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Plus all the other 2013 checklist changes

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294
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BIRDER’S GUIDE TO LISTING & TAXONOMY
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2012 Listing Snapshot

On the cover: Taxonomic changes, like the recent split of Sage Sparrow, have impacts on birders of all sorts. In the digital age, things frequently go the other way, as well: birders are impacting taxonomy through their observations, recordings, and photography. Center drawing (of adult bell Bell’s Sparrow) and notebook sketch © Matthew Dodder. Photos © Bob Steele (juvenile Bell’s Sparrow), © Michael L. P. Retter (birders in sagebrush), © Robert Royse (adult Bell’s Sparrow).
Does it count?

That’s a fundamental question that I hear birders ask all the time. They’ve seen or heard a bird, or they might be on the verge of doing so, or they did some time ago but have heard that the species’ status has changed. And they want to know, can they count it, on which lists, and when?

But they also want something more, most of the time. They want to understand. They want things to make sense, for the reality they observe with their own eyes and ears to square with what the authorities and experts are telling them. They want to know why certain birds count and others don’t, at least not in the same ways.

What you are now reading is the ABA’s attempt to answer those questions on an annual basis for the entire ABA Area.

It’s my hope and expectation that *A Birder’s Guide to Listing and Taxonomy* will quickly come to be regarded as the go-to source for understanding how the science of taxonomy and the game of listing interact to shape the birding experiences that all of us enjoy.

Birding can be a lot of things. It can be a sport, a hobby, a practice, a discipline, an escape, a social event or a solitary one. But one of the things that makes birding so fascinating and enduring is that it is rooted in science, in this case ornithology.

That scientific basis is also one of the things that can make birding frustrating from time to time. All those now-frequent splits, now-rare lumps, and myriad juggling and rejiggerings can really be exasperating. More than anything, *A Birder’s Guide to Listing and Taxonomy* aims to replace that frustration with understanding, appreciation, and even enjoyment.

Where so many of the recreations humans enjoy, from the football stadium to the opera house, are in essence artificial, existing only due to human effort and creativity, birding is based on birds, and birds are real entirely apart from us. We’re trying to understand their reality and their truths, albeit from our own human perspective.

So in birding, we’re not just trying to settle a dispute about scoring, though that can be a very real and important part of our discussions. We’re also trying to interpret science and illuminate the natural world in a way that will make your birding, however you practice it, more enjoyable and rewarding. To demonstrate that in the end, all birds count, each in its own way.

Good birding,

Jeffrey A. Gordon
President, American Birding Association
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Welcome to the first issue of the ABA’s *Birder’s Guide to Listing and Taxonomy*. As you may have gathered from the title, there are two topics covered in this issue, and although one is scientific and the other avocational, the two are intimately intertwined.

In the taxonomy articles, authors will explain to you, in straightforward terms, the latest official changes in how birds are classified and related, and also offer informed speculation. Specifically, in this issue, you’ll learn what a tanager is (and what it’s not), how the ABA and AOU checklists have changed, and how birders like you are contributing to those changes.

Within the listing articles in future issues we’ll give you the latest news in Big Year attempts, green listing, and Big Days. In this issue, Team Sapsucker relays the amazing tale of their smashing the ABA Big Day record earlier this year. You’ll also find a 2012 Listing Snapshot, which features some of the top lists submitted by ABA members at Listing Central.

Whether you’re a rabid lister, a casual feeder-watcher, or a taxonomy wonk, I hope you’ll find something of interest in this issue. Please let us know what you liked, what you didn’t like, what you’d like to see more of, and what you’d rather not see again. Be sure to check in at [aba.org/birdersguide](http://aba.org/birdersguide) for access to expanded, web-only content and to join discussions about topics in this issue.

Good birding,

Michael L. P. Retter
Editor, *Birder’s Guide*
ABA Convention:
Corpus Christi, Texas
April 22–27, 2014

ABA Convention Staff:
Jeff Gordon, Tom Johnson, Jennie Duberstein, Ted Floyd, Jen Brumfield, George Armistead, and more. Speakers include Gerrit Vyn, Brian Sullivan and Jeffrey Kimball.

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Migration is at its best in April along the Gulf Coast and there’s no better spot to take it all in than Corpus Christi. Join ABA members and staff for thrilling field trips in search of migrants and Texas specialties.

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When the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth in 1620, what did they see? There must have been Razorbills, Black Guillemots, and probably murres, and even Great Auks working the coast. Things have changed a bit since Captain Myles Standish’s days, but a lot is still the same too. The Clam Chowder has always been good, and the tough, plump Purple Sandpipers still work the tide-line along the rocks, while scoters and Common Eiders still drift offshore, just as they did in 1620. The Cape Cod area is a hotbed for rarities too. Join your ABA birding friends in legendary Plymouth!

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ABA Safari Staff: Adam Riley, Jeff & Liz Gordon, Forrest Rowland, George Armistead, and more.

Registration:
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For all the latest details on these and more ABA events, go to events.aba.org, email us at events@aba.org, or call us at (800) 850-2473
About the Authors

Ted Floyd is the Editor of Birding magazine, and he is broadly involved in other programs and initiatives of the ABA. He is the author of more than 100 magazine and journal articles, as well as three recent books, including an ABA title, Let’s Go Birding! Floyd is a frequent speaker at birding festivals and state ornithological society meetings, and he has served on the boards of several nonprofit organizations.

Alan Knue is an avid reader of the literature relating to the evolution, taxonomy, and biogeography of birds and over the years has taught popular evening classes for birders on these subjects. Alan lives in Seattle, Washington, with his partner and their dog and indoor cat.

Bill Pranty has lived and birded in central Florida for more than 35 years. His studies emphasize the documentation of Florida’s diverse avifauna, with a focus on its exotic species. His research has added three species to the ABA Checklist—Purple Swamphen, Nanday Parakeet, and Common Myna—all of them exotics from Florida. Pranty is chairman of the ABA Checklist Committee, and a Technical Reviewer for and frequent contributor to Birding magazine. In addition to dozens of peer-reviewed papers, Pranty is the author or co-author of five books, including A Birder’s Guide to Florida and the ABA Checklist.

Michael L. P. Retter is the editor of Birder’s Guide magazine, as well as a Technical Reviewer for Birding. He leads tours to North, Middle, and South America for Tropical Birding. When at home, Michael pursues interests in cooking, gardening, and numismatics, and helps to run the GBNA email group. The incoming secretary of the Indiana Bird Records Committee, Michael lives in West Lafayette, Indiana, with his fiancé, two indoor cats, and about 100 orchids.

Andrew Spencer has been birding ever since his grandmother showed him a Wood Duck on a local pond when he was five years old. After spending a number of years birding throughout the U.S., a trip to the tropics changed his life forever: he now lives in Ecuador and guides for Tropical Birding. That first trip to the tropics also triggered an increasingly fanatic obsession with all things related to bird sounds. Nowadays it’s rare to see him in the field without a recorder and parabola in tow, trying to get any peep, chirp, or twitter on tape.

Team Sapsucker’s members include Jessie Barry, Andrew Farnsworth, Marshall Iliff, Tim Lenz, Brain Sullivan, and Christopher L. Wood. All are staff members at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Big Days are one of their favorite aspects of birding. Collectively, the team members have run more than 100 Big Days, setting records in nearly a dozen states. They are always excited about the competitive challenge and the opportunity to raise funds and awareness for bird conservation.
In July of 2013, the ABA Board officially approved the reconstitution of the Recording Standards and Ethics Committee (RSEC). This committee is tasked with maintaining the standards used by ABA birders as a “rule book” of sorts for determining “what counts” when reporting list totals to the ABA. This committee is also in charge of forming and maintaining the ABA’s Code of Birding Ethics, an important set of ethical standards that all ABA members are encouraged to follow and disseminate.

The current and newly approved RSEC comprises Matt Fraker (as temporary chair; Carlock, IL), Nick Block (Lewisburg, PA), Shawneen Finnegan (Portland, OR), Greg Miller (Sugar Creek, OH), and Jennifer Rycenga (Half Moon Bay, CA).

The committee is in the process of reviewing the current listing standards to determine whether any should be updated. Jeff Skrentny’s excellent article in the December 2012 issue of Winging It (<tinyurl.com/onlineWI>) detailed some of the areas that need to be addressed or clarified. The committee will also review the Code of Birding Ethics, and prepare to work with the ABA Checklist Committee on the possible future addition of Hawaii to the ABA Area.

It is also a goal of the RSEC to start a direct line of online communication between the ABA membership and the committee. This will allow the RSEC to quickly field questions on recording and ethics standards and to participate in any general conversation pertaining to areas under the committee’s purview.

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns, and join in the conversation at the ABA Blog <aba.org/birdersguide>. 😊
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What the Heck is a Tanager?

Knowledge and memories from back home heavily influenced the European explorers, settlers, and naturalists who selected names for the “new” animals and plants they encountered in the Americas. Sometimes they got it right, as they discovered and named new species of owls, woodpeckers, crows, etc. Many of the smaller birds looked and behaved like familiar species in Europe, so they were given names like bunting, warbler, blackbird, oriole, and grosbeak. Several new names had to be coined. One of those was tanager, and it was used for colorful, fruit-eating birds that didn’t fit in with what was known back home.

Though most of the names these first explorers applied weren’t quite correct, many of their “new” species have retained these common names. On the other hand, as the years have passed and more has been learned, most of these “misnamed” birds were given different scientific names, and some were moved from the families into which they were originally placed.

Such is the case with the “nine-primaried oscines”. This assemblage contains a number of groups whose origins lie in the Americas and are still found exclusively here: New World warblers, icterids, tanagers, New World sparrows, and cardinalids. It also includes groups that are
shared with Eurasia (long-spurs) and others that are better represented in Eurasia and even reach Africa (fringillid finches and Old World buntings).

All of the species in these groups have one important thing in common: nine functional primary feathers. (However, they possess a reduced and hidden 10th primary, so they are really 10-primaried, like the majority of other passerines [Hall 2005].) Looking past this one unifying feature, we see a huge assemblage of birds which is very diverse! These birds have been grouped and classified by bill type and function, and the major groupings are:

1. **New World Warblers (a.k.a. wood-warblers or parulids)**. Thin, pointed bills designed for probing for insects.
2. **Icterids (a.k.a. New World orioles and blackbirds)**. Long, pointed, conical bills that are often employed in gaping.
3. **Emberizids (New World sparrows, towhees, longspurs, Old World buntings)**. Small, short, conical bills for eating seeds.
4. **Cardinalids (a.k.a. cardinal-grosbeaks)**. Large, thick, conical bills for crushing seeds.

A female White-collared Seedeater in Laredo, Texas. Is it really a New World sparrow? Read further to find out!

Photo © Greg Lasley.
What the Heck is a Tanager?

5 • Fringillids (a.k.a. true finches or “winter finches”). Some small and sparrow-like, some thick and grosbeak-like, but always conical.

6 • Hawaiian honeycreepers. Incredibly diverse bills. Some crossed at the tips for prying, some long and decurved for nectar-feeding, some short and stout for cracking large seeds, others chisel-shaped for pounding into wood or long and sickle-shaped for extracting insects (these last two simultaneously on the same species!). The greatest bill diversity of any group of birds.

7 • Tanagers. Difficult to characterize, but often stout bills intermediate between “thin and pointed” and “short and conical”. Often for fruit eating.

As birders know, ornithologists are constantly updating our knowledge of the relationships among birds. For our purposes, the story of the nine-primaried oscines starts in 1983. In that year, the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) lumped several major families into one huge family, the Emberizidae. This new family Emberizidae consisted of

Looking like a big yellowthroat and acting like a mockingbird, the Yellow-breasted Chat (above) remains a taxonomic enigma. Photo © Larry Selman.

Their lifestyles may be similar, but our brightly colored wood-warblers, like this Cape May (below), are a sharp contrast to the duller and distantly related warblers of the Old World. Photo © Phil Brown.
of all the groups listed above, except the finches, which remained in the family Fringillidae. In the three decades since, the 1983 lump has gradually been dismantled, with the wood-warblers, icterids, and other families regaining their former full-family status, and with other new families being recognized (Olive Warbler, longspurs). Many genera and species shifted from one group to another (and sometimes back again). Part of the reason is that, as a group, these species share a relatively recent (geologically speaking) common ancestor, which dates to roughly 21 million years ago (Barker et al. 2013). That is, compared to other birds, they are all attached rather near one another at the end of an evolutionary branch.

Below, I provide a brief overview of the current state of classification in the AOU Check-list of those species within the ABA Area, with reference to a few extralimital species that may be of interest to readers. We can thank John Klicka, Keith Barker, Kevin Burns, and their colleagues for teasing out much of the information contained in this account (see especially Barker et al. 2013), and we all can be assured that more changes are to come.

“We’d like to point out that who we are hasn’t changed all that much.”

