AOS Classification Committee – North and Middle America

Proposal Set 2019-D

21 March 2019

(revised 29 March 2019)

Split Vermiculated Screech-Owl *Megascops guatemalae*

Note:

This proposal follows up on Dan Lane's proposal (SACC #771) to split the widespread species *Megascops guatemalae* into two or three species: *M. guatemalae* and potentially a separate *M. vermiculatus* would be restricted to Middle America and within NACC territory; and *M. centralis* from central Panama to western Colombia, which would apply to both the NACC and SACC. We do not consider *M. roraimae*, which occurs in South America and would be extralimital to the NACC region, because it was not regarded as part of *M. guatemalae* in AOU 1998.

Background:

Ridgway (1914) treated *Otus guatemalae* (Sharpe 1875, Guatemalan Screech Owl) as a species separate from *O. vermiculatus* (Ridgway 1887, Vermiculated Screech Owl). He noted that *O. guatemalae* is found from southeastern Mexico, in the states of Veracruz and Oaxaca, southward through Guatemala and Honduras to northern Nicaragua. He wrote that *O. vermiculatus* resembles *O. guatemalae* superficially, but that the former has the lower portion of tarsus naked (the feathering shorter toward the lower portion of the tarsus), the tail much shorter, the coloration much more uniform (the upperparts with finer vermiculations and usually without distinct spots or streaks, and the underparts usually more densely vermiculated), and the eyebrow never whitish (always brown or chestnut-rufous). The distribution provided for *O. vermiculatus* was from Costa Rica and Panama south through western Colombia to western Ecuador. Ridgway (1914) noted that he had not seen specimens from either Colombia or Ecuador.

Cory (1918) also treated *O. guatemalae* as a species separate from *O. vermiculatus*. He listed the distribution of *O. guatemalae* as "Southeastern Mexico to Guatemala; West Ecuador?" and that of *O. vermiculatus* as "Costa Rica to Panama and south through western Colombia to western Ecuador". Cory also noted that he had not seen specimens from Colombia or Ecuador.

Peters (1940) listed all the different forms as subspecies of a single species, *O. guatemalae*. Peters noted that Chapman (Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., 63, 1931, p. 64-65) believed *O. vermiculatus* to be specifically distinct from *O. guatemalae* on the basis of the relatively shorter tail and tarsus of the former and because there is a specimen from the Paria Peninsula of northeastern Venezuela in the American Museum of the size and proportions of *O. guatemalae*, indicating that both birds may occur in northern South America.

Eisenmann (1955) listed a single species, *O. guatemalae*, which would be distributed in tropical Middle America and South America. However, he added a note indicating that some considered birds from Costa Rica, Panama, and South America to be a separate species, *O. vermiculatus*. Under that view, the birds from Mexico to Nicaragua may be called Middle American Screech-Owl.

Wetmore (1968), Stiles and Skutch (1979), Hilty and Brown (1986), Ridgely and Gwynne, Jr. (1989), and Howell and Webb (1995) listed a single species, *O. guatemalae*, and from here on the English name Vermiculated Screech-Owl has been used when *O. guatemalae* and *O. vermiculatus* have been considered conspecific. The species' range extends from NW and E

Mexico to N Venezuela, W Ecuador, and Bolivia. However, some authors noted that the birds from Costa Rica and southward are sometimes considered a separate species, *O. vermiculatus*, from *O. guatemalae*, which is then called Middle American Screech-Owl. Hilty and Brown (1986) and Ridgley and Gwynne, Jr. (1989) explained that such a split would be based on the fact that the two taxa differ in voice.

Hekstra (1982) published descriptions of 24 new subspecies of American *Otus*. Hekstra considered *O. guatemalae* (Vermiculated Screech Owl) a superspecies with 19 subspecies divided into six groups: *cassini*, *hastatus*, *guatemalae*, *vermiculatus*, *roraimae*, and *pacificus*. One of the new subspecies he described was *O. g. centralis*. He included this subspecies within the *O. g. vermiculatus* group. It is found in Panama east of Chiriquí through Darién into the Serranía de Baudó (Colombia), and perhaps also in adjacent northwestern Colombia (Cordoba, Bolivar, Magdalena), but not on the Pacific side of western Panama. It was described as intermediate in appearance between *vermiculatus* and *guatemalae*. All measurements are similar to those of *vermiculatus*, but the plumage pattern is more similar to that of *guatemalae*, with coarse streaks, bars and patches, and more reduced vermiculations. Tarsi are bare for less than the lower quarter.

