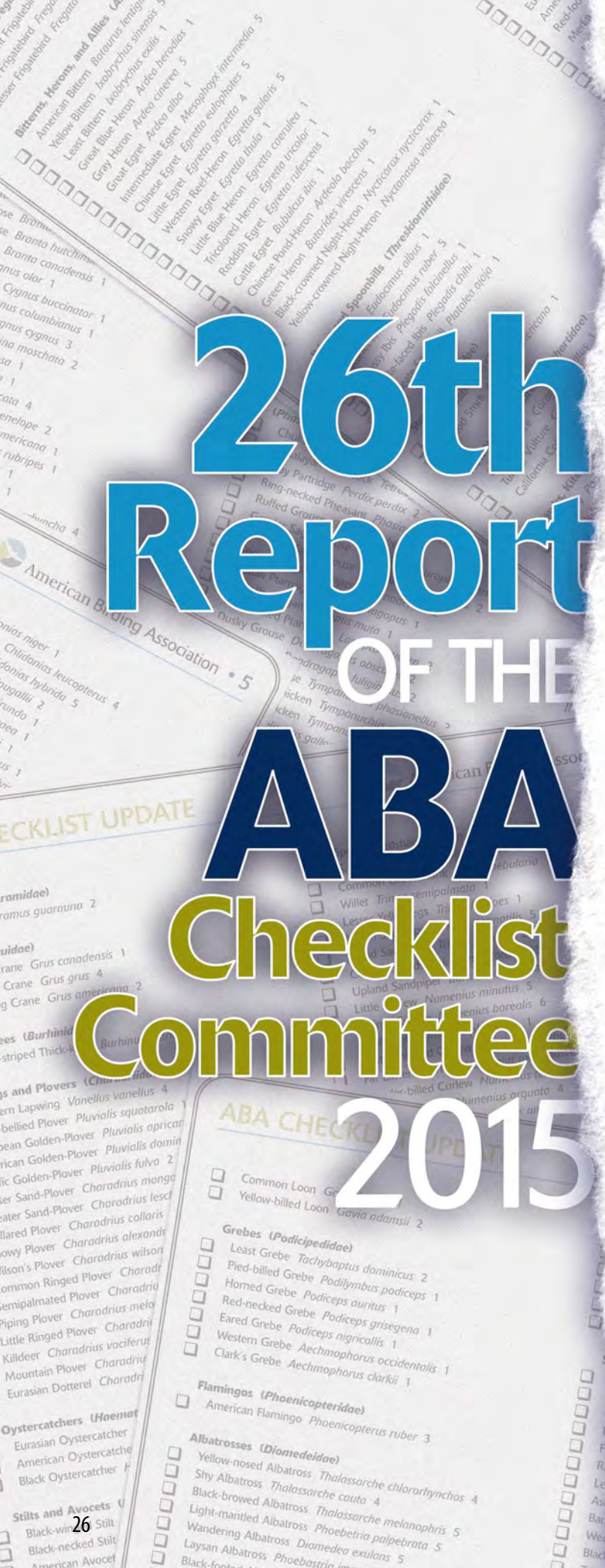

26th Report of the ABA Checklist Committee 2015

This is the 26th published report of the ABA Checklist Committee (hereafter, CLC or committee), covering deliberations between October 2014 and October 2015. The committee consists of eight voting members, including the chair. Since our previous report (Pranty et al. 2014), the terms of Dunn, Gibson, and Lockwood ended in December 2014. These vacancies were filled by Johnson, Lang, and Pyle, all new to the committee. The terms of Garrett and Sibley will end in December 2015. To fill these two vacancies, CLC members nominated two candidates. Elected to the CLC (with terms to begin 1 January 2016) were Mary Gustafson and Lockwood. Gustafson is newly elected, while Lockwood will return to the committee after a one-year absence; see biosketches of these two incoming members, p. 32.