“Our” warblers are often referred to as “wood-warblers” in order to distinguish them from the original warblers of the Old World, with which they share a basic body design and foraging habit, but little else. The warblers of Eurasia, Oceania, and Africa, though often drab in comparison, tend to sing more complex and musical songs that outshine the buzzy songs of many wood-warblers. While recently there have been some major changes in sequence and genera, including the loss of the beloved genus Dendroica (for more information, see <http://www.aba.org/birding/v43n2p24.pdf>), the list of species on the ABA Checklist contained within the family Parulidae has remained relatively constant over the years. That is, except for two rather unusual species: Olive Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Olive Warbler (Peucedramus taeniatu) is the only member of the genus Peucedramus and is now classified in its own family, Peucedramidae. It is very wood-warbler-like but has some significant differences in morphology and vocalizations, and it has one particularly unusual behavior not found among the wood-warblers: the adults allow the fecal sacs of the young to accumulate around the rim of the nest—a behavior common to the fringillids. So perhaps it should not have been surprising that this species is not a wood-warbler after all. And it seems not to be particularly closely related to any of the nine-pri- maried oscines. Instead, it occupies a branch of the evolutionary tree all by itself, one that is sister to the rest of the
What the Heck is a Tanager?

Looking like a giant yellowthroat and yet behaving and singing like a mockingbird or thrasher, the Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) is more of a puzzle. Molecular studies have shed some light on where this species most likely does not belong—it appears to not be wood-warbler—but just what it is has not yet been resolved. Although the AOU retains this species with the wood-warblers, it notes that this is probably not the proper placement. The most recent information (Barker et al. 2013) indicates a close relationship to the New World orioles, grackles, cowbirds, and marsh blackbirds.

“Our” orioles were named for their very superficial plumage similarity to the Old World group that shares the common name: the orioles of the family
Oriolidae. (Evolutionarily, the original orioles are not that far removed from our familiar jays and crows.) On the other hand, foraging strategy and DNA unite “our” colorful New World orioles with their more monochromatic relatives, the New World blackbirds, grackles, and cowbirds. All together, they are all referred to as icterids. The icterids were often classified with other groups that employ gaping as a foraging strategy (including the starlings), but there is now no question that the icterids belong with the other nine-primaried oscines, with perhaps the wood-warblers or Yellow-breasted Chat being their nearest relatives. And, as with the wood-warblers, it appears we have a pretty good idea about which birds are icterids and which are not: this group has not seen a lot of its members moved to and from other groups. This is not the case with the remaining groupings.

**“Just because we’re brown and streaky doesn’t mean we’re all related.”**

The nine-primaried oscines with bills adapted for eating seeds have been among the most difficult to classify. As is the case throughout the animal kingdom, **evolutionary convergence** masks true relationships because similar morphology often evolves in response to similar lifestyles and foraging strategies. In the case of all the world’s species referred to as sparrow, bunting, or seed-eater, a similar bill shape and function has evolved several times along unrelated branches of the passerines.

The longspurs (and Snow and McKay’s buntings) were long thought to be most closely related to the Old World (original) buntings and the New World sparrows. Evidence shows that the longspurs are not particularly closely related to most of the nine-primaried oscines, and they are now placed in their own family (Calcariidae), perhaps located on an evolutionary branch between the Olive Warbler and the rest of the emberizids (Klicka et al. 2003, AOU 2010). The buntings of the Old World genus *Emberiza* are prized for their rarity in North America, and this genus gives its name to the family Emberizidae. It has long been believed that these buntings are most closely related to the New World sparrows and towhees. Again, this may not be true, and although the AOU retains *Emberiza* in the same family with the New World sparrows, don’t be surprised if they are moved sometime soon.
What the Heck is a Tanager?

In fact, according to Barker et al. (2013), most of the evidence indicates that the Emberizidae as a family may need to be restricted to just Emberiza and several related Asian genera, which means that the American sparrows would require a new family name: Passerellidae.

And there are a few other species that also appear not to belong with the New World sparrows and towhees: the seedeaters and grassquits. But we’ll get to them shortly. Notwithstanding the seedeaters and grassquits, the New World sparrows and towhees are a rather nicely defined grouping (at least in the ABA Area).

“We’re the Swiss Army knife of bill morphology.”

This brings us to the fringillids. These “winter” finches have a tendency to wander far and wide and to set up house whenever and wherever food resources are available. This has allowed some very interesting examples of diversification in bill size and shape to develop. The family is found throughout Eurasia, Africa, and many islands, so it is not as unique to the Americas as most of the other groups mentioned in this account. Fringillidae is named for the genus Fringilla, which is mostly extralimital to the ABA Area. Only Brambling (F. montifringilla) and Common Chaffinch (F. coelebs) have been recorded in North America. This genus is somewhat distantly related to the rest of the fringillids, but there seems little doubt they all belong together.

Although not a part of the official ABA Area avifauna, the Hawaiian “honeycreepers”, also known as the drepanidids, are worth mentioning. Scientists used to believe that this diverse group of species was a distinct family. But over time research showed that these birds were clearly related to the fringillids, which makes sense, because wanderlust and bill modification seem wired into the family’s genetic makeup (consider the crossbills). As morphology and genetics aligned, the family Drepanididae became the subfamily Drepanidinae within the family Fringillidae. However, recently published molecular data indicate that the Hawaiian finches share their most recent common ancestor with the Asian Carpodacus rosefinches, and are not even worthy of being treated as a separate subfamily (Lerner et al. 2011)! The AOU agreed with this assessment.

Brown-capped (left) and Black (right) rosy-finches: The rosy-finches are members of the genus Leucosticte, which has more species in Asia than in North America. Indeed, fringillids reach their peak diversity in the Himalayas. Photo © Christopher Taylor.
in the summer of 2013 and placed the drepanids next to the rosefinches, within the subfamily Carduelinae.

“Many of us are crushingly pretty.”
The family Cardinalidae has always included some of the most striking members of the nine-primaried oscines. No matter how common these species are, no one gets tired of seeing a Northern Cardinal at the feeder or a Lazuli Bunting singing from a power line. Another species that has found its home with the cardinal-grosbeaks is the Dickcissel (Spiza americana), which was sometimes considered an aberrant icterid or American sparrow. Molecular data suggest a close relationship to the blue members of the genus Passerina.

In 2009, many of us were a little shocked to see the ABA Area’s Piranga tanagers (Summer, Scarlet, Western, and
Hepatic) moved to the Cardinalidae. But molecular data support this move, and there are similarities in song, plumage acquisition, and nesting behavior, so maybe this isn’t as outlandish as many of us thought. The common name “tanager” was retained for the same reason that the terms warbler, blackbird, sparrow, flycatcher, robin, and so on were used for unrelated birds. Still, the line between the Cardinalidae and Thraupidae is a bit blurry, and these two groups are rather closely related. Perhaps what were once our only regularly occurring “tanagers” will someday be in the tanager family again. But if not, what exactly is a tanager?

“Yes, we’ve been called the ‘junk drawer’…”
Remember the Muscicapidae? No, not the current one as recognized by the AOU, but...
the huge Muscicapidae? It was the junk drawer of the Old World passerines and included basically anything with warbler, babbler, thrush, monarch, and/or flycatcher in its name. (In fact, taxonomists call such haphazard groupings “wastebin taxa”.) This super-large family rivaled the expanded (1983) Emberizidae in its size and scope. It, too, has since been splintered into many families, and what Muscicapidae once was is now what Thraupidae has sort of become: Anything that isn’t a wood-warbler, icterid, New World sparrow, cardinal-grosbeak, or finch ends up here. This group is largely Neotropical, but that still leaves us with a question:

What is a tanager, and which, if any, species of tanager occur in the ABA Area? There are a few species which occur infrequently that could be tanagers: Bananaquit (Coereba flaveola), Western Spindalis (Spindalis zena), White-collared Seedeater (Sporophila torquela), Yellow-faced Grassquit (Tiaris olivaceus), and Black-faced Grassquit (T. bicolor). That makes five out of a family that probably contains well over 350 species!

The two grassquits, which are currently classified as New World sparrows by the AOU, are part of a Caribbean-Galápagos radiation of so-called “dome-nest builders” that also likely includes the Bananaquit, a widespread species which has bounced around among the various emberizid families more than any other species. It is currently treated by the AOU as Incertae Sedis, which means “of uncertain place”? The dome-nest builders also contain the famous Darwin’s finches, which are the subject of a fascinating evolutionary and biogeographic story but beyond the scope of this article.

The genus Spindalis is currently classified as a tanager by the AOU but probably does not belong in that group. Its position among the various nine-primaried oscines is a little unclear. It appears to be related to the warbler-like and tanager-like species of Hispaniola, plus the Puerto Rican Tanager (Nesospingus peculiferus), all of which, as a group, may be sister to the wood-warblers and icterids.

White-collared Seedeater is currently classified by the AOU with the American sparrows in Emberizidae, but of the five ABA Area “could-be-tanagers” listed above, it is likely the only species that is a true member of the tanager family. The genus Sporophila is nested quite nicely within the evolutionary branch that contains many brightly colored Neotropical birds with “tanager” in their names (Barker et al. 2013), including the genus Thraupis, which includes Blue-gray Tanager and is indisputably the original tanager genus.

The genus Piranga includes what many of us know as, and still call, tanagers. But this Summer Tanager is related to the cardinals and grosbeaks (and the “bunting” on the facing page), not the real tanagers. Photo © Tara Tanaka.

The times, they are a-changin’!

Who would have bet money, 20 years ago, that falcons and parrots would appear in taxonomic sequence right before the passerines, or that grebes and flamingos are each other’s nearest relatives? The techniques employed in the molecular studies referred to in this account have only scratched the surface of the information contained in birds’ DNA. We’re far from the last word on who is related to whom. The question, “Just what the heck is a tanager?” may be a long way from being answered with full confidence. ☛
What the Heck is a Tanager?

Western Spindalis was formerly known as “Stripe-headed Tanager”, but it, also, seems not to be a true tanager. That leaves just White-collared Seedeater (pictured at the beginning of this article) as likely the only ABA Area species which will wind up in the tanager family!

Photo © Michael L. P. Retter.

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Conical. Cone-shaped. Refers to a bill with straight edges and a pointed tip. Sparrows, cowbirds, cardinals, buntings, New World orioles, and New World blackbirds all have conical bills of varying lengths.

Evolutionary branch. Part of the evolutionary tree that is unique to its members. Members of a branch share a now-extinct common ancestor. All the members of a branch are referred to as a clade. The further toward the end of the branch, the more closely related the “leaves”, which represent species or subspecies.

Evolutionary convergence. Convergence is said to have occurred when two (relatively) unrelated organisms independently evolve an identical or similar trait in response to similar evolutionary pressures. A good example is bats and birds. Both have wings, but their ancestors did not.

Evolutionary tree. A branching diagram that shows the relatedness of living organisms and informs on their taxonomy.

Extralimital. Occurring only outside a given geographic area. (e.g., Japanese Waxwing is not found in Canada, so it is extralimital with respect to that country.)

Family. One of the hierarchical classifications found within biological taxonomy. It is higher than genus but lower than order. A subfamily is a step below family but still above genus. Sub- can be added to any level of the hierarchy to facilitate more specific classification (e.g., suborder, subspecies).

Fecal sac. A sac made of mucous membrane which contains the feces of a young bird.

Gaping. Inserting the bill into dense foliage structures, thatch, earth, or other substrates, and then forcing the bill open to pry apart the substrate. (e.g., European Starlings are commonly seen doing this on lawns.)

Genera. Plural of genus. A taxonomic level between species and family. A particular genus is always both capitalized and italicized (e.g., Accipiter, Empidonax).

Molecular studies. Within taxonomy, the molecule studied today is usually DNA, but various proteins were examined in the past. Molecular data are obtained via molecular studies.

Morphology. Physical characteristics (e.g., bill shape, feather color, size).

Neotropical. Pertaining to the Neotropics, which comprise the portion of the tropics found in the Americas. The Americas are also known as the New World, hence neo- (new) tropics.

New World. In biology, synonymous with “the Americas” as a noun and “Americ-
I’ve been a birder since I was a child. My grandmother told me that the bird waking me up every morning as it sang outside my bedroom window was a Carolina Wren. Ever since then, I’ve thought that nothing about birds is as evocative as their songs. In the winter, birders long for the first songs of the spring; in the summer, the dawn chorus in the cool morning gives a smile to the most hard-bitten cynic; and in the fall, listening to quiet and frighteningly similar calls challenges birders to take identification to the next level. Nothing brings back fond birding memories so much as hearing a singing bird and recalling that spring morning years ago, or summer day high in a mountain meadow.
In broad terms, birds fall into two groups: those which learn their songs, and those whose songs are **instinctual**. If a young bird of a species that sings instinctually is removed from its nest while still in the egg and raised away from every other member of its own species, it will still sing the correct song. This latter group is especially interesting in terms of taxonomy. That’s because a difference in songs implies an underlying difference in genetics. So when you hear the *FITZ-be*w of a Willow Flycatcher and the *rrree-BOO* of an Alder Flycatcher, you can be assured that no matter how similar they look, they are still genetically distinct.

That last bit is hugely important. Once scientists realized that some birds don’t learn their songs, avian taxonomy was changed forever. Suddenly, myriad flycatchers, owls, antbirds, and more were being split left and right, and **cryptic species** were found among species formerly thought to be clear cut.

