most important, here's the URL for the *Birding* Index:

- aba.org/pubs/birding/birdingindex.html

12 • The *Birding* Archives

We have just taken a look at the *Birding* Index (Chapter 11), a search engine that returns the basic specs (author or authors, year of publication, title of article, and page numbers) for any and all articles that have been published in *Birding*. The *Birding* Archives, in contrast, is an actual e-repository of the articles themselves.

Check it out at:

- aba.org/pubs/birding/archives/index.html

Please note that the *Birding* Archives is a work in progress. The eventual goal is to get all back issues of *Birding* onto the ABA website, and to get the Archives and the Index linked to one another. At the present time, though, the *Birding* Archives gives a nice if somewhat eclectic feel for a variety of recently published articles in *Birding*. If you're not all that familiar with *Birding* and the ABA, the Archives is a great place to get acquainted with us.

The files that are housed in the Archives are the copyright-protected property of some combination of the ABA, of the author or authors of the article, and of the photographer or photographers whose work appears in the article. In many instances, it will be acceptable for you to download material from the Archives, for use toward educational and other not-for-profit ends. But please check with us, first, for permission to do so.

Want more than just a camera-ready PDF of the article? It is possible to purchase back issues of *Birding* through ABA Sales < aba.org/abasales/index.html >

13 • Style

Ah, style. Is it possible to write about the subject without being pompous and clichéd? Probably not, but here goes.

The matter of style can be approached on three different levels, each of which we take up below. Be sure to read down to the third level.

First, there is the notion that well-styled writing is stylish writing. Writing that is possessed of a certain élan and panache. Sometimes, good writers employ stylish writing to good effect. Sometimes, they do not. Always, poor writers do not. Go easy—real easy—on stylish writing. Unless you really know what you’re doing, the outcome is going to be flamboyant at best. More likely: silliness and clichés, as in “We’re not laughing with you, we’re laughing *at* you.”

Second, there is the view that mastery of the so-called “elements of style” automatically results in well-styled writing. Employ good grammar and standard syntax, and all will be well. There is probably some validity to this point of view. Then again, computers and journalists can be taught good grammar and standard syntax—but they do not know how to write. The good writer knows the elements of style, which, after all, can be learned (or programmed into a computer) during the course of an afternoon. The good writer also knows when not to formulaically[†] follow the rules. The good writer knows that it isn’t worth getting all worked up over the restrictive relative pronouns which[‡] distract[§] the joyless grammarian from the broader objective of good diction.

Speaking of diction, we arrive now at the third and most important aspect of style. Diction, in the narrow sense, refers to word choice. Choosing the right words, even at the level of individual phrases and clauses, is a process that is neither mysterious (cf. “stylish” writing, above) nor mechanical (cf. grammar and syntax, also above). Rather, it requires discipline, logic, and clarity of thought. Thus: *Stop! Think before you write!* The result is writing that is clear and logical. Individual phrases and clauses actually make sense; entire paragraphs and sections are logical and well organized; the whole article is readable and informative. The end result is that you actually get your point across. You wind up making a difference.

[†] See?

[‡] Get it?

[§] Distracting footnotes are strictly prohibited at *Birding*.

14 • Orthography

Orthography—by which we refer to the rules that govern the actual mechanics of writing—has elements that are more subjective and arbitrary than they are objective or “right”. Serial commas? “Tags”? Galápagos or Galapagos? The answers to these questions are as much rooted in tradition as they are in logic. Still, we at *Birding* feel that certain principles of common sense can, in fact, be applied to the matters of typography and orthography.

(An aside: Typography vs. orthography? These two terms seem to mean all things to all people. We take the view that typography refers narrowly to the arrangement and appearance of printed matter, whereas orthography refers more broadly to the process that gives rise to printed matter. For simplicity’s sake, we treat both terms together here under the single heading of orthography.)

Even as you blindly follow the dictates set before you here (which, as a contributor to *Birding*, you are required to do), we hope you sense that, amid the quirks, there is a basic decency and order to our methods. Let’s get underway.

- *Capitalization*. The #1 orthographical oddity here at *Birding* is that we always capitalize the standard English names of bird species. Always. No exceptions. Thus, we write the following:
 - The marsh was teeming with Eared Grebes, American White Pelicans, herons, Wilson’s Phalaropes, and Black Terns.
 - You can expect to see Western and Clark’s Grebes, up to ten species of herons, breeding Marbled Godwits, and small colonies of Forster’s and Black Terns.
 - I was nearing the end of my ramble, and it dawned on me that I hadn’t seen a single warbler. Not even a Yellow or yellowthroat.

A major red flag for us here at *Birding* is the contributor who fails to capitalize the standard English names of bird species. Our assumption—almost always correct—is that such a contributor does not know our audience. And the result is usually a rejection letter.

- *Alphabetization*. Don’t do it! Well, not in lists of bird species. All birders know that ‘shearwater’ comes before ‘sandpiper’. ‘Nashville Warbler’ comes before ‘Cape May Warbler’, and ‘Tennessee Warbler’ comes before ‘Connecticut Warbler’. Etc. In other

words, it is required that lists of avian standard English names be placed in phylogenetic sequence (“checklist order”). In particular, you are expected to follow the linear sequence and nomenclature of the sixth edition (2002) and supplements thereto of the *ABA Checklist*. By the way, we acknowledge that if you have contributed a poem or essay, then the principles of meter and sonority may supersede the strictures of phylogeny. Otherwise, go for current checklist sequence, and see above about red flags and rejection letters.

