American Birding Association

Birder's Guide

OCTOBER 2015

TO LISTING TAXONOMY

Understanding Phylogenies

Biking for Birds

2014 Listing Snapshot

Interview with the Secretary of the RSEC

HIGH LONESOME birdtours

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Pribilofs I, St. Paul Island,: Galapagos of the North
May 21 – 25

Pribilofs, Gambell & Nome
May 21 – June 7

St. Paul Island, Pribilofs 2 with Rockjumper Tours
May 24 – 27

Gambell I: The Siberian Express
May 26 – June 3

Gambell & Nome: Vagrants & Western Alaska Specialties
May 26 – June 7

Nome & Seward Peninsula: Western Alaska Specialties
I: May 29 – June 2
II: May 29 – June 2 (with Rockjumper Tours)

Barrow I: The High Arctic with Rockjumper Tours
June 2 – 4

Nome & Seward Peninsula 3: Western Alaska Specialties
June 3 – 7

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Kenai Fjords National Park
I: June 5 – 13, 2016 (w/Rockjumper Tours)
II: June 7 – 15

Barrow II: The High Arctic I
June 16 – 18

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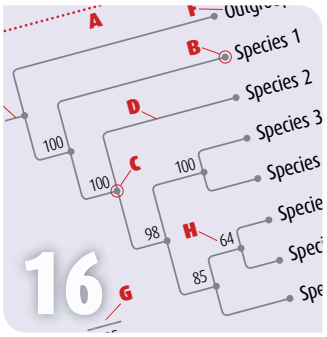

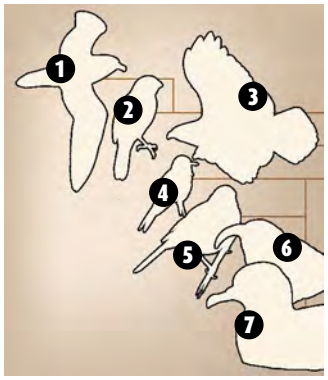

On the cover: Luke Seitz created the lovely cover for this issue. It depicts an array of species whose taxonomic fortunes changed this year. *Birder's Guide to Listing & Taxonomy* aims to explain these changes in straightforward language. **1** · Trindade Petrel; **2** · White-collared Seedeater; **3** · White-tailed Hawk; **4** · Bahama Woodstar; **5** · American Tree Sparrow; **6** · 'I'iwi; **7** · Townsend's Shearwater.

Watercolor painting © Luke Seitz

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BIRDER'S GUIDE TO LISTING & TAXONOMY

October 2015 • Vol. 27, No. 3

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From the **President**

Jeffrey A. Gordon
Delaware City, Delaware
jgordon@aba.org

There's not a lot of science behind baseball. Let me clarify that statement, because certainly, a lot of study has been done on the physiology and psychology of baseball. And statistics. *Moneyball*, anyone? But all this study clearly came after the rules of the game were written. So perhaps a more accurate statement would be to say that baseball itself preceded any science of baseball.

But birding, *i.e.*, the recreational and aesthetic enjoyment of birds, came after ornithology. Even the most casual birding is still undergirded and informed by the thinking of taxonomists. And understanding that thinking can actually make your birding more meaningful and more fun.

Birder's Guide to Listing & Taxonomy is meant to provide an engaging, reliable source to enhance your birding by knowing a bit of the science. It's also meant to get you fired up for the birding excitement to come this fall and far into the new year.

The American Birding Association strives to inspire all people to enjoy and protect wild birds. The *Birder's Guide* series, which is free to all at aba.org/birdersguide, is just one way we work toward that mission. To those of you who support our work through membership and donations, my sincere thanks. And if you're not an ABA member yet, I cordially invite you to consider joining at aba.org/join or by calling us at 800-850-2473.

Good birding,

Jeffrey A. Gordon
President, American Birding Association

From the **Editor**

Michael L. P. Retter
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Listing and taxonomy may not immediately seem related, but dive a bit deeper, and it soon becomes apparent.

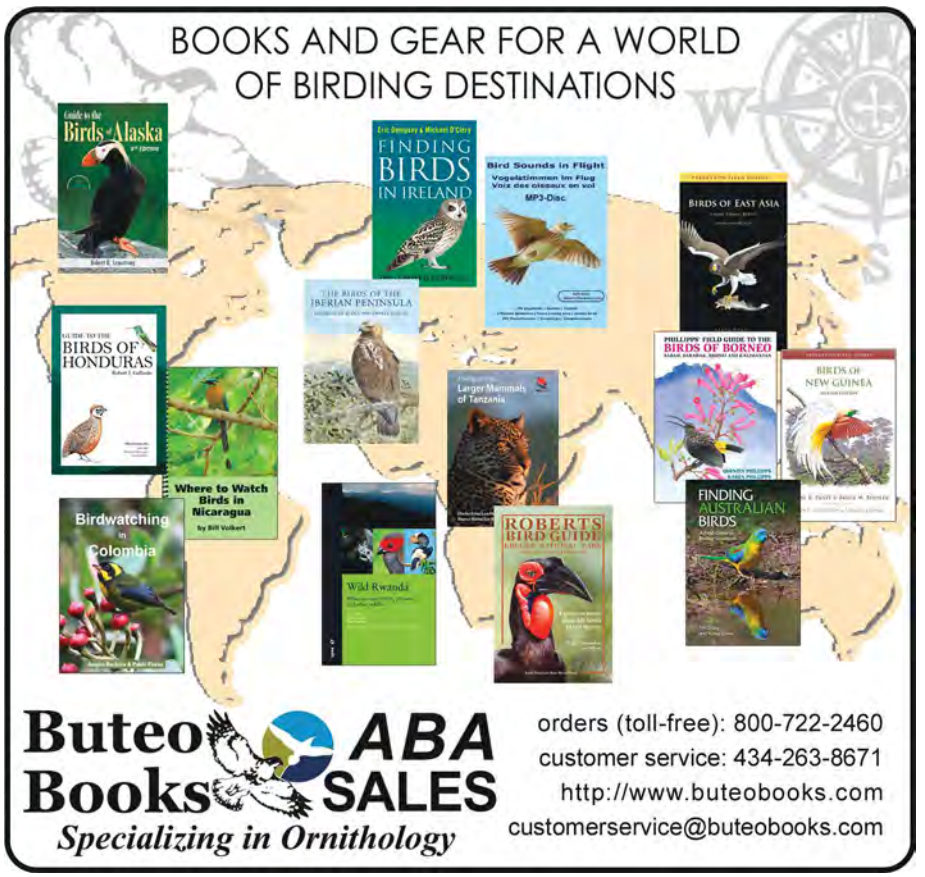
Of course, ABA Area listers depend on the American Ornithologists' Union to maintain its checklist because they use its taxonomy as the scorecard for their listing endeavors. In one of this issue's articles, ornithologist and ABA Recording Standards and Ethics Committee Secretary Nick Block offers a look inside how taxonomists analyze phylogenetic trees to determine what appears on the checklist. We continue to hear from Nick as Sheridan Coffey interviews him to help clarify the answers to some perennial listing questions. And, as always, the annual "*Check-list* Redux" explains in simple terms all that's changed on the AOU *Check-list* this year.

Listing articles in this issue cover Dorian Anderson's Big Year by bicycle and Ann Haverstock's quest to reach 700 ABA Area birds by the age of 70.

Whether you're a passionate feeder-watcher, a taxonomy wonk, or a dedicated lister, I hope you will find something of interest in this issue. Please take a moment to let us know what you did and didn't like, and what was missing. Even better, write something for us! And, finally, be sure to check in at aba.org/birdersguide, where you will find links to discussion fora. We look forward to hearing from you!

Good birding,

Michael L. P. Retter
Editor, *Birder's Guide*



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The American Birding Association, Inc., seeks to encourage and represent the North American birding community and to provide resources through publications, meetings, partnerships, and birder networks. The ABA's education programs develop birding skills, an understanding of birds, and the will to conserve. The ABA's conservation programs offer birders unique ways to protect birds and their habitats.

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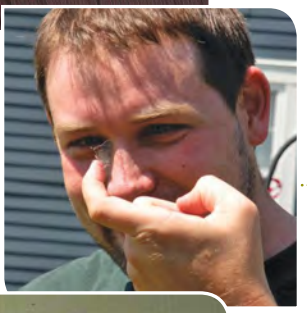
About the **Authors**

Dorian Anderson started birding around Philadelphia at age 7. He majored in molecular and cellular biology at Stanford University before completing a PhD in developmental genetics at New York University. He recently left a postdoctoral position at Massachusetts General Hospital to pursue his bicycle Big Year project, "Biking for Birds". During this year, he biked 17,830 miles around the U.S. and recorded 617 bird species. Bird photography is currently his main obsession, and he runs a birding blog, "The Speckled Hatchback", at thespeckledhatchback.blogspot.com.

Nicholas Block is the Secretary of the ABA Recording Standards and Ethics Committee and an Assistant Professor of Biology at Stonehill College in Massachusetts. He began birding at age 13 and participated in the first ABA Young Birders' Conferences. His birding travels in Mexico sparked an interest in avian phylogeography, which eventually led to a PhD in Evolutionary Biology from the University of Chicago. His dissertation research at The Field Museum focused on the evolution and phylogeography of the Bernieridae (a.k.a. Malagasy warblers), a passerine family endemic to Madagascar.

Sheridan Coffey identified her first bird, a Red-winged Blackbird, at the age of eight, in the field behind her rural Pennsylvania home. Now living in San Antonio, Texas, she works as a corporate travel consultant. Sheridan is a member of the San Antonio Audubon Society Bird Records Committee and has led numerous field trips for San Antonio Audubon and other organizations. She has been on numerous trips to Middle and South America, during which she photographed birds, butterflies, and anything else that moved. Her second passion is knitting, and she has combined her interests by designing bird-themed sweaters and hats.

Ann Haverstock is a retired teacher who now travels the world birding. Raised in Chicago, she has taught in general classroom settings in Illinois and Virginia, as well as at The Morton Arboretum, where she taught field natural history from 1989 to 2002. Ann has volunteered for The Nature Conservancy in Illinois (conducting grassland bird surveys at Nachusa Grasslands, 1990–2012) and for the Bird Conservation Network, for which she served in various positions over the past few years. She currently lives in Geneva, Illinois.



Michael L. P. Retter is the editor of *Birder's Guide* magazine. A former full-time birding tour leader, Michael has traveled extensively in the northern half of the Americas (from Alaska to Ecuador), and he still leads tours (especially to Middle America) part-time. When at home, Michael now spends most of his time writing a field guide to the birds of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. He serves on the Indiana Bird Records Committee and volunteers as an eBird reviewer for Illinois and Indiana. Michael currently lives and gardens in Fort Worth, Texas. He recently returned home from Chiapas, where he organized and led trips trips at the biannual meeting of GBNA, North America's informal club of LGBT birders and their allies.

Biking for Birds

Donning apparel appropriate for a Himalayan summit attempt, I stepped into the frigid Massachusetts morning that was January 1, 2014. This was the first day of my 2014 U.S. bicycle Big Year, "Biking for Birds". It also happened to be the first day of the "polar vortex", a frigid, arctic air mass that would blanket the northeastern U.S. for the next two months.

Pedal-pushing through the wide open spaces of Pawnee National Grassland in July.
Photo © Bill Schmoker

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The 10°F air stung my lungs as I pedaled along the two-lane road into a deserted Salisbury State Park. At 6:00 a.m., there was barely enough light to differentiate the open beach and dunes on my left from the bay and tidal marshes on my right. As I cruised along, I did manage to glimpse a large, buoyant, white mass drifting silently and gracefully across the road. Snowy Owl had just become Big Year bird #1.

A Big Year is essentially a huge avian treasure hunt. During this 365-day project, a birdwatcher tries to find as many species as he/she can within a particular area, often a county or state, between January 1 and December 31. The truly enthusiastic operate at the continent level. In 2013, Neil Hayward tallied a record 749 species in the ABA Area. During this odyssey, Neil flew 194,000 miles and drove an additional 52,000. Being that I would travel only by bike in 2014, I would threaten neither the species nor the distance benchmarks. I would, however, need to nearly reinvent how a continent-wide Big Year is planned and executed. In selecting the bicycle as my method of transportation, I hoped my efforts would inspire people—birders and others—to examine their own fuel consumption. I thought the bicycle would challenge me physically and mentally, and I figured it would make for an amazing adventure. I was correct on all counts.