Perhaps no group of birds better demonstrates this than a clan of small, gray, and undeniably mouse-like birds found in the Neotropics: the *Scytalopus* tapaculos. As recently as the publication of Ridgely and Tudor’s *The Birds of South America* (1994), there were only 16 species. Nineteen years later, one wouldn’t even recognize the genus, which has ballooned to more than 40 species! What has happened? Well, tapaculos are **suboscine** passerines. The suboscines, a speciose assemblage confined mostly to the Neotropics, don’t learn their songs. They inherit them, so their songs are genetic. Differences in song correspond to differences in genes—and quite possibly, differences at the species level. Every time some-
one finds a population with a distinctly
different voice, voilà! A new species is
“discovered”! While it isn’t always this
simple, consistent and diagnosable dif-
ferences in the songs of different popu-
lations of one species have often result-
ed in a new species being described.

Even for those birds which do learn
their songs, consistent vocal differences
can be important. Think of it this way:
if one bird is singing opera, and another
one is singing country, they aren’t very
likely to think of each other as a ter-
ritorial threat, nor is the female of one
likely to find the male of the other a very
impressive singer! So while you
can’t make black-and-white
statements about what vocal
differences mean within spe-
cies of birds which learn
their songs, these differen-
tes often have
some signifi-
cance.

At this point, you may be thinking: This
is all very interesting, but what’s it got
to do with ordinary birders like me? As
it turns out, “ordinary” birders are mak-
ing major contributions to documenting
these vocal differences. Equipped with
relatively inexpensive recording gear and
aided by recent advances in acoustics tech-
nology, birders are making a big difference.
It’s not much of an exaggeration to say that
you can go out in the field, press “record”
on your device, analyze the recording with
widely available freeware, and publish an
original scientific discovery. The potential
for discovery is greatest in the New World
tropics, but, even in such relatively well-
known regions as Europe and the ABA
Area, birders are advancing our knowl-
dge of acoustics-based taxonomy.

How birds learn their songs is only
part of the revolution of acoustics-based
taxonomy.

The other equally (if not more)
important part is ever-more-
available and portable
recording gear, and the

This melding of birding
and science has had a real
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are just more of us.
increasing sophistication of both that gear and the programs used for analyzing recordings. Without these tools, it’s effectively impossible to use sounds as a basis for a taxonomic split. Within the past 15 years or so, recorders finally have made the leap away from large, bulky, and expensive pieces of equipment that few birders had the ability or desire to tote around. Gone are the days of reel-to-reel rigs that weighed a ton and only held 45 minutes of tape. Now one can slip a cellphone-sized (or smaller) recorder into a breast pocket and be ready to record at a moment’s notice, and store hours upon hours of audio at once.

This has had profound effects on our understanding of variation in bird vocalizations. Take a look through Xeno-canto (<xeno-canto.org>) and notice how few of the recordings are more than a few years old: recording is a booming hobby. With this new trove of data from all over the world, patterns of variation formerly not apparent become clear; even new cryptic species sometimes pop out of the woodwork! The trend will continue as recorders become ever cheaper and the birding public becomes ever more aware of the usefulness and downright fun of recording birds.

This melding of birding and science has had a real effect on taxonomy. The hours we birders spend with birds total up to far more than ornithologists could ever hope for. There are just more of us.

Being oscines, chickadees learn their songs, so one needs to look carefully at plumage to ID a bird near the zone of overlap. You could be looking at a bird singing the “wrong” song or even a hybrid!

Facing page, Black-capped Chickadee
Photo © Jim Ridley.

This page, Carolina Chickadee.
Photo © Robert Royse.
Contributions of Bird Recordists

While ornithologists can (and often do) go out and get lots of recordings and information on whatever species they're interested in, birders as a group have been recording a huge number of individual birds of nearly every bird species on the planet. Imagine if all birders carried a recorder when they went birding, and every time they went out, they got a few recordings. As an aggregate, they would generate an enormous amount of data.

The number of birders with recording equipment is rising at a breakneck pace, and it's beginning to be felt in avian taxonomy. A new species of bird just described from Peru, Junín Tapaculo (Scytalopus gettyae), was found not by one of the many ornithologists combing that incredibly biodiverse country, but by a birder, and the species was brought to the attention of the world due to recordings obtained from that first encounter. Throughout the world, new species are being found by birding tour leaders, their clients, and independent birders who hear something that just doesn't fit—something that tickles their curiosity enough to prompt further investigation.

Although the chance that any one of us will find something completely new is minuscule, the proliferation of birders with recorders still hugely benefits taxonomy. Proposed splits and lumps that cite vocal differences as justification are taking advantage of a burgeoning bird

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vocalization database. Want an example? Again, visit Xeno-canto, pick a common or widespread species, and look at the map of where recordings of that species originate. Nearly all those recordings are from birders just like you and me. Now imagine you’re an ornithologist working on, say, Rufous Antpitta taxonomy. Sure, you’ll have a lot of recordings of your own, and likely many from your colleagues. But you’ll also have access to more than 150 others, made by birders and amateurs, from throughout the range of the species and involving nearly every described subspecies.

Next time you go birding, grab more than just your binoculars and a scope. Pick up a recorder, find a bird making some noise, and hit that record button! (See Diana Doyle’s “Tools of the Trade” article on p. 52 of the July/August 2013 issue of Birding for tips on taking the plunge.) If you get a decent recording, post it somewhere such as Xeno-canto. You never know what you’ll find, and if nothing else, you should have a great time and a greater appreciation for what birds say.

**GLOSSARY**

**Cryptic species.** A species that was overlooked by scientists because it appears nearly or completely identical to another in morphology.

**Instinctual.** Describes a behavior that is based on instinct. That is, it is not learned, but innate, and preprogrammed by DNA.

**Suboscine.** One of two widespread subdivisions of the order Passeriformes. The suboscines comprise a group of related passerines which have more “primitive” vocal structures than the other widespread group (the oscines). Another important difference is that song in suboscines is instinctual, but learned in oscines.
Dawn in Uvalde County was one of the most intense parts of the day. Here the Sapsuckers listen for Gray Vireo and hope to pick up a Western Scrub-Jay or Scott’s Oriole by scanning the ridges and tops of shrubs.
The quest to see as many species as possible in 24 hours is a test: a test of knowledge of bird distribution and identification, most obviously, but equally a test of the abilities to prioritize, schedule, and make changes. A test of how well you can work with everyone on your team—for 24 hours—after a week with very little sleep.

Since we were teenagers, each of us has dreamt of setting the North American Big Day record. This year we had the opportunity to pursue this goal, coupled with a chance to raise funds to support bird conservation at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. With more than 100 collective Big Days under our belts, including two previous attempts at the national record in Texas, we were primed for our 2013 run. This year we found the perfect mix of ingredients: finely tuned team chemistry that took advantage of each team member’s unique birding skills, an optimal year with many late-lingering winter species overlapping with arriving migrants, assistance from many friends in Texas, excellent scouting efforts, and perfect weather conditions that generated a Gulf Coast fallout on the day.

On our first attempt at the national record in April 2011, we were thrilled to find 264 species, besting the old record by three species. A flat tire in 2012

Team Sapsucker
Jessie Barry
Andrew Farnsworth
Marshall Iliff
Timothy Lenz
Brian Sullivan
Christopher L. Wood

Big Day Record
Our route was carefully scouted, planned to-the-minute, and refined over a three-year period. We traveled from San Antonio west to Uvalde County, and passed by Mitchell Lake eastbound to Houston, Anahuac NWR, and High Island, before finishing at Bolivar Flats.

deflated our hopes, as we only managed to tie our own record. From midnight to midnight on Thursday, April 25, 2013, we tallied 294 species, exceeding the record by 30 species! More importantly, the 2013 Big Day was an essential fundraiser for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and eBird, raising more than $325,000.

Planning: The lead-up to this day required months of planning. We began scouring eBird records and reworking the route as snow fell in the Northeast. Logistics of rental vehicles, hotels, and special access to closed areas were all handled before we hit the ground in Texas. These planning sessions led to excellent new detours in all three major birding portions of the route, each of which netted us species we had never found on our Texas Big Days. We spent about a week on the ground prior to the day testing these new route variations, finding birds, and strategizing with our scouters: Tom Johnson, Matt Hafner, Andy Guthrie, and Ken Rosenberg. During scout week, we broke into teams to cover three main areas on the route: Hill Country/Uvalde region (Marshall and Tim), Houston/Piney Woods (Brian and Andrew), and High Island/Bolivar Peninsula (Chris and Jessie).

Weather: Compared to the previous two years, the weather throughout spring 2013 was ideal. The weeks prior to the Big Day saw the jet stream take on unusually contorted shapes, enabling more cold fronts to reach the Texas coast. This produced a cool and wet spring that kept many wintering species lingering in Texas later than most years. This weather pattern also contributed to the fallout conditions that we experienced on the day, which was referred to by some locals as the best Texas fallout in 20 years! Almost like magic, Andrew put on his BirdCast hat, reading the weather forecast in a way that enabled us to choose which day to run the Big Day nearly a week in advance. Many of us were

Big Days take you to an incredible variety of locations and habitats. Here the Sapsuckers land in a Wal-Mart parking lot at 2 a.m., and Lesser Nighthawk is added to the list.
still in Ithaca, New York, when Andrew said fallout conditions were likely to hit Wednesday, so we needed to cut down our scouting time and be prepared for the Big Day of a lifetime on Thursday. Although it might have seemed that Wednesday, the day of the fallout, would be the day to run the Big Day, we chose the following day to avoid the 30-mph north winds and cold temperatures during the passage of the front. Fortunately, those weather conditions also kept the migrants grounded so that they were still present for us on Thursday afternoon; we heard many of them leaving in a massive nocturnal migration on Thursday night.

The Day: By Wednesday night, we convened in San Antonio and were loading the car, making final route tweaks, resting up a little, and enjoying our last sit-down meal before our 24-hour birding marathon.

Our route, timed to the minute, covered roughly 650 miles within Texas, from Uvalde to the Bolivar Peninsula. At midnight, we hit the ground running with a lingering Ross’s Goose in Boerne, followed by a nesting American Robin (our only one of the day!) in San Antonio, and a suite of owls and nightjars thereafter. At dawn, we found ourselves in the desert west of Uvalde, where a calling Scaled Quail joined the dawn chorus with other key western desert species. Uvalde is a great focal point for morning birding on a Big Day. Being close to the Hill Country, southwestern desert birds, eastern forest birds (like Yellow-throated Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo), and Mexican species (like Green Jay and White-tipped Dove) all come together in one narrow zone.

After our dawn-calling quail, we drove a route that transected habitats good for all three groups of birds, including the two breeding-endemic Hill Country birds: Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. This year, we managed to connect with almost all of our hoped-for species, many of which we found at Chalk Bluff Park during a quick 50-minute blitz, including a returning territorial Rufous-capped Warbler. From Chalk Bluff, we hit a few other key spots, visited the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery, made a fateful return visit to the Uvalde dump (site of the 2012 flat tire), and left the area with 129 species, which did not include Chihuahuan Raven, our quarry at the dump. Especially notable around Uvalde were a Gray Vireo (Uvalde County’s first record in eBird, found by Ken Rosenberg), a lingering Greater White-fronted Goose, and a host of late-departing landbirds, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Hermit Thrush, Vesper and Lincoln’s sparrows, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, all of which we missed the year before!

After birding Uvalde, we drove nonstop to the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, where optimal water levels created an impoundment with myriad ducks and shorebirds. Mitchell Lake is a superb birding site and

Scaled Quail represents a suite of desert species that are found in Uvalde County. Photo © Christopher L. Wood.

Roseate Spoonbill and many other waterbirds crucial to a high total are found at coastal sites like High Island. Photo © Christopher L. Wood.

Radar imagery from 18:30 CDT on Wed. 24 Apr. 2013. A line of storms offshore is the trailing edge of the cold front. When birds traveling across the Gulf of Mexico (which departed at dusk on the 23rd) hit the front and its associated strong north winds and rain, they dropped into the nearest points of land on the afternoon and evening of the 24th. With continuing strong north winds that night, there was little nocturnal migration, and many birds from the fallout were still present on the 25th, the Big Day. In addition, the weather on the 25th was perfect for birding, with light winds and clear skies.
a testament to the important habitats that can be created by wise management for migrant birds. We picked up a host of new birds here, including Hudsonian Godwit, a species not seen in our previous two years of Texas Big Days. Andrew Farnsworth and Brian Sullivan lived up to their reputations as exceptional raptor spotters, pulling both expected accipiters, Mississippi Kite, and our only Peregrine Falcon, from the skies overhead. Our total stood at 183.

Mitchell Lake was followed by a long cruise on I-10 towards Houston, with a quick stop near Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR, where we notched prairie birds such as White-tailed Hawk, Le Conte’s Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, and our first Eastern Meadowlark. From there, we circumnavigated urban Houston and blitzed through the pineywoods at Eisenhower County Park, picking up four woodpeckers and several other eastern forest species in the heat of the day. A few key species—like Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bald Eagle, Fish Crow, and Swainson’s Warbler—were specialties that reach or come close to their southernmost breeding range limits at Eisenhower Park, so that slightly longer extension to the north proved invaluable for adding some new species to our list.