- *Numbers*. We observe the convention, up to a point, of writing out the integers (“cardinals”) 1–9, but not ≥ 10 . Same thing with ordinals, e.g., ‘second’, ‘ninth’, ‘10th’, ‘101st’. We recognize that there will be instances in which slavish devotion to this convention is inappropriate. Also: We write ‘1,000’, not ‘1000’. And: It’s ‘0.01’, not ‘.01’.
- *Dates*. Provide ’em. Day, month, and year, please. Our readers are gluttons for detail. Besides, there really is a difference between a September Orange-crowned Warbler on the first of the month vs. one on the last of the month, between an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in 2005 vs. one in 1944. The correct format: 30 September 2006, 28 April 2005, etc. The following are abhorrent: September 30, 2005, the 28th of April, 2005, etc.
- *Locations*. For U. S. or Canadian locations, provide the place-name and the state or province. Outside the ABA Area, provide the place name and the country. Thus:
 - A Northern Shrike in Tallahassee, Florida, was south of its normal wintering range.
 - Although Barn Owls are rarely reported in southern Canada, three were noted this winter in the Winnipeg, Manitoba, area.
 - The scenery outside Melville Hall, Dominica, reminded me of South Florida.

By the way, what about south vs. southern vs. South in the preceding? Check out the lexicon (Chapter 17) for details.

- *Hyphens, em-dashes, and en-dashes*. With few exceptions, you can safely abide by the following rules: Hyphens go *within* words, em-dashes go *between* words, and en-dashes go between *numbers*. Thus:
 - Some 30–50 White-rumped Sandpipers were at Cat Slough—typically the best spot in the region for the species.

Some tips on when *not* to use hyphens, en-dashes, and em-dashes:

- Hyphens go great with attributive compound adjectives, e.g., “more-skilled birders”, but not so great with compound predicate adjectives, e.g., “birders are more skilled”. Ordinarily, hyphens are not used in two-word compound attributives that begin with an ‘-ly adverb’. Thus, “highly skilled birders”, without the hyphen.
- Use en-dashes to denote a range of at least three values. Thus, “11–13 individuals” is okay, but “11–12 individuals” is not (change it to “11 or 12 individuals”). However, “11–12 million dollars” is okay. Note that “pp. 11–12” and “pp. 11 & 12” have different meanings.
- Do not use em-dashes as glorified comma splices, e.g., “Carolina Wrens are expanding northward—global warming may be the reason.” Instead, reserve em-dashes for apposition, e.g., “Carolina Wrens—formerly uncommon here—are conspicuous year-round”, and for tags, e.g., “Carolina Wrens are such cheery little buggers—wouldn’t you say?”
- *Bird sounds*. Italicize Roman-alphabet transliterations of bird vocalizations. Thus:
 - *wit?*
 - *fitz-bew!*
 - *Quick! Three beers!*
- *Foreign words*. Italicize foreign words and phrases that are not widely used in English. Thus:
 - *Zugunruhe*
 - *pechos amarillos*

Do not italicize “foreign” words and phrases that are widely used in English. Thus:

- *gestalt*
- *en route*

- vis-à-vis

Do not italicize widely recognized abbreviations that are based on foreign words. Thus:

- e.g.,
- i.e.,
- viz.,

Please endeavor, by the way, to learn what the three preceding abbreviations actually mean, and be sure to use them correctly, and not interchangeably.

- *Foreign birds.* While we're on the subject of foreign words, what about the names of "foreign" birds?—that is to say, bird species that not are on the *ABA Checklist*. Use the standard English names given by the *AOU Check-list*, and, where relevant, follow the linear sequence therein. For bird species that are not on the *AOU Check-list* either, follow the nomenclature and linear sequence in the third edition of the *Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (2003). Important: For a bird species not on the *ABA Checklist*, always give the scientific name, along with the standard English name, the first time the bird is mentioned in the text; for all subsequent references to the species, give only the standard English name. Conversely: Do not give the scientific name of a bird species that does appear in the *ABA Checklist*.
- *Quotation marks and other delimiters.* Our take on quotations marks and other delimiters is surprising to many people, but it is eminently reasonable: What's quoted gets quoted. What that means is that *only* the quoted, excerpted, or otherwise referenced material is placed within the punctuation. Thus:
 - Also known as the "Bee Martin", the Eastern Kingbird is a voracious devourer of insects. [The comma is not part of the bird's name, so it does not go within the quotation marks.]
 - Sarah said it was a "Bee Martin"! [The exclamation is the writer's, not Sarah's, so the exclamation point goes outside the quotation marks.]
 - Sarah said, "Look at the Bee Martin!" [Now Sarah's getting excited, so go ahead and attribute the exclamation point to her, by putting it within the quotation marks.]

Here is a related example:

- The bird turned out to be an Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), which is an uncommon stray to Mineral County.

Please do not write something like:

- The bird turned out to be an Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), which is an uncommon stray to Mineral County.

It is correct, of course, to set off the bird's scientific name in italics, but it is incorrect to italicize the surrounding punctuation—in this case, the parentheses and comma.

By the way, e-mail addresses and web addresses are always set off with pointy-brackets (“less-than” and “greater-than” signs), in the following manner:

- For more information, check out our website <www.aba.org>.

Again, note the general principle of placing quoted or excerpted information (in this case, the URL) within the punctuation (in this case, the pointy-brackets and the period).

- *Apostrophes*. Apostrophes present two sorts of problems, both of them dealing with the matter of possession.