There had been several notable bicycle Big Years (BBYs) before Biking for Birds. Josiah Clark and Andy Kleinhesselink both completed San Francisco Bay Area BBYs in 2008 where they each recorded 295 species. In 2012, Jim Royer found 302 species by bike in San Luis Obispo County, California. Jim added 16 species from surrounding counties for a total of 318. 2013 saw two notable BBYs: Ron Beck tallied 301 species in Cochise County, Arizona, and Mark Kudrav saw 256 species in San Mateo County, California. Mark added 70 species from surrounding counties for a total of 326 species. At the time, Mark's 326 was considered the North American record. It is also worth noting that Malkolm Boothroyd, a Canadian teenager, and his family took a year-long bike trip that included Canada and the lower 48 states

Roadside rest with a spectacular view of the Big Sur Coast in California in October.
Photo © Dorian Anderson

Rufous-backed Robin was the reward after an insane, 150-mile, one-way chase.
Photo © Dorian Anderson

Surprise! The author found this Black-headed Gull on New Year's Day in Massachusetts.
Photo © Dorian Anderson

Biking for Birds

Crossing the Golden Gate Bridge in September.
Photo © Josiah Clark

This cooperative Pacific Golden-Plover posed in Half Moon Bay, California in September.
Photo © Dorian Anderson

in 2007. During this June-to-June effort, Malkolm tallied an incredible 548 species!

In preparation for my eco-adventure, I designed a route around the lower 48 states that I thought might yield 600 species. I would have to visit seven key birding areas at particular times to approach this total. These were the Northeast in January, Florida in March, the Texas Coast in April, Arizona in June, the Rockies in late summer, the Pacific Coast in September and October, and the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in December. Breaking the year into seven smaller trips made dealing with logistics a bit more manageable. At every stage, I would have to find safe routes, places to eat, and sites to stay. I would need to liaise with local birders and monitor the weather, particularly the wind, with an obsessive-compulsive vigor. My margin for error on a bicycle was a fraction of that for petroleum-based birders. It was this inability to quickly retrace my steps that would make the year so unique.

The Northeast in January presented novel logistical challenges. A bicycle doesn't come equipped with heat. I would have to brave subfreezing temperatures both while birding and while slowly and carefully traveling between ice- and snow-covered destinations. Despite record cold during the winter of 2013–14, I found all but one of my target birds (Black-legged Kittiwake) in the stretch from Massachusetts to Philadelphia. In this stretch, one snowstorm dumped 20 inches of snow on me. Another dropped 12. These storms cost me four full days of riding. Black-headed Gull, Dovekie, Thick-billed Murre, and King Eider were all found in coastal Massachusetts. Fox Sparrow in Connecticut was #100. Barnacle Goose, Long-eared Owl, and Northern saw-whet Owl also appeared in Connecticut. Northern Shrike in Philadelphia was the last of my winter targets to be ticked.

The next five weeks were spent migrating south. Upon reaching Florida, I added Yellow-throated Warbler for bird #200. Sporting shorts instead of thermals, I quickly cleaned up the Florida birds, both introduced and native. I also added my lifer La Sagra's Flycatcher in Miami. This was presumably the same bird that Neil saw in 2013! I missed Mangrove Cuckoo, but this was not completely surprising for this time of year. I also missed some of the nesting specialties, such as Black-whiskered Vireo. I expected this, though, as I needed to be out west during the summer months. Unlike someone traveling by plane, I couldn't be in two far-away places in the same day, week, or even month.

From Florida, I traveled along the Gulf of Mexico to reach the upper Texas coast on April 12. I added a few neotropical migrants en route, but a particularly nice push came during a moderate fallout at Sabine Woods on April 14. On that day,

All smiles after an incredible June ride through Monument Valley, Utah.

The highest elevation at which the author biked in 2014 was reached in June in Colorado. Photo © Dorian Anderson

I ticked Black-throated Green Warbler for #300, and I found a Black-throated Blue Warbler, a fantastic bird for Texas in spring and the only one I would see during 2014. I spent two full weeks between Sabine Woods, Anahuac NWR, High Island, and the Bolivar Peninsula.

On April 27, I made the very difficult decision to leave the Texas coast even though I had not yet ticked the later-migrating Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Mourning Warbler, and Alder Flycatcher. The strong southeast winds forecasted for that week would slow birding but speed my ride west. I decided to cash in on the winds and start the two-week, 1000-mile ride across West Texas and southern New Mexico. This ride would be tough, but Arizona's many nesting specialties provided ample motivation.

I arrived in Arizona on May 15, ten days ahead of schedule. On that day, I added 23 species, including Yellow-eyed Junco for species #400. In subsequent days, I found all the expected Chiricahuan birds, including Mexican Chickadee, after biking to Rustler Park. The best and most unexpected find was surely a Common Black Hawk that flew right over my head as I returned from a successful Montezuma Quail search! The Huachucas produced Lucifer Hummingbird, White-eared Hummingbird, and Rufous-capped Warbler. The Santa Ritas yielded a family of Black-capped Gnatcatchers and a Buff-collared Nightjar. From there, it was on to Tucson, Flagstaff, and the Colorado Rockies.

The mountains of Colorado presented the most amazing scenery and most challenging riding of the year. Some of the mountain passes through which I climbed were upwards of 12,000 feet in elevation! After several failed attempts, I landed Gunnison Sage-Grouse near—shockingly—Gunnison. As I would discover in the coming months, finding grouse off-lek would require unyielding perseverance, and so would ticking the high-elevation specialties like Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. I had to hike to the summit of 14,060-foot Mount Bierstadt to find it. At adjacent Guanella Pass, I nearly stepped on a cooperative White-tailed Ptarmigan. Flammulated Owl and Dusky Grouse appeared near Boulder, and, with the extra time amassed in previous months, I reached eastern Colorado to nab Greater Prairie-Chicken. Bird #500 was California Gull in western Colorado.

Then I headed through Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Highlights during this mountain segment included Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage-Grouse, Black Rosy-Finch, Great Gray Owl, and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. I cashed in more of my extra time in Washington for wet-my-pants views of "Franklin's" Spruce Grouse in the Cascades, and to add Slaty-backed Gull and Tufted Puffin along the coast.

September and October on the West Coast were my reward for surviving the mountains. Physically, I was still feeling very good. I was also entering coastal areas where finding food and lodging would be easier than in the more sparsely populated interior. Moving southward, I ticked all the expected residents and migrants. The action really picked up in central California, where I added Red-throated Pipit, California Condor, and Black Rail. Although I did not take any gas-powered pelagic trips, I did add shearwaters and jaegers from shore in Monterey. It is worth noting that sailboats must use engines while entering and exiting harbors, so I ruled out this possibility, too. In San Diego, I added my lifer Yellow-green Vireo, multiple Brown Boobies, and a very lost Ancient Murrelet. The Salton Sea yielded another good bird, Thayer's Gull, and the more expected Yellow-footed Gull. Detouring 150 miles north (and the same 150 back!) from the Salton Sea, I added Rufous-backed Robin as my last October bird. Leaving California, I made stops in Arizona for wintering Baird's Sparrow and the rarest bird of the trip to date, Sinaloa Wren.

This Red-legged Honeycreeper (in Texas in November) is one of a handful of as-yet-unaccepted ABA Area records for the species. Photo © Dorian Anderson

No smiles on an absolutely frigid January 4th in Massachusetts. Photo © Dorian Anderson

By mid-November, my body was really starting to break down, and my motivation was starting to wane. The 1,100-mile ride from southeastern Arizona to southern Texas was cold and windy, and it nearly broke me at times. I eventually reached Laredo, where I added White-collared Seedeater, and, farther down the Lower Rio Grande Valley, I found all the expected species. A spectacular, dark-morph Hook-billed Kite flying right over my head near Bentsen caused much celebrating. "Bird of

Biking for Birds

the Year" honors, however, will go to the Red-legged Honeycreeper that a group of us found at Estero Llano Grande State Park on Thanksgiving Day. My hope is that this well-photographed, young, female bird will be accepted by the ABA Checklist Committee. I rounded out the year by adding Whooping Crane and Yellow Rail along the Texas coast and Harris's Sparrow, Little Gull, and Smith's Longspur en route to Dallas. My girlfriend met me in Dallas, and, on January 1, 2015, we started the drive to the Northeast.

I officially ended the year with 617 species, not including the honeycreeper, which, if deemed countable, would bring the official ABA-reportable total to 618. I biked 17,830 miles and raised nearly $50,000 for bird conservation. I have a flock of new friends and stories to last well into the future. Biking for Birds truly was the adventure of a lifetime.

I cannot in this small space recount the unbelievable amount of daily logistics required to plan safe-but-direct routes, locate birds, find lodging, and ensure that I had enough to eat and drink. Nor can I relay the multitude of personal and environmental musings during my countless hours of solitary biking. A particularly notable incident occurred in Ocala, Florida, where I was struck and thrown from my bike by a car. Luckily, I was fine and only mildly rattled. There were about a dozen other close calls on the roads this year; I am really thankful to have survived in one piece. Most importantly though, I cannot describe, in the detail deserving, the personal interactions with people as I zigged and zagged my way around the United States. And finally, this year would not have been possible without the support of each of these people, and for this I owe them a huge and sincere thank you.

The author's 17,830-mile route through 28 states yielded 617 species and a sore backside. Map © Kei Sochi

Since the conclusion of this adventure, I've moved away from a purely list-centered approach to birding. While birding in New Jersey in January of this year, I received word of a Pink-footed Goose only an hour from where I was birding at that time. My (Pink-footed-Goose-less) view from the Barnegat jetty was satisfying enough, and I turned my attention back to the thousands of scoters streaming past the inlet. It was a beautiful sight.

To read what a typical day was like for Dorian during his Big Year by bike, check out Lori Potter's article, "1/365th of a Big Year by Bike", in the February 2015 issue of Birding.

Beach bumming, biking, and birding near Charleston, South Carolina in February. Photo © Dorian Anderson

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Photo by Steve N.G. Howell

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ABA 700 Before 70

A few years ago, after I cleaned up my ABA-Area life list spreadsheet, I realized I was within the reachable goal of 700. There would even be a touch of symmetry if I did this before my seventieth birthday. So for the last few months of 2013, I dashed around the U.S. filling in the blanks. On a few occasions, the stars aligned. I added the Common Cuckoo in Watsonville, California; the Spotted Redshank at Goose Pond in Indiana; and the Rufous-necked Wood-Rail at Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico. But there was little fun in getting to 695 by way of a Sage Sparrow split. When the bird alerts started to ramp up with invasions and wanderers, I decided to use some frequent flyer miles. Unfortunately, these were solo trips because my pitiful friends could not drop all for a chase.

Perpetually confused by tree identification, the author preferred her mimosa in a glass as she celebrated #700.

The Quest

As I settled into my seat for the flight to Arizona from Chicago, I saw an obvious birder coming down the aisle. You know what I mean: he was dressed to hit the ground running. As he passed, I asked, "Are you going for the Sinaloa or the booby?" He laughed and answered, "Both." We convinced his seatmate to change places, and Dedrick Benz, my newest friend, and I spent the entire flight working on our ground strategies. When he realized I was pushing toward my ABA 700, we laughed about a bizarre new addition to the ABA list—a species then called Nutmeg Mannikin (now called Scaly-breasted Munia). I had seen the bird in Thailand and did not want this nonnative species as #700 on my ABA list. Dedrick was meeting buddies and going directly to California's Salton Sea for the Blue-footed Booby; I was heading to Tubac, Arizona.