CLC bylaws require seven or eight "accept" votes for a species to be added to or removed from the *ABA Checklist*. During the period covered by this report, the CLC voted on three species. One species was added to the *ABA Checklist*, another was removed from it, and the status of the third species is unchanged. No new species were added to the ABA Area from the 56th supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds* (Chesser et al. 2015). The number of species on the *ABA Checklist* remains at 987.

New Species Accepted

Rufous-necked Wood-Rail (***Aramides axillaris***)—ABA CLC Record #2014-06. One individual at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico, in July 2013 was one of the most celebrated vagrants to the ABA Area. The New Mexico Bird Records Committee voted 7–1 to accept the record as a natural vagrant, with the dissenting voter being concerned about provenance (S. O. Williams, personal communication). In first-round voting, the CLC voted 6–2 to

accept the wood-rail, falling one vote short of consensus. The two dissenting CLC votes reflected similar caution: a large amount of hostile desert habitat exists between central New Mexico and the species' nearest native range in northwestern Mexico; despite well-documented vagrancy by many rails, it was thought that there were no records of vagrancy by any species in the genus *Aramides*. Additionally, wood-rails, including Rufous-necked Wood-Rails, are known to be kept captive.

Following first-round voting, CLC member Johnson provided a reference (Ingels et al. 2011) that documents vagrancy in the Little Wood-Rail (*A. mangle*). With proof of vagrancy among at least one member of the genus, and with the escape/release hypothesis considered highly unlikely, CLC members voted unanimously (8–0) in round-two voting to accept the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail as a presumed natural vagrant.

The Rufous-necked Wood-Rail has long been thought to be a sedentary resident from northern Mexico to Peru and French Guiana. However, recent observations suggest that it is an elevational migrant in at least parts of its range, such as in Belize (Boyer 2014). The species is placed on the *ABA Checklist* as a Code 5 species. We provisionally place it between Virginia Rail and Sora.

Species Removed

Budgerigar (***Melopsittacus undulatus***)—ABA CLC Record #2015-01. This species became extirpated from its formerly established range in the Tampa Bay, Florida region in April 2014, more than 50 years after the population was founded (Pranty 2015a, Pranty 2015b). In August 2015, the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee (FOSRC) voted unanimously to remove the Budgerigar from the Official Florida State Bird List (J. S. Greenlaw, personal communication). The following month, the CLC voted unanimously (7–0) to remove the species from the *ABA Checklist*.

Status Unchanged

Hooded Crane (***Grus monacha***)—ABA CLC Record #2014-02. In 2014, a majority of CLC members voted against adding Hooded Crane to the *ABA Checklist* based on records of unknown provenance from Idaho, Nebraska, Tennessee, and Indiana during 2010–2012 (Pranty et al. 2014, Pranty 2015c). Kendall et al. (2015) urged the CLC to reconsider its decision. CLC bylaws require that "new evidence" be provided before the committee can reconsider any record that previously was not accepted. Committee bylaws also require that any reconsideration be formally requested by at least two committee members. In August 2015, Pranty queried the other CLC members as to whether the information presented by Kendall et al. presented "new evidence" regarding the occurrence of Hooded Cranes. Members were unanimous (7–0) that no "new evidence" was furnished, and that the information provided simply repeated