First, there is the case of words that end in *-s*. All birders know that it's:

- Ross's Gull
- Harris's Sparrow

But check this out:

- Texas's
- Illinois'
- Kansas's
- Arkansas' largest city
- one of the Arkansas's tributaries

What's going on here? Easy: For words that end in *-s*, add the apostrophe-*s* to indicate an extra syllable; but just add the apostrophe, if there is not an extra syllable. In passing:

- for goodness' sake
- for Pete's sake
- in Jesus' name
- from Xantus's name

Second, there is the problem of possessives and faux-possessives. Now, nobody would ever write:

- It's bill is 8" long. [**Correct:** Its bill is 8" long.]
- Its thought that Black Rails are breeding in Bent County. [**Correct:** It's thought that Black Rails are breeding in Bent County.]

But here's one that gets by a lot of writers:

- I object to it being treated in such a manner. [**Correct:** I object to its being treated in such a manner.]

On a related note, the following also are wrong:

- You don't have a problem with him calling it a Baird's Sandpiper? [**Correct:** You don't have a problem with his calling it a Baird's Sandpiper?]
- He's concerned about the region getting a heavy snowfall. [**Correct:** He's concerned about the region's getting a heavy snowfall.]

On a technical note, in case you're curious, the three preceding examples illustrate the possessive gerundive.

One last thing—and it applies to both apostrophes and quotation marks: Please use curly-quotes (“ ”), not straight-quotes (" "), except to indicate measurements such as inches, feet, latitude, or longitude. Here are some examples:

- Also known as the “Bee Martin”, the Eastern Kingbird is approximately 8" long.
- Here in Nevada, the Abert’s Towhee is rarely seen north of 36°30'.
- *Periods—and colons, too, for that matter.* If you are over the age of thirty, the following rule may come as a surprise to you: Periods and colons are followed by one space, not by two (e.g., at the end of a sentence), and not by zero (e.g., in someone’s initials). An exception: If, within an abbreviation, a period follows a lower-case letter, it should not be followed by a space. The following examples should cover all our bases:
 - I have never seen R. T. Peterson’s 1934 *Field Guide*. It is out of print. [Not: R.T. Peterson’s]
 - Outside the U. S., there are records from the following locations: Québec, Bermuda, Cuba, and Costa Rica. [Not: Outside the U.S.,]
 - The Sri Lankan race (*P. s. brevicauda*) is distinctive. [Not: *P.s. brevicauda*]
 - Morris Arboretum is a good spot for some of the region’s rarer migrants, e.g., Alder Flycatcher, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Mourning Warbler. [Not: e. g.,]
 - For their help with field work, I thank Dan Horn, Carolyn Horn-Spencer, Ph.D., and Stuart Stahl. [Not: Ph. D.,]

We stray from the preceding rules in the Literature Cited section, however. Specifically: (1) No spaces within a person’s initials; and (2) no space after a colon indicating a volume number. Thus:

- Peterson, R.T. 1934. *A Field Guide to the Birds*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Sauer, J.R., J.E. Hines, and J. Fallon. 2005. *The North American Breeding Bird Survey: Results and Analysis 1966–2004*, version 2005.2. U.S. Geological Survey, Laurel.
- Skryabin, S.G., and L.T.E. Sofronitsky. 1997. On the field separation of two races of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus f. fuscus* and *L. f. intermedius*. *Kazakhstan Journal of Field Ornithology* 69:931–982.

Here's a basic rule to abide by: Nowhere in your document should there ever be two (or more) spaces in a row.

- *More on colons.* If a colon is followed by a complete sentence, capitalize the first character after colon. Otherwise, do not capitalize. Thus:
 - The two morphs also employ different mating strategies: White-and-black males are promiscuous, whereas tan-and-brown males are monogamous.
 - It is a pleasant diversion on the road to a serious destination: correct identification.
 - Preferred habitats include the following: canyons, outcroppings, talus slopes, and rock-strewn pastures.

Note that the preceding rule does not apply to semicolons. For semicolons, simply do not capitalize, regardless of whether the semicolon is followed by a complete sentence.

- *Commas.* We can't put it off forever. So let's plunge in now and discuss the matter of the comma. No, commas are not just for encouraging the reader to take a breath. Yes, there really are rules that govern the use of commas. Four especially important rules are summarized below.

Rule #1. If *two* main clauses are separated by a coordinating conjunction, use the comma. For other sorts of enumeration of two items or ideas, do not use the comma. Thus:

- Smilder reported a Royal Tern from Zack's cove, and she noted that it had been present there since Monday. [The word 'and' is a coordinating conjunction.]
- Smilder reported a Royal Tern but didn't provide any details. [The word 'but' is not a coordinating conjunction.]

Rule #2. In an enumeration of *three* or more items or ideas, use the so-called serial comma. Thus:

- There was a strong flight of flickers, Blue Jays, and robins.
- Species in my back yard include Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Blue Jay, and American Robin.

- We added Great Cormorant, Purple Sandpiper, and Iceland and Glaucous Gulls to our list.

Rule #3. In general, use the comma to set off appositional, adverbial, and prepositional phrases at the beginning of a sentence. Check out the following:

- Generally, the Palm Warbler is a late migrant.
- Generally speaking, the Palm Warbler is a late migrant,
- Generally a late migrant, the Palm Warbler is frequently seen into early winter.
- With its tail-wagging behavior, the Palm Warbler is easily detected.
- In the early winter months, Palm Warblers may be found in coastal thickets.

