

NACC Proposals 2008-A

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Change the family-level placements of several genera in the Emberizidae (*sensu* AOU-CL 7th, 1998) and the Thraupidae (*sensu* AOU-CL)

Effect of AOU-CL: Change the family-level placement of several genera of New World Nine-primaried oscines.

History: The placement of several species of New World nine-primaried oscines has long been unclear (see Bledsoe 1988, Sibley 1970, and Tordoff 1954 for summaries). The AOU-CL 7th Edition, 1998) essentially follows Sibley and Monroe 1990, which is heavily influenced by Sibley's work on DNA-DNA hybridization.

New information: Several molecular and summary studies (e.g. Burns 1997, Garcia-Moreno et al, 2001, Jønsson and Fjeldså 2006, Klicka, Burns, and Spellman 2007, and Yuri and Mindell 2002) have suggested that family-level reorganization of several oscine genera currently placed in the Emberizidae (*sensu* AOU-CL, 7th, 1998) are more appropriately place in the Thraupidae, and that some several genera, currently placed in the Thraupidae would be better placed in either the Emberizidae or the Cardinalidae. Among those that would affect the AOU-CL are the following:

- a. These would be moved from the Emberizidae to the Thraupidae:

Volatinia jacarina
Sporophila
Oryzoborus
Tiaris
Loxipasser anoxanthus
Loxigilla
Euneornis campestris
Melanospiza richardsoni
Pinaroloxias inornata
Haplospiza rustica
Acanthidops bairdii
Diglossa
Sicalis
Emberizoides herbicola
Paroaria

- b. *Chlorospingus* would be moved from the Thraupidae to the Emberizidae; it appears to be close to *Aimophila*, *Ammodramus*, and *Spizella*, etc. These apparently are not close to *Hemispingus* (Burns 1997)

- c. Move *Piranga* to the Cardinalidae. We've discussed this before, and concluded that *Piranga* are not tanagers and probably are cardinal-grosbeaks. The data seem to continue to show that relationship (e.g., Burns 1997, Carson et al. 2003,

and Jønnsen and Fjeldså 2006); *Habia* and *Chlorothraupis* are also apparently cardinals. *Amaurospiza concolor* apparently should be moved to the cardinals, into the “blue group” (e.g. Indigo Bunting), including the Dickcissel.

Recommendation: I think that we have generally agreed that these genera/species need to be reorganized, but are waiting for more information. So far, all (most?) new information has supported the above changes. If we make these change, some will no doubt need to be changed again later, but the molecular work seems to consistently point in this direction. I think that a few changes that may be required later are better than perpetuating the status quo, which is almost certainly wrong, and it would be best to avoid *incertae sedis* when reasonably possible. In other words, the time to make these changes is perhaps with us.

On the one hand, there may be no urgency. On the other, I know that the HBW is now writing on the volumes that this would effect (I am an author on the Emberizidae), so if we wish to see change now is the time to act – if we want that to be reflected in that source.

I recommend that we accept these changes, or these with modifications recommended by the committee or others (e.g., Burns, Klicka...).

References:

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Tordoff, H. B. 1954. A Systematic Study of the Avian Family Fringillidae Based on the Structure of the Skull. Misc. Publ. 81, Mus. Zoology, Univ. Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Yuri, T. and Mindell, D. P. 2002. Molecular phylogenetic analysis of the Fringillidae, a New World nine-primaried oscines (Aves: Passeriformes). *Mole. Phylogenetics and Evoln.*, 23: 229-243.

J. D. Rising, 9 January 2008

**Add Crowned Slaty Flycatcher, *Griseotyrannus aurantioatrocristatus*, to
The AOU Check-list of North American Birds**

Effect on North American Check-list: This would add Crowned Slaty Flycatcher, *Griseotyrannus aurantioatrocristatus*, to the North American Check-list following Variegated Flycatcher, *Empidonomus varius*.

Description: On December 1, 2007 the observers were birding from Hostal Casa de Campo in Cerro Azul, Panama, which is about 40 kilometers northeast of Panama City and at an elevation of 650 meters. We found a Crowned Slaty Flycatcher perched on a telephone wire at about 4:00PM. The bird was on Calle Principal about 100 meters uphill from Calle A and near the edge of Chagres National Park.

The bird appeared to be 15-17 cm long and rather stocky. The bird had a black cap that showed a thin yellow line through the crown when the crown was disturbed by the wind. The back of the head gave the appearance of a crest, especially when disturbed by the wind. There was a strong, light supercilium. There was a dark line through the eye, starting with the black lores and extending past the eye into a gray cheek. The back of the bird was gray with a brownish tinge while the breast was a lighter gray. The secondaries had white edges as did some of the tertiaries. The tail was gray as well with a bit of rufous on the upper tail coverts. The feet were black. The bill was broad at the base, triangle shaped, mostly black, but pale at the base of the mandible.

We watched the bird for 30 minutes as it occasionally did some flycatching from its perch on the phone wire, often returning to the same place. It only called once, a low soft chatter as it left its perch. We were able to take several photographs and these are attached to our report.

We found the bird again on the morning of December 4, 2007, at about 9:00AM in the same location and observed it for another 30 minutes.

Identification: We had a difficult time identifying the bird and finally confirmed its identity by consulting "Birds of Ecuador" by Ridgely and Greenfield, "Birds of Columbia" by Hilty and Brown and "Birds of Venezuela" by Hilty, all volumes found in the fine library at Canopy Lodge in El Valle. We had also sent our photographs to Larry McQueen, an illustrator for the recent "Birds of Peru" by Schulenberg, Stotz, Lane, O' Neill and Parker and received his confirmation on our identification. And we submitted our sighting information and a photograph to Ken Allaire, the author of the "Canopy Report", who confirmed the sighting.

References:

Ridgely, R.S. and P. J. Greenfield 2001. The Birds of Ecuador. Cornell University Press, Ithaca

Hilty, Steven L. and William L. Brown 1986. The Birds of Columbia. Princeton University Press, Princeton

Hilty, Steven L. 2002. The Birds of Venezuela. Princeton University Press, Princeton

Note from Banks: I told Mr. Robb that this needed to be published somewhere (such as NAB) and he indicated they plan to do so. I also suggested that he send the info to Bob Ridgely to try to find out if there are other reports. I suggest that we vote NO for now until publication. I don't know how to attach his photos to this document, but can (maybe) send them to anyone who wants.

Submitted January 10, 2008

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Merge *Cichlherminia* into *Turdus*

Background: *Cichlherminia lherminieri*, the Forest Thrush, is found on four islands in the Lesser Antilles. Since at least Ridgway (1907), this species has been placed in a monotypic genus. Ridgway's key emphasizes bill and toe morphology in diagnosing the genus, but I suspect that the reason it has been retained in a monotypic genus for so long is that its plumage is fairly distinctive and does not resemble that of any other New World thrush. The chevron-shaped scalloping on the breast and flanks recall, at least superficially, patterns in some Old World *Zoothera* (which led Sibley & Monroe 1990, for example, to place it close to *Zoothera* than to *Turdus*). Some other linear sequences (not ours) also do not place *Cichlherminia* adjacent to *Turdus*.

New data: Klicka et al. (2005) sequenced 2039 bps of mtDNA (ND2 and cyt-b) of 54 species from 17 of the 20 genera in the Turdinae. In both their maximum parsimony and maximum likelihood analyses, *Cichlherminia* (as well as South American *Platycichla* and *Nesocichla* from Tristan da Cunha) fell inside *Turdus*, with strong support. However, *Cichlherminia* was basal to all other *Turdus* except Old World *T. "viscivorous"* [sic], the Mistle Thrush. The authors recommended merger of *Cichlherminia* in *Turdus*.