Ultimately, I spent too many hours in Tubac with a surly Sinaloa Wren that refused to be seen. I love to hear birds—but not as lifers. After an entire evening and morning with this difficult and (for me) invisible wren, I headed east to Sierra Vista and another Sinaloa Wren that locals said was more cooperative. The dawn of October 2013 saw me at the gates of Fort Huachuca and face-to-face with the possible ramifications of a government shutdown. After a brief scare, I got through the gate and regis-

Sinaloa Wren. Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Photo © Laurens Halsey

Blue-footed Booby. Salton Sea, California. Photo © Sandra Gilchrist

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tered with the military police. Bless the army; they let me up the canyon by 7 a.m.! It was surprisingly quiet. Alone, but with the latest NARBA printout in hand, I walked slowly downstream from a bridge. I heard some scratching under a downed sycamore branch and thought I would see a mouse or shrew, but out popped the Sinaloa Wren! I watched it for about 15 minutes and wished in vain for some other birders to come along and share the fun. **#696 Sinaloa Wren**, *Oct. 1, 2013, Huachuca Canyon, AZ.*

I had the rest of the day to drive to California to see bunches of Blue-footed Boobies. By afternoon, I arrived at the Salton Sea—and the shutdown of the NWR. The barricades and signs told me that I would be on my own; there would be no refuge staff to help direct me. My maps guided me to the correct area, but I remained confused. I am from the Midwest, and this place looks like the moon. I was not sure what to do next and found myself alone at the desolate corner of Grubel and Lack Roads, when from the north comes my knight in shining Chevy, Bob Doe from Texas (formerly from California). Would you believe, he was wearing a hat that says, "Birding With Bob"? He said, "Follow me," and I did, proving once again that birders are the most generous of people. **#697 Blue-footed Booby**, *Oct. 1, 2013, Obsidian Butte, Salton Sea, CA.*

The next morning I headed to Ventura and the Laguna Road tamarisk trees. My new friend Dedrick emailed me a location where he had seen some Nutmeg Mannikins, and it was on my route. If I were to see that bird, it just had to be before #699, but I had no luck at Dedrick's location and several others. When you look at eBird, Southern California is awash with mannikins. Seems they can pop up anywhere.

Once near Ventura, I was too busy looking for the Yellow-green Vireo and rows of trees to bother with the mannikin. As a former arboretum employee, I am ashamed to say I hadn't a clue how to ID a tamarisk tree. And if I am honest, I expected to see birders on the roadside to make the search easier. That evening, I called a California friend and, with her help and that of Google, I was enlightened to the ID characteristics of tamarisks. The following morning, alone with these warbler-filled

Rufous-backed Robin. Reid Park, Tucson, Arizona. Photo © Paul Suchanek

Yellow-green Vireo. Ventura, California. Photo © David Pereksta

Island Scrub-Jay. Ventura, California. Photo © Brian E. Small

ABA **700** Before **70**

trees, I wondered, "Where is everyone?" By 7:20 a.m. I had several awesome views of the colorful Yellow-green Vireo, and slowly birders began to arrive. I met David Pereksta, who initially found the vireo. He was my rock star, so I forced him to autograph my journal. **#698 Yellow-green Vireo**, *Oct. 3, 2013, Laguna Rd. tamarisks (a lifer tree), Ventura, CA.*

I was getting a little nervous, still having found no mannikin. I checked eBird, which indicated there was a virtual mannikin desert around Ventura, so I moved on. With encouragement and help from local birders, I found a way onto a section of Santa Cruz Island that was not closed by the government shutdown. (I had forgotten that much of the island is part of the Channel Islands National Park.) The Nature Conservancy property at Prisoners Harbor was still open, and the Island Packers boats were running. **#699 Island Scrub-Jay**, *Oct. 4, 2013, Santa Cruz Island, CA.*

At this point, I had to wear blinders and hope that no Nutmeg Mannikin would cross my path. NARBA alerted me to a bird I needed in Tucson, so I left at dawn. Darkness was a necessity; I had to get away from Los Angeles and any possibility of seeing mannikins. I reached Tucson's Reid Park by 4 p.m. and found it packed with people, dogs, weddings, tents, festivals, and a concert. I went to bed.

I overslept Sunday morning and didn't arrive at Reid Park until after eight. There were no other birders nearby, but on the ground near the rose garden was my gold ring. **#700 Rufous-backed Robin**, *Oct. 6, 2013, Reid Park, Tucson, AZ.*

Please, pity all the people that met me that morning. I was on a high!

Technology has changed much over my birding career. I could not have done this without iPhone, emails, eBird, NARBA, Google, friends, and the many great birders I met during my quest. Someone did ask me, "What could be next: 800 before 80?"

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An Introduction to Understanding Phylogenies and Their Effects on Taxonomy

The advent of using DNA sequences to help define relationships among and within bird species has led to a veritable blur of taxonomic changes that often leave birders confused, frustrated, and believing in field guide publisher conspiracies.

Although it is fun to imagine the head honchos of National Geographic, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Knopf in a secret backroom with a giant collage of species and darts labeled *Split* and *Lump*, virtually all the recent ABA Area species name changes and changes in where to find species in a field guide have been based on decisions made by the American Ornithologists' Union's North American Checklist Committee (NACC). In turn, the NACC decisions typically are based on scientific research articles that present hypotheses concerning the evolutionary relationships of a particular group of avian taxa. These hypotheses are usually presented as branching, tree-like figures called phylogenies. Thus, understanding phylogenies is at the heart of understanding why the names and sequences of names in our field guides seem to be in continuous flux. This article aims to introduce birders to phylogenies, including their construction, interpretation, and application.

How are phylogenies constructed? A very brief introduction to phylogenetic methods

The data for constructing phylogenies primarily come from one of two sources: DNA sequences or morphology. Modern avian systematics studies typically use DNA sequences for extant (or recently extinct) species and reserve morphology for long-extinct species from which DNA cannot be extracted. The DNA for these studies can come from a variety of sources, including tissue, blood, feather, and fecal samples. Once the source sample has been obtained, the DNA is extracted in a lab (although scientists tend to use the term "extracted", the process really takes out everything *but* the DNA). Following extraction, researchers will prepare a sample of the DNA for sequencing, then run the prepared samples through a sequencing machine (the exact preparation technique and machine will vary depending on a researcher's goal and/or resources). The end result is a set of homologous DNA sequences for each individual bird in the study that can now be compared to each other via phylogenetic analyses.

As with sequencing methods, analysis methods vary widely, perhaps unsurprisingly given that a set of DNA sequences to be compared can comprise anywhere from a few hundred to millions of data points for each sample. A description of the various methods is beyond the scope of this article, but they all compare the DNA sequences from the samples and determine the level of similarity among them. Generally, the more similar the DNA sequences, the more closely related two birds are. By generating a similarity matrix for all samples, researchers can create a nested hierarchy of proposed relationships among the samples. This nested hierarchy can be presented in a number of ways, but the most common way is a phylogeny.

How to read a phylogeny

Figure 1 shows a hypothetical phylogeny of bird species. Below are explanations of various terms and features relevant to it, with each explanation matching a corresponding label on the phylogeny.

- **A** • **Time**: A phylogeny represents evolutionary lineages changing over time, with time progressing from the root to the tips. In this case, time progresses from left to right along the horizontal axis.
- **B** • **Tip**: Each tip of the tree represents a taxon of interest, often a species, at the time of its sampling.
- **C** • **Node**: A node represents the common ancestor of the taxa that split/descend from the node.
- **D** • **Branch**: A branch represents a taxon that is changing over time.
- **E** • **Root**: The common ancestor of *all* taxa represented on the tree

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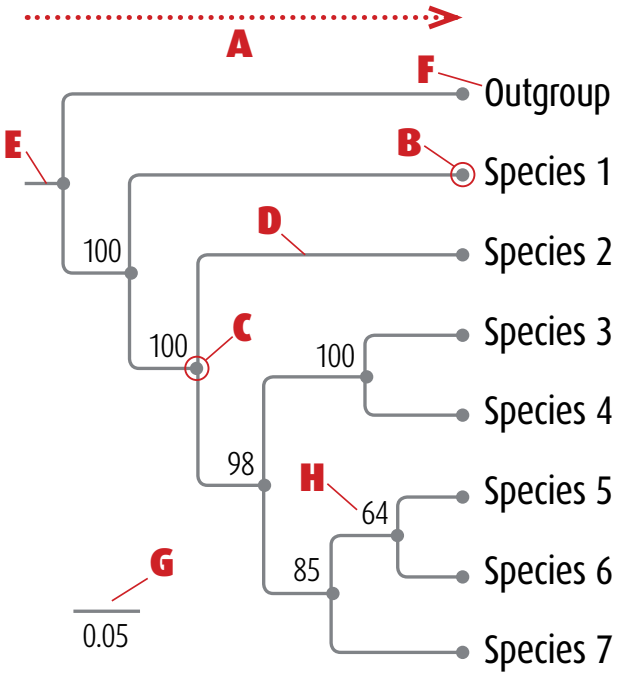

Figure 1. A hypothetical phylogeny showing the relationships among seven species of interest and an outgroup species.

F • **Outgroup**: A taxon closely related to but outside of the taxonomic group of interest. The outgroup is included to help researchers determine which traits are ancestral (versus derived) in the taxa of interest; any trait shared with the outgroup typically is presumed to be ancestral. To determine evolutionary relatedness, researchers focus on shared derived traits, which is why the outgroup is needed to "polarize" traits as ancestral or derived.

G • **Scale bar**: The amount of evolutionary change represented by this length on a branch (e.g., the bar in Figure 1 represents 5% change in DNA sequence).

H • **Node support values**: The numbers next to each node represent how well-supported that particular node is. These numbers are computed through various statistical methods (e.g., bootstrapping) that will be stated in a phylogeny's caption or legend, and they range 0–1 or 0–100. The closer to 1 or 100, the better the statistical support for the node (i.e., the better the support for the hypothesis that all taxa descendent from the node are more closely related to each other than to any other taxa on the phylogeny).

Before you begin the next section, I'd like you to answer this question using the phylogeny in Figure 1: Is Species 2 more closely related to Species 1 or to Species 7? Think about it for a minute. Got it? Okay, write your answer in the margin and continue on.

The ultimate goal of a phylogeny is to show relationships among a set of taxa, but understanding how to "read" those relationships is often not an intuitive skill. Almost every semester, at the beginning of the lectures about understanding phylogenies ("tree-thinking"), I present my students with a question very similar to the one you just answered. On average, I'd say that at least 60% give the incorrect answer. And the number one reason for their incorrect responses, by far, is that they focus on the *linear* order of the taxa across the tips of the tree. However, the linear order of the tips is almost meaningless when it comes to communicating evolutionary relationships. The exact same evolutionary relation-

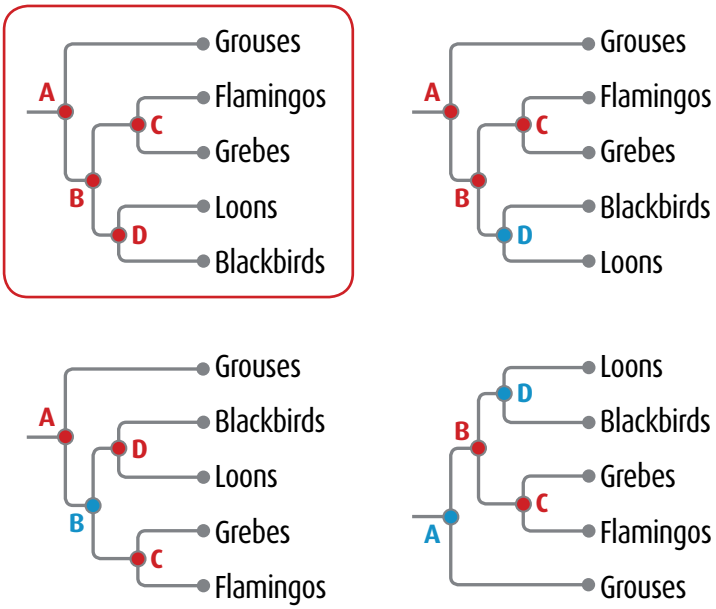

Figure 2. Identical evolutionary relationships—based on Jarvis et al. (2014)—are presented in these four phylogenies, with the only differences being the arrangement of the nodes. Using the phylogeny outlined in red as a reference, each of the other three phylogenies is the result of the blue node(s) simply being rotated. Although the linear order of taxa changes, the evolutionary relationships depicted do not (e.g., Grebes are always sister to Flamingos).

ships can be presented with very different linear orders because every node in a phylogeny can be rotated without changing the results (**Figure 2**). If you can learn to ignore the linear arrangement of taxa in a phylogeny, then you'll be in great shape!

Instead of looking at what taxa are found nearest each other in the linear order, focus on connecting taxa via branches and nodes only. Early on, it often helps to trace the branches between two taxa of interest with a pencil until you train your eyes to automatically do the same thing. So let's return to the earlier question about the closer relative of Species 2 and trace some lines in Figure 1. First, taking the shortest route possible via branches in the phylogeny, connect Species 2 to Species 1; then repeat the process with a different colored writing tool for Species 2 and Species 7. Have you changed your answer to the question yet? Many of my students that gave a wrong answer at first still will not have changed their answer at this point. This is because their thought process is bumping into the number two reason for incorrect responses to questions like this: they count the number of nodes they had to cross to connect the two taxa, thinking that fewer nodes equals closer relationships. But, and I'm sure you know what's coming here, the number of nodes between taxa is completely useless to tell us how closely related they are! The number of nodes between taxa is dependent only on what taxa are included in the tree.