CHANGES IN BRIEF

Species Added
❑ Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, Code 5

Species Removed
❑ Budgerigar

Status Unchanged
❑ Hooded Crane

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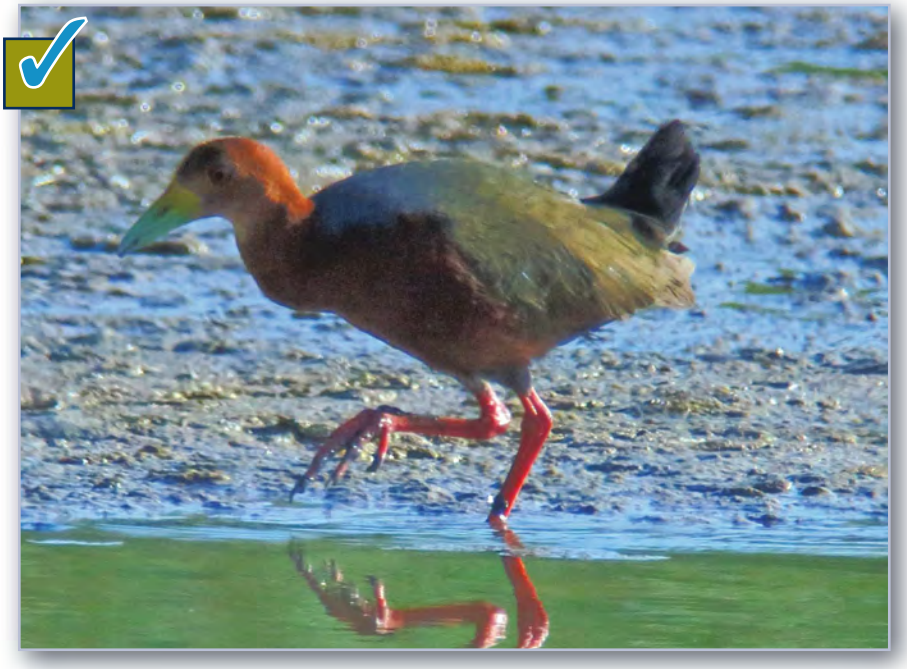


This **Rufous-necked Wood-Rail** was one of the most celebrated vagrants ever to the ABA Area. Although some questions about its provenance were discussed by members of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee and the CLC, the Checklist committee unanimously voted during a second round of deliberations to accept this individual as a natural vagrant from the Neotropics. *Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico; July 2013. Photo by © Peter Burke.*

A feature of the regional avifauna for more than 50 years, the **Budgerigar** was extirpated from the Tampa Bay, Florida, area in April 2014. As the Florida birds represented the only viable population in the ABA Area, the species has been removed from the *ABA Checklist*. *Hudson, Pasco County, Florida; March 2014. Photo by © Dorian Anderson.*

information that the CLC had already reviewed and considered to be unconvincing. CLC bylaws thus offer no avenue for a reconsideration of the Hooded Crane records by the committee, even if members supported such an action—and clearly, there is little or no such support. As a result, the ABA CLC considers the matter of the Hooded Crane to be closed unless "new evidence"—most likely, one or more new records—is obtained. Certainly, a record from western Alaska would be of great interest to the committee.

Votes in Progress

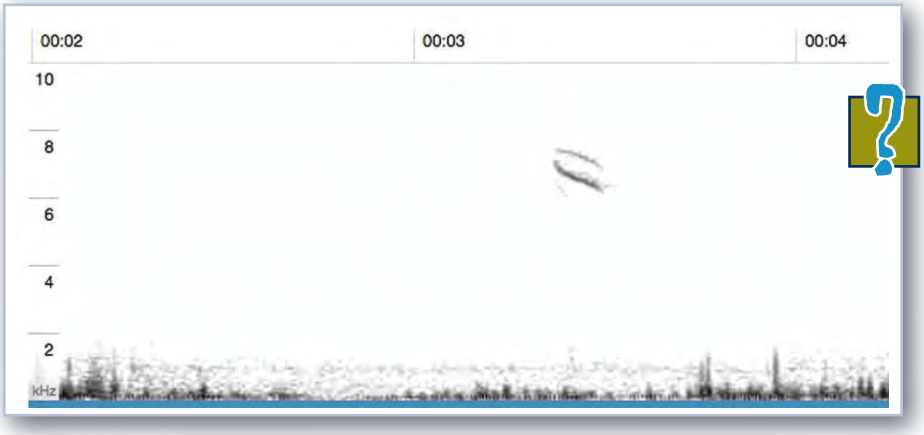
Common Scoter (***Melanitta nigra***)—ABA CLC Record #2015-02. One male at Crescent City, California, during January–February 2015 was accepted unanimously (9–0) by members of the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). The CLC is voting on this record at this time.