However:

- The Palm Warbler is easily detected with just a little searching.
- Palm Warblers may be found in the early winter months.
- The Palm Warbler is generally found in coastal thickets.

Rule #4. Use commas to delineate non-restrictive (“non-essential”) elements, but do not use commas to delineate restrictive (“essential”) elements. Note the difference in meaning between the following:

- barring on the rectrices, which are visible [i.e., all rectrices]
- barring on the rectrices that are visible [i.e., only the visible rectrices]

Here’s another:

- hummingbirds, which occur in the ABA Area [i.e., the family Trochilidae]
- hummingbirds that occur in the ABA Area [i.e., only ABA-area species]

In the preceding examples, note that ‘which’ is used to indicate non-restrictive relative clauses, whereas ‘that’ is used to indicate restrictive relative clauses. But don’t be too

pedantic in the application of this rule, as there are plenty of instances in which a restrictive ‘which’ looks, sounds, and feels a lot better than the stilted ‘that’. Note further that restrictive and non-restrictive elements may take the form of implied relative clauses that are not indicated by relative pronouns. Thus:

- as in our previous article, on shorebirds [i.e., with reference to all articles that we have written]
- as in our previous article on shorebirds [i.e., with reference only to those articles of ours that have dealt with shorebirds]

Finally, it is worth pondering the matter that failure to distinguish between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses can result in unintended stereotypes, hurt feelings, and probably street brawls. Check out the following:

- New Yorkers, who are hopelessly parochial [i.e., all New Yorkers are hopelessly parochial]
- New Yorkers who are hopelessly parochial [i.e., only those New Yorkers who happen to be parochial]

There are other comma rules, e.g., the Nominative of Direct Address (it’s “Dear Editor”, but “Hi, Editor”), but the four discussed above seem to create the worst headaches. Honest, if you apply just these four, you’ll be in outstanding shape, and so will we.

15 • Grammar

Any style manual worth its salt has to contain extensive treatment of grammar, right? Actually, we do not take that view. We feel that grammar, vis-à-vis the nuts and bolts of writing, is superfluous and uninteresting. Grammar is something that we mastered when we were toddlers (now *that's* interesting, but not germane to our present purposes); if you are literate, then you know your grammar.

Yes, there are certain matters that the killjoy grammarian still agonizes over—who vs. whom, split infinitives, determiners and agreement, the subjunctive, and the word ‘none’. But all of these examples refer to the general phenomenon of present-day grammatical instability in English. ‘Whom’ and the subjunctive are gradually dying out; split infinitives are increasingly being accepted; and ‘none’ and various determiners are inexorably shifting from the singular to the plural. The native speaker tends to have a strong innate sense of grammatical rights and wrongs; grammatical boobos, when they do show up in manuscripts for *Birding*, are either entirely uncontroversial or hopelessly irresolvable.

Don't fret about grammar. Fixate on style (Chapter 13) instead, if you must. Harbor a healthy obsession with orthography (Chapter 14). Above all, aspire to the highest standards of good diction, which matter we take up next (Chapter 16).

16 • Diction

Good writing is, in essence, good diction—that is to say, well-styled (but not necessarily “stylish; cf. Chapter 13) prose.

Good writing tends to be characterized by good grammar and syntax, by careful orthography and typography, and even by the occasional stylistic flourish. But please note that these things are *not* the nuts and bolts of good writing, even though they are often portrayed as such. Rather, they are the icing on the cake of good diction. They are the sorts of things that present little challenge to an editor.

Poorly styled writing, in contrast, presents considerable challenges to even the most patient of editors. In some instances, there is really nothing we can do: Bad diction is tragically ingrained in the “writing” of the would-be contributor to *Birding*, who is mercifully dealt an early rejection letter. In other instances, the problem is one of laziness rather than intrinsic incompetence; that is to say, the writer only *appears* to be illiterate. Yes, we can be of service to lazy writers who are not really functional illiterates. But we get annoyed in the process.

Let’s look at two major categories of bad diction. We’ll start off with five different ways to write too much. Then we’ll look at five different ways to be sloppy. Here we go:

• *Hypercorrection*. If it sounds stilted, it probably is. Check out the following:

- The bird flew toward Joanne and I.
- Myself and Eduardo saw a Red-eyed Vireo.
- I’m a good birder, aren’t I?

Instead:

- The bird flew toward Joanne and me. [**Me** is the object of the preposition **toward**.]
 - Eduardo and I saw a Red-eyed Vireo. [**I** is the nominative pronoun.]
 - I’m a good birder, am I not? [Even **ain’t I** would be better.]
- *Syllable multiplication*. The longer word is, at best, an ungainly and pretentious substitute. More often than not, it’s just plain wrong. The following are incorrect:

- I had not seen a male Painted Bunting previous.
- The survey methodology was not suitable for estimating population densities.
- I determined that the bird was an adult, but I couldn't tell its gender.

Rather:

- I had not seen a male Painted Bunting before. [Change the adjective **previous** to the adverb **before**.]
 - The survey method was not suitable for estimating population densities. [A **methodology** is a principle; a **method** is a tool.]
 - I determined that the bird was an adult, but I couldn't tell its sex. [**Gender** is culturally conditioned; **sex** is genetically determined.]
- *Meaningless intensifiers*. First, consider the following:
 - As we approached the goshawk, it became quite agitated.
 - The lake was literally frozen over.
 - The all-new second edition of Blakeslee's *Birds of Kyrgyzstan* can be yours for just €25.95.