So, instead of looking at the closest taxon in the linear order or the number of nodes connecting taxa, what do we need to look at to answer our question about Species 2? How far back in time you must go to connect the two taxa! Remember that the phylogeny is tracing relationships of taxa back through time. The longer ago taxa shared a common ancestor, the less related they are (i.e., the further away the node connecting two taxa is from the tips of the tree, the less related they are). Returning to our example, which traced line *went furthest back in time* on the phylogeny? The line connecting Species 2 and Species 1! Thus, Species 2 and Species 7 share a *more recent common ancestor* and are more closely related.

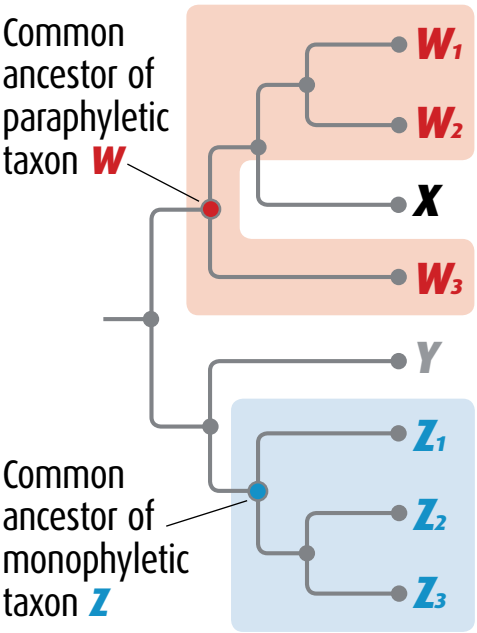

Figure 3. A phylogeny illustrating the concepts of paraphyly and monophyly. Taxon W comprises the most recent common ancestor of its extant populations (W_1, W_2, W_3) but only *some* of that ancestor's descendants (i.e., W does not include Taxon X, although X is a descendant of W's common ancestor), rendering W paraphyletic. Taxon Z comprises its common ancestor and *all* of that ancestor's descendants, making Z monophyletic.

Voilà! Now you can read a phylogeny! Well, okay, perhaps it will take a bit more practice, but now you know the basic procedure for interpreting the evolutionary relationships among taxa in a phylogeny: look only for the most recent common ancestor (i.e., node) connecting taxa, ignoring linear order and the number of nodes connecting taxa. And if you ever trace connections as above and find that the lines go an equal distance back in time, then you know that the taxon of interest is related equally to the taxa you connected it to (e.g., Species 2 is related equally to Species 3 and Species 7).

How do phylogenies affect taxonomy?

Okay, so what? What do these phylogenies have to do with all the splits and lumps (particularly splits these days!) handed down by checklist committees, not to mention the seemingly ever-changing taxonomic order of species in most field guides? Quite a lot! More than any other line of evidence—such as behavior, morphology, vocalizations, or ecology—I think it's safe to say that genes (and the phylogenies constructed from their DNA sequences) currently dominate taxonomic decision-making. But to connect phylogenies to taxonomy, I need to introduce two concepts that are extremely important in the process: monophyly and paraphyly. A monophyletic group of taxa (also known as a clade) comprises a common ancestor and *all* of its descendants, whereas a paraphyletic group is a common ancestor and only *some* of its descendants (**Figure 3**).

As a general rule, avian taxonomists will make changes that eliminate paraphyletic taxa. This approach applies to all taxa, from species to orders. The genus of Calliope Hummingbird provides an excellent example of a decision that converted an instance of paraphyly to monophyly. Calliope Hummingbird previously was placed in its own genus, *Stellula*, but is now in *Selasphorus*. The impetus for this taxonomic change was a study that showed Calliope to be phylogenetically embedded within all of the *Selasphorus* species (**Figure 4**), thus rendering *Selasphorus* paraphyletic (the group did not include *all* the descendants of its common ancestor) (McGuire et al., 2007, 2009). Another way to describe it is that some species in *Selasphorus* were shown to be more closely related to Calliope than to other *Selasphorus* species. Amazingly, a more recent study with better sampling supports Allen's Hummingbird being more closely related to Calliope than to Rufous (McGuire et al. 2014)! Thus, if the taxonomy were not changed, we'd be left with the awkwardly correct statement that *Selasphorus* is more closely related to *Stellula* than to *Selasphorus*. You can probably see why paraphyly can start offending the sensibilities of picky, detail-oriented folks, which taxonomists tend to be! To avoid such an unforgivable offense, Calliope became a *Selasphorus*, restoring monophyly to the avian realm (well, this one small corner of it at least).

Although the Calliope example concerns a genus change, the same thought process is what influences many species-level splits and lumps (i.e., the ones that affect our life

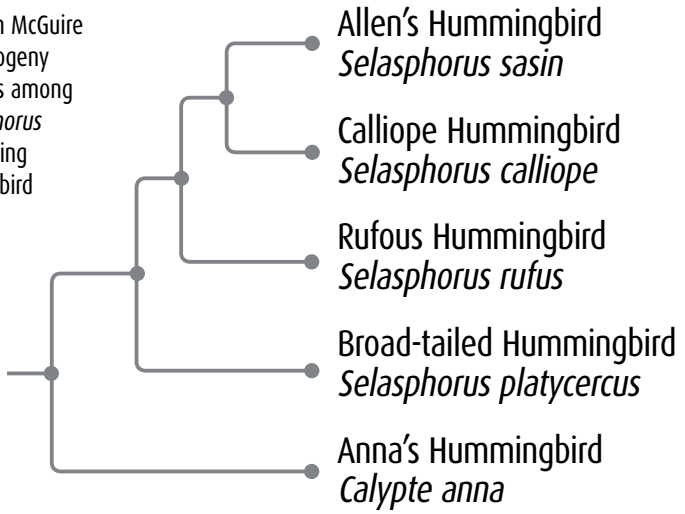

Figure 4. Adapted from McGuire et al. (2014), this phylogeny shows the relationships among a subset of the *Selasphorus* hummingbirds, illustrating that Calliope Hummingbird is embedded within the genus and must be included in it to render *Selasphorus* monophyletic.

lists). If two populations within a species of bird show significant differences in plumage, ecology, and/or vocalizations, *and* they are each monophyletic, then proposals to split the species usually succeed. If the same differences between populations are present but the two populations are not each monophyletic (i.e., a phylogeny of the species shows members of the two populations mixed together within a clade), then the two populations usually remain lumped. I say "usually" for both scenarios because all species-level decisions are still subject to the personal opinions of taxonomic committee members and the members' application of species concepts. (For more on this topic, plus a glossary defining many terms used in this article, see Morgan Churchill's article in the 2014 issue of *Birder's Guide to Listing & Taxonomy*.) Although phylogenies are relatively objective, the taxonomic decisions based on them are not.

Lest I make it sound like phylogenies are a completely objective, end-all solution to taxonomic problems, I want to reiterate that *phylogenies are hypotheses*. No phylogeny is a fact, even if one may sometimes be presented as such by overenthusiastic folks. Just as with any scientific hypothesis, some phylogenies may be better supported than others. Do all gene sequences produce the same tree? Do all nodes in the phylogeny have very high support values? If not, then it's a good sign that a particular phylogeny may not be very well-supported, a very important consideration when making taxonomic decisions. Even seemingly well-supported phylogenies have turned out to be incorrect after more data were added. Thus, even with a tree with high node support values in hand, taxonomists may still hesitate to pull the trigger on that split (i.e., lifer!) we've all eagerly anticipated until a study using a different set of data produces the same results.

Aside from our life lists, phylogenies also affect what order species are presented in most field guides. Species tend to be presented in taxonomic order, theoretically to inform users about evolutionary relationships. But what is taxonomic order? The *linear* order of taxa in a particular phylogeny. Phylogenies tend to be presented in such a way that the longer of two branches extending forward from a node always goes on the same side of the node, so the linear arrangement of taxa is not completely arbitrary. Therefore, when nodes move around in an updated phylogenies, taxonomic order usually changes as well.

However, if you'll permit me a moment on the soapbox, I think field guides should stop using taxonomic order to organize families and/or orders. As I discussed earlier, the linear order of taxa is a very unreliable way to communicate evolutionary relatedness. Any node in a phylogeny can be rotated, making it possible to create a very wide range of linear orders that all reflect the same evolutionary relationships. Thus, if the point of changing the order of families and/orders is to inform birders of evolutionary relationships, which I believe it is, then it is a very flawed way to present this information. As an example, the current taxonomic order of field guides (and the AOU *Check-list*) presents us with grouses, loons, grebes, and flamingos (in that order) near the front and blackbirds near the very back. Previously, the order was loons and grebes at the front, flamingos a little later, grouses a little later, and blackbirds still near the end. But what does the updated order tell us about the evolutionary relationships among these five groups? Virtually nothing intuitive (or correct; see Figure 2)! Would we have guessed that loons are more closely related to blackbirds than they are to grouse? Or that flamingos and grebes were each other's closest relatives and not very closely related to loons at all? Without outside information, I doubt that I would have.

Instead of changing the taxonomic order as a poor proxy for conveying updated evolutionary information, use a phylogeny! Establish a standard family/order sequence in field guides, and add a phylogeny of these taxa to the introduction section. Thus, evolutionary relationships can be updated in the phylogeny section, but ease of use can be relatively stable when looking for a bird in a new field guide edition. I look forward to phylogenies becoming a standard part of a field guide's introduction; we could all use some more tree-thinking in our lives!

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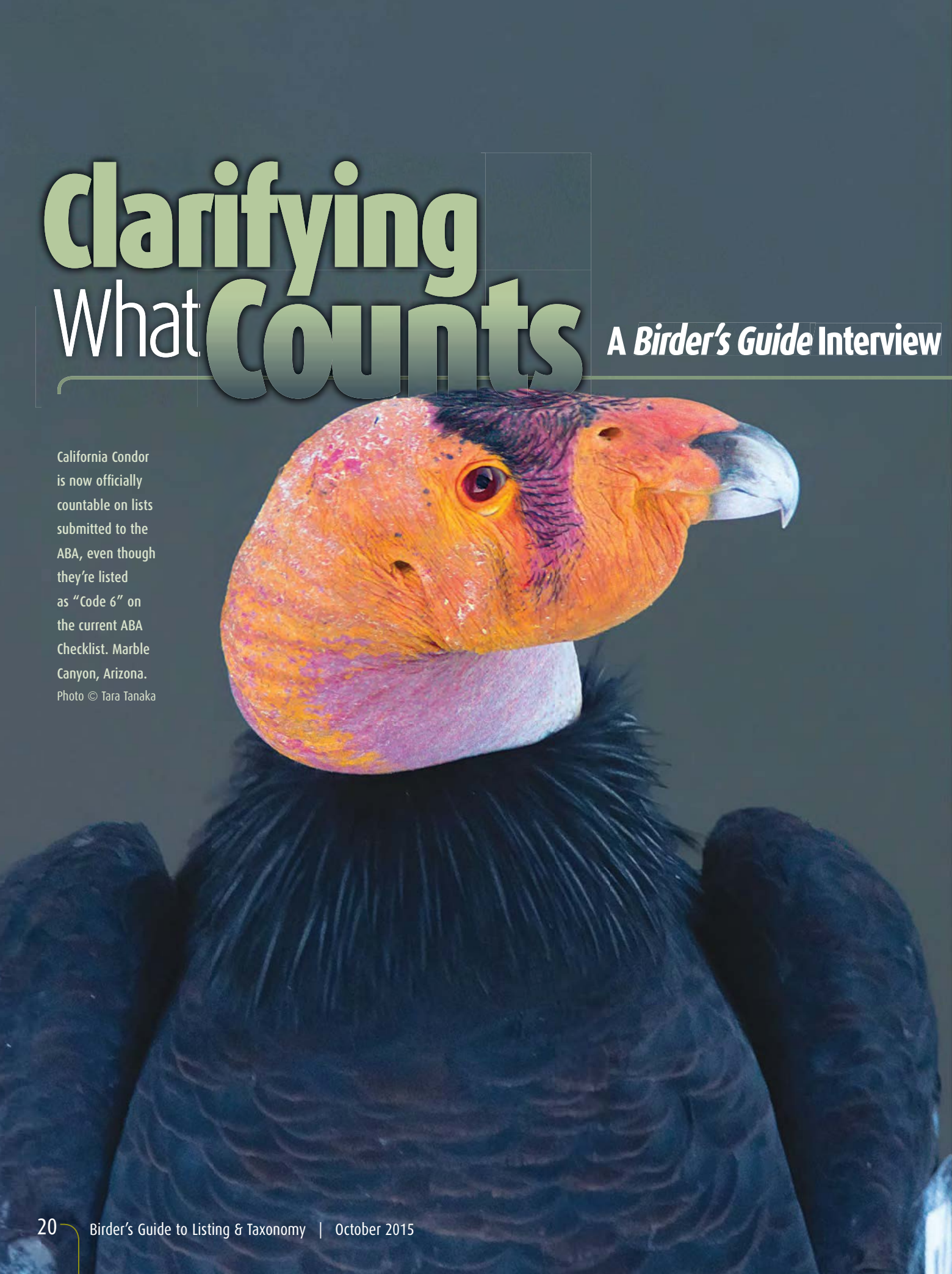
Clarifying What Counts

A *Birder's Guide* Interview



California Condor is now officially countable on lists submitted to the ABA, even though they're listed as "Code 6" on the current ABA Checklist. Marble Canyon, Arizona.
Photo © Tara Tanaka

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Birder's Guide assistant copy editor and technical reviewer Sheridan Coffey recently interviewed Nick Block, the current Secretary of the ABA's Recording Standards and Ethics Committee (read about him on page 5). She asked him questions she has pondered herself and others she's heard fellow birders raise over the past year or so. Here is their exchange.

with the Secretary of the Recording Standards and Ethics Committee

Thanks for taking time to talk with me, Nick. For those of us who are not familiar with the Recording Standards and Ethics Committee, what exactly do you do?