Tricolored Munia (***Lonchura malacca***)—ABA CLC Record #2014-04. The first-round vote on this species was detailed

In 2014, the CLC judged that the provenance of the **Hooded Crane** records from Idaho, Nebraska, Tennessee, and Indiana during 2010–2012 was too uncertain for the species to be added to the *ABA Checklist*. Committee bylaws prohibit a reconsideration of a vote unless "new evidence" is presented. Because CLC members recently decided that no such evidence had been brought to the committee's attention, the status of the Hooded Crane in the ABA Area remains unchanged. *Goose Pond, Greene County, Indiana; February 2012. Photo by © Ryan Sanderson.*

in our 25th CLC report (Pranty et al. 2014); a brief summary follows here. Four records of one or two adult-plumage Tricolored Munias at Dry Tortugas National Park, Florida, between 1999 and 2013 have been considered by the FOSRC to represent natural dispersers or colonists from the exotic population established in Cuba. The CLC voted 6–2 to accept the Florida records as representing natural colonists, falling one vote short of consensus. One of the dissenting voters was concerned that the munia population in Cuba may not be established according to CLC criteria (see Pranty et al. 2008:13–15). Committee members chose to wait for information from Cuban ornithologists on the status of Tricolored Munia in that country before beginning second-round voting. However, no information on the munia population in Cuba reached the committee through October 2015. We hope to finalize voting on this species in 2016; the FOSRC decision, along with a record of two Tricolored Munias photographed at Everglades National Park, Florida in July 2015, indicate the need for definitive CLC action.

The **Tricolored Munia** creates a unique challenge for the CLC, which has never before voted to add a non-breeding exotic species to the *ABA Checklist*. Five records of adult-plumage Tricolored Munias in southern Florida may represent dispersers from an exotic population found in Cuba. However, first-round voting by CLC members to add this species to the *ABA Checklist* was inconclusive, with six votes in favor and two votes opposed. Attempts to clarify the status of the munia population in Cuba have to date been unsuccessful. *Dry Tortugas National Park, Monroe County, Florida; December 2013. Photo by © Judd Patterson.*



In evaluating a rosefinch (*Carpodacus*) from St. Paul Island, Alaska, the CLC will examine not only photographic evidence but also acoustic data such as this sound spectrogram. With the recent proliferation of audio recorders, Pranty and Floyd (2013) predicted that the CLC would soon be confronted with acoustic analyses of potential additions to the *ABA Checklist*; **Pallas's Rosefinch** may well provide that example. *St. Paul Island, Alaska; September 2015. Recording by © Doug Gochfeld.*

Votes Anticipated/Possible

The CLC is aware of six potential "firsts" for the ABA Area that are undergoing or may soon undergo review by state bird records committees. A **Red-legged Honeycreeper** (***Cyanerpes cyaneus***) at Estero Llano Grande State Park, Texas in November 2014 was recently accepted as a natural vagrant by the Texas Bird Records Committee. A **Black Catbird** (***Melanoptila glabrirostris***) that rode a ship to 26°14.55 N, 91°31.29 W, a point in the Gulf of Mexico about 191 miles south of the Louisiana coast, on June 4, 2013, is under review by the Louisiana Bird Records Committee. A **European Robin** (***Erithacus rubecula***) in Bucks County, Pennsylvania (Newitt 2015) during February–March 2015 is under review by the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee. A **Gray Thrasher** (***Toxostoma cinereum***) at San Diego, California, will soon be reviewed by the CBRC. Finally, in September 2015, two potential first ABA records were documented from Alaska: a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** (***Acrocephalus dumetorum***) photographed at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, and a **Pallas's Rosefinch** (***Carpodacus roseus***) photographed and audio-recorded at St. Paul Island; both records will be reviewed by the Alaska Checklist Committee.