Now, note that following—simpler and superior—constructions convey exactly the same information:

- As we approached the goshawk, it became agitated. [Delete **quite**.]
 - The lake was frozen over. [Delete **literally**.]
 - The new second edition of Blakeslee's *Birds of Kyrgyzstan* can be yours for just €25.95. [Delete **all**.]
- *Pleonasm*. Avoid the temptation to use more words than are necessary to express something. Offenses include the following:

- free gift
- completely extinct
- at this point in time

Better:

- gift [Because a gift **is** free.]
- extinct [As opposed to **somewhat** extinct?]
- now [Or **right now**, if emphasis is desired.]
- *Clichés*. Check out the following:
 - sharp-eyed listers
 - Category 5 monster
 - avid birder

Do phrases such as the preceding come naturally to you? That is not a good thing. There are two ways to step clear of a cliché: You can fashion your own word picture (risky, difficult), or you can employ good old fashioned declarative prose (powerful, laudable).

- *Number and agreement*. Be especially vigilant about prepositional phrases and plural determiners. The following are wrong:
 - A pair of Tufted Titmouse were at my feeder.
 - A number of reasons comes to mind.
 - The number of American Coots were staggering.

The following are acceptable:

- A pair of Tufted Titmouses was at my feeder.

- A number of reasons come to mind.
- The number of American Coots was staggering.
- *Precision and parallelism.* Avoid sloppiness such as the following:
 - In our area, Common Ravens build their nests in trees, cliffs, and even utility poles.
 - Passerines favor this spot because it offers spilled grain, there are abundant berries, and to go into in the dense shrubbery.
 - Carla and I managed to find the Hoary Redpoll, also saw a Gyrfalcon, and then she went home after dropping me off at the nature center.

The following are preferable:

- In our area, Common Ravens build their nests in trees, on cliffs, and even on utility poles.
- Passerines favor this spot for its spilled grain, abundant berries, and dense shrubbery.
- Carla and I managed to find the Hoary Redpoll, along with a Gyrfalcon. Then she dropped me off at the nature center and went home.
- *Indefinite references.* Don't take shortcuts such as the following:
 - This may have led to its decline.

“This” *what?* And what is “it”? Maybe it's obvious to the writer, but the reader needs a little help. The following alternatives present the reader with helpful detail:

 - This drought may have led to the Dickcissel's population decline.
 - This competing resource may have led to the RBA's declining popularity.
 - This new technology may have led to the decline of traditional agriculture in the area.
- *Misplaced modifiers.* In theory, there is nothing wrong with the following:
 - Ask for permission to observe the nesting colony at the headquarters building.

- As a valued member of our staff, I invite you to join us for the retreat in Reno.
- We only saw three Great Blue Herons.

But note that they do not mean the same as the following:

- Ask for permission at the headquarters building to observe the nesting colony.
- As a valued member of our staff, you are invited to join us for the retreat in Reno.
- We saw only three Great Blue Herons.
- *Relative and reporting clauses.* Such constructions invite abuses by slovens and pedants alike. Here are some ways to err:
 - He found the Le Conte's Thrasher in the boneyard was cooperative. [Saith the sloven.]
 - The Le Conte's Thrasher's fossorial lifestyle is reflected in the way that it scratches for food. [Saith the pedant.]
 - The Le Conte's Thrasher is a bird both seldom seen and little studied. [Sloven.]
 - The Le Conte's Thrasher is a bird that is both seldom seen and little studied. [Pedant.]

Here are better solutions:

- He found that the Le Conte's Thrasher in the boneyard was cooperative. [Without the subordinating conjunction **that**, the reader expects a direct object to follow the transitive verb **found**.]
- The Le Conte's Thrasher's fossorial lifestyle is reflected in the way it scratches for food. [In contrast to the preceding example, there is no possibility here for confusion; thus, the relative pronoun **that** of the relative clause is implied, not stated.]
- The Le Conte's Thrasher is a seldom-seen and little-studied bird. [Often, a clunky clause can be restyled more simply and elegantly as an attributive adjective, as here. Note, by the way, the introduction of hyphens for the compound adjectives; cf. Chapter 14.]

This very last example brings us to a deeper-level aspect of the matter of diction. Good diction is more than quick fixes (avoid pleonasm and clichés, employ parallel syntax, etc.). Good diction is about good taste, about having the good sense not to write out a subordinate clause when a simple adjective will do. Good diction is about having a basic grasp of the power and sonorities of our English language.

Good diction, as we said at the outset of this chapter, is good writing.

Should you write *Distinct* or *distinctive*? *Character* or *characteristic*? Is it *Southeast Arizona* or *southeastern Arizona*? *Exotic*, *introduced*, or *non-native*? *Last* or *past*? What is the plural of *Brant*? Of *Killdeer*? Should you capitalize *arctic*? What about *internet*?

We reveal the answers to these and many other questions, in the lexicon that follows.

But before doing so, a comment is in order. Really, it is a comment that might reasonably be inserted at virtually any point in the “Guidelines”. It is a comment that goes straight to the heart of this or any usage manual. The comment: This lexicon reflects our own preferences, our own whimsies, our own pet peeves. It is up-to-date, even hip—doubtless to the consternation of a handful of rigid Old Schoolers. It is the sort of work that is subject to constant updates and improvements, revisions and modifications, and—who knows?—probably some backsliding. It is best to view this lexicon—and, really, the entirety of these “Guidelines”—as dynamic and evolutionary. Our English language is a work in progress, and so is the linguistic subculture of American birders.