Pan et al. (2007) used the GenBank cyt-b sequence deposited by Voelker (I think) in their analysis of 991 bp of that gene. Naturally, therefore, their results are similar to those of Klicka et al. (*Cichlherminia* embedded in *Turdus*), but they did sample a number of new, mainly Old World turdines. Although support for the critical nodes in their MP and ML trees is strong for *Cichlherminia* being nested within *Turdus*, their Bayesian tree lacks >95% support for any of those critical nodes.

Voelker et al. (2007) sampled 60 of 65 species (!) in *Turdus* and sequenced roughly 2400 bp of 3 mitochondrial genes. Their ML tree shows very strong support for a monophyletic, cosmopolitan *Turdus* if and only if the three genera above, *Cichlherminia* included, are merged into *Turdus*. *Cichlherminia* again is not particularly closely related to any other species or group, but there are 4 nodes with 100% Bayesian support that would have to be overlooked to maintain it as a separate genus. Voelker et al. also considered the alternative of breaking up *Turdus* into several genera but favored retention of a single genus because of their overall biological similarity.

Analysis and Recommendation: *Cichlherminia* is another example of phenotypic divergence in small, island populations producing morphologically distinctive insular taxa for which monotypic genera have been erected. *Cichlherminia* even has the oversized bill that we come to expect on insular taxa. Although the West Indies is home to some species that clearly warrant monotypic genus status, e.g., *Dulus* and *Nesocittes*, and therefore has the biogeographical potential to have very old taxa for which the nearest extant relative is unclear, *Cichlherminia* is not among them.

Retaining a monophyletic *Turdus* requires the merger of *Cichlherminia* into *Turdus* . Therefore, I recommend a YES on this proposal. That said, *Cichlherminia* is not closely related to any extant species, and is not a member of either the South American or Caribbean-Central American clades; thus its evolutionary history is more complicated than a mere insular offshoot of a mainland *Turdus*.

References:

KLICKA, J., G. VOELKER, AND G. M. SPELLMAN. 2005. A molecular phylogenetic analysis of the "true thrushes" (Aves: Turdinae). *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 34: 486-500.

PAN, Q.-P., F.-M. LEI, Z.-H. YIN, A. KRISTÍN, AND P. KANUCH. 2007. Phylogenetic relationships between *Turdus* species: mitochondrial cytochrome b gene analysis. *Ornis Fennica* 84: 1-11.

VOELKER, G., S. ROHWER, R. C. K. BOWIE & D. C. OUTLAW. 2007. Molecular systematics of a speciose, cosmopolitan songbird genus: defining the limits of, and relationships among, the *Turdus* thrushes. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 42: 422-434.

Van Remsen, Jan. 2008 (in consultation with Gary Voelker)

Change the Vernacular Names of the Sharp-tailed Sparrows

Effect of AOU-CL: Change the English vernacular names of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. caudacutus*) to Nelson's Sparrow and Saltmarsh Sparrow (or something else?).

History: Nelson's Sharp-tail was originally described as a subspecies of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow ([*Oriolus*] = *Ammodramus caudacutus nelsoni*). Work by Greenlaw (1993) and Rising and Avise (1993) suggested that these *A. c. caudacutus* and *A. c. nelsoni* differed sufficiently to be considered different species. The English vernacular names Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow were used in the 7th Ed. of the AOU Check-list, and most (all?) other recent sources. The acceptance of this taxonomic split seems to have been universally accepted (although I might argue that it did not go far enough-- but that is a different issue).

These vernacular names, however, are not generally popular in the ornithological and birding community (Remsen pers. comm., pers. obs., etc.); in fact, they are highly unpopular!

New information: There is, to my knowledge, no new biological information about this issue. However, many have proposed alternative, rather shorter English names, most commonly Saltmarsh Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow.

Recommendation: Although my manifest complicity in this issue is undeniable (I believe that I recommended those names-- perhaps invented them!), I can claim to be disinterested. I am, indeed, essentially uninterested in this (which explains the previous statement)! However, the request for change is before us.

The proposed names, Saltmarsh and Nelson's sparrows, were available for consideration when the taxonomic change was made. The argument for Nelson's was easy: Sharp-tailed Sparrow from the prairies were called "Nelson's Sparrow" or "Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow" for years, before ornithologists ceased to use vernacular names for subspecies. Both were entrenched in the literature. On the other hand, the coastal ones had always been called "Sharp-tailed Sparrows" [Acadian Sharp-tailed Sparrows are included in Nelson's in the current taxonomy.] The idea of restricting the name Sharp-tailed Sparrow to the coastal (non-Acadian) sharp-tailed sparrows was unacceptable to most of us, because it in the past had referred to all birds in this group. So we came up with a new name, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow -- admittedly a rather cumbersome name, but nonetheless an unambiguous one that recognized the apparently close relationship between the inland and maritime (Acadian) birds and the coastal (south of southern Maine) ones. I think that we took some inspiration from the ugly names, Northern Rough-winged Swallow and Southern Rough-winged Swallow--split rather recently but obviously closely related, and, at one time, collectively called Rough-winged Swallows. I, for one, did not like the alternative name "Saltmarsh Sparrow," because there are lots of those. On the east coast, it would

include some sharp-tails, plus Seaside (maybe up to 3 of these, and not all saltmarsh dwellers [Acadians are only occasionally found in saltmarshes!]), and some Song Sparrows. On the west coast, the Savannah Sparrow is the conspicuous "saltmarsh sparrow," though some Song Sparrows would qualify. Etc. Of course, there are a lot of worse names out there! One thinks of Cape May Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler (out of curiosity, have ANY of you ever seen one in a magnolia?).... And then there is the argument, "We have already created the new names which, though unpopular, are generally used. We have already taken the cold bath! Should we reverse ourselves (well, not really that!) at this stage?"

So, there appear to be three options: (1) stay with the *status quo*, (2) adopt "Saltmarsh Sparrow" and "Nelson's Sparrow," or (3) something else.

References:

See 7th edition of the Check-list.

Also see Banks, 1988 (Obsolete English Names of North American Birds and their Modern Equivalents). U. S. Dept. Interior Fish & Wildlife Service, Resource Publ. 174.

Jim Rising, 18 January 2008

Split *Lepidocolaptes lacrymiger* from *L. affinis*

Effect on AOU-CL: This would not effect anything within the AOU area except restrict the distribution of *L. affinis* to Middle America by recognizing the South American populations as a separate species.

Synopsis: The species that we call Spot-crowned Woodcreeper probably consists of two species characterized by vocal and plumage differences. If split, all populations in the AOU area belong to one species, *L. affinis*, and the South American populations would comprise the other, *L. lacrymiger*.

History: Ridgway (1911) treated Middle American populations of what we currently call Spot-crowned Woodcreeper as one species, *L. affinis*, and (by implication) the remaining South American populations as a separate species. Hellmayr (1925) retained this taxonomy, treating South American populations as *L. lacrymiger*. Peters (1951) -- surprise, surprise -- lumped them into a single species. I can find no published rationale for that treatment. That treatment has been generally followed subsequently (e.g. Meyer de Schauensee 1966, 1970, AOU 1983, Fjelds  and Krabbe 1990, Sibley and Monroe 1990).

New information: Ridgely and Tudor (1994) treated South American *lacrymiger* as a separate species, with the following statement: "We consider the birds of South America (*L. lacrymiger*, Montane Woodcreeper) as a separate species from the birds of Middle America (*L. affinis*, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper). The latter are larger, buff-throated, streaked on the back, etc. They were separated in [Hellmayr 1925] on this basis, and their very different primary vocalizations would appear to confirm their specific separation."

