

# ABA Checklist Committee 2002 Annual Report

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ALAN MURPHY

This is the first Committee report since the publication of the sixth edition of the ABA Checklist (ABA 2002). Jon Dunn deserves special kudos for his effort in bringing the sixth edition to fruition. The sixth edition not only incorporates those species that have been added since the fifth edition, but also updates the ever-changing taxonomy and nomenclature of the North American avifauna and corrects details of a number of records published in earlier editions of the ABA Checklist.

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During the past nine months the Committee has reached a final decision on nine species, of which four were accepted and added to the Checklist. Three species were designated as *Origin Hypothetical*, a recently adopted option to evaluate extraordinary occurrences (see below). Two species were not accepted by the Checklist Committee. The Committee is currently or soon will be reviewing records for Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Gray-hooded Gull (*Larus cirrocephalus*), Giant Kingbird (*Tyrannus cubensis*), and Cuban Pewee (*Contopus caribaeus*). Note that Loggerhead Kingbird (*Tyrannus caudifasciatus*) was removed in the sixth edition of the ABA Checklist.

#### New Species Accepted

Galápagos/Hawaiian (“Dark-rumped”) Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia/sandwichensis*). ABA-CLC Record # 2002-3. 1 August 1997, Cordell Bank, off Marin County, California. The Committee unanimously accepted this record (of one individual) at the somewhat problematic level of Galápagos/Hawaiian Petrel. Since the time of the Committee’s evaluation, the recently published forty-third supplement (Banks *et al.* 2002) to the American Ornithologists’ Union’s *Check-list of North American Birds* has recognized populations on the Hawaiian Islands as a species (*P. sandwichensis*) distinct from those on the Galápagos Islands (*P. phaeopygia*); see Tomkins and Milne (1991) and Browne *et al.* (1997) for additional details. Thus, the ABA Committee anticipates revisiting this issue if and when concrete evidence is received for one or both of these two newly-recognized species. Galápagos/Hawaiian Petrel is

added to the ABA Checklist as a Code 5 species. Photographs and additional details on identification, status, and distribution are viewable on the California Bird Records Committee website <[www.wfo-cbrc.org/cbrc](http://www.wfo-cbrc.org/cbrc)> under the 1997 Annual Report.

Greater Sandplover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*). ABA-CLC Record # 2002-7. 29 January 2001 – 8 April 2001, Bolinas Lagoon, Marin County, California. The Committee unanimously accepted this well-documented record of a single individual that was present for more than two months and seen by many (Abbott *et al.* 2001; Fig. 1). During this period it was netted, measured, and photographed. Measurements indicate that the bird was referable to the nominate subspecies, which breeds farther east, in Mongolia and north-central China, and which is the longest-distance migrant of the three described subspecies (Hirschfeld *et al.* 2000). The nominate subspecies is known as a vagrant across Europe, and it is a rare but regular migrant to Japan and Korea (Hayman *et al.* 1986). Greater Sandplover is added to the ABA Checklist as a Code 5 species.

Band-tailed Gull (*Larus belcheri*). ABA-CLC Record # 2002-2. Photo documentation has been provided for Florida, (adult in alternate plumage, January 1976 – 11 February 1976, Naples) and for California (adult in basic plumage, August 1997, San Diego County; see Fig. 2). The Committee unanimously accepted the identification of these birds, with one member voting to designate the species as “*Origin Hypothetical*”. Details on identification, status, and distribution are given in Lethaby and Bangma (1999). Although this species is normally not encountered north of coastal Peru, there are three

In evaluating lumps and splits, the ABA Checklist Committee follows the lead of the AOU, which makes decisions based on a broad suite of biochemical, morphological, and behavioral data. For example, in the case of the recently-split Black-crested Titmouse, shown here, the AOU examined patterns of assortative mating and hybridization with the Tufted Titmouse, as well as genetic and vocal differences between the two titmouse populations. *Rio Grande Valley, Texas; March 2002.*



PETER LA TOURRETTE

Fig. 1. North America's first Greater Sandplover was found 29 January 2001 in Marin County, California. Full details of this remarkable record can be found in a 2001 article by Sue Abbott *et al.* that appeared in *North American Birds* (55:252–257). *Bolinas Lagoon, Marin County, California; 5 February 2001.*



TONY MERCECA

Fig. 2. Band-tailed Gull, which has been recorded in both Florida and California, has now been added to the ABA Checklist. *San Diego, California; October 1997.*

other Florida records (Stevenson and Anderson 1994), and it is casual to Panama (AOU 1998). Band-tailed Gull is added to the ABA Checklist as a Code 5 species. Note that Band-tailed Gull is often referred to as Belcher's Gull.