Entering Anahuac NWR, we knew we had many more possibilities, so our running tally at 219 indicated we were on a record pace. Seeing flocks of Indigo Buntings, tanagers, and grosbeaks flushing from the roadside was a good sign and indicated that the hoped-for fallout of the previous day deposited a large number of birds that remained. Our first rice field stop was a good omen, getting us Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and our second stop scored two Glossy Ibis along with a number of target shorebirds.

At 6 p.m., we finally arrived at legendary High Island, where Scarlet Tanagers were dripping from the trees. We saw more than 100 tanagers on our quick circuit around Houston Audubon’s Smith Oaks Sanctuary, including many individuals feeding on the ground and up to 15 in a single mulberry tree. This spectacle was a new experience for many of us, but the Big Day required focus on other more furtive and less colorful species. Veery, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, Philadelphia Vireo, White-throated Sparrow, and Acadian Flycatcher were a few of the species we quickly added to our list. Warblers were not abundant, but the diversity was great: Blackburnian, Cerulean (a nice male found by Tim!), Chestnut-sided, and Blackpoll warblers, Northern Waterthrush, and American Redstart were all key pickups. Trying one more spot, we hit Texas Ornithological Society’s Hooks Woods Bird Sanctuary, where we added Blue-winged Warbler and our only surprise rarity of the day, a Lazuli Bunting!

Jessie was taskmaster during our entire effort in the High Island woods, making sure we stayed focused on new species and didn’t get too distracted by the kaleidoscope of colorful tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles. This was critical to our success, because our schedule only allowed one final hour to collect all the coastal species for which Texas is so famous. As soon as we left the woods, we hit the ground running by finding eight species of terns, five more species of gulls (including Lesser Black-backed and Bonaparte’s), Reddish Egret, Greater Scaup, Black Skimmer, and Marbled Godwit. The three coastal plovers—Snowy, Wilson’s, and Piping—always require special effort, and we managed to nab all three.
As darkness fell over Bolivar Flats at 8:30 p.m., just after we found Red Knot (our last species in daylight hours), we were out of breath and high on adrenaline. But none of us knew our total. Had we broken the record? We had seen so many species in the previous three hours that it was hard to even estimate. Years of Big Day disappointments taught us to temper our expectations. On our drive north along the Bolivar Peninsula, we began to tabulate in one of Marshall’s famous Excel spreadsheets. When all was counted, our total rested at 291, and the vehicle erupted with cries of disbelief and elation. With so many species under our belts, finding a few more would not be easy. We managed to add a calling King Rail, heard a nocturnal migrant Gray-cheeked Thrush, and finally, at 11:41 p.m., heard a grunting Virginia Rail that would be our final bird.

We had theorized that such a successful day might be possible under perfect conditions, but we never really expected it would all work out. With 294 species, there obviously were not a lot of misses, but Belted Kingfisher, Greater Roadrunner, Chihuahuan Raven, and Least Grebe are four memorable ones that eluded us, even though we had excellent chances for them on the route. If we had gotten those, plus migrant Canada and Bay-breasted warblers, our wildest dreams of a 300-species Big Day in Texas might have been realized.

Countless individuals helped us reach this lofty total, and we cannot thank them all here. You know who you are. Just as important, the huge community that uses and supports eBird must be recognized. We used eBird constantly in our scouting and in planning leading up to the day. Without the submissions from the eBird community, this day would not have been nearly as successful. Generous support from our team sponsor, Carl Zeiss Sports Optics, ensured that all funds raised went directly to the cause. Finally, we offer a very special thank you to everyone who pledged to support Team Sapsucker, enabling us to also reach an all-time high fundraising record.

Big Days stoke our competitive spirits, but more importantly, they highlight bird diversity and the conservation threats birds face. When thinking how we might have reached 300, perhaps it is appropriate to reflect on the species that we could have seen if we had run this day in the late 1800s. Eskimo Curlew, “Attwater’s” Prairie-Chicken, Whooping Crane, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Carolina Parakeet, Bachman’s Warbler, and Passenger Pigeon might all have been routing considerations. On the other hand, we know that species populations respond to legal protection and management, and that we can bring them back. This same Big Day in the 1960s likely would have missed Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, and Brown Pelican—all species that we saw and all conservation success stories.

Finally, it is worth remembering that bird ranges are constantly changing; even as some species contract their range, others expand. A number of tropical birds are pushing their ranges north into Uvalde, which put White-tipped Dove, Green Jay, Elf Owl, and Great Kiskadee in the cards, considerations that would not have been possible even 10 years ago. Our Big Days provide an opportunity to reflect on the incredible diversity in North America and the dynamic nature of bird populations. We hope Big Days inspire citizen scientist involvement with eBird, which helps document and understand these changes, and raises critical funds to help ensure that North America’s exceptional bird diversity and migration spectacles will exist for the enjoyment of generations to come.
Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Age

In Brief
In the past, ornithologists relied mainly on collected specimens, and to a lesser extent on film photography and non-verifiable reports (“sight records”), to establish regional checklists. Today, many more tools are available. For starters, the widespread use of digital cameras has revolutionized birding—and the documentation of rare birds. Today’s birders and field ornithologists are also making good use of inexpensive yet high-quality video and audio recorders. At the same time, birds are increasingly being detected by “remote sensing”—radio and satellite telemetry, geolocators, autonomous recording units, and other technologies.

Along with new technologies, new attitudes and new ways of thinking are influencing how birds are added to regional checklists. A welcome development is that birders have better access than ever to information on avian vagrancy and status and distribution in general. Another welcome development is that many of today’s birders and field ornithologists are increasingly aware of and knowledgeable about exotic bird populations. A less-welcome development has been a general decline in the quality of written reports in support of “physical” evidence like photographs and sound recordings (Lehman 2008). Undeniably, the emergence of the internet and, in particular, of online social media is playing a role in changing attitudes about field ornithology.

In this article, we focus on 21st-century challenges and opportunities for the ABA Checklist Committee, whose central function is to maintain and update a checklist of the birds of the ABA Area. Please note that, although we are affiliated with the ABA (Pranty is Chairman of the ABA Checklist Committee, Floyd is Editor of Birding magazine), this commentary does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the ABA. Indeed, we don’t always agree with each other! We welcome members’ comments on this article; please contribute to the special online forum <aba.org/birdersguide> that has been created for reader feedback and discussion.

Since its inception in 1973, the ABA Checklist Committee (CLC) has produced seven checklists (in 1975, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1996, 2002, and 2008), 12 annual updates (1975–1986), and 24 formal, more-or-less-annual reports (since 1985). As of September 2013, the ABA Checklist contains 981 species. Since last year, new distributional records added four species (two natural vagrants and two established exotics), another species was split into two species, a second split caused one species to replace another, and another species replaced a species-pair. For additional details on these recent changes to the ABA Checklist, please see Pranty’s and coauthors’ annual report in the November/
December 2013 Birding.

How are species added to an “official” list? Before there was an ABA Checklist, the sole authority within North America was the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) Check-list. In the past, most first records added to the various AOU Check-lists (the first was published in 1886) were based on collected specimens. Today, the AOU and ABA committees maintain and update separate lists; the two committees work independently and publish check-lists for different geographic areas. Given vast improvements in photography, coupled with a great decline in the frequency of collecting, most species added to the various ABA checklists have been based on birds photographed. Today, few first records within the ABA Area are the result of birds collected (and of these, almost all are from Alaska). Technology is playing a much larger role in field ornithology, including the work of checklist committees, with many tools other than shotguns and film being used. Also, we are seeing the emergence of new knowledge of and attitudes toward vagrancy and exotics.

In this article, we explore ways in which technology is affecting the CLC. We focus on seven main case studies: five species accepted by the committee during 2013 (Hawaiian Petrel, Purple Swamphen, Common Moorhen, Common Chiffchaff, and Nutmeg Mannikin) and two others expected to be addressed within the next year or so (Rufous-necked Wood-Rail and Hooded Crane). We also discuss in less detail four other species that have presented recent challenges or that are expected to challenge the committee in the near future (Barred Ant-shrike, Demoiselle Crane, Zino’s Petrel, and Thick-billed Parrot). Space limitations prevent us from discussing the species recently split by the AOU. Such changes (for example, the AOU’s 2013 split of Sage Sparrow into Sagebrush and Bell’s sparrows) are automatically accepted by the CLC. See Michael Retter’s “AOU Check-list Redux” on p. 50 for details.

**Hawaiian Petrel**

*Pterodroma sandwichensis*

**Background**

In 2002, the AOU split Dark-rumped Petrel (*P. phaeopygia, sensu lato*) into Galápagos Petrel (*P. phaeopygia, sensu stricto*) and Hawaiian Petrel based on morphological and vocal differences between the two taxa. At the time, however, there were no specimens from the ABA Area, field-identification criteria were not established, and it was not known which species visited the ABA Area. In the ensuing years, Force et al. (2007) and Pyle et al. (2011) developed identification criteria based on high-quality digital photographs. As a result, Hawaiian Petrel has been shown to be regular off the west coast of North America, but there is no firm evidence to date that Galápagos Petrels visit waters within the ABA Area.

![Hawaiian Petrel. Monterey Bay, California. Photo © David Pavlik.](image)
The ABA Checklist Committee in the 21st Century

The four “completely new” species added by the ABA Checklist Committee to the ABA Checklist in 2013 are:

- Purple Swamphen
- Common Moorhen
- Common Chiffchaff
- Nutmeg Mannikin

Hawaiian/Galápagos Petrel was “upgraded” to Hawaiian Petrel.

Through June 2013, 22 photographic records of “Dark-rumped Petrel” off California have been accepted by the California Bird Records Committee as representing Hawaiian Petrels. Also, there is one record of Hawaiian Petrel for Washington (M. Bartels, pers. comm.). Currently, there are no accepted Oregon records of Hawaiian Petrel, but at least two reported in 2013 will make their way through the state records committee. And there are several “Hawaiian/Galápagos Petrel” records. It is anticipated that this species-pair will be replaced with Hawaiian Petrel on the Oregon checklist (D. Irons, pers. comm.). Hawaiian Petrel has also been reported off British Columbia (e.g., Davis 2013). And as we were going to press, we learned of a remarkable record of a salvaged specimen from Yuma, Arizona <tinyurl.com/YumaPetrel>.

Of particular interest to us is a report by Adams and Flora (2010) of a Hawaiian Petrel fitted with a satellite transmitter on Maui, Hawaii; the bird traveled clockwise in a large loop that placed it within 215 nautical miles (400 kilometers) of the Pacific Coast of North America from Alaska to California—just outside the ABA Area. The bird was not, to our knowledge, seen, let alone photographed, while at sea; its occurrence was documented by a technology that simply did not exist until relatively recently.

Comments

The splitting of one species into two or more species has been a staple of ornithology for three centuries. In the 18th and 19th centuries, differences in plumage and measurements were the primary factors driving taxonomy. During the 20th century, technological advances allowed the development or improvement of other tools, such as those used to measure differences in vocalizations and genetics. Today, miniaturization in electronics for radio and satellite telemetry units, global positioning systems (GPS), and geolocation units has revolutionized the ability of ornithologists to remotely track birds for long periods and over great distances. Using “biotelemetry” (remotely recorded biological activity), researchers can even determine the behavior of seabirds by measuring the timing and frequency of saltwater immersion and even the depth of their dives!

Seabirds detected by “remote sensing” present interesting challenges and opportunities for today’s records committees. For example, a radio-tagged Short-tailed Albatross visited Washington’s offshore waters 25–29 September 2009; this remotely sensed bird was not observed by any person, but it was accepted by the Washington Bird Records Committee (M. Bartels, pers. comm.). Similarly, a Fea’s Petrel tagged at its nesting burrow on Bugio Island (in the Desertas chain off Madeira) and recently geolocated as a winter resident off Florida’s Atlantic Coast (Ramirez et al. 2013) was recently accepted by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee as the first record for the state (J. S. Greenlaw, pers. comm.).

In another application of biotelemetry, researchers are recording metabolic data on Swainson’s Thrushes as they migrate by night (Bowlin et al. 2005). So far, these studies have focused on thrushes migrating within their typical ranges. But it is easy to imagine that a wayward Swainson’s Thrush—the species is prone to vagrancy—could be detected in the course of a biotelemetry study. Perhaps Great Britain will get its next Swainson’s Thrush in the form of a blip on a radar screen, or by ARU (automated recording unit) monitoring; the species’ flight call is diagnostic and should be detectable by ARU technology.

Remote sensing—including “old-fashioned” radio telemetry, as well as more recent technologies involving biotelemetry and ARUs—seems likely to play an increasingly prominent role in the documentation of rare birds. Other technological advances, ones we cannot even imagine at the present time, may well come to aid the ornithologists and birders of the future. Time will tell.