In a nutshell, the RSEC establishes and addresses concerns about birding ethics and official listing rules (our bylaws are at http://listing.aba.org/bylaws/). To be more specific, the RSEC is responsible for the wording of the ABA Code of Birding Ethics (http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html), as well as its utility and interpretation. And when I say "official listing rules", I mean that the RSEC maintains the ABA Recording Rules (http://listing.aba.org/aba-recording-rules/), which must be adhered to when submitting list numbers to the ABA's Listing Central (http://listing.aba.org/). We also maintain the Big Day (http://listing.aba.org/big-day-count-rules/) and Big Year (http://listing.aba.org/big-year-rules/) listing rules. A popular phrase among birders is "your list is your own", which is absolutely true for personal lists that are not reported to Listing Central. Enjoy and count whatever you like for such lists; more power to you! But if you are submitting a list total to Listing Central, please make sure the species listed were encountered in a way that adheres to the Recording Rules.

How does this differ from the function of the ABA Checklist Committee?

The two committees (RSEC and CLC) are completely independent bodies within the ABA. The CLC maintains the official *ABA Checklist* (the CLC bylaws are at http://listing.aba.org/checklist-committee-bylaws/). It determines which species are included on the main list and its two appendices. It decides when new species should be added to the Checklist (e.g., Egyptian Goose and Common Redstart were added in 2014) and when previously listed species should be removed completely or moved to an appendix (e.g., Caribbean Elaenia was removed in 2009). Essentially, the CLC decides what species go on the *Checklist*, and the RSEC determines how/when those species may be counted on reported life lists.

> "...the RSEC is responsible for the wording of the ABA Code of Birding Ethics, as well as its utility and interpretation."

I understand that the RSEC was inactive for a decade or so and was resurrected in 2013. Was there anything in particular that instigated this?

I don't know the specifics of why the RSEC was relatively inactive for that period. I attribute its "resurrection" to the changes in ABA leadership, though. I think it's something that Jeff Gordon and the current Board members—including Matt Fraker, the current RSEC chairperson—were eager to see return as a resource for birders.

Recently there have been some adjustments to the rules, which sparked a dialog on the ABA's Facebook discussion group, among other places. Is this something we should expect regularly? How often do you plan on modifying the rules?

We hope that the several updates we made in 2014 will not need much tweaking. Since their original publication in 1996, the Recording Rules were updated in 1999, 2003, 2004, and 2014. We will review the Rules every year, but we do not plan to make any major changes (such as altering the countability of reintroduced indigenous species) again anytime soon.

The potential addition of Hawaii to the ABA Area is a perennial source of speculation. Is this something that the RSEC could or would do, or would you be involved at all? If it happens, do you foresee any flak from long-time listers?

As far as I understand, Hawaii can only be added to the ABA Area following a full membership vote, but I do not know the details of how that process could occur. The RSEC will play no role in whether Hawaii joins the ABA Area. If Hawaii were added, the effects it would have on listing are that the listing area description for the ABA Area (http://listing.aba.org/descriptions/) would be changed to include Hawaii, and thus, many new spe-

cies would be added to the *ABA Checklist*. Exactly which species would be added to the *Checklist* would be determined by the CLC. Many birders have expended a considerable amount of effort to maximize their current ABA Area list, and, to be honest, I do expect some flak from long-time listers if Hawaii is added because it moves the proverbial goalposts a bit.

In Texas, where I live, there has been controversy over counting introduced species, like Egyptian Goose in San Antonio, Scaly-breasted Munia in Houston, and Muscovy Duck in Brownsville—populations that the state records committee has not accepted as established. What do ABA rules have to say on this?

The specific section of the Recording Rules that covers this is Rule 2.B(v): "an individual of an introduced species may be counted only when part of, or straying from, a population that meets the ABA Checklist Committee's definition of being established". Thus, once an exotic species is on the ABA Checklist, an individual of that species from any population that meets the criteria for establishment (http://listing.aba.org/criteria-determining-establishment-exotics/) may be counted. *The individual you count does not necessarily have to be from the population originally recognized as established by the CLC*. Therefore, if you see an Egyptian Goose in Texas, and you think it belongs to a population that meets the criteria for establishment, then you may count it on your official life list. The same goes for any other species currently on the ABA Checklist, whether it's Muscovy Duck, Gambel's Quail, or Scaly-breasted Munia.

I think both the RSEC and the CLC would love to see a list of officially established (i.e., countable) populations for each introduced species on the *Checklist*, but such a list is nowhere near fruition. Until then, the RSEC prefers to leave decisions about the countability of introduced species on the *Checklist* to the individual birder. Many birders (including myself most of the time!) look to local records committees for guidance in making these decisions, but local committee decisions technically do not affect whether a birder may count something on a list submitted to the ABA.

I have heard birders talk about having an introduced species "in the bank". They wait for the day when the ABA Checklist Committee adds it to the official list and then get an "armchair tick". When an introduced species goes onto the ABA Checklist, does it become retroactively countable?

This is the listing issue that the RSEC is primarily working on clarifying right now. Referring again to Rule 2.B(v), birders may count an introduced species on the *ABA Checklist* if the species met the criteria for establishment *at the time of the encounter*. There is nothing in the rules saying a species may only be counted if encountered *after* the species is officially added to the *Checklist*. (A species clearly must be on the *Checklist* before it can be included in official list totals at the time of submission, though.)

Retroactively counting introduced species is similar to retroactively counting new ABA Area records. For example, birders who were lucky enough to see the Common Redstart on St. Paul Island in 2013 could not count that bird immediately; they had to wait until the CLC added the species to the *Checklist* in 2014. The same applies for introduced species; as long as that species met the criteria for establishment when it was seen prior to addition to the *Checklist*, it may be counted once it is added to the *Checklist*.

Having said all that, the RSEC recognizes that not every established population will meet criterion #8 of the CLC's Criteria for Determining Establishment of Exotics in a relatively timely manner: "A publication, ideally in a peer-reviewed journal or book, describes, how, when, and where the above seven criteria have been met." Thus, we are working on tweaking the rules in a way that will focus countability on the first seven criteria. The date of countability for

an introduced species likely will be based on when the species met criterion #6 of the CLC's Criteria for Determining Establishment of Exotics: "The population has been present for at least 15 years." We are developing a list of the years each introduced species recently added to the *Checklist* passed the 15-year threshold. If a species is encountered during that calendar year or later, it should be unequivocally countable. However, the exact wording of this rule change has not been decided upon, so folks should not adjust any lists quite yet.

If someone reports a rarity to the local records committee and it is rejected, can that person still put it on his or her ABA list?

Unambiguously, yes, as long as that rarity is on the *ABA Checklist*. As I mentioned above, many (most?) birders look to records committees for guidance in what they decide to count on a life list, but they technically don't have to do so when reporting totals to the ABA. As long as a birder encounters a species in a way that adheres to the ABA's Recording Rules, the birder may choose to count the species.

California Condor is currently listed as "Code 6" on the ABA Checklist. Code 6 means "cannot be found", but the RSEC made the species countable last year, didn't it? Is a Code 6 bird countable?

This is a question that has been coming up often since condors became countable again. To be clear, the number code for a species on the ABA Checklist is not connected to whether the species is countable. In other words, *Code 6 does not mean uncountable*. Condors were not countable before the recent rule change because they did not meet the ABA Checklist Committee's criteria for established species—not because condor was (and still is) a Code 6 species. If a Code 6 species (California Condor, Thick-billed Parrot, Bachman's Warbler, etc.) is encountered by a birder in a way that adheres to the Recording Rules, the birder may count the species.

Thanks, Nick, for clarifying some countability rules. But what about birding ethics? Do you see any ethical issues coming before the RSEC in the future?

After spending most of last year focusing on a revision of the Recording Rules and Interpretations, I think the committee soon will be revisiting the Code of Birding Ethics to look for possible revisions. Personally, I think the Code is an extremely durable, well-written document, and I do not anticipate any major changes. The issue that seems to come up the most in members' questions/comments (and thus may require some clarification from the RSEC) is playback. I think the current Code's wording about the subject is still very good: "Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily-birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area." I do not know that the RSEC would alter this segment, but I think we may issue some interpretations of it, similar to how the Recording Rules have their own set of accompanying interpretations.

Another issue concerns the feeding of owls, particularly wintering Snowy and Great Gray owls. As you may know, the debate over this practice is a giant can of worms, but it may be one that the RSEC needs to open. We shall see.

I think this would be the appropriate place to mention that the RSEC is always open to hearing from birders about issues they would like us to address. Many of our recent revisions to the Recording Rules were influenced by questions/comments from ABA members, and we love hearing from you! If folks have questions about a recording rule, want to voice concerns about an ethical issue, or are seeking clarification about how to apply the rules and/or ethics to a particular scenario, they should not hesitate to email us at rsec@aba.org. We look forward to hearing from more members!

Introduced populations of species not recognized as established by local committees are countable on lists reported to the ABA if you think they're part of established populations. From left to right: Within Texas, there are substantial introduced populations of Scaly-breasted Munia (© Erin Ryza) in Houston, Muscovy Duck (© Ken Slade) in Brownsville, and Egyptian Goose (© Mike Charest) in San Antonio.

Check-list Supplement Redux, **v. 2015**

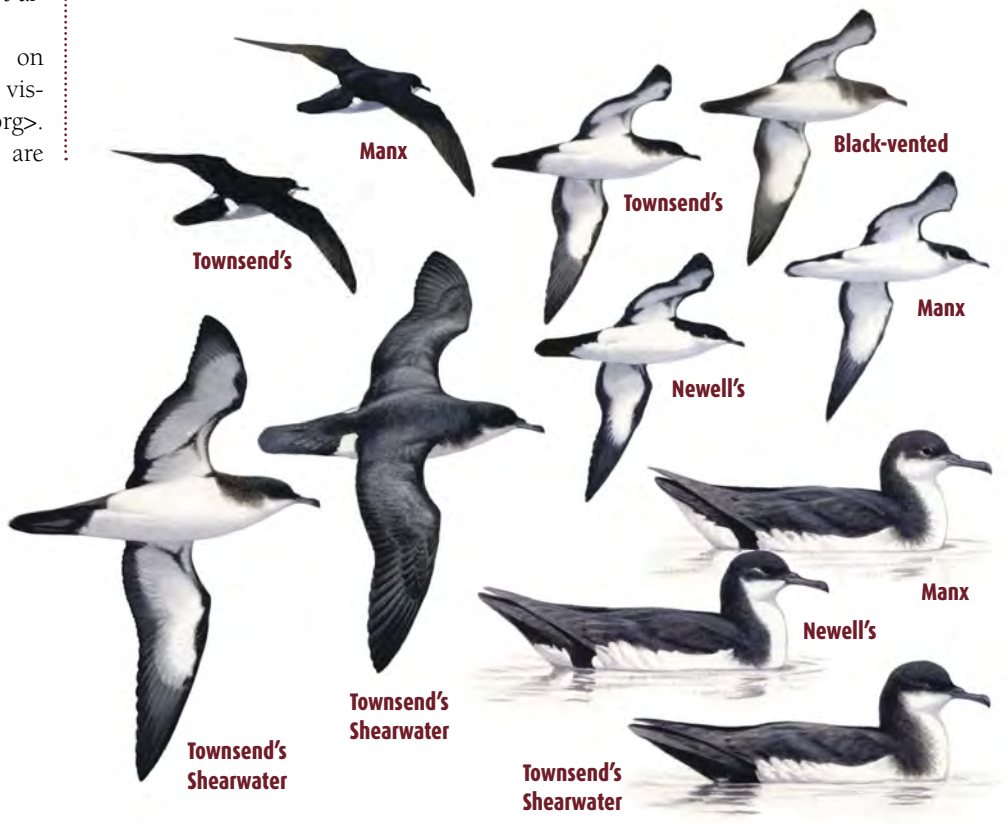
Every summer, birders anxiously await publication of the "Check-list Supplement" by the American Ornithologists' Union's Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North and Middle American Birds (NACC). The Supplement details revisions to its Check-list. This "Check-list Redux" is the fifth annual summary appearing in ABA publications that aims to explain in straightforward terms what has changed and how those changes affect anyone birding in the U.S. or Canada. Illustrations, photos, charts, and maps are employed where applicable. Note that although the NACC does not use diacritical marks (and completely deletes some letters from Hawaiian bird names), such marks and letters are used here in order to facilitate communication and pronunciation.