&. Use the ampersand in the following (and a few other) special instances:

- *U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service*
- *T & A D Poyser*
- *Figs. 1 & 2*
- *Figs. 1–3 & 5*
- *pp. 107 & 110*

Do not use the ampersand in the following (and many other) instances:

- *abundant fish and wildlife*
- *Jack, Jill, and Jehoshaphat Westerberg*
- *first and second figures*
- *figures and tables*
- *pages and pages of gibberish*

Not sure?—then do not use the ampersand. We on the editorial side of things can figure it out.

ABA. When used as a standalone collective noun, this abbreviation should always be preceded by the definite article. You wouldn’t—or you shouldn’t—write, “I am a citizen of U. S.”

- Wrong: *I am a member of ABA.*
- Right: *I joined the ABA in 1992.*

ABA Area, ABA-area. Note the differences in orthography between the compound-noun and compound-adjective forms.

- Compound Noun: *There are four records for the ABA Area.*
- Compound Adjective: *There are four ABA-area records.*

Acknowledgments. Our preference is for the simpler spelling, without the extra ‘e’ between ‘g’ and ‘m’.

Aging. Not ‘ageing’.

American Ornithologists’ Union. Note the plural possessive.

And. Man! The editor’s nightmare! There really are simple, easily understood rules governing the use of this little conjunction. Here are some things to be on the lookout for:

- Always use the serial comma (see Chapter 14).
- Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction but not before a subordinating conjunction (see Chapter 14).
- Avoid the use of ‘and’ as a surrogate for such conjunctive idioms as ‘along with’ and ‘in addition to’.
- Never use ‘and’ adverbially, e.g., as a surrogate for ‘moreover’ or ‘in addition’.
- Never use ‘and’ as a surrogate for ‘to’ in the infinitive form of a verb.
- Unless you are writing an article on Boolean logic, use ‘and’ instead of the clunky ‘and/or’.
- Be careful about the overuse of ‘or’—which is properly used to denote alternative states or conditions—in the many instances in which ‘and’ is preferable.

AOU. Apply the same commonsense standards as for ‘ABA’ (which see).

Arctic. Do not capitalize this word, except where obviously required to do so, e.g., in standard English names of bird species (Arctic Loon, Arctic Warbler, etc.) or at the beginning of a sentence.

As. When this word is used as a conjunction to indicate a causal relation, use a comma. Otherwise, do not.

- *Look for Eurasian Collared-Doves as you enter the subdivision.*
- *Look for Eurasian Collared-Doves, as they have been reported in this subdivision.*

Between. Use ‘between’ for two objects, ‘among’ for three or more.

- *The report does not distinguish between Cordilleran and Pacific-Slope Flycatchers.*

- *The report does not distinguish among Cassin's, Plumbeous, and Blue-headed Vireos.*

Binocular. Yes, in the singular. Ordinarily, the birder carries a single binocular, not a pair of binoculars. If you really do mean two binoculars, then write 'a couple of binoculars', or, better, 'two binoculars'.

Birdfinding. Write it as one word, like 'birdwatching' (which see).

Birdwatching. Unless compelled by context to do otherwise, write 'birding' instead of 'birdwatching'. On this point, by the way, we acknowledge that there is a fair amount of context.

Brants. Birders say (and write) 'Brants' as the plural of 'Brant'. Hunters tend not to.

- *Me and Bubba was loading our pickup with brant, baldpate, and bluebill.* [Gray's Sporting Journal]
- *Charlesworth and I scampered back to our Lexus, well pleased with our splendid haul of Brants, American Wigeons, and Greater and Lesser Scaups.* [Birding]

But. This word is subject to the same general sort of abuse that the word 'and' (which see) is. One thing to be particularly vigilant about is substitution of adverbial 'however' for conjunctive 'but'—an especially heinous act of syllable multiplication (see Chapter 16). The converse—'but' when the writer means 'however'—is less criminal, but ought, of course, to be avoided too.

cf. Be discriminating in your use of this abbreviation. It's not just a catchall for 'see'. Rather, use of 'cf.' (an abbreviation for the Latin word 'confer') should be reserved for those situations in which an explicit contrast is being made between two figures, objects, or ideas.

Character. A feature or attribute of a bird (or other organism) is a 'character', not a 'characteristic'.

- *Bill color and the rosy flush across the breast are characters that vary with diet.*
- *Wilkerson questioned the usefulness of head shape as a character for distinguishing between the two populations.*

Checklist, Check-list. Note that it's the ABA *Checklist*, but the AOU *Check-list*. Whatever.

Comprise. Yes, we realize that the meaning of this word is in the process of transformation. For now, though, we stick to the view that a larger object comprises its various constituents.

- Acceptable: *The Great Basin comprises parts of California, Nevada, and Utah.*
- Currently unacceptable (but just wait a few years): *I was delighted by the essays that comprise the pages of this book.*
- Currently unacceptable (and likely to remain so for a while): *The Great Basin is comprised of parts of California, Nevada, and Utah.*

Different. In a direct comparison between A and B, write that A is ‘different from’ (not ‘different than’) B.

- Right: *In various aspects of ecology and behavior, the eastern race differs importantly from the western.*
- Wrong: *In its conception and execution, the second edition was not all that different than the first.*

Distinct, Distinctive. They’re not exactly the same. ‘Distinct’ usually refers to an absolute quality or essence, whereas ‘distinctive’ usually refers more narrowly to a specific comparison.