Ridgely's description of the song of *lacrymiger* is "a series of thin, sibilant, whistled notes with a distinctive rhythm, e.g. 'tsip, ts-ts-tsee u, tseu-tsu-tsu-tsu'" Fjelds  and Krabbe (1990) described what was presumably the song as "a little laugh with an introductory *ah*." Howell and Webb (1994) described the song of *affinis* as "a reedy note followed by a rapid laugh, *syeehr see-see-see-see-see-see-see-syn*, or *rreer hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hee-hee* [my spell-checker is gonna love this ...], etc." Stiles and Skutch (1989) described the song of *affinis* as "a reedy to nasal note followed by a rattling trill: *deeeeeeah, hihhihihi*; sometimes two reedy whistles without trill, *deeee-deeeeih*."

Frankly, given the obvious difficulties with verbal descriptions, I see plenty of similarities in these descriptions. Sonograms from throughout the ranges badly needed, obviously. On the other hand, the plumages of these two taxa are more different from each other than allospecies that we currently rank at species level (*Xiphorhynchus erythropygius* and *X. triangularis*) that have virtually the same distribution pattern, Middle America vs. South America.

Once again, we have the awkward situation of glaringly weak, non-quantitative evidence for a split that is probably "correct." Do we endorse such "taxonomy by anecdote."? On the other hand, not even anecdotes were provided by Peters and other lumpers, who extinguished species-level taxa by pen strokes, not evidence. A dilemma.

1. If we vote against the split, I would, in addition to recognizing the two as groups, add the following "Note": "Although most recent authors have treated South American populations *L. lacrymiger* (Des Murs, 1849) [Montane Woodcreeper, 5511.1] as conspecific with *L. affinis*, Cory and Hellmayr (1925), Eisenmann (1955), and Ridgely and Tudor (1994) treated South American populations as a species separate from *L. affinis* [Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, 1446]. The plumage patterns of the two groups differ strongly. Although Ridgely and Tudor (1994) stated that the vocalizations of the two groups differ strongly, no analysis of these characters has been published."

2. If we vote for the split, my "Note" would read something like this: "Most recent authors have treated South American *L. lacrymiger* (Des Murs, 1849) [Montane Woodcreeper] as conspecific with *L. affinis*. Cory and Hellmayr (1925), Eisenmann (1955), and Ridgely and Tudor (1994), however, treated *L. lacrymiger* as a separate species. The plumage patterns of the two groups differ strongly, more so than do those of some pairs of woodcreeper species with similar distributions, e.g. *Xiphorhynchus erythropygius* and *X. triangularis*. Although Ridgely and Tudor (1994) stated that the vocalizations of the two groups differ strongly, no analysis of these characters has been published. On the other hand, those who treat the two as a single species have not published any rationale at all for that treatment."

V. Remsen, 20 May 1996 and 11 Feb. 2008

Adopt a new English name for *Cerorhinca monocerata* (Charadriiformes, Alcidae)

Pages of the AOU Checklist (7th ed.) affected by the proposed change: Page 216 of the AOU North American Check-list would be amended so that the common name of *Cerorhinca monocerata* would become the Rhinoceros Puffin.

Background: The currently accepted English name of *Cerorhinca monocerata* (Pallas) is the Rhinoceros Auklet (AOU, 1998; pg. 216). This taxon was originally named the Horn-billed Puffin by Pallas (1811), and this species is still infrequently referred to by that common name (AOU, 1998). Historically grouped with Puffins (Coues, 1868; Dawson, 1920; Verheyen, 1958), and recognized as a member of Tribe Fraterculini (AOU, 1998), *Cerorhinca monocerata* is the only species placed outside Tribe Aethiini given the English name "auklet".

Analyses: Analyses of relationships within Alcidae utilizing data from multiple sources including osteology (Strauch, 1978, 1985; Chandler, 1990b; Chu, 1995), integument (Strauch, 1978, 1985; Chandler, 1990b), myology (Hudson et al., 1969), oology (Dawson, 1920; Chandler, 1990b), natural history (Strauch, 1985; Chandler, 1990b), DNA-DNA hybridization (Sibley and Ahlquist, 1990), as well as sequences of mitochondrial (Friesen et al., 1996; Moum et al. 2002; Thomas et al., 2004) and nuclear (Baker et al., 2007; Pereira and Baker, 2008) DNA have all placed *Cerorhinca monocerata* as the sister taxon to *Fratercula*, thus supporting the monophyly of Tribe Fraterculini (to the exclusion of the Aethiini).

In addition to the sole extant representative of *Cerorhinca*, the fossil remains of five species of *Cerorhinca* have been described: (1) *Cerorhinca dubia* L. Miller 1925; (2) *Cerorhinca* sp. Howard 1968; (3) *Cerorhinca minor* Howard 1971; (4) *Cerorhinca reali* Chandler 1990a; (5) *Cerorhinca* sp. Smith et al., 2007. Phylogenetic analysis of the systematic position of these extinct taxa places them in a monophyletic assemblage as the sister clade to *Fratercula* (to the exclusion of the Aethiini), lending further support for the monophyly of the puffins (Smith, *in prep.*).

Recommendation: It is hereby recommended that the common name of *Cerorhinca monocerata*, as reflected in the North American Check-list of Birds, be changed from the Rhinoceros Auklet to the Rhinoceros Puffin. This name would reflect current phylogenetic hypotheses of the systematic position of this taxon and avoid the misleading treatment of *Cerorhinca monocerata* with auklets (*Aethia* & *Ptychoramphus*) in the popular literature.

References:

American Ornithologists Union, 1998. Checklist of North American Birds. 7th ed. 829pp.

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February 13, 2008.

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Misc. details

p. 463 Change the gender of *Poecile* to masculine, following David and Gosselin (2008). Change the endings of the species names *hudsonicus* and *cinctus*.

When we used *Poecile* instead of *Parus* in the 7th edition, we kept the masculine endings for the species names that are adjectival. As I recall, this was based on Ridgway. In the 42nd Supplement (2000), we stated that *Poecile* is feminine and changed the endings appropriately. Unfortunately, we did not give a reason or cite who we were following. Then we had to change *atricapillus* back to masculine because it is not truly adjectival. Now David and Gosselin have published the note cited, proving that by the code *Poecile* is in fact masculine, which changes only these two names in our list.

The Supplement entry might read:

p. 463. The generic name *Poecile* is masculine (David and Gosselin 2008). Change the names *Poecile hudsonica* and *Poecile cincta* (which were treated as feminine by AOU 2000) to *Poecile hudsonicus* and *Poecile cinctus*.

DAVID, N., AND M. GOSSELIN. 2008. Grammatical gender of *Poecile* and *Leptopoecile*. *Dutch Birding* 30:19.

Richard C. Banks

Split *Passerculus sandwichensis* into as many as four species

Effect on AOU-CL: To split *Passerculus sandwichensis* into up to four species: *Passerculus sandwichensis* (the Savannah Sparrow), *P. beldingi* (Belding's Sparrow), *P. sanctorum* (San Benito Sparrow), and *P. rostratus* (Large-billed Sparrow).

History: The Savannah Sparrow was first named by Gmelin in 1789, from the Sandwich Bunting of Latham, based on material from Sandwich Bay, Unalaska Is., Alaska. Wilson later described the Savanna Bunting (or sparrow?) from Savannah Georgia. These have long been synonymized. Ridgway described *Passerculus beldingi* from San Diego, California in 1885. In recent lists these have generally be considered to be a subspecies (or subspecies group) of Savannah Sparrows, e.g. *P. s. beldingi*. *Emberiza rostrata* (= *P. rostratus*) was described by Cassin in December 1852, from coastal southern California (San Diego [a wintering bird, probably representing birds that breed on the Sonora Coast]). These, again, have generally been placed in *P. sandwichensis* as *P. s. rostratus*. *P. sanctorum* was described by Ridgway in 1883, with the type locality of San Benito [islands], off the west coast of Baja California. These are generally (universally?) treated as a subspecies of Savannah Sparrow, *P. s. sanctorum*; to my knowledge *P. sanctorum* have never been recorded from any place off the Islas San Benito.