As a general policy, the NACC accepts as additions to its North American Check-list any species the American Birding Association's Checklist Committee (ABA CLC) adds to its list that are not already on its own Check-list.

You can read all the proposals on which the NACC voted this year by visiting its webpage <checklist.aou.org>. Species marked with asterisks (*) are those which do not appear on the ABA Checklist, either because there are no currently accepted records in the ABA Area or because they are non-natives that have not yet been admitted to the list. Daggers (†) denote extinct species. When a split is discussed, the species that retains the scientific name of the "old" lumped species is listed first. These days, you can assume that any change in taxonomy is due (at least partly) to analysis of new genetic data, so that is not always mentioned below.

There were many changes in the sequence of genera and species, but not that of families. These sequence changes, which mostly pertain to tropical species found only south of the ABA Area, are detailed at the ABA Blog at **tinyurl.com/AOU2015**. There you will also find further changes that affect Middle American taxa.

Trindade Petrel in the Gulf Stream off Hatteras, North Carolina.
Photo © David Kirschke



This artwork by © Ian Lewington appears whole and in part, respectively, in *Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America* by Howell (2012) and in *Rare Birds of North America* by Howell, Lewington, and Russell (2014); both are published by Princeton University Press. For in-depth ID tips on these three very similar species, see the former book.

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This possible Brown Skua was photographed on Sable Island, Nova Scotia on 13 May 1996.
Photo © Zoe Lucas

Herald Petrel Split

- **Trindade Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*)**
- **Herald Petrel* (*Pterodroma heraldica*)**

Trindade Petrel is found in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and nests on (among others) the Trindade Islands of Brazil. Herald Petrel is a species of the Pacific Ocean, and although there are no accepted records for the ABA Area, there are records off Hawaii and the Pacific Coast of Mexico, so birders should be cognizant of this species during pelagics off southern California. Both species are quite variable in plumage, and the ability to ID a vagrant bird on the wrong ocean is probably beyond our current knowledge. "Trindade" is pronounced "*treeng-DAH-jee*".

Townsend's Shearwater Split

- **Townsend's Shearwater* (*Puffinis auricularis*)**
- **Newell's Shearwater (*Puffinis newelli*)**

Townsend's Shearwater (*sensu stricto*) nests only on Isla Socorro in Mexico's Revillagigedo (*reh-BEE-yah-hee-HEY-though*) Archipelago, in the Pacific Ocean. It has been extirpated from two historic breeding islands and is critically endangered due to human-introduced goats and rats. (You can read more about conservation efforts at **tinyurl.com/TOSH-Beck**) The species has no records in the ABA Area, but if numbers increase, warm waters off southern California—especially in El Niño years—would be a good place to look. Newell's Shearwater is a Hawaiian-breeding endemic with one record from San Diego County, California.

Separation of the two species (and from Manx Shearwater) is often very difficult and beyond the scope of this article, but see the caption for the excellent illustration by Ian Lewington in Steve N. G. Howell's *Petrels, Albatrosses, & Storm-Petrels of North America.*

Great Skua Split

- **Great Skua (*Stercorarius skua*)**
- **Brown Skua* (*Stercorarius antarcticus*)** —no common name given by NACC, but called this by the AOU's South American Checklist Committee

This rather obvious split was long overdue. Great Skua is the only large skua breeding in the Northern Hemisphere. There are no accepted records of Brown Skua in the ABA Area, but at least four birds widely speculated to have been this species have been documented in ABA Area waters (two in NC, one in NJ, and one in NS). In addition, two have been positively identified from the UK, proving that the species does venture north of the equator. See *Birding*, December 2000, p574 and **tinyurl.com/skua-NS** for details. Identification of the two is tricky and beyond the scope of this article.

New Genus for American Tree Sparrow

The species's scientific name has changed from *Spizella arborea* to ***Spizelloides arborea***. Genetic data show it to be not at all closely related to *Spizella* sparrows. Instead, it is related to a group containing Fox Sparrow, *Zonotrichia* sparrows, and juncos.

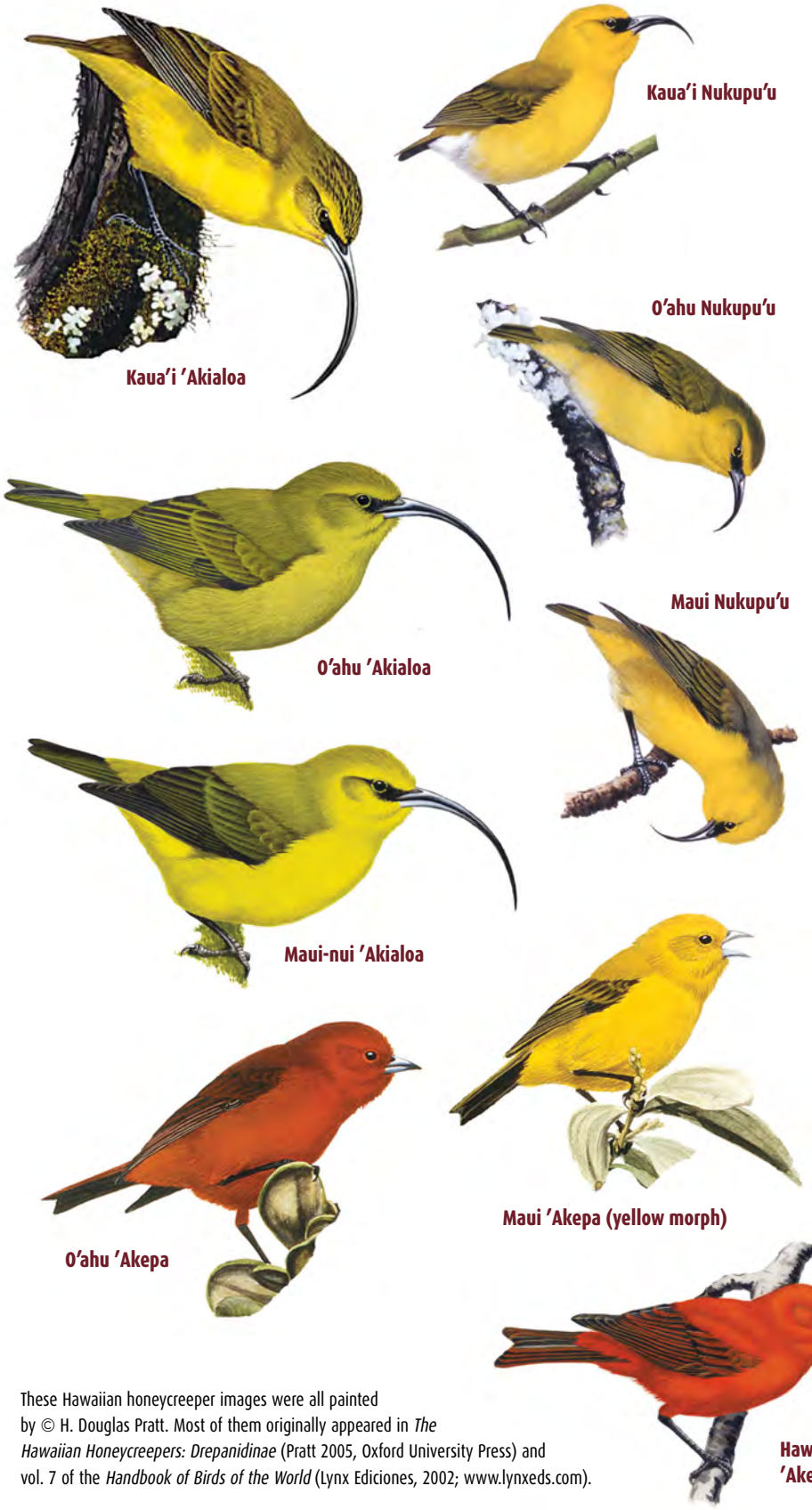
New Genera for Some Hawaiian Honeycreepers

'I'iwi* (*Vestiaria coccinea* ➛ ***Drepanis coccinea***)
Lesser 'Akialoa* (*Hemignathus obscurus* ➛ ***Akialoa obscura***)
Greater 'Akialoa* (*Hemignathus ellisianus* ➛ ***Akialoa ellisiana***)
Hawai'i 'Amakihi* (*Hemignathus virens* ➛ ***Chlorodrepanis virens***)
O'ahu 'Amakihi* (*Hemignathus flavus* ➛ ***Chlorodrepanis flava***)
Kaua'i 'Amakihi* (*Hemignathus kauaiensis* ➛ ***Chlorodrepanis stejnegeri***)
Greater 'Amakihi* (*Hemignathus sagittirostris* ➛ ***Viridonia sagittirostris***)

Splits for Some Hawaiian Honeycreepers

A grim reminder of the plight of Hawaii's birdlife comes in the form of four splits. Nine of the eleven resulting species are extinct. In all cases, the names of the new

American Tree Sparrow is now in the monotypic genus *Spizelloides*.
Photo © Brian E. Small



These Hawaiian honeycreeper images were all painted by © H. Douglas Pratt. Most of them originally appeared in *The Hawaiian Honeycreepers: Drepanidinae* (Pratt 2005, Oxford University Press) and vol. 7 of the *Handbook of Birds of the World* (Lynx Ediciones, 2002; www.lynxeds.com).

species describe where they are found.

Greater ʻAkialoa (*Hemignathus ellisianus*) has been split into three species and changed genus. The new species are **Kauaʻi ʻAkialoa***† (*Akialoa stejnegeri*), **Maui-nui ʻAkialoa***† (*Akialoa lanaiensis*), and **Oʻahu ʻAkialoa***† (*A. ellisiana*).

Nukupuʻu was split into three species: **Kauaʻi Nukupuʻu***† (*Hemignathus hanapepe*), **Maui Nukupuʻu***† (*Hemignathus affinis*), and **Oʻahu Nukupuʻu***† (*Hemignathus lucidus*).

ʻAkepa was split into three species: **Oʻahu ʻAkepa***† (*Loxops wolstenholmei*), **Maui ʻAkepa***† (*Loxops ochraceus*), and **Hawaiʻi ʻAkepa*** (*Loxops coccineus*).

ʻApapane was split into **ʻApapane*** (*Himatione sanguinea*) *and* **Laysan Honeycreeper***† (*Himatione fraithii*).

New Genus Sequence for the Hawaiian Honeycreepers

Melamprosops†
Oreomystis
Paroreomyza
Loxioides
Telespiza
Chloridops†
Rhodacanthis†
Ciridops†
Palmeria
Himatione
Drepanis
Psittirostra†
Dysmorodrepanis†

Pseudonestor
Hemignathus
Akialoa†
Magumma
Chlorodrepanis
Viridonia†
Loxops

Bahama Woodstar Split

- **Bahama Woodstar (*Calliphlox evelenae*)**
- **Inagua Woodstar* (*Calliphlox lyrura*)**

This split was adopted on the basis of differences in sounds (vocal and mechanical), genetics, and morphology: Inagua has narrower, outwardly-flared outer rectrices and a magenta (vs. greenish) crown. For more information, including photos comparing the two species, visit **ucrtoday.ucr.edu/27199**. ABA Area records of birds from this complex are thought to pertain to Bahama Woostar (*sensu stricto*). A proposal to name the two species "Bahama Sheartail" and "Inagua Sheartail" was not accepted for now, because the committee wants to wait until the entire hummingbird family undergoes a major overhaul of scientific and common names, based on a 2014 phylogeny that challenged much of the status quo, including ABA Area species like Anna's and Costa's, which seem to be nested within *Selasphorus*.