AOU (1998) considered *O. guatemalae* (Vermiculated Screech-Owl) as a single species consisting of two groups, the *guatemalae* group distributed from southeastern Sonora and southern Tamaulipas south on both slopes of Mexico to Chiapas and the Yucatan Peninsula, and thence south through Guatemala, Belize and Honduras to north-central Nicaragua; and the *vermiculatus* group locally distributed from northeastern Costa Rica and Panama south to western Colombia. AOU (1998) noted that *O. guatemalae* [Middle American Screech-Owl] and *O. vermiculatus* [Vermiculated Screech-Owl] are sometimes treated as separate species because of vocal differences (references in AOU 1998: Sibley and Monroe 1990, Marshall et al. 1991).

The Howard and Moore Checklist (Dickinson and Remsen 2013) listed a single species, *Megascops guatemalae* - Vermiculated Screech Owl, which included nine subspecies (several of which they noted might merit species rank):

1.	*M. g. hastatus*	W Mexico (S Sonora and SW Chihuahua to Oaxaca). Includes *tomlini*.
2.	*M. g. cassini*	NE Mexico (S Tamaulipas, SE San Luis Potosí and N Veracruz)
3.	*M. g. fuscus*	NE Mexico (C Veracruz)
4.	*M. g. thompsoni*	SE Mexico (Yucatan Pen., Isla de Cozumel)
5.	*M. g. guatemalae*	SE Mexico (S Veracruz and NE Oaxaca) to Honduras
6.	*M. g. dacrysistactus*	NW Nicaragua
7.	*M. g. vermiculatus*	Costa Rica to W Colombia and SW Ecuador (El Oro); Sierra de Perijá, Andean slopes and Coastal Range of Venezuela. Includes *centralis*, *inexpectus*, and probably *pallidus*.
8.	*M. g. roraimae*	Tepuis and mountains of S and SE Venezuela, N Brazil, SW and S Guyana and Surinam
9.	*M. g. napensis*	E slope of Andes from Ecuador to WC Bolivia (N Cochabamba)

Mikkola (2014) treated *guatemalae* and *vermiculatus* as separate species, and he noted that the two differ vocally and no hybrids between them are known; in addition, they are geographically

separated and differ in plumage. Mikkola also treated *centralis* as a separate species, and reported that it is unknown whether *centralis* is sympatric with *vermiculatus* in eastern Costa Rica.

Vallely and Dyer (2018) recognized the single species *Megascops guatemalae* – (Vermiculated Screech-Owl). They reported that the song of northern Central American populations is a long, hollow, flat, toad-like trill, whereas the song of the southern Central American populations, *M. g. vermiculatus* (southern Nicaragua to western Panama), is very similar but perhaps slightly higher in pitch. Additionally, the song in central and eastern Panama is shorter and distinctly down-slurred. The authors did not mention it, but this last song variation might refer to *centralis*.

Holt et al. (2019a, b) listed two species: *M. guatemalae* (including subspecies 1 through 6 from Howard and Moore) and *M. vermiculatus* (subspecies 7 through 9). They noted that *centralis* is sometimes recognized as a separate species (range Panama to SW Ecuador) "based primarily on its distinctive voice".

Table 1. Summary of the taxonomic history of *Megascops guatemalae*.