Note: An apparent Red-backed Shrike x Turkestan Shrike (*Lanius*

The issue of ship-assistance has presented a "thorny" (Dunn 1997) challenge for the CLC for decades. The CLC has had no formal policy on the issue of ship-assistance since 1996, relying instead on a belief that "…each member should vote based on his or her own overall philosophy" (Dunn 1997). This **Black Catbird,** which rode a ship into the ABA Area in June 2013 may well require the Checklist Committee to adopt formal rules on the issue of ship-assistance. *Gulf of Mexico; June 2013. Photo by © Sean Minns.*

A shrike found in Mendocino County, California, in March 2015 and originally identified as a Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) is now believed to have been a hybrid between a Red-backed Shrike (*L. collurio*) and a Turkestan Shrike (*L. phoenicuroides*; P. Pyle, personal communication). Even though the ABA Checklist Committee does not track the occurrence of hybrids, this individual, the first reported for the continent, deserves mention here. Note that there are no ABA Area records of either presumed parental species. *Manchester, Mendocino County, California; March 2015. Photo by © Monte Taylor.*

collurio x *L. phoenicuroides*) from California will not be reviewed by the ABA CLC; see photo, left.

Taxonomic Changes Accepted by the AOU (Chesser et al. 2015)

For the first time in several years, the annual supplement (Chesser et al. 2015) prepared by members of the Committee

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Members of the AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature–North and Middle America are responsible for determining the official names and taxonomic placement of all bird species found in the AOU Area. Members of the ABA CLC automatically accept all such changes made by the AOU committee. As a result, the generic name of the **White-tailed Hawk** is changed in the *ABA Checklist* from *Buteo* to *Geranoaetus*, following an AOU decision based on genetic studies of buteoine hawks. *Kleberg County, Texas; November 2003. Photo by © Brian E. Small.*

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Continued from page 30

on Classification and Nomenclature–North and Middle America, of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), resulted in no additions to the *ABA Checklist* (although one species replaces another). AOU changes that affect the *ABA Checklist* are as follows:

- Herald Petrel is split into two species, Trindade Petrel and Herald Petrel; Trindade replaces Herald on the *ABA Checklist*.

- The scientific name of White-tailed Hawk is changed from *Buteo albicaudatus* to *Geranoaetus albicaudatus*.

- The scientific name of Roadside Hawk is changed from *Buteo magnirostris* to *Rupornis magnirostris*.

- The sequence of the Buteonine hawks is rearranged as follows:
  - Roadside Hawk (*Rupornis magnirostris*)
  - Harris's Hawk (*Parabuteo inicinctus*)
  - White-tailed Hawk (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*)
  - Gray Hawk (*Buteo plagiatus*)
  - Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)
  - Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*)
  - Short-tailed Hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*)
  - Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)
  - Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*)
  - Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)
  - Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*)
  - Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)

- Western Spindalis is moved into the *incertae sedis* category, signifying uncertain phylogenetic placement.

- The scientific name of American

Mary Gustafson is a bird biologist who has served on the Maryland–Washington, D.C. Records Committee and more recently the Texas Bird Records Committee. She has worked extensively in museum collections, and she edits a large region of southern Texas for eBird. Gustafson actively birds in the ABA Area and elsewhere.

Mark W. Lockwood is a Regional Director with Texas State Parks. He has actively birded Texas for more than 40 years and serves on the state bird records committee. Mark is the Texas editor for *North American Birds*. He has published 50 papers and eight books, including *The Texas Ornithological Society Handbook of Texas Birds*.

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Tree Sparrow is changed from *Spizella arborea* to *Spizelloides arborea*.