Purple Swamphen

(Porphyrio porphyrio)

Background

This species has been added to the ABA Checklist on the basis of an exotic population established in southern Florida. Florida’s Purple Swampshens were discovered around December 1996, and the population had increased to at least 135 individuals by February 1999. By 2012, swampshens had been reported from nearly 30 sites in Florida, with several of these more than
200 kilometers from the source. A state-sponsored eradication program resulted in the shooting of 3,187 swamphens between October 2006 and December 2008, before the program was deemed a failure and discontinued. Based on specimen and DNA evidence, the Purple Swamphens in Florida represent the gray-headed subspecies *poliocephalus*, which is native from the Caspian Sea and Iraq to Indochina and Sumatra. Sangster (1998) considers *poliocephalus* to represent a separate species, which he calls Gray-headed Swamphen.

A thorough overview of the natural history of Purple Swamphens in Florida is provided by Pranty (2013), and a basic sketch is given by Pranty et al. (2013).

**Comments**

The history of exotics added to the ABA Checklist shows a maturing attitude from the CLC, as well as the chaotic status of the introduced populations. The first Checklist (Robbins et al. 1975) contained 16 species considered exotic: Cattle Egret (!), Mute Swan, Ring-necked Pheasant, Chuckar, Gray Partridge, Black Francolin, Rock Pigeon, Spotted Dove, African Collared-Dove (then called Ringed Turtle-Dove), Red-whiskered Bulbul, European Starling, Crested Myna, Blue-gray Tanager, Spot-breasted Oriole, House Sparrow, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. The 1975 Checklist required that two criteria be met before an exotic was considered by the CLC to be established: (1) breeding for 10 years and (2) a stable or increasing population (Robbins et al. 1975). Although we intend no criticism of the pioneering work of the CLC in its earliest years, we have come to realize that the 1975 Checklist employed limited and short-term criteria that were insufficient for determining the successful establishment of exotic bird populations.

By the seventh ABA Checklist (Pranty et al. 2008), the number of exotics had increased to 18, with eight additions (Himalayan Snowcock, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Budgerigar, Monk Parakeet, Green Parakeet, White-winged Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot, and Common Myna) and six deletions. Of the deletions, two species had been reclassified (the Cattle Egret as a natural colonizer and the European Starling as a natural vagrant/established exotic), and four others had been removed because their populations had become extirpated: Black Francolin (removed in 1990), African Collared-Dove (1994), Crested Myna (2004), and Blue-gray Tanager (1982).

By 2008, the CLC had expanded the number of criteria required to meet the CLC’s definition of an established exotic to eight, including a more rigorous temporal criterion. These eight criteria are discussed in detail in Pranty et al. (2008) and are available online <aba.org/checklist/exotics.html>. Note that even meeting all eight of these criteria is not necessarily sufficient for adding a species to the ABA Checklist. For example, in 2006 the CLC rejected the establishment of Nanday Parakeet in west-central Florida despite its meeting all eight CLC criteria, because two members were concerned that the occupied range was too small (Pranty et al. 2006). On the basis of updated information on population size and range expansion, the CLC added Nanday Parakeet to the ABA Checklist six years later (Dunn et al. 2012).

During the past 25 years, 10 species of exotic birds have been added to the ABA Checklist. One of these species, Yellow-chevonied Parakeet, was removed after

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Florida’s Purple Swamphens are of the gray-headed subspecies *poliocephalus*, as is this individual in Thailand. Photo © Bob Steele.
only three years because neither the California nor Florida records committee had ratified its establishment prior to the CLC vote. (Although not a codified rule, the CLC prefers to wait until an exotic has been ratified by a local committee before voting to add it to the ABA Checklist; in the case of the parakeet, this preference was not followed initially.) Of the nine exotics added to the Checklist since 1988 that remain on the list, five are from Florida (Purple Swamphen in 2013, Eurasian Collared-Dove and Monk Parakeet in 1992, Nanday Parakeet in 2012, and Common Myna in 2008), Nutmeg Mannikin (in 2013) is from California, Rosy-faced Lovebird (in 2012) is from Arizona, Himalayan Snowcock (in 1994) is from Nevada, and Green Parakeet (in 1999) is from Texas.

By waiting until a local records committee has ratified the establishment of an exotic species before it can vote, the CLC can hamper its own efforts to use strictly biological criteria (rather than emotions or “politics”) in its decision-making. However, it is important that the CLC maintain good relations with members of local committees—some of whom may eventually serve on the CLC—even at the expense of waiting years (or even decades!) to add a qualified exotic species to the ABA Checklist. The issue is particularly relevant to California, where several other exotics may also be eventual candidates for CLC consideration and where, at least until recently, the birding culture has had a generally negative view of exotics. For example, in 2002, the AOU added Mitred Parakeet to its Check-list of North American Birds after ratifying it as an established exotic in southern California, despite no previous—or subsequent—action by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) (Banks et al. 2002). Also, Rose-ringed Parakeet has long been established in and around Bakersfield, California, and its substantial population there is at least stable and likely is increasing and expanding (Sheehey 2012).

### Common Moorhen

(Gallinula chloropus)

**Background**

In 2011, the AOU split Common Moorhen (G. chloropus, sensu lato) into the Common Gallinule (G. galeata) of the New World and the extralimital Common Moorhen (G. chloropus, sensu stricto) of the Old World, based on differences in bill and shield morphology, vocalizations, and mitochondrial DNA (Chesser et al. 2011). A juvenile male *Gallinula* collected at Shemya Island in Alaska’s Aleutian Islands in October 2010 (Withrow and Schwitters 2012) could have represented either species, although geographic probability strongly favored Common Moorhen. Because measurement data between the two species overlap, and because the Shemya Gallinula was a juvenile that had not yet fully developed its bill and frontal shield, identification required genetic testing. A parsimony analysis of 416 base pairs of mitochondrial DNA revealed that the Shemya bird clustered with the DNA of known Common Moorhens rather than with DNA of known Common Gallinules (Withrow and Schwitters 2012).
Comments

In recent decades, the practice of collecting birds to document first state, provincial, or national records in the ABA Area has nearly ceased. Birders and field ornithologists with digital cameras—increasingly on their smartphones—routinely document rare birds and post the images online, usually within hours of the sighting. Bird banders now sometimes take blood samples and pluck feathers before releasing the birds they band; these may be used for subsequent DNA analyses and stable isotope analyses. The latter allow for an approximate determination of where birds were geographically several months to a year prior to the date of capture. Other evidence can be obtained from fecal samples or from feathers shed by birds that were never captured. A compelling case study involves a murrelet found dead in New Mexico in 2009; the bird could not be identified by traditional morphometric and plumage characters, but DNA analysis confirmed that it was New Mexico’s first Long-billed Murrelet (Witt et al. 2010).

In the case of the Alaska moorhen, photographic evidence would not have been definitive to species, and capture with a mist net or other means was probably not feasible. The collecting of birds will probably continue to play a role in ornithology in the ABA Area, but at only a shadow of its importance 150 years ago. Some of the reasons for the decline of scientific collecting may be waning public support for the practice, coupled with increasing urbanization that precludes discharge of shotguns. But just as important is that diagnostic DNA analysis doesn’t require a traditional specimen; a feather or a small blood sample is sufficient. Stray hummingbirds are increasingly identified by molecular analysis of their feathers, and potential vagrant skuas to Britain have been identified by their mitochondrial DNA (see Hess 2004). Fascinatingly, genetic analysis sometimes results in conclusions that are substantially different from speculations based on analysis of high-quality digital photographs. A good example of this is an extremely well-studied and well-photographed hummingbird in Illinois in 2011 that was believed to be a Broad-tailed Hummingbird by some observers; DNA analysis, however, showed that it was at least 75% if not 100% Rufous Hummingbird (Swick 2011). Finally, we note that there is increasing support for—but also a lot of opposition to—the scientific description of bird species new to science based not on a “type specimen” but rather only on small tissue samples; Peterson and Lanyon (1992), in an early commentary, well anticipated much of the current debate.

Common Chiffchaff

(Phylloscopus collybita)

Background

One individual at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska 6–7 June 2012 was extensively photographed (Lehman and Zimmer 2013). Although consensus was not initially achieved—with some considering the bird to be a Willow Warbler or some other Phylloscopus—the short primary projection and the dark legs and feet led many to believe that the bird was a Common Chiffchaff. Subsequent and detailed analysis of the photographs confirmed the identification by the presence of four emarginated primaries (rather than three on Willow Warbler). Identification as the Siberian subspecies tristis was based on geography and strongly suggested by the dull plumage and rather strong supercilium.

Comments

The Gambell chiffchaff well illustrates how far the “digital revolution” has come. As recently as 25 years ago, bird photography was practiced by only a handful of photographers—mostly professionals or semi-professionals—with ample time, money, patience, and skill, who lugged around big, heavy telephoto lenses on giant tripods. Although photographers with giant lenses are an increasingly common sight at rare-bird chases today, many “serious” birders carry into the field small digital cameras with surprisingly high resolution capabilities. Even an inexpensive point-and-shoot digital camera (costing much less than most binoculars) can instantly
The ABA Checklist Committee in the 21st Century

and credibly provide documentation of a rare bird. It is impossible to accurately quantify the phenomenon, but we believe that there exist orders of magnitude more publicly accessible bird photographs than was the case 25 years ago—maybe only five years ago. One could probably spend the rest of one's life viewing various Flickr accounts and never see the same bird image twice! Thus, bird photography has proliferated, to say the least, in recent decades. But that's not all; there has also been an "aesthetic" change that has had felicitous consequences for records committees.

In the past, bird photographers toiled to get the "perfect shot"—a well-composed image of a beautiful adult male in alternate plumage perched on a well-manicured snag with a smooth, featureless background. But many of today's birders are amateur photographers with digital cameras who will shoot at almost anything—a behavior due in large part to not having to pay for film or developing costs. In the past, a review species seen briefly while birding might not have been photo-documented at all; there wouldn't have been enough time to set up the "perfect shot". Today, though, a birder can fire off 25 or more shots in a few seconds, and the rarity has been commendably documented.

What's next? There has been speculation for several years now about a closer fusion of binoculars and telescopes with cameras; the birder of the future may be able to employ a single device both for observation and for documentation. Sensitive, precise, inexpensive, and extremely small audio-recorders are increasingly valued and used for documenting diagnostic songs and calls (Floyd 2012). Today, most cameras (and even most cellphones!) are able to record bird vocalizations accurately enough for credible documentation. It is easy to imagine that, in the not-too-distant future, there will be apps for tracking the locations of birds with radio or satellite transmitters (as costs decline and the technology improves, maybe these will be routinely affixed to mist-netted birds' leg bands?). And—who knows?—maybe the currently fantastical idea of binoculars that "see" DNA will one day be reality. The digital revolution continues to amaze all of us, and we should be open-minded about the future.

Nutmeg Mannikin

(Lonchura punctulata)

Background

This species was recently added to the ABA Checklist on the basis of an exotic population established in southern California. Nutmeg Mannikins have been present in California since at least 1988 and were considered common in Los Angeles and Orange counties by 1997–1999, when the population was studied by Smithson (2000). The established population ranges from San Luis Obispo County south into extreme northwestern Baja California, Mexico. The overall size of the California population is thought to number in the several thousands of individuals. The Nutmeg Mannikin is a polytypic species that is widespread from northeastern Pakistan through the Indian subcontinent and Indochina to southeastern China, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Because of its popularity as a cage bird, exotic populations are known from many regions, including Australia, California, Cuba, Dominica, Florida, Guadeloupe, Hawaii, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Japan, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Restall (1997) recognizes 13 subspecies; the nominate subspecies is found in California and Florida (Pranty and Garrett 2011), whereas the subspecies toplea is found in Hawaii (P. Pyle, pers. comm.).

Comments

Some birders may reasonably wonder about the "countability" of Nutmeg Mannikins in the ABA Area that are observed outside southern California. For example, the species is widely scattered along the northern Gulf Coast at least from Houston, Texas, to Pensacola, Florida (e.g., Duncan 2009), and escapees could be found virtually anywhere. Would a mannikin seen along the northern Gulf Coast "count" for an ABA-compliant list?

According to Rule 2(B)(iii) of the ABA Recording Rules and Interpretations, available online <aba.org/bigday/rules.pdf>, “an introduced species may be counted only where and when it meets the ABA Checklist's definition for being an established population. An introduced species observed well away from the accepted geographic area is not counted if it is more likely to be a local escape(e) or
release rather than an individual straying from the distant population.

One of us (Pranty) takes the “strict” view that Rule 2(B)(iii) would limit “countable” Nutmeg Mannikins only to those regions or counties in California in which the species has been ratified by the ABA CLC to be established. The other of us (Floyd) takes the more “liberal” view that exotics from established populations (i.e., meeting the eight criteria of the ABA CLC given in Pranty et al. 2008) elsewhere would count. Exotic game birds in the ABA Area illustrate the subjective nature of “countability”. A Himalayan Snowcock in eastern Colorado (far from the established population in Nevada) would be judged by most birders to be uncountable. But what about a Chukar in eastern Colorado? (Chukars are established in western Colorado.) What about Ring-necked Pheasants? Their populations are regularly augmented by public and private stocking efforts. What about native game birds like Northern Bobwhites and Wild Turkeys? Their populations, too, are frequently augmented by stocking for hunters.