Reference	Scientific name	English name	Geographic range
Ridgway (1914)	*Otus guatemalae*	Guatemalan Screech Owl	SE Mexico to N Nicaragua
	O. vermiculatus	Vermiculated Screech Owl	Costa Rica to W Colombia and W Ecuador
Cory (1918)	*O. guatemalae*	Guatemalan Screech Owl	SE Mexico to Guatemala
	O. vermiculatus	Vermiculated Screech Owl	Costa Rica to W Colombia and W Ecuador
Peters (1940)	*O. guatemalae*	Not included	SE Mexico to E Ecuador and Venezuela
Eisenmann (1955)	*O. guatemalae*	Vermiculated Screech-Owl	Tropical Middle America and South America
Wetmore (1968), Stiles and Skutch (1979), Hilty and Brown (1986), Ridgely and Gwynne Jr. (1989), Howell and Webb (1995)	*O. guatemalae*	Vermiculated Screech-Owl	NW and E Mexico to N Venezuela, W Ecuador and Bolivia
Hekstra (1982)	*O. guatemalae* (19 subspecies, 6 of which were new including *O. g. centralis*)	Vermiculated Screech Owl	
AOU (1998)	*O. guatemalae*	Vermiculated Screech-Owl	[*guatemalae* group] Mexico to Nicaragua, [*vermiculatus* group] Costa Rica to W Colombia
Dickinson and Remsen (2013)	*Megascops guatemalae* (9 subspecies)	Vermiculated Screech Owl	Mexico to N Brazil and Bolivia
Mikkola (2014)	*M. guatemalae* (4 subspecies)	Guatemalan Screech Owl	Mexico to N Costa Rica
	M. vermiculatus (2 subspecies)	Vermiculated Screech Owl	Costa Rica to NW Colombia and N Venezuela
	M. centralis	Chocó Screech Owl	C Panama (Caribbean slope) to W Colombia and NW Ecuador

Vallely and Dyer (2018)	*M. guatemalae*	Vermiculated Screech-Owl	Mexico to South America
Holt et al. (2019 a,b)	*M. guatemalae* (6 subspecies)	Guatemalan Screech-owl	Mexico to Nicaragua
	M. vermiculatus (3 subspecies)	Vermiculated Screech-owl	Costa Rica to N Brazil and Bolivia

New Information:

Dantas et al. (2016) published a study on the molecular systematics of the New World *Megascops* based on samples from 21 of the 22 recognized species. Using three mitochondrial (Cytb - 1035 bp, ND2 - 1040 bp, COI - 379 bp) and three nuclear (Bfib5 - 560 bp, CHD - 349 bp, MUSK - 605 bp) genes, they reconstructed a phylogeny using Maximum Likelihood (RAxML 7.0.3) and Bayesian Inference (MrBayes 3.1.2). Dantas et al. (2016) included five samples of *M. vermiculatus* representing three subspecies, and two samples of *M. guatemalae.* One of the *M. vermiculatus* samples was identified as *M. v. vermiculatus*, but Lane pointed out in SACC proposal #771 that "based on the locality of the *M. vermiculatus vermiculatus* specimen used by Dantas et al., it is very likely that specimen actually represents Hekstra's (1982) taxon *centralis* – true *vermiculatus* is from Costa Rica and into the western third of Panama's Caribbean slope (using Xeno-canto sound recordings as a basis for identification). Thus, true *vermiculatus* is not included in this tree."

A note from Niels Krabbe confirmed the inclusion of a *centralis* specimen, instead of a true *vermiculatus*: "I had left the specific information for a future paper on the rank of *vermiculatus*, but as Dan has let out the cat, I should inform that the sample labeled as *vermiculatus* in the Dantas et al. 2016 paper is indeed *centralis*. I had a sample from a bird Tom Schulenberg and I collected after tape-recording it in El Oro, Ecuador sequenced (GenBank KU521767), and (after removal of primer remains) it matches the bird from the canal zone in Panama (KT799255) perfectly, leaving no doubt they are the same taxon."

Dantes et al. were unable to resolve the relationship of *M. guatemalae/M. vermiculatus* to other *Megascops*, but found strong support within this clade for two subclades: *M. vermiculatus* from South America and *M. guatemalae* from Mexico. The *M. v. vermiculatus* (= *M. v. centralis*) sample was sister to the South American *M. vermiculatus.* Pairwise uncorrected genetic distances between *M. guatemalae* and *M. vermiculatus* samples ranged from 8.4% to 9.4%, with distances within *M. vermiculatus* ranging from 3.5% (*roraimae–napensis*) to 6.3% (*vermiculatus–napensis*)."