- *The Willow Flycatcher was a distinct favorite of songbird researcher Gladys Segal.*
- *The Willow Flycatcher’s distinctive fitz-bew song separates it from the similar Alder Flycatcher.*

East. Note the capitalization in the following:

- *Ash-throated Flycatchers are annual in the East.*
- *Red-cockaded Woodpeckers breed in East Texas.*
- *Sanderlings are common in winter along the East Coast.*

In contrast:

- *Lark Buntings are abundant farther east.*
- *McCown’s Longspurs breed in eastern Colorado.*
- *Olrog’s Gull is found along the eastern coast of the continent.*

e.g. This abbreviation (from the Latin *exempli gratia*) means ‘for example’. Do not confuse it with, and do not use it interchangeably with, the abbreviation ‘i.e.’ (which see).

Exotic. Use the word ‘exotic’ to refer to species that occur or have occurred in the ABA Area as a result of human agency. Avoid use of the words ‘introduced’ or ‘non-native’, which are often misleading or downright inaccurate.

Eyecup. It’s one word, with no hyphen.

Fewer, Fewest. The little word ‘few’ (and inflected forms thereof) enjoys most-favored-adjective status here at *Birding*. Now here are various sorts of constructions that are *not* particularly favored:

- *less than eight birds*
- *the least amount of words*
- *a small number of Kurds*

And here are superior alternatives to the preceding:

- *fewer than eight birds*
- *the fewest words*
- *a few Kurds*

Following. Disyllabic ‘after’ is frequently preferable to trisyllabic ‘following’; consult Chapter 16 for general perspective on the evils of syllable multiplication.

- Acceptable use of ‘following’: *We saw the storm-chasers following the storm.*
- Smart use of ‘after’: *Three Black-capped Petrels were seen after the storm.*

However. First, and most important: This word cannot be used as a coordinating conjunction.

- Wrong: *The Eurasian Griffon Vulture is a true vulture, however the Turkey Vulture is not.*
- Right: *The Eurasian Griffon Vulture is a true vulture; however, the Turkey Vulture is not.*

Something else: It is acceptable, although somewhat grating, to start a sentence with *however*.

- Acceptable, but grating: *However, the Turkey Vulture is related to the storks.*
- Better, more sonorous: *The Turkey Vulture, however, is related to the storks.*

Bottom line: The words ‘however’ and ‘but’ (which see) are not interchangeable.

i.e. This abbreviation (from the Latin *id est*) means ‘in other words’. Use ‘i.e.’ to denote equivalency between two objects or ideas; use ‘e.g.’ (which see) to denote that one object or idea is an example of larger object or idea.

- *With just a little bit of searching, you should find a dozen species of what the locals call pechos amarillos, i.e., large flycatchers with extensive yellow on the breast.*
- *There remains considerable uncertainty about the genetic relationships among the pechos amarillos, e.g., Tropical Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Great Crested Flycatcher.*

Inseparable. This word does not mean ‘indistinguishable’.

- Acceptable: *Rick and Nora are inseparable.*

- Unacceptable: *Juvenile Gray-crowned and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are inseparable.*
- Acceptable: *Juvenile Gray-crowned and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are indistinguishable.*
- Also acceptable: *Juvenile Gray-crowned and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches cannot be separated.*

internet. Do not capitalize this word—unless, of course, it is at the beginning of a sentence. By the way, we at *Birding* are not especially sanguine about the long-term prospects for capital letters, period. Not even at the beginning of sentences. You heard it here first.

Jr. Do not precede ‘Jr.’ with a comma. It is a restrictive, not a descriptive (“non-restrictive”) element. Thus:

- *Elisabeth II* [not Elisabeth, II]
- *Alexandre Dumas the younger* [not Alexandre Dumas, the younger]
- *Ken Griffey Jr.* [not Ken Griffey, Jr.]

Killdeer. See ‘Brant’.

–ly adverbs. A lot of these are overused or misused. For example:

- *arguably* [does not mean ‘inarguably’]
- *frankly* [does not mean ‘honestly’]
- *hopefully* [does not mean ‘I hope’ or ‘it is hoped’]
- *importantly* [does not mean ‘important’]
- *momentarily* [does not mean ‘in a moment’]
- *presently* [does not mean ‘currently’]

Last, Past. Do not write ‘last’ when you really mean ‘past’. The following sentence is straightforward enough:

- *She was an important influence during the last ten years of Audubon’s life.*

And so are the following:

- *The past five years have seen an explosion of interest in digiscoping.*
- *The past century saw erratic improvements in the field guide.*
- *There has been a heavy influx of Snow Buntings these past few days.*

But the following contains an interesting component of eschatological prognostication:

- *There has been a heavy influx of Snow Buntings these last few days.* [That is, these last few days before the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world?]

MacGillivray's. Not 'MacGillivary's'. Note that it is Latinized to *macgillivraii*, as in the trinomial for one of the many subspecies of the Seaside Sparrow. Meanwhile, the specific epithet of the eponymous warbler is *tolmiei*, which itself is often misspelled. While we're at it, the banding code for MacGillivray's Warbler is, somewhat unexpectedly, MgWa.

May, Might. There is a fair bit of overlap between these two words, but we observe the distinction that, all else being equal, 'might' suggests a lower level probability than 'may'. Consider the following:

- *The AOU might lump Iceland and Thayer's Gulls.*
- *The AOU may split the Fox Sparrow into four species.*

Now note their closeness to the following:

- *The AOU might conceivably lump Iceland and Thayer's Gulls.* [But it doesn't seem all that likely.]
- *The AOU may well split the Fox Sparrow into four species.* [And it seems like a pretty good bet.]