The question of where to count Nutmeg Mannikins, along with the related question of when to count them (relative to when they were added to the ABA Checklist), is currently under discussion at <blog.aba.org/2013/09/aba-adds-nutmeg-mannikin-981.html>.

More on Nutmeg Mannikins

More than one subspecies of Nutmeg Mannikin occurs in the U.S. The subspecies *topela* was introduced to Hawaii with individuals captured from the wild in Hong Kong in 1866 (P. Pyle, pers. comm.). On the other hand, Nutmeg Mannikins in the continental U.S. are of the nominate subspecies, which is native to India and Sri Lanka (Pranty and Garrett 2011). These were imported for the pet trade from an exotic population established in Puerto Rico (Garrett et al. 2013) beginning in the 1960s.

In most regions of the world, Lonchura punctulata is known as Scaly-breasted Munia. (and, in aviculture, by a host of other names such as “spice bird” or “spice finch”). Because the AOU Area for North and Middle America includes Hawaii and the Caribbean islands (where the species has long been established), Nutmeg Mannikin is already on the AOU Check-list. As such, its English name and taxonomic placement are automatically accepted by the ABA CLC. However, a proposal to the AOU to change the English name to Scaly-breasted Munia may be forthcoming (J. Dunn, pers. comm.).

Hooded Crane

(*Grus monacha*)

*Background*

One or more single Hooded Cranes were observed over a 21-month period, in Idaho (April 2010), Nebraska (April 2011), Ten-
nessee (December 2011–January 2012), and Indiana (February 2012), always among flocks of Sandhill Cranes. Records committees in Indiana and Tennessee have accepted the records in those states as having represented natural vagrants; the Nebraska committee has yet to reach consensus (M. Brodie, pers. comm.), and the Idaho committee is still “collecting documentation” after three years (IBRC 2013).

Proponents of natural vagrancy have suggested that Hooded Cranes are so rare in captivity that every individual can be accounted for (presuming that no individuals are found on the “black market”), that all should be banded, and that many have been pinioned. One possible scenario in this view is that a wild Hooded Crane from Mongolia, Russia, or Japan flew off course to Alaska, joined the local breeding “Lesser” Sandhill Cranes, migrated with them to winter in the U.S. or Mexico, and was then observed in Idaho during spring migration. What we presume to be the same crane was then found during the following two years in Nebraska, Tennessee, and Indiana.

This bird or these birds may have been natural vagrants, but it is unlikely that the ABA CLC will simply rubber stamp that view. For starters, the CLC will be challenged with trying to determine how many Hooded Cranes are involved. If it is thought to be just one bird, then the committee will have to wrestle with the question of the bird’s complex movements around the U.S. (e.g., Tennessee and Indiana are outside the presumed northward trajectory of Lesser Sandhill Cranes returning to their breeding grounds in Alaska from wintering grounds in Texas or Mexico). Whether one or multiple birds are involved, the matter of provenance must be addressed. In this regard, it is noteworthy that four Hooded Cranes disappeared from captivity in Idaho in 2007. Apparently, these were all pinioned (M. Brodie, pers. comm.) and so could not have been any of the free-flying individuals. Nevertheless, it is at least a curious coincidence that the first report of Hooded Crane in the wild in North America happened to be in the same state from which four captives disappeared 28–30 months earlier.

Comments
Of particular interest with these records is the “jurisdictional” issue for the ABA CLC. Four state committees are reviewing records of possibly the same individual Hooded Crane! Two committees (Indiana and Tennessee) have accepted the records as representing natural vagrants, but the other two committees (Idaho and Nebraska) have been unable to reach consensus. Given the differing judgments of the committees themselves, it will be impossible for the ABA CLC to reach a decision that reflects everyone’s views.

A thorny issue for the ABA CLC is the relative experience and expertise of the different committees. How much weight, for example, should be given to the Nebraska committee’s considerable experience with vagrancy in East Asian cranes? (The state has multiple accepted records of Common Crane, whose breeding range includes the Russian Far East.) Also potentially awkward is public sentiment regarding vagrants; in this age of online social media, there is a virtually instantaneous torrent of
impassioned opinion about the countability of vagrants (see Brinkley 2012) whose provenance is in many cases impossible to determine with certainty. Needless to say, the ABA CLC strives to render judgments that are objective; at the same time, it may be impossible for some members of the committee to be completely unaware of and unaffected by public discourse.

Finally, there is a strictly procedural question for the ABA CLC. Members of the CLC need to decide at what point they will review the Hooded Crane records. Does the CLC evaluate the record(s) right now, after two state committees have voted in favor of vagrancy? Or does the CLC wait until the Idaho and Nebraska committees also reach consensus? With more birders than ever, and with more and generally more active records committees than ever before, such procedural matters will continue to challenge the ABA CLC.

**Rufous-necked Wood-Rail**  
*Aramides axillaris*

### Background

One individual was at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico, 7–19 July 2013. There has been an extremely large—perhaps unprecedented—amount of discussion and media coverage of this presumed vagrant. It seems destined to become one of the most celebrated ABA Area vagrants of all time. The identity of the bird is not in question, but, understandably, there have been questions about its provenance. The general consensus seems to be that it is a natural vagrant; however, some wood-rails are known to be kept captive in the U.S. But we’re getting ahead of ourselves, as this record awaits review first by the New Mexico Bird Records Committee.

### Comments

Rails are in a family known for long-distance movements. Notable vagrants to the ABA Area from the Neotropics have included Paint-billed Crake and Spotted Rail (Pranty et al. 2008). But despite their aquatic habitats and the dull plumages and secretive behavior of many species, rails are kept in captivity and at times escape. A recent, familiar example is the population of Purple Swamphens found in Florida, which began from captive individuals allowed to roam freely. Another example, this one specifically regarding wood-rails, was the report of two small populations of Gray-necked Wood-Rail (*Aramides cajanea*) “said to exist under protected conditions” in southeastern Florida (Vero Beach and Miami) in the 20th century (Stevenson 1976, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992). Unfortunately, published details about these populations are so sparse that it is not known even whether they were released accidentally or intentionally or whether any of these birds bred outside of captivity (Greenlaw et al. in press).

As stated above, there seems to be some consensus that the New Mexico wood-rail was a natural vagrant. However, records committees aspire to operate independently of the “court of public opinion”. Will the New Mexico and ABA committees corroborate public opinion about this bird? We honestly do not know. One possible point of reference is another recent, spectacularly out-of-place bird at Bosque del Apache: a Sungrebe (*Heliornis fulica*) in November 2008. The species was accepted by the ABA CLC as representing a natural vagrant (Pranty et al. 2011), but the New Mexico committee’s decision to accept the record was not unanimous. It is too early to say whether the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail will be added to the ABA Checklist.

In passing, we note that the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail was discovered and...
documented in a manner that probably would not have happened 25 years ago. The wood-rail was incidentally documented when it “photobombed” a Least Bittern that was being digitally video-recorded by Matt Daw. While such documentation would have been possible in the past, vastly more birders now obtain video in the field than was the case a generation ago.

**Miscellaneous**

We here provide a few thoughts on four species that highlight additional challenges and opportunities for the ABA CLC in the second decade of the 21st century and beyond. This is just a sampling that reflects some of our own biases and interests.

**Barred Antshrike**

*(Thamnophilus doliatus)*

Unique in the ABA CLC’s history was a Barred Antshrike reported from Texas in September 2006. The only evidence for this species’ occurrence is a sound recording; the bird—assuming the source of the sound was avian—was audio-recorded at night and was never seen. Although accepted by the Texas Bird Records Committee, the record was subsequently rejected by the ABA CLC; see Pranty et al. (2007) for a justification of the CLC’s decision.

In the seven years since that sound recording was obtained, there has been a dramatic surge in birders’ interest in and knowledge about making and interpreting sound recordings of avian vocalizations. (For a look at this phenomenon, see Andrew Spencer’s article on p. 24.) Today, it is increasingly the case that problematic audio recordings are analyzed spectrographically, rather than aurally. Birds that “sound” simple (to human ears) may actually sing songs that “look” highly complex (on a spectrogram); the remarkably complex song of Henslow’s Sparrow provides an excellent example of a vocalization that sounds vastly different from how it looks (see Kroodsma 2005). If the Texas antshrike record were from 2013, rather than from 2007, it is likely that the ABA CLC would have sought expert, outside review of the sound spectrogram.

Going forward, it is not implausible to imagine that an Asian vagrant and potential addition to the ABA Checklist will be photographed and audio-recorded. It is conceivable that images alone might not be diagnostic, but that vocalizations like a flight call might clinch the identification. Pioneering digital resources like Evans and O’Brien (2002) and van den Berg et al. (2003) put the birding community on alert that birds can be definitively identi-
fied by sound spectrograms of their flight calls, and contemporary resources like Xeno-canto <xeno-canto.org> are pushing the envelope much further.

**Demoiselle Crane**
*(Anthropoides virgo)*

A Demoiselle Crane observed among dozens of Sandhill Cranes in San Joaquin County, California, from September 2001 through February 2002 was rejected by the CBRC on the basis of uncertain provenance (Cole and McCaskie 2004). Possibly the same individual crane was observed three months later in British Columbia and Alaska; neither of these records seems to have been reviewed. Since the CLC has never reviewed a record that was either rejected or not reviewed by a local committee, the CLC did not evaluate these particular records. However, the CBRC’s decision was split, and it is fair to say that opinions were divided about the provenance of California’s Demoiselle Crane.

An interesting conjecture is whether this record would have been rejected, were it from 2013–2014, rather than a dozen years earlier. Is there an ongoing shift in birders’ attitudes toward the provenance of vagrants? If so, is it reflected in records committees’ decisions? Pendulums swing back and forth, and such qualities as committee conservatism may wax and wane over the years. One thing is certain: Many of the additions in the past decade to the *ABA Checklist* have been of vagrants that were not on anybody’s radar screen; a complete, annotated list of additions since 2004 to the *ABA Checklist* is provided as a WebExtra to this article <aba.org/birdersguide>.

Decisions of records committees, including the ABA CLC, can be revisited. A telling case study is that of the CBRC’s extremely—but not unjustifiably—lengthy process of reevaluation of the status of Swallow-tailed Gull in California; see Pranty et al. (2007). Depending on any precedent set by the outcome of committees’ votes on the Hooded Crane records, and in light of evolving knowledge about vagrancy in cranes and other birds, it is conceivable that the ABA CLC would at some point review the records of the Demoiselle Crane.

**Zino’s Petrel**
*(Pterodroma madeira)*

As noted above, the CLC has not recently voted on a record before a state or provincial committee has done so (many years ago, this action was frequent, as many local committees had not yet been established). Also, CLC decisions very rarely contradict those of local committees. At the same time, the CLC does not simply rubber stamp state and provincial decisions. For example, Pranty et al. (2008) note their disagreement with the British Columbia Records Committee’s decision to reject the record of a Xantus’s Hummingbird in 1997–1998. Also, the CLC’s decision not to accept a 2004 record of Ivory-billed Woodpecker was in opposition to the decision by the Bird Records Committee of the Arkansas Audubon Society (Pranty et al. 2011), and the CLC’s antshrike decision, discussed above, contradicted the Texas Bird Record Committee’s decision.

What procedure should be in place for the ABA CLC to move to contradict a state or provincial committee’s decision to reject a record, or to act on a record that was ignored by a local committee because of provenance? The ABA CLC is currently in the process of formalizing that matter.

A looming decision for the ABA CLC involves a *Pterodroma* petrel photographed Zino’s Petrel off the Madeira Archipelago. Photo © Martin Lofgren.
by Brian Patteson off North Carolina in September 1995. The bird was not identified as a Zino’s Petrel until the photograph was published 17 years later by Steve Howell (2012); the record, although not submitted to the North Carolina Bird Records Committee, nevertheless was rejected by the committee the following year (Tove et al. 2013). Subsequently, Flood and Fisher (2013) also accepted this photograph as a Zino’s Petrel, a decision that may prompt the ABA CLC to vote on it. This petrel may yet represent the first time that the CLC has ever voted on a record that was rejected by a local committee.

Perhaps more than any other taxon, the “tubenoses” in the order Procellariiformes have in recent years attracted the attention of the CLC. Emerging technologies are at play here (see our discussion, above, of the Fea’s and Galapagos petrels), but so too is a recent avalanche of new information about the basic biology of these birds. A quarter century ago, most birders hadn’t even heard of Fea’s Petrel—let alone its little-known congener, Zino’s Petrel.