New Information: Zink et al. (1991) examined mtDNA of *P. s. rostratus* and representatives of typical Savannah Sparrows, and found that they differed "considerably" from "typical" Savannah Sparrows. In a much more extensive molecular survey (based on material from Sable Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alaska, Washington, and from along the Pacific Coast, from the San Francisco Bay area south to Bahia Magdalena, B.C.S.), Zink et al.(2005) identified three distinct clades of Savannah Sparrows – let's call them A, B, and C. The separation between A and B-C is clear, and B and C also are clearly separated higher on the tree.

Clade C contains all specimens of saltmarsh Savannah Sparrows (*beldingi* (*s.l.*) (except for those from the San Francisco Bay area) and *rostratus* (*s.l.*), and nothing but these. Specimens from the other collection sites are scattered between clades A & B (i.e., a "B" and an "A" could have been collected in the same field in Ontario – indeed could well have been mated with each other).

Rising (2001) studied size and shape variation among 55 populations of Savannah Sparrows. Variation among populations of "typical" Savannah Sparrows was found to be clinal, with the exception of the birds from Sable Island, Nova Scotia ("Ipswich" Sparrows), which cluster separately from the others, specifically because they are larger. They are also distinctly paler in coloration (Rising et al. in prep.). Color variation among other "typical" Savannah Sparrows is clinal (Rising et al. in prep.).

Phenetically, the saltmarsh sparrows are separate from “typical” ones, and within the saltmarsh group, the large, large-billed individuals that breed along the coast of Sinaloa and Sonora are easily separable from the saltmarsh birds from coastal southern California and Baja California (“large-billed” Savannah Sparrows [*P. s. rostratus s.l.*]). The songs are also distinctive (although not strikingly different), but this (to my knowledge) has not been studied in any systematic, quantitative manner. The songs of the other saltmarsh Savannah Sparrows (*P. s. beldingi s. l.*) have been carefully studied, but only those from Santa Barbara, CA south to El Rosario, Baja California (Bradley 1977).

Phenetically, *P. s. beldingi s. l.* are distinct (Rising 2001; Rising et al. in prep.), but there is clinal variation among them. In terms of size and shape, there is a clinal increase in bill size and body size from Morro Bay and San Diego south to Bahia Magdalena. In coloration, birds from the northern part of the range of *P. s. beldingi s. l.* have dark streaking, distinct lemon yellow supercilia, and a distinct, buffy median crown stripe. Phenetically there is a distinct separation between coastal birds from northern California (Humboldt Co.) and Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo County, and another (less pronounced) break between Morro Bay and San Diego. Rising did not examine birds from Santa Barbara, but they appear (by casual inspection) to be very similar to San Diego birds.

Savannah Sparrows from the Islas San Benito, off the west coast of Baja California (*P. s. sanctorum*) are phenetically distinct, and ecologically differ from other southwestern coastal Savannah Sparrows by living and breeding (presumably) in xeric shrub habitat; their breeding season does not seem to overlap that of those from mainland coastal Baja California.

Proposal: I propose that we recognize these as four different species: (1) *Passerculus sandwichensis*, Savannah Sparrow; (2) *Passerculus beldingi*, Belding’s Sparrow; (3) *Passerculus rostratus*, Large-billed Sparrow, and; (4) *Passerculus sanctorum*, San Benito Sparrow

Passerculus sandwichensis (Gmelin). Savannah Sparrow.

Emberiza sandwichensis Gmelin, 1789, Syst. Nat. 1(2):875. Based on the “Sandwich Bunting” Latham, Gen Synop. Birds 2(1):202. (In Unalaska et sinu Sandwich = Unalaska, Alaska.)

Habitat. -- Open areas, especially grasslands, tundra, meadows, bogs, farmlands, grassy areas with scattered bushes, and marshes. (Subtropical and Temperate zones).

Distribution. -- *Breeds* from western and northern Alaska, northern Yukon, northern Mackenzie, central and southern Nunavut, northern Ontario, islands in James Bay, northern Quebec, northern Labrador, and Newfoundland south to southwestern Alaska (including Middleton Island, Nunivak Island and the Aleutians west to Amukta), coastal regions of west-central California (Monterey region), the interior of east-central California (locally to San Bernardino County), southern Nevada, southern Utah, east-

central Arizona, northern New Mexico, central Colorado, central Nebraska, Iowa, central Missouri (irregularly or formerly), northwestern Arkansas (irregularly or formerly), eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, western Virginia, central Maryland, western North Carolina, and northern Georgia, southeastern Pennsylvania, and northern New Jersey, and locally in the interior highlands of Mexico from Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, south to Puebla, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and perhaps southwestern Guatemala.

Winters from southwestern British Columbia, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, northern Arizona, central New Mexico, Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee, southern Kentucky, and, east of the Appalachians, from Massachusetts (casually north to Alaska, the northern United States, southern Ontario, and Nova Scotia) south to southern Baja California (including most adjacent islands), throughout most of Mexico (including the Yucatan Peninsula) to Guatemala, El Salvador, and northern Honduras, and to southern Texas, the Gulf coast, southern Florida, Bermuda, the Bahama Islands (south to Rum Cay, Cuba, the Isle of Pines, and Cayman and Swan islands.

Resident or partly resident on coastal northern California.

Casual or accidental on St. Lawrence Island and in the Pribilofs and western Aleutians (Shemya), north to Victoria, Seymour, Cornwallis, and Southampton islands, the British Isles [*princeps*, *sandwichensis*], and northeastern Asia (Chukotski Peninsula, Bolshoi Diomedé, Wrangel Island [where probably rarely breeds], southern Ussuriland, Koryak highlands), and Japan; sight reports for the Hawaiian Islands (Kure), Costa Rica (Cocos Island), and central Panamá.

Geographic variation. – There are several clines of variation among populations, as well as differences between populations resident in saltmarshes and other populations (“typical” Savannah Sparrows). Among the latter, individuals from islands are large. Those that breed on Sable Island, Nova Scotia (*princeps*) are both large and pallid in coloration. Birds from the Aleutians Islands, Alaska (*sandwichensis*, *s. s.*) are also large, but similar in coloration and shape to other Savannah Sparrows in Alaska; there is clinal variation in size eastward along the Alaska Peninsula, and birds from mainland Alaska are relatively small in size. Eastern birds tend to be slightly larger than western birds, and to have rather less gracile bills; individuals from the northeast (Labrador, James Bay Lowlands) tend to be darker in color than others, whereas those from the Great Plains and the interior of the west tend to be pale. Nonetheless, the differences are slight, and overlap among contiguous populations in both size, bill size, bill proportions, and coloration is great.

There is clinal variation among the populations in the *sandwichensis* group. *P. s. princeps* is large and pallid; it does not overlap Savannah Sparrows from the adjacent mainland in either size or color. Mainland Savannah Sparrows only rarely overlap them in range. In the northeast, *labradorius* has the most northerly distribution (Labrador, Newfoundland, James Bay Lowlands); it is on average larger and darker than either *oblitus*, which is found from southern Manitoba westward, or *savanna* which breeds from central Quebec and Ontario south in the Appalachian Mountains to northern Georgia. Variation both in size and color in the eastern birds is clinal, and delimiting

subspecies seems arbitrary. *Labradorius* is said to have a relatively stout bill, but this is highly variable, and differences among populations, if any, are subtle. Among non-saltmarsh western Savannah Sparrows, *oblitus*, *brooksi*, *anthinus*, *sandwichensis*, *nevadensis*, *brunnescens* (including *rufofuscus*), and *wetmorei* have been generally recognized. *Oblitus*, which breeds from northern Manitoba south through central eastern Ontario to Indiana, and west to the Great Plains, is said to be grayer and with a stouter bill than eastern *labradorius*; *savanna* is said to be browner than *oblitus*. However, variation is clinal, and generally it is not possible to separate individuals of these subspecies. *Sandwichensis*, of the Aleutian Islands and the western Alaska Peninsula, is significantly larger than *anthinus*, but similar to *anthinus* in color; there is, however, clinal variation between them along the Alaska Peninsula. *Nevadensis* of the Great Plains, Great Basin, and eastern Washington south to eastern California are relatively pallid and gray, often with reduced yellow in the supercilium; to the south, they merge clinally with *brunnescens* of Arizona, New Mexico and the Mexican Plateau, and to the north and west with *anthinus*. *Brunnescens* is darker in coloration than *nevadensis*; birds from New Mexico and Arizona are intermediate. *Brooksi*, of coastal British Columbia south to northwestern California, is said to be small, but they are not significantly smaller than birds from the Great Plains or Great Basin; they are, in fact larger than these Savannah Sparrows. *Alaudinus*, of the saltmarshes of central California south to Ventura County, may belong with the *beldingi* group, but this requires further study. *Wetmorei* is known only from the type series of five specimens collected in June, 1897; these specimens are somewhat worn. They are darker and more reddish, with more yellow in the superciliary than birds from the Great Basin (*nevadensis*); the specimens are old and it is difficult to say how much color change has occurred.