19th Century, 19th-century. This one is analogous to 'ABA Area' vs. 'ABA-area' (which see).

Non-breeding. As a (very) general rule (with lots of exceptions), use a hyphen to separate "technical" terms from prefixes such as *anti-*, *non-*, and *pre-*. Do not use a hyphen in the case of non-technical terms that enjoy wide currency. Examples:

- *anti-listing, non-breeding, pre-Sibley*
- *antimatter, nonsense, preconceived*

Then again:

- *prealternate, postjuvenal*
- *pre-modern, postmodern, post-postmodern* [Go figure.]

On the other hand. Any occurrence of 'on the other hand' should be preceded by an occurrence of 'on the one hand'. If the antecedent 'one hand' isn't available, then change the would-be 'other hand' to 'conversely' or 'instead' or something.

Over. Usually, we favor 'more than' to modify a cardinal amount (cf. 'few'). As in:

- *more than 75 lifers*

Then again:

- *well over 75 lifers*

Prealternate, prebasic. No hyphen, oddly enough. (The "reason" for this convention? Well, it's a convention, plain and simple.)

Photo, Photograph. We tend to eschew the casual ‘photo’ in favor of the formal ‘photograph’. Well, some of the time; we acknowledge that there are instances in which the formal construction is just plain silly.

- Too casual: *Marie McCall’s photos clearly show the diagnostic wing formula.* [The formal subject matter seems to call for ‘photographs’.]
- Just right: *Dan Hall’s photography is notable for its austerity and sharpness.* [Indeed, one could argue that there is a slight difference in meaning between ‘photography is’ and ‘photographs are’.]
- Hapless hypercorrection: *I was annoyed by the identification error in the photographic caption on p. 218.* [Normal people say ‘photo caption’; besides, ‘photographic’ implies adjectival modification that is actually incorrect.]

Previous. Recall from Chapter 16 that syllable multiplication is frowned upon. In this vein, adjectival ‘previous’ should never be used in place of the perfectly valid adverb ‘before’.

Quite. Another reminder from Chapter 16: Go easy on the meaningless intensifiers. The adjective ‘quite’ is quite pointless and superfluous, most of the time. Same thing, much of the time, with such modifiers as ‘rather’, ‘very’, ‘pretty’, and ‘somewhat’.

Shall. Yes, we at *Birding* are aware of the supposed distinction between ‘shall’ and ‘will’. But we tend not to observe said distinction, which we think is stilted and affected. That said, there are certain instances—those in which a particular sort of forcefulness is intended—that probably do call for ‘shall’.

Sonogram. Do not use the incorrect but frequently encountered ‘sonagram’. Do not use ‘spectrogram’, either.

Southeast. Follow the same logic as for ‘East’ (which see). The following are correct:

- *Southeast Arizona*
- *southeastern Arizona*

The following are incorrect:

- *southeast Arizona*
- *Southeastern Arizona*

Species. ‘Species’ is both singular and plural. Do not write ‘specie’ unless you are writing—rather improbably so—about commodity metals. Any serious birder would never make that gaffe, right? But how about the following: What is the possessive of ‘species’? In the case of the plural possessive, the answer is straightforward enough: Just

add the apostrophe. Now what about the singular possessive? Is it *apostrophe-s*? If not, why not? We at *Birding* are still pondering the matter.

State-of-the-art, Work of Art. Compare the following:

- *The result was a state-of-the-art field guide.*
- *Her field guide was a work of art.*

If you are not clear on why hyphens are employed in the former construction but not in the latter, please consult the treatment in Chapter 14 of attributive and predicate compound adjectives.

Though. Do not use ‘though’ as a surrogate for the conjunction ‘although’. Of course, it is acceptable to use ‘though’ as an adverb, essentially synonymous with ‘however’. Thus:

- Informal, generally disapproved of: *Though not in the order Falconiformes, the Turkey Vulture is reckoned by many to be a raptor.*
- Perfectly acceptable: *Although regarded by most birders as a raptor, the Turkey Vulture is in fact in the order Ciconiiformes.*
- Also acceptable: *The skies were filled with Turkey Vultures, though, and we got great looks.*

Versus, Vs. Use the abbreviated form, and do not capitalize it. Limit the use of ‘vs.’ to denote alternatives or contrast. In particular, do not write ‘vs.’ when ‘and’ is acceptable.

- Correct: *The new guide conveniently bypasses the whole problem of jizz vs. feather birding.*
- Incorrect: *The new guide neglects to treat the differences between Short-billed vs. Long-billed Dowitchers.*
- Really incorrect: *The report casts new light on the differences between Long-billed Versus Short-billed Dowitcher.*

Website. One word; no hyphen, no space.

While. Limit the use of this word to denote simultaneity. To denote contrast or comparison, use ‘although’ or ‘whereas’.

- Incorrect: *While the Wrentit is frequently heard, it is difficult to catch a glimpse of.*
- Correct: *Although Winter Wrens are common around the banding station, they are only rarely netted there.*
- Incorrect: *While the Pyle guide caters to advanced readers, the Kaufman guide is suitable for beginners.*
- Correct: *Whereas the Fall Frolics Festival is sponsored by the county extension office, the Blythe Birding Symposium is run by a private corporation.*

- *Correct: While waiting for the Hoary Redpoll to visit the feeder, I was gabbing on the cell phone with my agent.*