**Thick-billed Parrot**  
(*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*)

The central function of the ABA CLC is to add species to (and less frequently to delete species from) the ABA Checklist. But that is not the committee’s only function. Since 1991, the CLC has associated with each Checklist entry a “birding code” that provides a very coarse sketch of the species’ status in the ABA Area. These codes are explained in detail in Pranty et al. (2008). There are six codes, and one of them has potential consequences for the countability of species on birders’ lists: Code 6 is defined as, “Cannot be found—The species is probably or actually extinct or extirpated from the ABA Checklist Area, or all survi-
The New Mexico Thick-billed Parrot was seen by more than 500 birders, who asked the obvious question: Did the bird count? Following a near-unanimous rejection of the record by the New Mexico Bird Records Committee because of questionable provenance, the ABA CLC took up the matter. The CLC agreed with the decision of the New Mexico committee and voted not to “upgrade” the species’ status, presumably to Code 5, “Accidental” (Pranty 2006, Pranty et al. 2006).

The two of us do not see eye to eye on the countability of the New Mexico Thick-billed Parrot. Pranty’s view is that the Thick-billed Parrot, being a Code 6 species, simply cannot be counted. Floyd sees the logic in Pranty’s interpretation but also admits biological and probabilistic considerations: Could the bird, in fact, have been a naturally occurring vagrant? If so, and given that the species is already on the ABA Checklist, then Floyd would say that the bird counts on the lists of those birders who saw the bird and believe it was a naturally occurring vagrant. (Note that, despite our differing interpretations, the two of us are strongly allied in our conviction that it is highly worthwhile to document birds in the wild; we commend the discoverers of this bird, the many birders who studied and documented it, and the New Mexico Records Committee for its careful review of the record.)

We have deliberately chosen to conclude our species accounts with an unresolved matter. Certain decisions of the ABA CLC and of other records committees are complex and nuanced. They are open to interpretation and reevaluation. New technologies and new attitudes are upon us, and the CLC and other records committees will continue to adapt and evolve.

**Glossary**

**Clustered.** Gathered around a central point. In the case of parsimony analyses, various individuals are clustered together visually in a “tree”, representing their apparent relatedness.

**Collecting.** The practice of shooting birds with guns or trapping them in mist nets, skinning them, and placing the resulting study skins into a collection at a museum or university.

**Congener.** A fellow member of a particular genus. Chipping Sparrow is in the same genus as Clay-colored Sparrow. They are *congener* (noun) and *congeneric* (adjective).

**Emarginated.** The outermost primaries of some birds feature a noticeable, gradual narrowing along the leading edge toward the tip. This narrowing is called emargination, and the feathers are referred to as being *emarginated*. This feature varies from species to species and can, in some cases, be helpful in identification.

**Extinct.** No longer in existence anywhere; no living member of the species exists (e.g., Passenger Pigeon and *Tyrannosaurus rex* are both extinct).

**Extirpated.** No longer occurring in a particular location but still existing elsewhere (i.e., not extinct). (e.g., Greater Prairie-Chicken has been extirpated from Canada and most of the eastern U.S.)

**Exotic.** A noun or adjective describing a bird occurring outside its normal geographic range as a result of human transport. Some species were deliberately released while others escaped accidentally. The latter are called *escapees*.

**Mitochondrial DNA.** DNA that is found in a part of the cell called the *mitochondrion*. In most species (including humans and birds), mitochondria (plural) are inherited solely from the mother, so mitochondrial DNA tells us about an organism’s maternal lineage.

**Parsimony analysis.** Data analysis that uses the principle that the simplest explanation is the one that is preferred. In the analysis of phylogeny, parsimony means that the hypothesis of relationships that requires the smallest number of character changes is most likely to be correct. In molecular systematics, these character changes are often DNA mutations.

**Pinioned.** Describes a bird rendered permanently flightless by amputation of part of the wing.

**Sensu lato.** Latin for “in the stricter sense”.

**Sensu stricto.** Latin for “in the wider sense”.

**Species-pair.** A pair of species, often each other’s closest relatives. Spotted and Eastern towhees form a species-pair. Sometimes species within a pair are difficult to distinguish; unidentifiable individuals may be referred to using both names (e.g., Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher, Hawaiian/Galápagos Petrel).

**Spectrogram.** A graph that shows a visual representation of sound, usually with the y-axis representing frequency and the x-axis representing duration.

**Split.** When scientists decide that a taxon (often, a species) is really two or more taxa, the resulting action is called a *split*. Also used as a verb (e.g., Rufous-sided Towhee was split into Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee).

**Stable isotope analysis.** A scientific procedure that looks at the proportions of certain kinds of atoms within a sample. This analysis is often used with feathers to give a general idea of where the bird was geographically while it was growing that feather.

**Vagrant.** A bird occurring far outside its normal geographic range, without direct human assistance.
As a general policy, the AOU accepts as additions to the Check-list any species the American Birding Association Checklist Committee (ABA CLC) adds to its list that are not already on the AOU’s list. Those species were covered in last year’s “ABA Checklist Report” (Birding 44:6).

Most of this year’s changes affect only the scientific names or sequence of birds on the Check-list. But there is one important exception.

Sage Sparrow Split
The biggest news for ABA Area birders this year is that Sage Sparrow has been split into Sagebrush Sparrow (Artemisiospiza nevadensis) and Bell’s Sparrow (Artemisiospiza belli). Bell’s Sparrow—as it is now constituted—comprises four subspecies. Sagebrush Sparrow is monotypic.

Sagebrush Sparrow is the most northerly and easterly of the former Sage Sparrows, breeding north into Washington and Montana and east into Wyoming almost to the South Dakota border. It shows a strong preference for Big Sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata). Sagebrush Sparrow is highly migratory, with some birds flying as far south as Chihuahua and Sonora in the coldest months, so it’s not surprising that most, if not all, vagrant records of “Sage Sparrow” in the central and eastern parts of North America pertain to Sagebrush Sparrow. It is paler above than A. b. belli and A. b. canescens, with more prominent back streaking, a thinner lateral throat stripe, and bold white outer tail markings.

Nominate Bell’s Sparrow (belli) has a dark, mostly unstreaked back, a dark slaty crown, a limited amount of buff in the outer rectrices, and a bold, thick lateral throat stripe. It is resident in coastal chaparral and sage in coastal mountain ranges from northern California south into southern Baja California state. There are no records outside these two states. Throughout its range, it prefers shorter scrub. In central and northern California, it prefers chaparral dominated by Chamise (Adenostoma fasciculatum).

The intermediate-looking “Mojave Sparrow” or “Saltbush Sparrow” (canescens) is now treated as a subspecies of Bell’s Sparrow, but, as mentioned in last year’s “Check-list Redux” (Birding 44:5.), its placement within Bell’s Sparrow is somewhat problematic. It is hinted in this year’s supplement that A. b. canescens may yet be split as a species of its own. Partially migratory, this taxon breeds in the Mojave Desert of southeastern California and southern Nevada, where it uses scrubland dominated by Big Sagebrush, Common Saltbush (Atriplex polycarpa), bitterbrush.
(Purshia sp.), and Shadscale (Atriplex confertifolia). Some individuals move downslope and south in winter (into the lower Colorado River Valley of California, Arizona, and northwestern Mexico), but, overall, the taxon does not seem to undergo long-distance movements. It is intermediate in appearance between A. b. belli and A. nevadensis. Peter Pyle notes that overlap in characters seems mostly absent, with nevadensis having a less-distinct lateral throat stripe and bolder and more numerous streaks on the back when compared to A. b. canescens, which is consistently smaller than A. nevadensis. Thankfully, it seems that when these two taxa appear most similar is in worn pumage, and that's precisely when they're on the breeding grounds and, in almost all cases, are easily identified by range. (For more details on the identification of these taxa, Sagebrush Sparrow in Inyo County, California. Note the overall pale upperparts, bold mantle streaking, and faint submoustachial stripe. Photo © Bob Steele.)
see Pyle’s analysis here <tinyurl.com/PyleSAGS> and another commentary here <tinyurl.com/DVP-SAGS>. Still, determining in the field where a lone individual falls along the spectrum is likely more difficult than comparing it to a tray of specimens. Field identification of dull A. b. canescens vs. dark A. nevadensis and dark A. b. canescens vs. dull A. b. belli will probably remain problematic into the near future.

Resident on San Clemente Island off the coast of southern California is the subspecies A. b. clementeae. It is nearly identical to A. b. belli but averages a longer bill.

The subspecies A. b. cinerea is paler than belli and at first glance resembles A. nevadensis with reduced back streaking. It has sparse slaty (not black) streaks on sides of the throat and the breast. It is resident in a small portion of the western half of the Baja California Peninsula, centered on the Vizca-
into Peninsula in northern Baja California Sur. It makes contact with A. b. belli in southwestern Baja California state at about 29°N. Visual separation of A. b. cinerea and A. nevadensis has not been studied, but, save a vagrant A. nevadensis, identification by range should be sufficient.

**Little Shearwater Split**

The “Little Shearwater” which occurs off eastern North America is now called Barolo Shearwater (*Puffinus barolli*). A record from California, which was attributed to Little Shearwater <http://tinyurl.com/2003-CA-LISH>, is no longer considered to have been identified unequivocally.

[For a more comprehensive treatment of the “Little Shearwater” complex and of “Sage Sparrows”, see the ABA CLC report in the Sep.–Oct. 2013 issue of Birding.]

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**Want to see Bell’s and Sagebrush sparrows?**

Here are some dependable locations. Nominate Bell’s Sparrow (A. b. belli) is often found in Chamise-dominated chaparral on the hillsides of the east side of Pinnacles National Park in central California. Knowing what Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) looks like will greatly increase your chances of finding the bird. Once inside the park boundary on the east side, the entrance road winds up and over a ridge before descending to Bear Valley Visitor Center. Before the visitor center, the road crosses a bridge over Chalone Creek. During fall and winter, there is often some water under or near this bridge, and, with patience, you may see a Bell’s Sparrow (or some Lawrence’s Goldfinches) coming in for a drink. Note, however, that you are not permitted to park on the road at this location: You must park in a designated lot and hike to the bridge. The east side campground (which is also a good location for California Condor) may have puddles of water worth checking, as well. The west side of the park also has Chamise, so you may find sparrows there, too. (Note that the east and west sides of the park are not connected by road.)

“Mojave Sparrow” (A. b. canescens) is usually not too hard to find in lower Jawbone Canyon, near Mojave, California. Jawbone Canyon Road goes west off CA-14 just south of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area/State Park (which is north of Mojave). Not far in along the road is a large expanse of sparse scrub covering the floor of the flat wash. This area is also good for Le Conte’s Thrasher and Chukar.

Sagebrush Sparrow can be found breeding in sage flat within Colorado National Monument, just outside Grand Junction, Colorado. It’s also a good location for Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, and Chukar.
The following “oddball sandpipers” are now placed within the genus *Calidris*, and their former monotypic genera disappear:

- **Surfbird** (*Aphriza virgata* ➔ *Calidris virgata*)
- **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* ➔ *Calidris pygmea*)
- **Broad-billed Sandpiper** (*Limicola falcinellus* ➔ *Calidris falcinellus*)
- **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** (*Tryngites subruficollis* ➔ *Calidris subrucollis*)
- **Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax* ➔ *Calidris pugnax*)

The sequence of species within the genus *Calidris* has been changed to the following, keeping in mind the genus’s new members outlined above:

- **Great Knot**
- **Red Knot**
- **Surfbird**
- **Ruff**
- **Broad-billed Sandpiper**
- **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**
- **Stilt Sandpiper**
- **Curlew Sandpiper**
- **Temminck’s Stint**
- **Long-toed Stint**
- **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**
- **Red-necked Stint**
- **Sanderling**
- **Dunlin**
- **Rock Sandpiper**
- **Purple Sandpiper**
- **Baird’s Sandpiper**
- **Little Stint**
- **Least Sandpiper**
- **White-rumped Sandpiper**
- **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**
- **Pectoral Sandpiper**
- **Semipalmated Sandpiper**
- **Western Sandpiper**

The order **Charadriiformes** was reorganized, as follows:

- **Suborder Charadrii**
  - Family **Burhinidae** (thick-knees)
  - Family **Recurvirostridae** (avocets and stilts)
  - Family **Haematopodidae** (oystercatchers)
  - Family **Charadriidae** (plovers)

- **Suborder Scolopaci**
  - Family **Jacanidae** (jaçanas)
  - Family **Scolopacidae** (sandpipers)

- **Suborder Lari**
  - Family **Glareolidae** (pratincoles and coursers)
  - Family **Stercorariidae** (skuas and jaegers)
  - Family **Alcidae** (alcds)
  - Family **Laridae** (gulls, terns, and skimmers)

[For more information on recent changes in sandpiper taxonomy, see <tinyurl.com/piper-taxo> and Birding 45:2.]

The name for the sandgrouse order was changed from *Pteroclidiformes* to **Pterocliformes**. One member of this order...
Old World order—Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse—is an established exotic in the northwestern portion of the island of Hawai‘i.

Flammulated Owl was moved from the genus Otus (that of the Old World scops-owls) and placed in a new, monotypic genus. Its scientific name is now *Psiloscops flammeolus*.