Passerculus beldingi Ridgway. Belding's Sparrow.

Passerculus beldingi Ridgway, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 7 (Feb. 25), 1885, p. 516. San Diego, Cal[ifornia].)

Habitat. – Saltwater/brackish marshes; mangroves; beaches.

Distribution. – Resident or partially in saltmarshes of coastal California from Morro Bay south to Bahía Magdalena (including Isla Todos Santos).

Geographic variation. -- Belding's Sparrows are relatively small billed, darkly streaked, with considerable lemon yellow in the supraloral and supercilium. There is clinal variation both in size, bill size and shape, and coloration along the Pacific coast, from central California south to Bahía Magdalena, with bill size and length increasing and the streaking becoming less striking. *Passerculus sandwichensis* are said to breed along the California coast south to central California (Ventura County), but individuals from Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo County, are resident in saltmarshes and are phenotypically intermediate between those from central California and Belding's Sparrows from south of Point Conception, but are closer to *beldingi* and are probably best placed with these. *Beldingi* intergrades into *anulus*, which breeds along the shores of Laguna Ojo de Liebre, Baja California; *anulus* has a longer and larger bill than

beldingi, with less dark streaking. *P. s. guttatus* is resident in the marshes around Laguna San Ignacio and Pond Lagoon, Baja California Sur. Their dorsal coloration is diffused with less contrast between feather centers and edges than *anulus*. These intergrade into *magalanae* which are larger, larger-billed, and lighter in color.

Passerculus sanctorum Ridgway. San Benito Sparrow.

Passerculus sanctorum Ridgway, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., 5, Apr. 3, 1883, p. 538.
(Island of San Benito, Pacific coast of Lower California).

Habitat. Xeric brush and beaches.

Distribution. Resident on the Islas San Benito, Baja California.

Passerculus rostratus (Cassin). Large-billed Sparrow.

Emberiza rostrata Cassin, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, Sept.-Oct. (Dec. 31) 1852, p. 184. (Sea shore at Dan Diego, California.)

Habitat. – Saltwater/brackish marshes; beaches.

Distribution. – Resident from northeastern Baja California, northwestern Sonora south to central Sinaloa (El Molino).

Winter. Postbreeding individuals (probably from coastal northwestern Sonora and northeastern Baja California) wander north to the Salton Sea, California, and coastal California, north to San Mateo County and the Channel Islands, and south along both coasts of Baja California and Baja California Sur to southern Baja California Sur.

References:

Bradley, R. A. 1977. Geographic variation in the song of Belding's Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*). *Bull. Florida State Mus. Biol. Sci.* 22:57-99.

Rising, J. D. 2001. Geographic variation in size and shape of Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). *Studies in Avian Biol.* No. 23, Cooper Ornithol. Soc., Lawrence, KS.

Rising, J. D., D. A. Jackson, and H. B. Fokidis. *In prep.* Geographic variation in plumage pattern and coloration of Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*).

Rising, J. D. 2007. Named subspecies and their significance in contemporary ornithology. *Ornithol. Monogr.* 63:45-54.

Zink, R. M., D. L. Dittmann, S. W. Cardiff, and J. D. Rising 1991. Mitochondrial DNA variation and the taxonomic status of the large-billed Savannah Sparrow. *Condor* 93:1016-1019.

Recommendation: I prefer the four species solution, but note that it would be nice to know more about the birds from around Point Conception, CA. In the San Francisco Bay area they definitely are in saltmarshes (a la Belding's sparrows), but in the molecular data these cluster with the "regular" Savannah Sparrows, i.e., they appear to be ordinary Savannah Sparrows that live in *Salicornia* (etc.) habitat). In Morro Bay, they also are in classical *Beldingi* habitat, but morphologically they cluster close to San Diego birds, but somewhat intermediate between those and Savannah Sparrows from Humboldt Bay along the coast in northwestern CA – which morphologically are just ordinary Savannah Sparrows. We don't have molecular material from birds between San Diego and San Francisco (although I have clipped toes for anyone interested).

The birds from the Islas San Benito are a problem. There they are a small (although locally abundant) population that are allopatric with all other Savannah Sparrows, and appear to be on a different breeding cycle -- perhaps breeding during an autumnal rainy season (which I guess occurs there); a recall seeing skins of fledged young taken in January in the AMNH – but that is based on my memory and should be checked from a glance at the collection there. They sure weren't breeding in March and April when the mainland *Beldingi* there were breeding. We need to know more about these birds, but I doubt that we soon will: they are hard to get at, and one needs permission from the local fishermen, and it would be a difficult place for a long-term study for one used to the comforts of available food, freshwater, and a minimal research station (although my guess is that the local fishermen would cooperate, and I think that the little settlement is now permanent).

I suggest the following possible votes:

- A. Stay with the *status quo*, i.e. one species, *Passerculus sandwichensis*, Savannah Sparrow.
- B. Split into two: *P. sandwichensis* and *P. rostratus*, including *beldingi* and *sanctorum*.
- C. Split into three: *P. sandwichensis*, *P. rostratus*, and *beldingi* (including *sanctorum*),
or
- D. Split into four: as proposed above.

If we go with option **B.** we need a common name for the "saltmarsh" ones. I suggest "Belding's Sparrow." More widely used already than "Large-billed Sparrow," and (vague name) "Saltmarsh" Sparrow may be used for Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Or, we could go with the ever-popular "Saltmarsh Savannah Sparrow." Kidding aside, if we go with **B.**,

that might not be a bad option. I assume that the rest would collectively be called Savannah Sparrows.

■ Jim Rising (1 March 2008)

Addendum:

As a follow-up I found (believe it or not) my notes on the sparrows I have examined at the AMNH. Re *S. s. sanctorum* (San Benito Islands) they have specimens of "juveniles" ("First Basic") specimens (2 females and a male) taken 12 & 14 July 1897, and "locals" in Juvenal Plumage taken 30 March

1897 -- which would imply a late Feb. early March nesting there, at least that year.

Which would put them more-or-less in sync. with the mainland birds (at least as I found them). They were not nesting when I was there, late April 1999. All of the 14 birds that I collected (and probably twice that many that I handled) were SCO, well-worn adults, and there was absolutely no epigamic behavior. However, the 6 males did have enlarged testes (e.g. 9x6mm to 11x0mm) and enlarged cloacae, but the 8 females had granular ovaries and lacked brood patches, whereas on the mainland at Guerrero Negro, the males testes (e.g. 9x8mm to 12x8mm) were even larger (but not much), and the females were laying and incubating. At Guerrero Negro on 1 & 2 April 5 males had gonads like those on the San Benitos; I didn't collect any females then. One of the males from GN collected on 1 April had an incompletely ossified skull, but enlarged testes ("large", doubtless damaged in collection or I would have measured it).