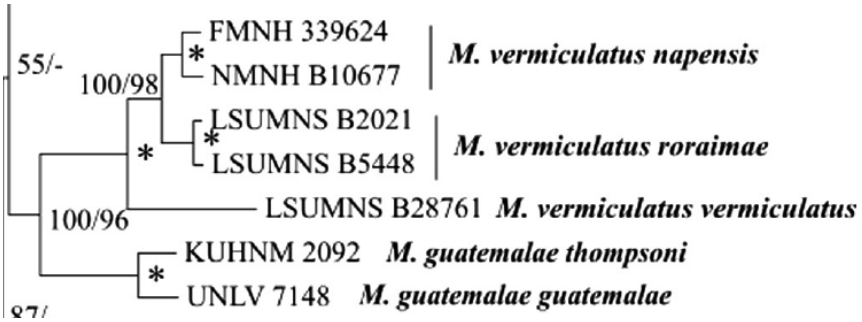

Figure 1. Bayesian Inference phylogeny estimate based on concatenation of all sequenced genes (Cytb, ND2, COI, BF5, CHD, and MUSK). Here, we show only the relevant portion of the

tree. The *M. v. vermiculatus* sample is thought to be misidentified, and to actually be *M. centralis.*

Krabbe (2017) provided an overall assessment of the vocalizations of New World screech-owls as part of a description of a new *Megascops* species from Colombia. In his paper, Krabbe stated:

> "Although slight vocal differences of *M. [guatemalae] vermiculatus* in pitch and pace from *M. g. guatemalae* and *M. guatemalae hastatus* are suggested, sample sizes are small and no recording of the N Nicaraguan form *M. guatemalae dacrysistactus* was included in the comparison. Additional material is needed to assess the rank of *vermiculatus*. The data indicate distinct vocal differences in all measurements between *M. [guatemalae] centralis* (Hekstra) and geographically adjacent forms in the clade (*vermiculatus, pallidus, napensis*), strongly supporting the suggested species rank of *M. centralis* (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001, Gill and Donsker 2016). *M. [guatemalae] pallidus* (Hekstra) has been overlooked by most authors and deserves mention. The similarity in plumage pattern, tarsal feathering, size and proportions to Mexican *guatemalae* of a specimen (AMNH120332) from the Paria Peninsula, coastal mountains of Venezuela, led Chapman (1931) to conclude that it was specifically distinct from *roraimae*. Hekstra (1982b) named birds from the coastal mountains of Venezuela *pallidus* (including in that form AMNH476699 [type], FMNH91892, FMNH91893, and four additional specimens in AMNH [2], British Museum and Frankfurt Museum) and also described them as being very similar in plumage and tarsal feathering to *guatemalae*. It would appear that *pallidus* is a valid taxon. Birds from the coastal mountains vocalize similarly to birds from the eastern slope of the Serranía de Perijá, and usually differ in both pitch and change of pitch from *M. [guatemalae] roraimae*. However, some recordings of the two are indistinguishable suggesting that despite the morphological differences, *pallidus* may have been correctly referred to *roraimae* by König et al. (1999)."

The following figure and table show vocal data for *guatemalae* from Chiapas Mexico, *vermiculatus* from Costa Rica, *centralis* (location is not mentioned in Krabbe 2017), *pallidus* from Venezuela, *roraimae* from Surinam, and *napensis* from Peru.