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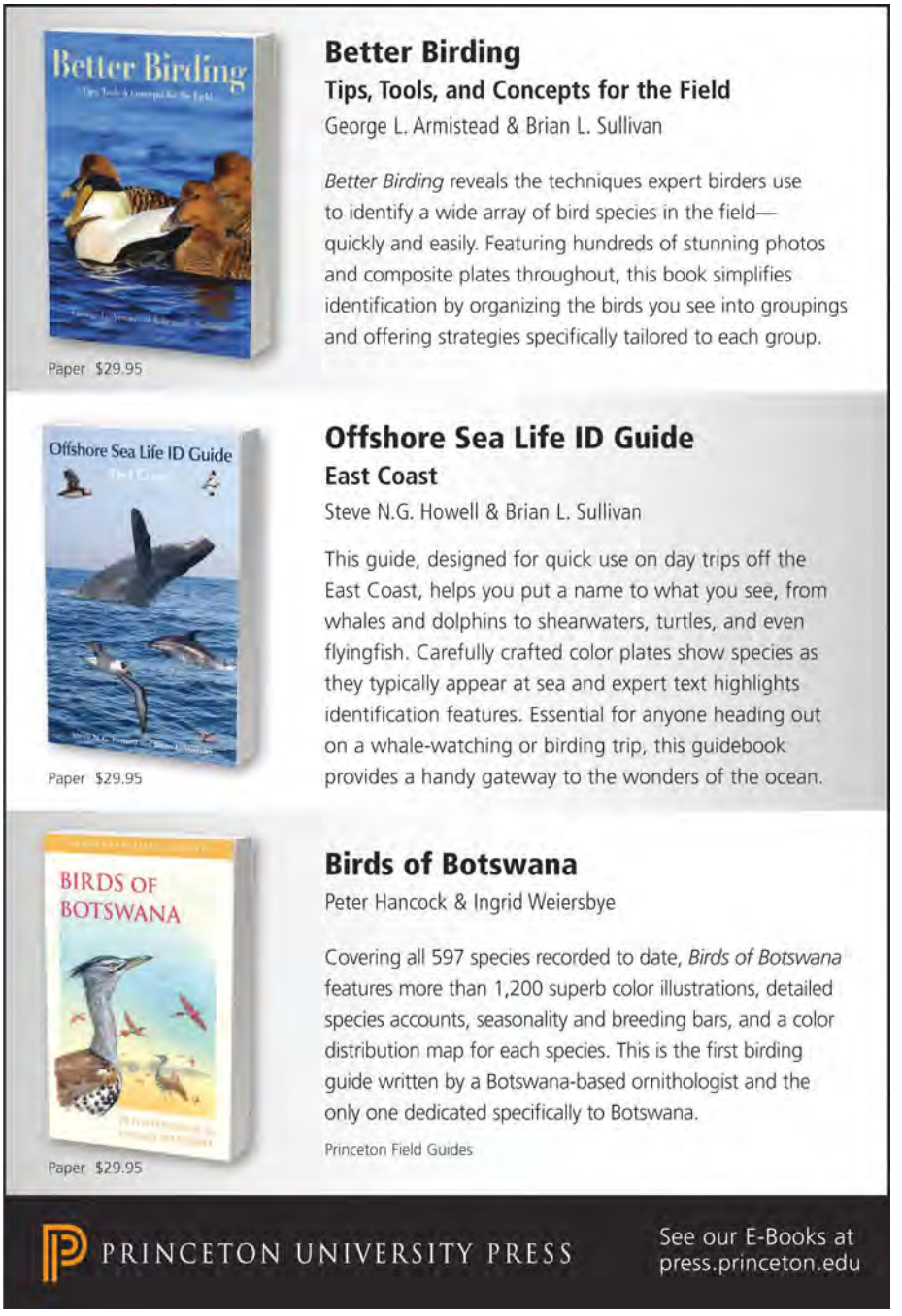
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