I.e., the Guerrero Negro (mainland) birds and the San Benito (island) birds were not in sync., but not so far off as I implied in my summary (done from memory -- never trust your memory!).

Note: Please vote A, B, C, or D on this proposal

Split *Carduelis* into two or more genera

Effect on AOU-CL: Change the generic-level taxonomy of *Carduelis*.

History: The genus *Carduelis* was created in 1760, and the generotype is *Carduelis carduelis*. The American *Carduelis* are: *C. flammea* (Common Redpoll), *C. hornemannii* (Hoary Redpoll), *C. spinus* (Eurasian Siskin), *C. pinus* (Pine Siskin), *C. atriceps* (Black-capped Siskin), *C. notata* (Black-headed Siskin), *C. dominicensis* (Antillean Siskin), *C. psaltria* (Lesser Goldfinch), *C. lawrencei* (Lawrence's Goldfinch), *C. tristis* (American Goldfinch), *C. carduelis* (European Goldfinch), and *C. sinica* (Oriental Greenfinch). The Eurasian Siskin, European Goldfinch, and Oriental Greenfinch are extralimital in our area.

New information: This is another paper in the apparent series by Arnaiz-Villena et al. (2007).

Arnaiz-Villena et al. (2008) sequenced 924 base pairs of mt cyt-b DNA, *Carduelis* of the following species: *C. ambigua* (Black-headed Greenfinch, China), *C. atriceps*, *C. carduelis*, *C. chloris*, *C. dominicensis*, *C. flammea*, *C. hornemannii* (tissues from Belgium), *C. lawrencei*, *C. notata*, *C. pinus*, *C. psaltria*, *C. sinica*, *C. spinoides* (Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, Nepal), *C. spinus*, and *C. tristis*. Arnaiz-Villena et al. (2008) also sequenced species of *Carpodacus*, *Haematospiza*, *Leucosticte*, *Loxia*, *Pinicola*, *Pyrrhula*, *Rhodopechys*, *Serinus*, *Uragus*, and *Emberiza impetuani*. They clustered taxa using Maximum Likelihood (ML) and Bayesian (BI) techniques, with *Emberiza impetuani* as an outgroup.

Many of the clades identified by ML are not well supported. Nonetheless, the analysis shows *Carduelis* to be polyphyletic, with the siskins (including the European Siskin) and American goldfinches (all of them) in one clade, the redpolls in a clade with the crossbills, *C. carduelis* in a clade with the Citril Finch (*Serinus citrinella*; the other *Serinus* are in different clades), and the greenfinches in a forth clade (with *Rhodopechys obsoleta*).

The BI again clusters the American goldfinches and siskins together (posterior probability [PP] of 98), and puts the redpolls with the crossbills, but also with the greenfinches (PP for this clade = 23), and the European Goldfinch with the Citril Finch (PP = 94).

Recommendation: The data of Arnaiz-Villena do suggest rather strongly that *Carduelis* are polyphyletic. I do, however, worry (once again!) that only one gene has been sequenced.

We could solve the suggested problem of the apparent polyphyly of *Carduelis* by splitting the New World goldfinches and all of the siskins from the redpolls+ European Goldfinch (which would be *Carduelis* by priority, but that would mean that we should put

the crossbills and greenfinches into this new, restricted *Carduelis* (a poorly supported clade in their analyses). Also, if we follow their maximum likelihood tree, *Serinus* would also have to be split (one solution would be to put the NW *Carduelis* in the *Serinus* group that includes the Canary, with another *Serinus* group for most of the African *Serinus*. The BI would make the *Serinus* split more straight forward, and leave the NW siskins and goldfinches in a monophyletic group, well supported (PP = 98).

On the basis of this study, I would recommend splitting the New World goldfinches and the siskins from the others (in their own genus = *Spinus*?), and leaving the greenfinches (along with *Rhodopechys obsoleta*) in another genus (*Chloris*?), the crossbills in *Loxia*, and the redpolls in a genus by themselves (*Acanthis*?), and the European Goldfinch + Citril Finch in another genus (*Carduelis*). The canaries (two more genera?) and the Citril Finch, however, are not our problem.

Comment: This is an awfully lot of change to base on 940 bp of one gene. But, returns us to a classification that was widely used in the past. On what basis was that changed? Let's look at Mayr & Short, 1970) – glad Andy reminded me of this seminal work:

Prologue: R. F. Johnston reviewed this tome in Syst. Zool. (ca. 1971). He wrote, among other things, "...I hold this view rather strongly, partly because of the demonstrated power of genetic science and partly because taxonomic science has so much unanalyzed preconception [AP] and ad hoc decision [AHD] involved in it (stated another way, the degree of subjectivity in taxonomic practice is larger than anyone in his right mind would wish for)." This is sort of an 1970s analysis, so we need to abbreviations **AP** and **AHD** to evaluate this text, sort of like **ML** and **BI**; we don't have to worry about anything like PP. To horse:

M & S p. 79 tell us: "*Carduelis [spinus]*. We consider *Spinus* (1816) congeneric with *Carduelis* (1760). [No reference. Let's call this one both **AP** and **AHD**.] The New World species comprise a subgroup of this genus, except for *C. pinus* which is closely related to Palearctic *spinus* (Vaurie, 1959)[I have not seen Vaurie, but let's call this one **AP**.]; these species comprise a superspecies [**AP** and **AHD** apparently]. There is the possibility that *pinus* is also related to certain New Word [sic] species such as *barbatus*...." Indeed, there is that possibility.... Etc.

M & S p. 80: "*Carduelis tristis*. This species has no close relatives; its variation is slight." [**AP?**]. The Arnaiz et al. paper puts it in a well-supported clade with *psaltria* and *lawrencei*, with *psaltria* with *lawrencei* as a sister. Well, this does make a certain amount of geographic sense, but ... who knows? Only one gene.

M & S p. 80: "*Carduelis lawrencei*. Lawrence's Goldfinch is probably related to one or another of the Central South American species of *Carduelis*, rather than to *tristis* or *psaltria*." [and perhaps it is; no citation; **AP?**]

M & S p. 80 recognize *Acanthis* – without question. An these are the guys that lumped nearly everything, including *Nycticorax* and *Nyctanassa*; damn near all little woodpeckers in *Picoides* etc. (my **AP** showing here!)! Well again, no justification for lumping them.

So why did the AOU-CL change? I don't know, and I suspect that it is not generally known.

References:

Arnaiz-Villena, A., Moscoso, J., Ruiz-del-Falle, V., Gonzalez, J., Reguera, Wink, R., and Serrano-Vela, J. I. 2007. Bayesian phylogeny of Fringillinae birds: Status of the singular African oriole finch *Linurgus olivaceus* and evolution and heterogeneity of the genus *Carpodacus*. *Acta Zoologica Sinica* 53: 826-834.

Arnaiz-Villena, A., Moscoso, J., Ruiz-del-Falle, V., Gonzalez, J., Reguera, R., Ferri, A., Wink, M., and Serrano-Vela, J. I. 2008. Mitochondrial DAN Phylogenetic Definition of a Group of 'Arid-Zone" Carduelini Finches. *The Open Ornithology Journal* 1:1-7.

Mayr, E. and L. L. Short, Jr. 1970. *Species Taxa of North American Birds: A Contribution to Comparative Systematics*. Publ. Nuttall Ornithol. Club, No. 9, Cambridge, MA.

-- J. D. Rising, 5 March 2008

Comments and Modification by Banks, 10 March

I strongly support this proposal. I was very much against the merger of these genera into *Carduelis* when it was done (following the Europeans) for the 1983 edition. I will try to find and circulate what I wrote about it at that time. My objection to merging *Acanthis* and *Spinus* into *Carduelis* is why we still carry them as subgenera.