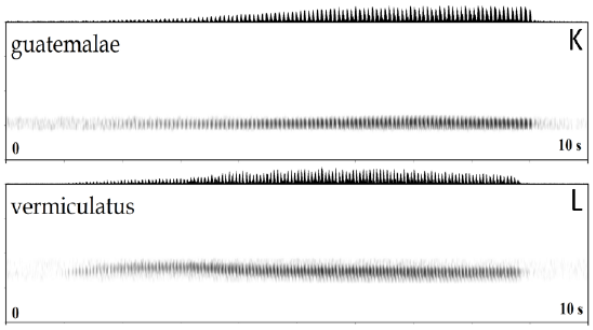

Figure 1 (*cont.* 1) . Oscillograms and sonograms of songs of forms of *Megascops*. Vertical scale 0-2 kHz. Catalogue numbers of recordings are: (E): *watsonii watsonii* XC257742; (F): *petersoni* XC274951; (G): *marshalli* (Pasco) XC105090; (H): *marshalli* (Cochabamba) Mayer (2006 cut 3); (I): *hoyi* XC48743; (J): *barbarus* ML53444; (K): *guatemalae* XC3320; (L): *vermiculatus* XC65705 (see cont. 2).

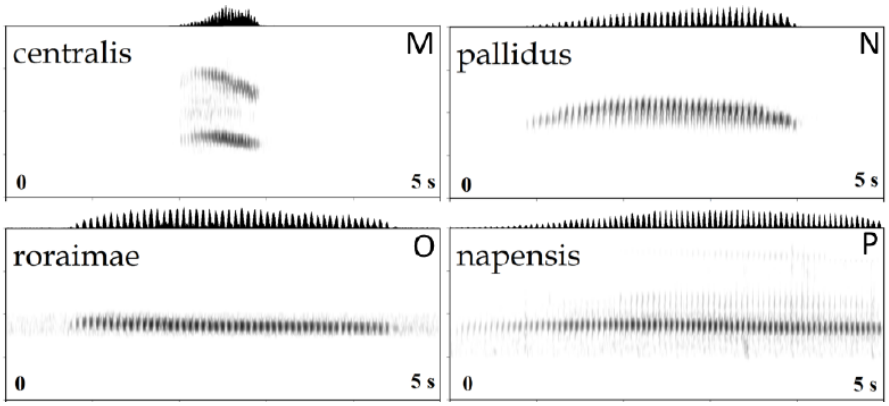

Figure 1 (*cont.* 2) . Oscillograms and sonograms of songs of forms of *Megascops* and *Margarobyas lawrencii*. The taxa *centralis* and *pallidus,* often omitted in taxonomic lists were described by Hekstra (1982b). Songs from two different individuals are included for *clarkii* (both from Costa Rica) and *kennicottii* (from Baja California and Arizona). Song of *albogularis* in duet, song of *Margarobyas lawrencii* in duet or by two differently pitched males. Vertical scale 0-2 kHz. Catalogue numbers of recordings are: (M): *centralis* Hardy (1989 example 3); (N): [*roraimae*] *pallidus* ML59336; (O): [r.] *roraimae* - ML134292; (P): [*roraimae*] *napensis* XC23482; (Q): *sanctaecatarinae* ML18817; (R): *gilesi* XC235877; (S): *choliba* ML59304; (T): *koepckeae* G. Engblom (unpublished from La Libertad); (U): *roboratus* XC33939; (V): *albogularis* XC2021; (W): *clarkii* Hardy (1989) and XC65665; (X): *trichopsis* XC227087; (Y): *cooperi lambi* XC31495; (Z): Hardy (1989 example 2); (AA): *seducus* Hardy (1989 example 1); (AB): *kennicottii* XC11555 and XC48223; (AC): *asio* XC77270; (AD): *nudipes* ML129734; (AE): *Margarobyas lawrencii* ML133244.

Table 1. Some properties (duration, pace during 1st and last quarter of song, pitch of 1st harmonic with most volume) of male songs and shortsongs of New World screech-owls (mean ± standard deviation, range, sample size). *Psiloscops flammeolus*