**Yellow-chevroned Parakeet** (*Brotogeris chiriri*). ABA-CLC Record # 2002-8. This introduced species was unanimously added, based on information provided by Garrett (1993), Smith and Smith (1993), and Garrett (1997). Prior to the early 1990s, Yellow-chevroned and White-winged (*B. versicolorus*) Parakeets, which are native to South America, were considered conspecific, and they were collectively known as Canary-winged Parakeet, which usage obfuscated the status of both taxa. Since the 1970s, Yellow-chevroned Parakeet has been replacing the formerly common White-winged Parakeet in southern California. A conservative population estimate for Yellow-chevroned Parakeet in southern California is 550 birds, with a population expansion underway in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. In California, only a few White-winged Parakeets occur in the San Pedro / Redondo Beach area of Los Angeles County and in San Francisco. In southern Florida, in contrast, White-winged Parakeet appears to remain fairly common, and the species remains on the ABA Checklist. On the whole, though, the status of the genus *Brotogeris* in Florida (e.g., in the Fort Lauderdale area) is uncertain; flocks often are mixed, and some individuals display considerable variation in wing pattern and color, which may suggest hybridization between the two species (Pranty and Voren 2003). Yellow-chevroned Parakeet is added to the ABA Checklist as a Code 2 species. Note that this species has not yet been added to either the California (K.L. Garrett, personal communication) or Florida (B. Pranty, personal communication) checklists.

# The Forty-third Supplement to the AOU Check-list (Auk 119:897-906): Changes Affecting the ABA Checklist

The A.O.U.'s recently published forty-third supplement on classification and nomenclature brings a number of changes to the ABA Checklist. These revisions are summarized below.

## Taxonomic Changes

- “Dark-rumped” Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*) is now recognized to consist of two species, Galápagos Petrel (*P. phaeopygia*) and Hawaiian Petrel (*P. sandwichensis*). To date, no unequivocal specific identifications have been made of birds that have been recorded off the west coast of North America.
- The bird formerly known as Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) is now considered to be two species. The widespread bird in North America is now known as Wilson’s Snipe (*G. delicata*), and the Old World species retains the name Common Snipe (*G. gallinago*). The Old World species reaches the western Aleutian Islands, mainly as a migrant (more common in the spring). It has wintered in Alaska (Shemya Island), and there is a single nesting record for Alaska (Attu Island). There is one record for Labrador (Godfrey 1986). As a transient, there are no records for Common Snipe from mainland Alaska, but the species is regular to the Pribilof Islands and casual to St. Lawrence Island (D.D. Gibson, personal communication). Note that this split reflects a return to an older taxonomy, in which Wilson’s and Common Snipes were recognized as separate species. The reason for the return to the older taxonomy was based largely on a reanalysis of the display vocalizations of the two taxa.
- In another return to an older taxonomy, Black-crested Titmouse (*Baccolophus atricristatus*; see frontispiece, p. 138) has been split from Tufted Titmouse (*B. bicolor*). Reasons for the split include a reanalysis of assortative mating and hybridization in the contact zone, along with additional studies on genetic and vocal differences between the two populations.

## Nomenclatural Changes to English Names

- Eared Trogon (*Euptilotis neoxenus*) is now known as Eared Quetzal. This change reflects current thinking about the species’ close relationship with other quetzals.

## Nomenclatural Changes to Scientific Names

- Roseate Spoonbill is now placed in the genus *Platalea*.
- Purple Gallinule is now placed in the genus *Porphyrio*.
- The specific epithet of Red Phalarope is changed to *fulicarius*.
- Based on the results of a genetic analysis, the closest living relative of Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) appears to be Blue Grosbeak (formerly *Guiraca caerulea*). As a result, the monotypic genus *Guiraca* is merged into *Passerina*. The linear sequence for the ABA-Area *Passerina* buntings is now: Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Indigo Bunting, Varied Bunting, Painted Bunting.