Jim's proposal boils down to three actions:

- a. Recognize the subgenus *Acanthis* as a genus
- b. Recognize the subgenus *Spinus* as a genus

This leaves the subgenus *Carduelis* by itself in the genus, at least in our classification, so it disappears, unless there are Eurasian subgenera.

- c. Remove *Carduelis sinica* and *C. chloris* (in our Appendix) from the genus *Carduelis* and place them in a genus with *Rhodopechys*; that genus would probably be *Chloris*. However, there seems to be a nomenclatural problem here. The genus *Rhodopechys* is paraphyletic (or maybe poly) and there are other complications; see the footnote in Peters 14, p. 262.

So, we need to divide this into 9a, b, and c for voting purposes. I recommend Yes on 9a and 9b, and No on 9c, the latter because of the complexity and the fact that the birds are out of our area.

Change linear sequence of *Trogon* species

This proposal is to change the current linear sequence of the currently recognized species in the genus *Trogon* to reflect recent phylogenetic data.

Background: Currently, the NACC sequence is:

melanocephalus
citreolus
viridis
bairdii
violaceus
mexicanus
elegans
collaris
aurantiiventris
rufus
melanurus
massena
clathratus

Although this sequence groups clusters of species traditionally regarded as closely related because of plumage similarities, I have no idea if/what rationale guided the overall sequence.

New data: Moyle (2005) analyzed DNA sequences from 2 genes, mitochondrial ND2 and nuclear RAG-1, for all genera in the family, including single samples for 14 species in *Trogon*. DaCosta & Klicka (2008) produced a phylogenetic hypothesis for all 17 traditional species in the genus plus numerous additional population/subspecies samples (n = 160 individuals) using 1041 bp of the mitochondrial gene ND2. The two analyses produced highly congruent results (but expected to a degree giving overlap in genes sampled). The resolution of the branching pattern was very good using the usual measures of node support, and I think we can have reasonably high confidence in the branching pattern for construction of a new linear sequence.

Both analyses indicate a major break in the genus in that the “first 5” species (*melanocephalus* through *violaceus*) form a sister group to the “last 3” (*melanurus*, *massena*, *clathratus*), and that together they form a sister group to the “middle group” (*mexicanus* through *rufus*). Therefore, whatever sequence we chose will “disturb” the overall structure of the current sequence. I recommend that we start with the last 3, then follow with the first 5, and then finish with the middle group (thus minimizing change by bringing the last 3 to the front).

The sequence within the last 3 should be begin with *clathratus* – it is basal to the other two. Central American *melanurus* is sister to *massena*, so the next two should be *massena* and *melanurus* (by convention N to S).

Minimizing change in the “first 5” would mean starting with *melanocephalus*, followed by its sister *citreolus*; this pair is sister to *bairdii* + *viridis*, so the current sequence is fine, with these 4 sister to the final species, *violaceus*.

The sequence of the “middle group” should begin with *rufus*, because it is basal to the rest. Support for the next two nodes is weak, but if we follow the branching pattern, the sequence should be *elegans*, *mexicanus*, and then *collaris* + *aurantiiventris*.

Translating all that to a linear sequence, using the usual conventions (basal taxa first; for sister taxa, NW-most taxon listed first; for polytomies, stay as close to traditional sequence as possible), the result is:

clathratus
massena
melanurus
melanocephalus
citreolus
viridis
bairdii
violaceus
rufus
elegans
mexicanus
collaris
aurantiiventris

Because of the near-absence of polytomies, there really isn't an alternative sequence that reflects the phylogeny, at least as far as I can see. There are some problems with species limits revealed by DaCosta & Klicka, but they do not affect the sequence for these North American members as far as I can tell, and would have to be altered by a separate set of proposal anyway. Therefore, I recommend a YES on this one.

References:

DaCOSTA, J. M., AND J. KLICKA. 2008. The Great American Interchange in birds: a phylogenetic perspective with the genus *Trogon*. *Molecular Ecology* 17: 1328-1343.

MOYLE, R. G. 2005. Phylogeny and biogeographical history of the Trogoniformes, a pantropical bird order. *Biological Journal Linnean Society* 84: 725-738.

Van Remsen (in consultation with Jeff DaCosta), March 2008

Change English names of mostly Palearctic birds to follow BOU

This proposal addresses some discrepancies between common names in the AOU Check-list and the BOU. Most of the species concerned are primarily Palearctic, with just a few AOU area records. Our informal policy is to follow BOU recommendations for Palearctic birds. AOU names are listed first, followed by BOU names.

a. Eurasian Kestrel: Common Kestrel

p. 108

“Common” is the name used very widely for this species, including in Dickinson (2003) and Gill & Wright (2006). The name is marginally more appropriate for the species than “Eurasian” because it is certainly common over huge areas (in contrast to the scarce, local Lesser Kestrel, which also occurs in both Europe and Asia), and it is also resident throughout Africa. Of course several other kestrel species are common within their respective ranges, so the point is arguable. Nevertheless, I recommend following BOU in this case and changing to “Common” because there is no strong reason to stay with “Eurasian”.

b. Gyrfalcon: Gyr Falcon

p. 110

This species’ range is split more or less evenly between northern North America and Eurasia, and in fact is something of a rarity in Britain, with a few records per year, and thus we don’t need to feel obliged to follow BOU. Few do; for example, Dickinson (2003) and Gill & Wright (2006) use Gyrfalcon. The origin of its name is obscure (different online sources give very different interpretations) and hence it is difficult to make any clear argument about which name is better. Advantages of Gyr Falcon would be that it then can be indexed with falcons in print matter and perhaps more readily be recognized as a falcon by novices. It also makes explicit its true taxonomic group (as opposed to, say, nighthawk). Nevertheless, my personal preference is Gyrfalcon, although I can attribute this to nothing more than long familiarity with the name and a perception that it is a more elegant form of the name (for whatever that’s worth!). I don’t have a recommendation on this one, and will be interested to learn what other committee members think.

c. Eurasian Coot: Common Coot

p. 137

“Eurasian” is the name used by Gill & Wright, while “Common” is used by Dickinson 2003. In this case, I feel the name “Eurasian” is much preferable to “Common” because while several coots are common in various parts of the world, only one coot is Eurasian (and “Eurasian” is the name I used in *Birds of South Asia*). This is not a case where a split within Eurasia is imminent or likely (it’s currently considered monotypic over this huge area), so “Eurasian” seems likely to adequately describe this species well into the future. However, because the Australasian *australis* is normally included within *F. atra*,

“Eurasian” is not completely descriptive of the species’ currently accepted range. Still, I recommend retaining “Eurasian”.

d. Common Ringed Plover: Ringed Plover

p. 146

e. Little Ringed Plover: Little Plover

p. 148

These two should be considered together. BOU clearly changed Little Ringed to Little to avoid having to add “Common” to Ringed Plover. Both are reasonably common and widespread but in different habitats and regions, so “Common” does not much better fit *hiaticula* than it does *dubius*. And, *dubius* is indeed smaller and slimmer than *hiaticula*, so “Little” is a good descriptor for it, although not distinguishing *dubius* from many other plovers (but then, neither does “Ringed”). Although I used Common Ringed and Little Ringed in my book, I would have adopted this change had it been made in time. I recommend following BOU on this one.

f. Eurasian Blackbird: Common Blackbird

p. 507

In this case I strongly suggest following BOURC (and Gill & Wright) and using Common Blackbird, because *merula* and similar subspecies just reach western Asia. All the major Asian taxa (*maximus*, *mandarinus*, *simillimus*) are very different from *merula* and each other---I considered them to be three separate species in *Birds of South Asia*, and another group has a formal, peer-reviewed analysis close to the publication stage that splits them (also alluded to in Dickinson 2003, who however used “Eurasian”). Once this analysis is published I doubt if anyone anywhere will still maintain that *merula* is a widespread Eurasian species--it’s really not a judgment call. If we stick with Eurasian we will just have to change it very soon when the formal paper is published.

g. European Starling: Common Starling

p. 523

For *Sturnus vulgaris*, “our” name (“European”, also used in Dickinson 2003) reflects the origin of our hordes, but does not well describe the species’ full natural range (which extends far into northern and central Asia), and certainly not its present range. Because of this and because it truly is the common starling over much of the Northern Hemisphere, I recommend adopting the BOU name that is already in extremely wide usage (including Gill & Wright), “Common Starling”.

h. Common Chaffinch: Chaffinch

p. 658

In this case “Common” is useful to distinguish this species from the Blue Chaffinch of the Canaries. However, Dickinson (2003) opted to use just plain “Chaffinch” alongside “Blue Chaffinch”, and I am unaware of any dire consequences suffered. Just the same, I recommend we continue to use “Common Chaffinch” which does have the advantage of avoiding confusion with Blue Chaffinch, and especially to keep someone from feeling it necessary to resurrect “Teydefinch”, the name used for *F. teydea* by Sibley & Monroe (1990).