Taxon	Duration (s)	Start pace (s^{-1})	End pace (s^{-1})	Loudest pitch (Hz)
M. atricapilla	11.0 ±5.6 (4.1-25.4)	12.7 ±1.5 (10.5-15.9)	12.2 ±1.4 (9.6-14.5)	767 ±38 (700-850)
	n = 19	*n = 19*	*n = 19*	*n = 18*
M. atricapilla shortsong	2.9 ±0.5 (2.6-3.4)	5.9 ±1.4 (4.3-6.8)	9.2 ±2.9 (6.8-12.4)	833 ±28 (800-851)
	n = 3	*n = 3*	*n = 3*	*n = 3*
M. g. guatemalae	8.8 ±1.7 (6.6-11.4)	14.3 ±1.0 (13.3-16.1)	14.2 ±0.9 (13.3-16.0)	586 ±56 (520-660)
	n = 6	*n = 6*	*n = 6*	*n = 6*
M. vermiculatus	6.8 ±1.3 (5.2-8.3)	17.8 ±1.5 (16.2-20.2)	17.6 ±1.2 (16.1-19.1)	676 ±52 (631-760)
	n = 7	*n = 7*	*n = 7*	n=7
M. centralis [Hekstra]	1.2 ±0.2 (0.7-1.6)	23.0 ±1.9 (20.3-27.0)	23.5 ±2.1 (20.4-28.0)	845 ±62 (687-953)
	n = 24	*n = 23*	*n = 23*	*n = 24*
M. [*roraimae*] *pallidus* [Hekstra]	4.2 ±0.7 (2.8-5.6)	13.2 ±0.7 (11.7-13.9)	14.1 ±0.8 (13.0-15.4)	955 ±68 (855-1083)
	n = 16	*n = 16*	*n = 16*	*n = 16*
M. [*roraimae*] *napensis*	5.1 ±1.0 (3.6-6.7)	14.2 ±1.3 (12.6-17.0)	14.0 ±1.5 (11.0-17.0)	843 ±57 (760-960)
	n = 13	*n = 13*	*n = 14*	*n = 14*
M. [*r.*] *roraimae*	4.9 ±1.2 (3.5-6.4)	13.3 ±1.1 (10.7-14.6)	13.6 ±1.0 (11.1-15.1)	884 ±81 (760-1058)
	n = 11	*n = 12*	*n = 12*	*n = 12*

SACC proposal #771 included two sub-proposals, both of which were passed by the committee:

A. The separation of *Megascops centralis* from the remainder of the *M. guatemalae* complex, giving it the English name Chocó Screech-Owl. The committee passed this proposal based on the vocal distinction and genetic evidence. Thus, the vocal distinction is diagnosable, substantial, and constant.

B. The separation of the cis-Andean taxa of the complex (*roraimae, napensis,* and *pallida*) from the Middle American forms (*guatemalae, hastatus, thompsoni, tomlini, cassini, fuscus, dacrystactus*, and *vermiculatus*). "Although the evidence is less compelling… this makes sense from a biogeographical standpoint. Whether to separate *vermiculatus* from the remainder of Middle American *guatemalae* is beyond the jurisdiction of SACC. *M. vermiculatus* does sound rather more like the *roraimae* group than *guatemalae* does to my ear, but with *M. centralis* intervening, I feel comfortable not considering these disjunct taxa conspecific. Thus, I weakly suggest a YES for this vote as well. If this passes, then the name with priority is *M. roraimae*, and the English name Foothill Screech-Owl seems appropriate for the cis-Andean taxa, as all are found in foothill elevations." The committee also passed this proposal mainly based on the biogeographic information and the vocal difference of *centralis*, which geographically separates *guatemalae/vermiculatus* from *roraimae*.

   However, there was some hesitation from Areta on the second subproposal: "A hesitant YES. It seems that vocalizations of *roraimae* differ to some extent from those of *vermiculatus* and *napensis*. However, more thorough vocal analyses of *napensis*, *vermiculatus* and *roraimae* and genetic data from *vermiculatus* would be welcome to better understand species limits here."

These taxonomic changes have been incorporated into the Clements checklist (2018).

SACC proposal #771 proposed to "let the NACC sort out the status of *vermiculatus* with respect to *M. guatemalae*."

Recommendation:

We recommend following the SACC in splitting *centralis* based on the vocal and genetic data, but holding off on splitting *guatemalae* from *vermiculatus* pending more thorough genetic and vocal sampling and analyses.