## Placement:

- Galápagos/Hawaiian Petrel comes immediately after Black-capped Petrel on the revised Checklist.
- Greater Sandplover comes immediately after Mongolian Plover on the revised Checklist (this provisional placement is based on BOU 2000).
- Wilson’s Snipe comes immediately before Common Snipe on the revised Checklist.
- Band-tailed Gull comes immediately after Heermann’s Gull on the revised Checklist.
- Black-crested Titmouse comes immediately after Tufted Titmouse on the revised Checklist.
- Information on the placement of Yellow-chevroned Parakeet is not available at this time, because the AOU has not yet adjudicated in the matter.

## Origin Hypothetical

In February 2002, the Committee adopted this designation for an increasing number of records whose origin is problematic. In order to take the guesswork and the inevitable politics out of evaluating these records, we created this designation. The *Origin Hypothetical* designation encompasses those records for which it is impossible to ascertain whether a bird arrived via a "natural" vs. a human-assisted means. Typically, records that are placed in this category involve species for which there is no existing pattern of vagrancy. However, there are examples in which a species is known to have a pattern of vagrancy, but the provenance of the bird is questionable (as in the case of the Dark-billed Cuckoo record, below).

**Light-mantled Albatross** (*Phoebastria palpebrata*). ABA-CLC Record # 1997-1. 17 July 1994, off Cordell Bank, Marin County, California. The ABA Committee unanimously accepted the identification of this single individual; after the *Origin Hypothetical* designation was adopted, three members voted to so designate this record in that category because there is no way to eliminate the possibility that the bird was ship-assisted. This species is a southern hemisphere inhabitant with no prior pattern of vagrancy; northernmost records in the western hemisphere are off Peru (Harrison 1983, AOU 1998). For further details on the ABA-Area record, see Stallcup and Terrill (1996).

**Dark-billed Cuckoo** (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*). ABA-CLC Record # 1999-3. The record is based on a specimen (accession # 164956) deposited at the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science (LSUMNS), Baton Rouge; photos of the specimen are on file at the ABA. The cuckoo, originally identified as a Black-billed, was included in a large shipment of salvaged specimens sent to LSUMNS from a wild bird rehabilitation center in Weslaco, Texas. It remained in an

LSUMNS freezer for several years.

While researchers were sorting through the salvaged specimens in 1993, the cuckoo was discovered, re-identified, and prepared as a study skin.

Unfortunately, the only information associated with the specimen was "10 February 1986, Weslaco, TX, dead on arrival"; there was no information concerning the circumstances surrounding the bird's arrival at the center (who found it, when it was found, or where it came from).

The Committee unanimously accepted the identification, but three members felt that the bird's provenance was uncertain. Unlike Light-mantled Albatross and Blue Rock Thrush (below), this species exhibits a well-established pattern of vagrancy; it is an austral migrant that occurs as a vagrant outside its normal range (AOU 1998). In its normal range, the Dark-billed Cuckoo is native to South America, including Trinidad and the Galápagos Islands (A.O.U. 1998).

**Blue Rock Thrush** (*Monticola solitarius*). ABA-CLC Record # 1999-4. 6 June 1997, West Spences Bridge, British Columbia. This record is based on good-quality photographs of an adult male (McDonald 1997). Based on the chestnut-colored lower breast and abdomen, the Canadian bird clearly was referable to the migratory East Asian *philippensis* subspecies of this widespread Palearctic species. (Vaurie 1959). The *philippensis* subspecies occurs in the eastern Palearctic; it breeds in China, Korea, and Japan, and it winters from southern China south into many of the islands of Oceania (Vaurie 1959). The Committee unanimously accepted the identification, but four members voted to designate the record as *Origin Hypothetical* because there is no established pattern of vagrancy (although the species is migratory) in those populations of the Blue Rock Thrush that occur closest to the ABA Area.

## Records Not Accepted

**Rufous-tailed Robin** (*Luscinia sibilans*). ABA-CLC Record # 2002-5. A thrush seen and photographed on Attu Island, Alaska, on 4 June 2000 may have been a Rufous-tailed Robin, but photos and videotape do not unequivocally support that identification. The bird appears to be only faintly barred below (see Figs. 3 & 4), but it should be taken into account that the images of this bird were overexposed. Material recently collected from China, and now deposited at the University of Kansas Natural History Museum, indicates that the Rufous-tailed Robin is much more heavily marked across the breast and along the flanks (see Figs. 5 & 6) and that the tail is not as intensively red as indicated either in the digital images or in the written descriptions of the Attu bird. This record failed to pass the Alaska and ABA records committees, with a 4-4 vote in the latter.

**Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel** (*Oceanodroma monorhis*). ABA-CLC Record # 2002-6. This record involves a single individual off Hatteras, North Carolina, on 8 August 1998. See O'Brien *et al.* (1999) for a thorough analysis of this record, along with color photos of the bird. Although the description is convincing, photographic material does not clearly and unequivocally eliminate the possibility that the bird was a dark-rumped Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). Because of overlap in measurements between Swinhoe's and Leach's Storm-Petrels, the identification comes down to the observers' belief that the bird had a different structure and flight style than from those of dark-rumped individuals of Leach's Storm-Petrel. Unfortunately, structure and flight differences cannot be ascertained from the photos. Indeed, interpretation of the extent of a white patch on the base of the primaries is problematic, and there were observer discrepancies in the appearance of the tail length. Although

Swinhoe's Storm-Petrels have been documented in the North Atlantic, and to date, no dark-rumped Leach's Storm-Petrels have been recorded in the Atlantic, the committee took the conservative view by not accepting the record, with a 3-5 vote. The AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature relegated the species to their Appendix that includes species reported with insufficient evidence for placement on the main list.

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Fig. 3. The bird in this videograb can safely be assigned to the Old World genus *Luscinia*. The lack of rich coloration on the flanks and on the sides of the breast, however, is not consistent with Rufous-tailed Robin (*L. sibilans*). *Attu Island, Alaska; 4 June 2000*.



JAN KHOTTS

Fig. 4. At this angle, the bird can be seen *not* to show heavy scalloping on the upper breast—a character that is usually shown on Rufous-tailed Robin. *Attu Island, Alaska; 4 June 2000*.



COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Fig. 5. In evaluating potential additions to the ABA Checklist, the ABA Checklist Committee makes use of a variety of resources, such as this specimen (#92115) of an adult female Rufous-tailed Robin housed in the University of Kansas Natural History Museum.



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Fig. 6. This specimen (#92113)—an incontrovertible adult female Rufous-tailed Robin from Heilongjiang Province, China, in late May 2001—exhibits heavy scalloping across the breast and down onto the flanks.

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- Garrett, K.L. 1993. Canary-winged Parakeets: The southern California perspective. *Birding* 25:430–431.
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## Corrections to the ABA Checklist, sixth edition (2002)

After the recent publication of the sixth edition of the ABA Checklist, the following corrections have come to our attention.

### Taxonomy

- Rose-throated Becard and Masked Tityra should appear under the heading *Incertae sedis* (placement uncertain) following the family *Tyrannidae* on p. 45 (AOU 1998). These two species, as well as some other neotropical species, are considered part of the superfamily *Tyranniodea*, but they are not necessarily within the family *Tyrannidae*.
- Bullock's Oriole should follow Streak-backed Oriole on p. 56 (AOU 2000). Genetic work has determined that Bullock's Oriole is more closely related to Streak-backed Oriole than to Baltimore Oriole.

### ABA Status Codes

The status codes that follow each species name on the main list should be changed as detailed below. Most of these changes involve Codes 4 and 5 which reflect the actual number of accepted records. Codes may change in the future with additional accepted records. See p. 14 of the Checklist for further details.

- Roadside Hawk, (4) to (5), p. 32.
- Little Ringed Plover, (4) to (5), p. 34.
- Common Redshank, (4) to (5), p. 35.
- Eurasian Curlew, (5) to (4), p. 36.
- Broad-billed Sandpiper, (5) to (4), p. 36.
- White-throated Needletail, (4) to (5), p. 42.
- Piratic Flycatcher, (4) to (5), p. 45.
- Variegated Flycatcher, (4) to (5), p. 45.
- Thick-billed Vireo, (4) to (5), p. 46.
- Gray-breasted Martin, (6) to (5), p. 47.
- Lanceolated Warbler, (4) to (5), p. 49.
- White-throated Robin, (4) to (5), p. 50.
- Blue Mockingbird, (4) to (5), p. 50.
- Crescent-chested Warbler, (4) to (5), p. 51.
- Worthen's Sparrow, (6) to (5), p. 54.
- Yellow-breasted Bunting, (4) to (5), p. 55.

— Thanks to Jonathan Alderfer for providing the data in this sidebar.