This is a recent change by the BOU. Previously (and still within Britain) they just used "Bullfinch". Dickinson (2003) and Gill & Wright (2006) use "Eurasian". There does not seem to be an advantage in using "Common" for this species, as it is not generally notably common (though it is widespread), and where other bullfinches occur they may be just as common. All the other *Pyrrhula* bullfinches are exclusively found in the southern half of Asia. In my opinion, "Eurasian" is marginally better because *P. pyrrula* is the only one that occurs in both regions.

I suggest that, for any names we choose not to change to accord with those of the BOU, we at least insert a note to at least acknowledge the alternative name, as with *Turdus obscurus* (p. 507). Please vote separately for each proposed change.

References:

- BOURC. The British List. The official list of bird species recorded in Great Britain. Category A, B, C species. <http://www.bou.org.uk/recbrlst1.html>, accessed 5 April 2008.
- Dickinson, E.C. (ed.) 2003. The Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. 3rd Ed. Christopher Helm, London.
- Gill, F. & M. Wright. Master_IOC_list_Jan_08e, <http://worldbirdnames.org/>, accessed 5 April 2008.
- Rasmussen, P.C. & J.C. Anderton. 2005. Birds of South Asia: the Ripley Guide. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
- Sibley, C.G., & B.L. Monroe, Jr. 1990. Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.
- Pamela C. Rasmussen, 5 April 2008

Change linear sequence of species in *Turdus*

Effect on NACC: This would modify our current sequence to reflect the phylogenetic hypothesis in Voelker et al. (2007).

Background: Our current sequence is as follows. Other than placing presumed sisters adjacent, I am not sure that there is any published rationale for the sequence of species groups. The Eurasian species were grouped together and placed first, and the Caribbean species, except *jamaicensis*, were placed last; the Neotropical species occupied the middle.

Turdus merula
Turdus obscurus
Turdus naumani
Turdus pilaris
Turdus iliacus
Turdus nigrescens
Turdus infuscatus
Turdus plebejus
Turdus fumigatus
Turdus obsoletus
Turdus grayi
Turdus nudigenis
Turdus jamaicensis
Turdus assimilis
Turdus rufopalliatus
Turdus rufitorques
Turdus migratorius
Turdus swalesi
Turdus aurantius
Turdus ravidus
Turdus plumbeus
Cichlherminia (= *Turdus*) *lherminieri*

New data: Voelker et al. (2007) sequenced mtDNA (1000 bp of cyt-b, 333 bp of ND3, and 1035 bp of ND2) for 55 *Turdus* spp. and smaller samples for another 5 species to produce a phylogeny for 60 of 65 species (!). Their tree has a high number of strongly supported nodes. South American species all fall into one clade that includes *Nesocichla* from Tristan da Cunha, a few species from Middle America, and two from Africa. "*Platycichla*" falls within this clade – we already merged *Platycichla* into *Turdus* based on earlier papers. *Cichlherminia* is deeply embedded in *Turdus* (subject of a previous proposal).

Pan et al. (2007) published a *cyt-b* phylogeny that included 19 species of mostly Old World *Turdus*. Given that their gene and species samples are really just a subset of Voelker et al.'s larger samples, it is not surprising that their tree topology is the same.

Translating all that to a linear sequence, using the usual conventions ("basal" taxa first; for sister taxa, NW-most taxon listed first; for polytomies, stay as close to traditional sequence as possible), the result is:

philomelos (this species is "basal" to all others in the tree except *viscivorus*; listed here assuming that the recent proposal to add this species passes)
iliacus (a floating branch, possibly basal to the next group)
rufopalliatus (strong support for traditionally perceived group of this plus next two; this is sister to the next two)
migratorius (sister to *rufitorques*)
rufitorques (sister to *migratorius*)
infuscatus (sister to *nigrescens*; listed N>S)
nigrescens (sister to *nigrescens*; listed N>S; this pair forms a reasonably well-supported group with the 3 robins above)
aurantius (this and the next 4 species are all Caribbean; the branching pattern is poorly resolved but the 4 sampled tend to come out close to each other)
plumbeus (sister to *aurantius* with good support)
ravidus (extinct and not sampled; traditionally placed between the previous two)
jamaicensis (clusters with *swalesi* but with no support)
swalesi (clusters with *jamaicensis* but with no support)
Iherminieri (assuming previous proposal to merge into *Turdus* passes; does not clearly belong to any of the major clades, including the one to which the Caribbean species above belong)
plebejus (on a branch by itself, not clearly a member of either large New World clade)
merula (another species on a branch by itself, not clearly a member of any clade, but tends to cluster with the Eurasian clade)
pilaris (solid member of Eurasian clade, like next two species, but no close relatives)
naumani (this and two other Eurasian species form a group that may be sister to *pilaris*, but no real support for that)
obscurus (member a well-supported group within Eurasian clade)
fumigatus (member a well-supported group within the large "largely South American" clade)
grayi (member of largely South American clade, but member of a separate group from *fumigatus*; this group also includes *nudigenis*, and the two are listed here N > S)
nudigenis (see *grayi*)
assimilis (member of a separate clade from previous two that also includes mostly South American species)

Analysis: Perhaps Voelker et al.'s most exciting result was that biogeography does not precisely predict relationships, and so there is evidence for multiple intercontinental dispersal events. Given that 4 European *Turdus* have now been recorded as vagrants to eastern North American, i.e., the best track record of any European landbird group, and given the track record of the group in colonizing remote oceanic islands (e.g., Tristan da Cunha), the existence of prior intercontinental dispersal events seems exceptionally plausible (although Gary says reviewers who are presumably dogmatic vicariance types have given him a tough time).

Therefore, the proposed new linear sequence reflects this, with the break-up of the block of Eurasian species and of Neotropical species. The sequence from *aurantius* through *merula* is a section dominated by lack of resolution of the branching pattern, with *aurantius-plumbeus* the only solidly supported node; therefore, much of that sequence is arbitrary. I put *lherminieri* adjacent to other Caribbean species and *merula* next to the Eurasian species, even though there is no real support for those positions. If anyone has a better system, chime in.

Recommendation: Regardless of any minor problems that might arise with this new sequence, most is backed by phylogenetic data, in contrast to the traditional sequence, which is maintained solely by historical momentum; therefore, I recommend YES.

References:

- PAN, Q.-P., F.-M. LEI, Z.-H. YIN, A. KRISTÍN, AND P. KANUCH. 2007. Phylogenetic relationships between *Turdus* species: mitochondrial cytochrome b gene analysis. *Ornis Fennica* 84: 1-11.
- VOELKER, G., S. ROHWER, R. C. K. BOWIE & D. C. OUTLAW. 2007. Molecular systematics of a speciose, cosmopolitan songbird genus: defining the limits of, and relationships among, the *Turdus* thrushes. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 42: 422-434.

Van Remsen (in consultation with Gary Voelker), March 2008