New Genera and Sequence for White-tailed Hawk and Roadside Hawk

White-tailed Hawk changes from *Buteo albicaudatus* to ***Geranoaetus albicaudatus***. Genetic data show that it is not a *Buteo*, but rather, is more closely related to Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle* and Variable Hawk. Speaking of which, Red-backed Hawk (*Buteo polyosoma*)—of which there is an unaccepted Colorado record—has changed to **Variable Hawk** (***Geranoaetus polyosoma***).

Roadside Hawk changes from *Buteo magnirostris* to ***Rupornis magnirostris***.

White-tailed Hawk has been moved to the genus *Geranoaetus*. Photo © Jim Zipp

New Buteonine Hawk

The new sequence is as follows:
Roadside Hawk
Harris's Hawk
White-tailed Hawk
Gray Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Hawaiian Hawk*
Short-tailed Hawk
Swainson's Hawk
Zone-tailed Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Rough-legged Hawk
Ferruginous Hawk

Falcon Subfamily Reshuffle

The caracara subfamily was absorbed into the "regular falcon" subfamily, Falconinae. Laughing Falcon* moved from that subfamily into the forest-falcon subfamily, which had to be renamed because of priority. The subfamily containing forest-falcons and Laughing Falcon is now called Herpetotherinae.

Western Spindalis a Tanager No Longer

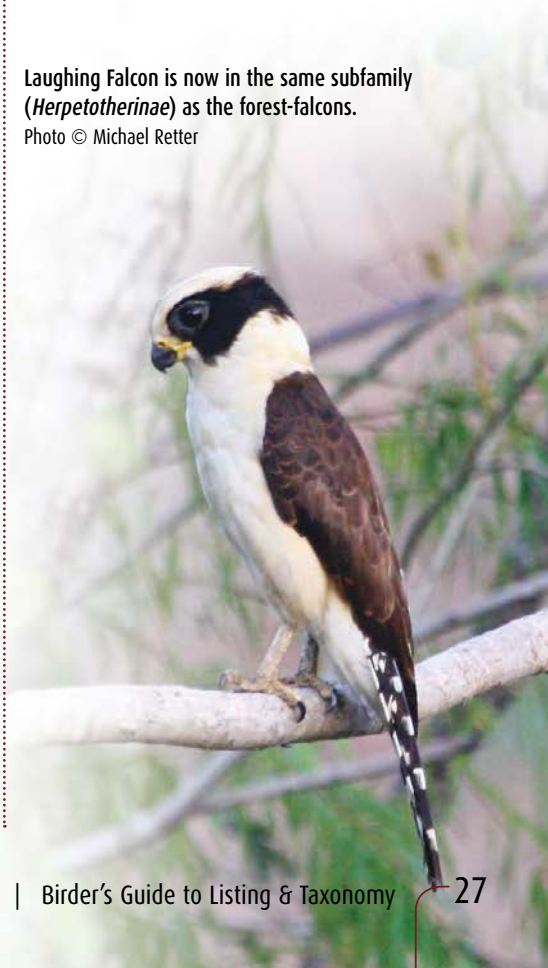
The genus *Spindalis* has joined that great taxonomic purgatory known as "incertae sedis". The spindalises appear immediately after the true tanagers in the sequence.

"New" Tanagers and a Reshuffle

As long expected, seedeaters, grassquits, and Bananaquit have been added to the tanager family. The new sequence of genera is as follows, and the following are the only species of true tanager now found in the U.S. and Canada.

Paroaria (including Red-crested* and Red-capped* cardinals)
Coereba (Bananaquit)
Tiaris (including Yellow-faced and Black-faced grassquits)
Sporophila (including White-collared Seedeater)

Laughing Falcon is now in the same subfamily (*Herpetotherinae*) as the forest-falcons. Photo © Michael Retter



Parrot Family Split

Psittacidae is no longer just "the parrot family", but rather, the "African and New World parrot" family. Split from it was **Psittaculidae**, the newly-created "lory, lovebird, and Australasian parrot" family. Most parrot species found in North America belong to the former family, but Rose-ringed Parakeet (established populations in Hawaii and California), Rosy-faced Lovebird (established populations in Arizona), and Budgerigar (Florida population now officially extirpated) are members of the latter. Each of those three species is in a different subfamily. Respectively, these are **Psittaculinae** (Australasian parrots), **Agapornithinae** (lovebirds and hanging-parrots), and **Loriinae** (lories).

Notable Proposals That Were Not Accepted

- Separation of Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) from Hen Harrier (*C. cyaneus*).
- Separation of "Vizcaíno" Thrasher* (*Toxostoma arenicola*) from Le Conte's Thrasher.
- A two-way split of Painted Bunting.
- A six-way split of Northern Cardinal.
- Giving Hawaiian Creeper* its own genus (*Manucerthia*).
- A change in the English name of American Pipit (to Buff-bellied Pipit).
- The universal adoption of American English spellings in bird names. This would have changed the spelling of birds like Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and "Ochre" Orchard Oriole (to Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher and "Ocher" Orchard Oriole, respectively).

On the Horizon

Possible actions that may be ripe for consideration in the next couple years include a redpoll lump, a White-winged Scoter split, an Eared Grebe split, a Warbling Vireo split, a Plumbeous Vireo split, a three-way split of White-breasted Nuthatch, and major generic reorganization of hummingbirds and vireos.

The author thanks Jon Dunn for his assistance with the preparation of this article, and all the members of the AOU NACC for their diligence in maintaining the Check-list.

GLOSSARY

Maui-nui. "Greater Maui" in Hawaiian. This phrase refers to both a former super-island and the current collection of four smaller islands it has become: Maui, Lāna'i , Moloka'i, and Kaho'olawe.

Morphology. Physical characteristics.

Phylogeny. A reconstruction, based on analysis of shared traits, of the evolutionary history of a group of organisms. It is usually depicted in a tree-like diagram.

Sensu lato. In the broad sense. "Canada Goose *sensu lato*" refers to what we called Canada Goose before the split—it includes Cackling Goose.

Sensu stricto. In the strict sense. For instance, "Canada Goose *sensu stricto*" means what we call Canada Goose today, after the split—just the large birds.

Taxa. Plural of taxon. A taxon is a biological group or classification of organisms. Classes, orders, families, genera, species, and subspecies are all various levels of taxon.

White-collared Seedeater is now the only species of tanager that breeds in the ABA Area.
Photo © Cameron Rutt

ABA Event

IFO: The Cradle of American Ornithology

When: March 30–April 3, 2016

Where: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Instructors: Bert Filemyr, Ted Floyd & George Armistead

Cost: $1395 (LIMIT 24)

The City of Brotherly Love is the birthplace of our nation, but also the birthplace of bird study in North America. Join Pennsylvania natives Bert Filemyr, Ted Floyd and George Armistead as they retrace the steps of luminaries such as Audubon, Wilson, Cassin, Say, and Bond (yes, James Bond!), among others. We'll examine the rich history of this area and of course go birding too, as this IFO program visits a variety of birding and historical sites.

American Birding® ASSOCIATION

For more details and registration, go to:

events.aba.org

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2014 Listing Snapshot

Printed here 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 2015 totals uploaded by 1 June 2016.

2014 Year Lists

ABA Area - Top 25

610	Leo Miller
570	Barb & Dean Stewman
556	Andrew VanNorstrand
532	David W. Nelson
524	Jennifer Rycenga
510	Olaf Danielson
503	William Drummond
473	Leo Weigant
466	Rodney Murray
445	Michael Schall
441	Susan Foster
439	Harold Bond
433	Michael Liberton
422	Ric Zarwell
415	Kevin Calhoon
414	Al Guarente
408	Dave Grise
407	William Rockey
406	Samuel Paul Galick
403	Mike Austin
398	Edward Slattery
396	Dan & Gloria Dotson
390	Ethan Goodman
384	Amy Simmons
376	Thomas McNeil

United States - Top 25

604	Leo Miller
556	Andrew VanNorstrand
532	David W. Nelson
524	Jennifer Rycenga
508	Olaf Danielson
502	William Drummond
473	Leo Weigant
466	Rodney Murray
449	Patricia Lueders
445	Michael Schall
438	Harold Bond
422	Ric Zarwell
412	Rob Batchelder
409	Sharon Pratt
408	Dave Grise
407	William Rockey
406	Samuel Paul Galick
398	Edward Slattery
384	Amy Simmons
376	Thomas McNeil
365	Roy Carlson
363	Ray Hodson
356	John Collins
352	Michael Stewart
352	Lorna Engleman

North America - Top 10

1030	David Bell
735	Pierre Howard
610	Ron Furnish
596	John Collins
571	Marie Mullins
534	Andrew VanNorstrand
532	David W. Nelson
524	Jennifer Rycenga
438	Harold Bond
415	Sharon Pratt

World - Top 10

1880	Elaine Nye
1674	Todd Pepper
1603	James Sigsbee
1442	Chris Doughty
1243	Patty O'Neill
1222	Dodge Engleman
1197	Lorna Engleman
1181	Alice Deutsch
1065	Roger Robb
1045	Craig Caldwell

Life Lists

ABA Area - Top 100

910	Macklin Smith
896	Larry Peavler
896	Paul Sykes
881	Benton Basham
866	David Narins
865	Ebbe Banstorp
855	Monte Taylor
847	Bruce Barrett
841	Steve Kornfeld
838	Mark Cudney
836	Timothy Steurer
836	Mike Austin
830	Louise Mccullough
830	Bob Funston
829	Ted Peterson
827	Gary Stitzinger
827	Barrett Pierce
822	Lucie Bruce
821	Keith Camburn
821	David C. Chaffin
820	Edward Borowik
819	Karen Shrader
819	Dan Sanders
818	John Shrader
816	Bud Johnson
815	William Drummond
815	Jay Lehman
814	Kenneth Burden
814	David Silverman
811	Ian Mcgregor
810	Greg Bretz
809	Martin Meyers
808	Paul O'Brien
808	Alan Schmierer
805	William Lindley
805	Bill Grossi
805	Bill Brooks
805	Dorothy Robbins
805	Grace Steurer
804	Lynn Hemink
802	Colin Campbell
802	Stephen Moore
801	Jim Holmes
800	Michael Schwitters
800	Nick Cooney
800	Richard Wachtler
800	David W Nelson
799	Thomas Heatley
798	Ron Howard
796	Carl Haynie
794	Gloria Wachtler
794	Charles Biggs
794	Bob Ake
794	Shawneen Finnegan
793	Christopher Hitt
792	Paul Berrigan
792	Bernard Master
791	Glenn Belyea
790	Jerry Theis
789	Howard Einspahr
787	Bob Morse
787	Richard Cimino
787	Lee Johnson
786	John Hirth
786	Bill Bouton
785	Bruce Mack
785	Ken Hollinga
785	Steve Matherly
784	Chuck Probst
782	M.K. Edge Wade
782	Dollyann Myers
781	Roger Foxall
781	John Vanderpoel
781	Thomas Prince
779	Norman Erthal
778	Hank Vanderpol
777	Thomas Pincelli
776	Thor Manson
775	Don Roberson
774	Robert Ohmart
774	Neil Hayward
773	Mike Mulligan
772	Chris Feeney
772	James Fuller
772	Matthew Matthiessen
772	David B. Wright
771	Tommie Rogers
771	Barbara Volkle

2014 Listing Snapshot

770	Don Chalfant
769	Dave Dereamus
769	Stanley Wulkowicz
769	Kevin Calhoon
768	Mark Oberle
768	Greg Miller
767	Bill Osborne
767	Dale Manor
766	Henry Turner
766	Kevin Calhoon
766	Phil Davis
765	Scott Atkinson

ABA Area [Photographed] - Top 25

845	Monte Taylor
790	David W. Nelson
770	Martin Meyers
743	Matthew Matthiessen
736	Sam Fried
726	Ken Hollinga
719	Phil Swanson
708	Ron Howard
706	Alan Schmierer
706	Stanley Wulkowicz
705	Michael Schall
705	Elton Stilwell
687	Sherry Hagen
680	Dick Cabe
679	Isaac Sanchez
675	Glen Tepke
670	Brian Small
658	Nolan Lameka
658	Byron Berger
641	Dan Vickers
636	Paul Nistico
635	Michael Todd
635	Tommie Rogers
630	Kenneth Burden
628	Jeff Moore