The scientific names of some of the silky-flycatchers changed to correct a misspelling. The genus *Ptilogonys* (which includes Gray Silky-flycatcher) changed to *Ptiliogonys*. The silky-flycatcher family, of which Phainopepla is also a member, changed from Ptilogonatidae to *Ptiliogonatidae*.

The sequence of species in the mimid
family changed. Those on the ABA Checklist are now in the following order:
- Blue Mockingbird
- Gray Catbird
- Curve-billed Thrasher
- Brown Thrasher
- Long-billed Thrasher
- Bendire’s Thrasher
- California Thrasher
- Le Conte’s Thrasher
- Cassin’s Thrasher
- Bahama Mockingbird
- Northern Mockingbird

The sequence of the three Haeorhous (formerly Carpodacus) finches has changed to the following:
- House Finch
- Purple Finch
- Cassin’s Finch

The subfamily Drepanidinae (Hawaiian honeycreepers) was subsumed into the subfamily Carduelinae. The Hawaiian “honeycreepers” really just are, it seems, highly diverged members of the goldfinch clan. Their position in the list has changed, now coming immediately after Eurasian Bullfinch, but their internal sequence is unchanged.

**Hawai’i Creeper**, one of those afore-mentioned “honeycreepers”, underwent a change of scientific name. It was formerly a member of the monotypic genus Oreomystis. It is now Loxops mana. It shares this genus with ‘Akeke’e and ‘Akepa, and it now precedes the former in the checklist sequence.

**Notable Proposals That Were Not Accepted**
- A change in genus name for Yellow-crowned Night-Heron from Nyctanas sa to Nyctherodius.
- Split of American Thalasseus acuflavidus (Cabot’s Tern) from Sandwich Tern (T. sandvicensis).
- Split of Guatemalan Pygmy-Owl (Glaucidium cobanense) from Northern Pygmy-Owl.
- Split of Velasquez’s Woodpecker (Melanerpes santacruzi) from Golden-fronted Woodpecker.
- Split of Chiapan Myiarchus flavidior (Ridgway’s Flycatcher) from Nutting’s Flycatcher.
- Further splitting of Canada Goose.
- Split of White-breasted Nuthatch into two to four species.
- Lump of the three American-breeding rosy-finches into American Rosy-Finch (L. tephrocotis).

**On the Horizon**

The AOU CLC is anticipating voting on a retooled proposal to split White-breasted Nuthatch, but perhaps not in...
2014. The proposal voted down this year didn’t address some members’ concerns about how many species there should be. The CLC may also consider changing the name of Nutmeg Mannikin to Scaly-breasted Munia, the English name used for this species across most of the world.

To join discussion of the Check-list changes, and to read about even more changes that affect Middle America, visit <tinyurl.com/2013AOUCLC>.

The author thanks Jon Dunn, Oscar Johnson, Peter Pyle, Debi Shearwater, and Andrew Spencer for help with this article.

Range maps in this article were adapted from those which appear in the most recent edition of the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, which is a wonderful and highly-recommended source for subspecies maps.

This White-breasted Nuthatch, photographed in New Jersey, is of the pale-backed and short-billed eastern population. Photo © Brett Klaproth.

Hawai’i Creeper is now in the genus Loxops. Photo © Christopher Taylor.
even months ago, we launched ABA’s Listing Central (listing.aba.org), the main feature of which is the digital Big Day and List Report. It is a work in progress. We’re making changes and additions based on your feedback and implementing some ideas of our own. I won’t lie: Making the abrupt switch to an interactive online database after decades of mailed and printed reports was (and is) challenging. Many ABA members enjoy the new site as much as other members want to keep things the way they were.

So far, we’re pretty happy with the way it’s going. As of September 2013, we have about the same amount of participants at Listing Central as we had for the (final printed) 2012 Big Day and List Report. We’ve also added quite a bit in certain sections. For example, the 2012 report had 828 ABA Area Life List totals. Listing Central has 796 at the moment. Canada Life List totals entered in the 2012 report numbered 71. Listing Central has 213 so far. That’s quite a jump; our Canadian members were obviously just waiting for this to go online!

But where we’ve seen some astounding numbers is in county listing. There is no doubt that keeping county totals has become the most popular “game” in ABA Area birding. The ABA had not previously published county list totals, and it seems as though members were champing at the bit. So far, 14,120 County Life List totals and 8,759 State Life List totals have been entered at Listing Central. In all, 43,356 list totals are now entered at Listing Central, including 28,731 Life List totals, 7,551 Year List totals, and 7,006 Month List totals.

Where we’re lagging behind is in Big Day submissions: Only 51 Big Days have been submitted so far. The Big Day is a different beast. To be honest, it was the one part of the printed report I most looked forward to. And I was always disappointed. Not with what was submitted, but with the lack of available space in the report,
and how that forced us to print your accounts of some amazing Big Days in tiny type and bunched-together paragraphs.

Now, space is not a concern, so we’ve provided a fully functional WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor for uploading your Big Day stories, and you can include photos, maps, checklists, files, videos, comments, or whatever else you want. Now, these epic stories can be told as they should be, unabridged and in full color!

Speaking of the WYSIWYG editor, that feature is available not just for Big Days, but also for all of the list totals you submit. Now other ABA members can comment on your lists, and you can reply. (This part, I think, is really cool!) Another exciting change is the creation of Member Profiles, which show not only each person’s totals in one screen, but also include a user photo and bio information.

Here are a few preview snapshots of submitted lists, but for the full story, visit listing.aba.org.
Printed below are some of the top lists from Listing Central <listing.aba.org>. To make sure your lists qualify for inclusion in next year’s Listing Snapshot, be sure to have your 2013 totals uploaded by 1 June 2014.

### 2012 Year Lists

#### ABA Area - Top 25
- 632 Robert Metzler
- 611 Francis Fekel
- 596 Robert Baumber
- 563 David W Nelson
- 560 Leo Miller
- 526 William Drummond
- 522 Mike Dupree
- 520 Magill Weber
- 517 Kathy Mihm-Dunning
- 514 Jennifer Rycenga
- 511 John F Gatchet
- 502 William Rockey
- 499 Justin Streit
- 493 Chip Clouse
- 482 Richard Norton
- 451 Harold Bond
- 444 Tal Roberts
- 443 Wilson Cady
- 441 Kevin Calhoun
- 439 Greg Miller
- 432 John Hubbell
- 431 Ric Zarwell
- 423 Cameron Carver
- 422 Steve Collins
- 415 Alex Burdo

#### United States - Top 25
- 657 Francis Fekel
- 632 Robert Metzler
- 560 Leo Miller
- 558 David W Nelson
- 548 Paul Raney
- 531 Steve Brown
- 526 William Drummond
- 520 Mike Dupree
- 517 Kathy Mihm-Dunning
- 514 Jennifer Rycenga
- 511 John F Gatchet
- 502 William Rockey
- 499 Justin Streit
- 493 Chip Clouse
- 482 Richard Norton
- 451 Harold Bond
- 444 Tal Roberts
- 443 Wilson Cady
- 441 Kevin Calhoun
- 439 Greg Miller
- 432 John Hubbell
- 431 Ric Zarwell
- 423 Cameron Carver
- 422 Steve Collins
- 415 Alex Burdo

### North America - Top 10
- 632 Robert Metzler
- 630 James Sigtsbee
- 617 David W Nelson
- 522 William Rockey
- 499 Justin Streit
- 452 Charles Mills
- 451 Harold Bond
- 443 Wilson Cady
- 428 Craig Caldwell
- 413 Tommie Rogers

### World - Top 10
- 3310 Kenneth Prytherch
- 2215 Forrest Rowland
- 1858 Chris Doughty
- 1606 Lorna Engleman
- 1602 Dodge Engleman
- 1485 Todd Pepper
- 1354 Jim Holmes
- 1340 James Sigtsbee
- 1313 Patty O’Neill
- 589 Craig Caldwell

### Life Lists

#### ABA Area - Top 100
- 889 Macklin Smith
- 883 Paul Sykes
- 882 Larry Peavler
- 864 David Narins
- 854 Ebbe Banstorp
- 842 Monte Taylor
- 835 Bruce Barrett
- 830 Bob Funston
- 828 Paul Lehman
- 827 Mike Austin
- 825 Timothy Steurer
- 821 Louise McCullough
- 821 Ted Peterson
- 820 Mark Cudney
- 820 Steve Kornfield
- 818 Karen Shramer
- 817 John Shramer
- 816 Gary Stitzinger
- 813 David C Chaffin
- 809 Edward Borowik
- 808 Lucie Bruce
- 807 Dan Sanders
- 806 Paul O’Brien
- 806 Greg Bretz
- 803 Bill Grossi
- 802 Keith Camburn
- 800 Michael Schwitters
- 800 Kenneth Burden
- 800 Lynn Hemink
- 800 Bill Brooks
- 799 Thomas Heatley
- 799 Jim Holmes
- 798 Barrett Pierce
- 798 Grace Steurer
- 797 Martin Meyers
- 794 Gloria Wachtler
Canada - Top 50

542 Roger Foxall  
526 Jo Ann MacKenzie  
494 Michael Force  
489 David Stirling  
487 Peter Gilchrist  
486 Hugh Currie  
479 Drew Campbell  
477 David Mark  
473 William Lindley  
459 Brian Elder  
457 Kevin Neill  
457 Ann White  
456 Thor Manson  
455 Mike Mulligan  
455 Larry Neily  
451 Jeff Skevington  
450 Gordon Tufts  
449 Barbara Begg  
447 Gordon Payne  
445 Thomas Heatley  
443 Larry Cowan  
441 John Voos  
436 Mike Austin  
435 Phillip Cram  
435 Robert McDonald  
429 Gordon Grief  
421 Tony Timmons  
420 Mark Chojnacki  
415 Rob Parsons  
412 Ken Thorpe  
410 Antonio Salvadori  
410 Todd Pepper  
410 Brent Schmor  
408 Karl Overman  
401 Robert Walton  
397 Kenneth Burden  
389 Barbara Baldinger  
386 James Fowler  
385 Jim Mountjoy  
382 Michael Tate  
378 Rick Collins

United States - Top 100

942 Paul Sykes  
934 Macklin Smith  
907 Larry Peavler  
897 Bruce Barrett  
887 David Narins  
869 Steve Kornfeld  
860 Mike Austin  
860 Bob Funston  
856 Thomas Heatley  
856 Timothy Steurer  
851 Bob Morse  
851 Jim Holmes  
850 William Drummond  
847 Bernard Master  
845 Monte Taylor  
843 Mark Cudney  
842 Gloria Wachtler  
841 Richard Wachtler  
841 John Hirth  
841 Grace Steurer  
826 Carl Haynie  
826 David C Chaffin  
825 Kenneth Burden  
825 Bill Grossi  
824 Mark Oberle  
822 Martha Hirth  
821 Dorothy Robbins  
818 Stephen Moore  
817 Lynn Hemink  
817 Dollyann Myers  
817 Robert Walton  
814 David W Nelson  
814 Phil Davis  
813 Paul O’Brien  
810 M.K. Edge Wade  
807 Voni Strasser  
807 Joseph Strasser  
807 Stephen F Bailey  
804 Bruce Mack  
804 Dan Sanders  
803 Lucie Bruce  
802 Norman Erthal
## 2012 Listing Snapshot

| Hawaii - Top 10 | 1012 Jorge Montejo | 947 Ronald Huffman | 934 Amy McAndrews | 921 Ebbe Banstorp | 880 Mike Mulligan | 866 Michael Retter | 860 John Sharader | 849 Karen Shadrer | 839 Macklin Smith | 827 Hector Ceballos-Lascurain |
| 236 Reginald David | 211 H. Douglas Pratt | 190 Lance Tanino | 184 Kurt Pohlman | 176 Thomas Snetsinger | 137 Martha Hirth | 137 John Hirth | 122 George Armstrong | 115 Mark Nikas | 112 Jim Holmes |

| Mexico - Top 10 | 1012 Jorge Montejo | 947 Ronald Huffman | 934 Amy McAndrews | 921 Ebbe Banstorp | 880 Mike Mulligan | 866 Michael Retter | 860 John Sharader | 849 Karen Shadrer | 839 Macklin Smith | 827 Hector Ceballos-Lascurain |
| 1012 Jorge Montejo | 947 Ronald Huffman | 934 Amy McAndrews | 921 Ebbe Banstorp | 880 Mike Mulligan | 866 Michael Retter | 860 John Sharader | 849 Karen Shadrer | 839 Macklin Smith | 827 Hector Ceballos-Lascurain |

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Marvelous Sparulate, Huembo Reserve, Peru, by Dubi Shapiro
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The reserves protect close to one million acres, providing habitat for nearly half the total number of bird species found in the Americas, including both endemic species and Neotropical migratory songbirds that nest in North America. These reserves have been set up to host birders, and just by visiting, you will provide income to help pay for the stewardship of these special places.

Reserve network partners include Asociación Armonía (Bolivia), Fundação Biodiversitas and REGUA (Brazil), Fundación ProAves (Colombia), Osa Conservation and Tirimbina Association (Costa Rica), Fundación Jocotoco (Ecuador), ECOAN and Amazon Conservation Association (Peru).
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