United States - Top 50

945	Paul Sykes
944	Macklin Smith
907	Bruce Barrett
907	Larry Peavler
900	Bud Johnson
891	David Narins
887	Steve Kornfeld
871	Mark Cudney
871	William Drummond
867	Timothy Steurer
865	Mike Austin
860	Bob Funston
859	Jim Holmes
856	Thomas Heatley
855	Monte Taylor
851	Bob Morse
851	Bernard Master
847	John Hirth
847	Grace Steurer
843	Ted Peterson
842	Gloria Wachtler
841	Richard Wachtler
839	Dorothy Robbins
835	Carl Haynie
832	Lynn Hemink
831	David C. Chaffin
830	David W. Nelson
828	Stephen Moore
828	Bill Grossi
827	Dollyann Myers
825	Kenneth Burden
824	Martha Hirth
819	Mark Oberle
819	Barrett Pierce
818	Neil Hayward
817	Robert Walton
817	Dan Sanders
816	Lucie Bruce
815	Paul O'Brien
814	M.K. Edge Wade
814	Phil Davis
814	Dale Manor
812	Norman Erthal
812	Howard Einspahr
812	Paul Berrigan
811	Thomas Prince
810	Stanley Wulkowicz
809	Jay Lehman
809	Stephen F. Bailey
807	Bruce Mack

Canada - Top 25

545	Roger Foxall
540	Michael Bentley
527	Jo Ann Mackenzie
510	Christopher Escott
504	Tom Hince
503	Michael Force
493	Peter Gilchrist
491	David Stirling
488	Hugh Currie
482	Drew Campbell
482	Ian Platt
481	William Lindley
480	Mark Gawn
478	Russ Tkachuk
477	David Mark
468	Thor Manson
466	Kevin Neill
465	Larry Neily
460	Gordon Payne
459	Brian Elder
458	Ann White
456	Mike Mulligan
452	Jeff Skevington
452	Barbara Begg
450	Gordon Tufts

Hawaii - Top 10

238	Reginald David
212	H. Douglas Pratt
208	David Kuhn
199	Lance Tanino
193	Michael Walther
190	Kurt Pohlman
179	Bud Johnson
176	Thomas Snetsinger
169	Chuck Probst
137	Martha Hirth

Mexico - Top 10

1014	Jorge Montejo
963	Amy McAndrews
958	Kurt Radamaker
955	Ronald Huffman
921	Ebbe Banstorp
916	Rick Taylor
900	Mike Mulligan
898	Michael Retter
860	John Shrader
860	Byron Berger

North America - Top 25

1884	Macklin Smith
1803	David Narins
1732	Rick Waldrop
1700	Kenneth Burden
1700	Robert Walton
1665	Bud Johnson
1664	Dodge Engleman
1661	Ronald Huffman
1660	David Klauber
1659	Steve Kornfeld
1639	Paul Sykes
1636	Lorna Engleman
1629	Bob Funston
1599	Mike Mulligan
1587	Bernard Master
1582	Patty O'Neill
1577	Rigdon Currie
1535	Eugenia Larson
1531	Dollyann Myers
1524	Bob Bates
1515	John Cobb
1513	Hugh Buck
1489	Claes-Göran Cederlund
1483	Elaine Nye
1479	Mark Oberle

World - Top 50

9053	Hugh Buck
8765	Claes-Göran Cederlund
8532	Robert Walton
8505	Peter Kaestner
8464	Bob Bates
8462	Joe Thompson
8219	Ronald Huffman
8041	Dave Sargeant
8030	Dollyann Myers
7967	Ron Hoff
7800	Bernard Master
7774	David Narins
7663	Josep Del Hoyo
7621	David Fisher
7618	Ian Lewis
7592	Stephen F Bailey
7588	Keith Betton
7580	Chris Doughty
7570	Elaine Nye
7427	Ken Cole

7249	John Hardister
7224	Richard Byrne
7194	Chuck Probst
7167	Dodge Engleman
7099	John Drummond
7076	Lorna Engleman
7037	Bill Brooks
6970	Chuck Braun
6966	Glenn Mahler
6922	Gary Babic
6922	Marlene Babic
6802	Eileen Mahler
6745	Paul Bristow
6711	John Shrader
6709	Karen Shrader
6697	Dave Chantler
6667	Dee Bates
6653	Romney W. Bathurst
6617	David Donsker
6599	Patty O'Neill
6402	Brian Beers
6350	Terry Witt
6249	Anne Kahle
6199	Allan Keith
6183	James Sigsbee
6150	Ian Mcgregor
6131	Linda Macaulay
6127	William Macaulay
6119	Peter Bono
6101	Tony Menart

World [Photographed] - Top 25

5007	Josep del Hoyo
3937	Ron Hoff
3021	Vaughan Ashby
2481	Sherry Hagen
2469	Matthew Matthiessen
2411	Tony Menart
1651	David W Nelson
1546	Ronald Huffman
1438	Christopher Taylor
1431	Michael Todd
1343	Byron Berger
1342	Kevin Calhoon
1305	Glenn Mahler
1245	Monte Taylor
1213	donald faulkner
1203	Jeff Harding
1156	Roger Robb
1154	Glen Tepke
1086	Aaron Maizlish
1085	Fred Peters
1049	David Pereksta
974	Phil Swanson
971	Ron Furnish
960	Jack Holloway
956	Garett Hodne

All-Time Big Year List

ABA Area [By Year] - Top 25

749	Neil Hayward	2013
748	Sandy Komito	1998
743	John Vanderpoel	2011
733	Jay Lehman	2013
731	Bob Ake	2010
723	Lynn Barber	2008
722	Sandy Komito	1987
715	Greg Miller	1998
715	Dan Sanders	2005
711	Benton Basham	1983
711	Allen Levantin	1998
704	John Spahr	2010
704	Christopher Hitt	2010
689	Ron Furnish	2013
675	Roy Poucher	1998
667	Ken Hollinga	1998
648	Leo Miller	2004
640	Robert Metzler	2012
616	Matthew Matthiessen	2013
611	Isaac Sanchez	2013
610	Olaf Danielson	2013
610	Leo Miller	2014
607	Leo Miller	2009
596	Robert Baumander	2012
593	Laura Erickson	2013

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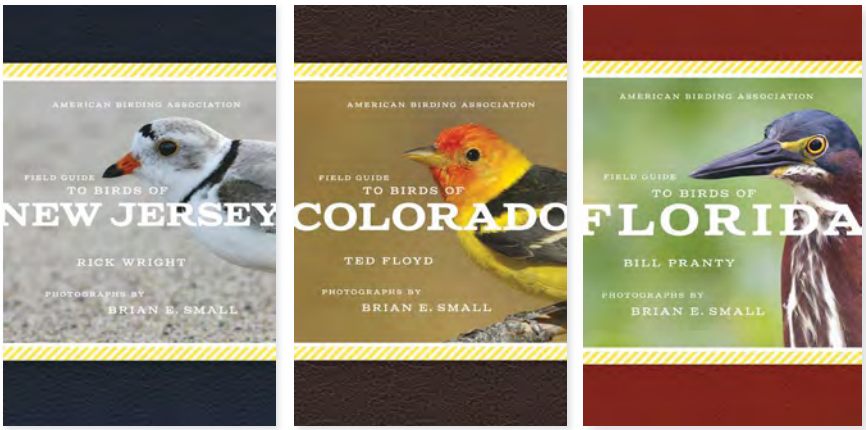

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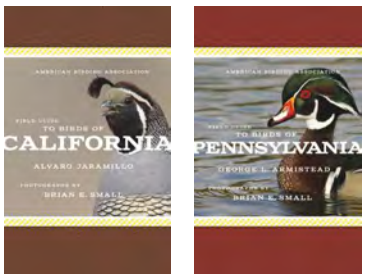

American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of California by Alvaro Jaramillo

American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of Pennsylvania by George Armistead

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Listing Central Update

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2014

There wasn't really anyone who made a true ABA Big Year effort, but with the recent acceptance of Rufous-necked Wood-Rail by the ABA Checklist Committee, Neil Hayward's 2013 effort was confirmed as the new ABA Big Year champion at 749 species.

Also of note, Macklin Smith of Michigan became the first birder to report a life list of over 900 species in the ABA Area, with 910 as of this writing. Paul Sykes and Larry Peavler are right behind, each with 896 species.

Among the county listers, Camden Bruner submitted the highest annual county list total for the year, with 301 species for Humboldt, CA. The highest county life list in the ABA Area was submitted by Don Robertson, with 460 species in Monterey, CA.

There were 8 ABA Area Big Days submitted for 2014, among them a new state record for Montana (197), set by Radd Icenoggle, Forrest Rowland, Tom Forwood, and Andrew Guttenberg, on June 2. On May 21, Nick Bonomo, Patrick Dugan, Frank Gallo, Dave Tripp, and Fran Zygmont tallied 188 species on a Connecticut big day, coming very close to their 2011 record day (192 species).

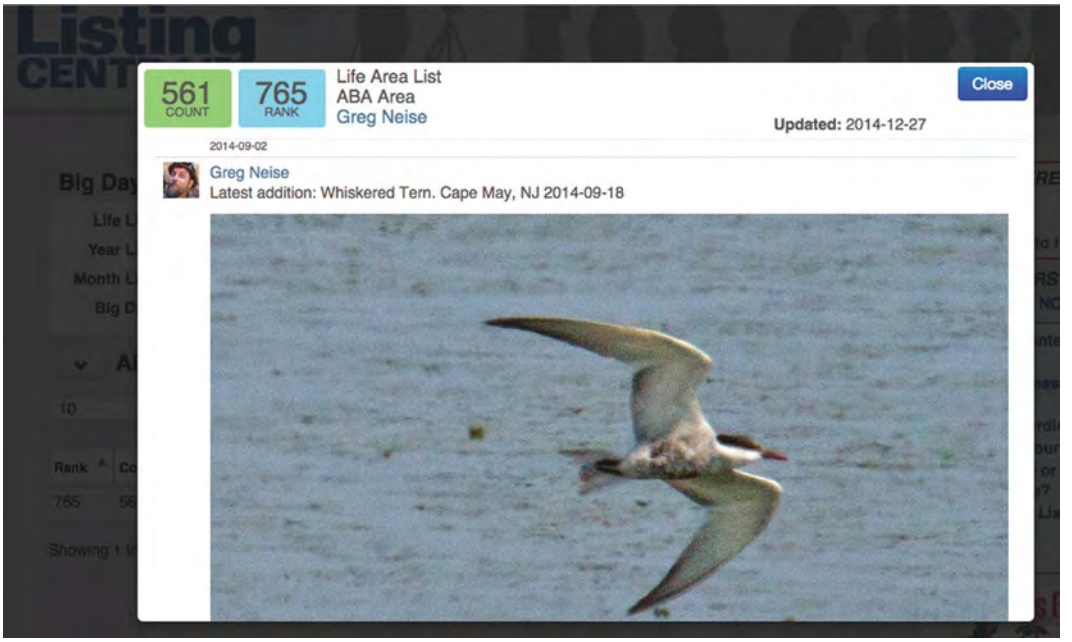
55,487 Total Ticks

That's how many list totals 2,045 ABA members have entered into Listing Central as of August 1, 2015.

Interestingly, while the number of people entering totals has increased quite a bit since the last Big Day & List Report was printed on paper (2011), the number of members submitting ABA Area life lists has remained about the same. In 2011, there were 781; today there are 998 … and that's with the threshold removed. Where things have really taken off is county lists: 21,374 have been entered into the system.

One thing that is being underutilized is the comments sections for all of the lists, and I think this may be because people just don't realize what the button is for. In the "Actions" column in every list category (except Big Days), there are two icons. One looks like a speech bubble in a comic strip, and the other is a silhouette of a person.

The silhouette will go to that person's profile page, with all of their entered list totals available on one screen. The speech bubble is the comments icon. Clicking that allows you to add notes, updates, and pictures to any list total. It's neat to go through and see what other's milestones or latest lifers were. So click on over to http://listing.aba.org, and update, or enter, your list totals… and don't forget to tell us what your latest additions were in the comments!



"List notes" for the author's ABA Area Life List. All lists have note fields that can be updated as frequently as you like; these can be seen by everyone visiting Listing Central.

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