Although *centralis* clearly differs vocally from the other taxa, we think that there are too many issues remaining at this time to support a split between *guatemalae* and *vermiculatus.* First, the molecular data set included only 5 of the putative 19 taxa in *M. guatemalae* (inclusive of *vermiculatus* and *centralis*). Second, the phylogeny did not include any samples of true *vermiculatus*, and thus we cannot say anything about its relationship to *guatemalae* or *centralis.* Third, there are similarities in vocalizations among *guatemalae, vermiculatus,* and the South American populations (*roraimae*).

Please vote on these two sub-proposals:

A. Split *centralis* and recognize it as the Choco Screech-Owl.
B. Split *guatemalae* and *vermiculatus.* If this passes, use the established names Guatemalan Screech-Owl and Vermiculated Screech-Owl, respectively.

See below for comments from the SACC on the split of *centralis* (A) and cis-Andean taxa from the remaining Middle American forms (B).

Comments from Stiles: "A. YES, no problem here, given the definite vocal distinction and genetic evidence. B. YES; Foothill Screech-Owl is a good name, and the biogeographical situation also supports considering these as subspecies of *roraimae* rather than *vermiculatus*, which would appear to be a separate, monotypic species (though that is NACC's decision)."

Comments from Robbins: "A. YES. As I pointed out in Proposal 12, the voice (now readily available to all via online sources) of *centralis* is quite unique and it certainly deserves species status."

Comments from Areta: "A. YES. I had a hard time with this one, until I asked Niels for more information to help dispel my doubts. My central objections were as follows: "It is frequently the case that *Megascops* species have short and long songs, and a plethora of little-studied and seldom-recorded calls. Although vocal differences are certainly suggestive, I am not convinced that available recordings of *vermiculatus* are of vocalizations homologous to those of *centralis*. What if those recordings by *centralis* are of the short song and most recordings of *vermiculatus* of the long song? Why would these two taxa lack any short and long song differentiation? Are they closely related to each other? Note also that species in the same clade as "*centralis*", *M. guatemalae* and *roraimae*/*napensis*, have the two song-types. If Dantas et al. (2016) erred in identifying the sample of *centralis* as *vermiculatus* as suggested by Dan, then we would be relying upon an apparently incomplete set of vocalizations, and without DNA backup, to make this split." Niels indicated that *centralis* is a well-known species that never gives a longer song,

which convinced me that the comparisons between *vermiculatus* and *centralis* are good to support the split."
"B. A hesitant YES. It seems that vocalizations of *roraimae* differ to some extent from those of *vermiculatus* and *napensis*. However, more thorough vocal analyses of *napensis*, *vermiculatus* and *roraimae* and genetic data from *vermiculatus* would be welcome to better understand species limits here."

Comments from Zimmer: “YES. This one is a slam-dunk in my opinion. The vocal distinctions between *centralis* and all taxa in the complex to the north/west and south/east are diagnosable, substantial, and constant, and do not reflect any inadequacies of sampling bias as questioned by Nacho. This one is overdue. B) Recognize *M. roraimae* group as a separate species. YES, on the biogeographic grounds articulated by Dan in the Proposal – the range of *vermiculatus*/*guatemalae* is separated from that of the *roraimae*-group by the Andes and by the range of the vocally very different *centralis*."

Comments from Jaramillo: “A YES - I would say a YES on Choco Screech-Owl as the English name as well. B YES – And for English Name, Foothill Screech-Owl seems good."

Comments from Pacheco: “A) YES. The vocal distinctions between the *centralis* and all taxa in the complex are relevant. B) YES. The proposed arrangement is biogeographically coherent."

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Submitted by: Rosa Alicia Jiménez and Carla Cicero, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology

Date of Proposal: 19 March 2019, revised 20 May 2019

Supplementary figures. Geographic ranges of *Megascops guatemalae*, *M. vermiculatus*, *M. centralis*, and *M. roraimae* (www.xeno-canto.org):

Middle American Screech Owl · *Megascops guatemalae* · (Sharpe, 1875)

Order: STRIGIFORMES Family: Strigidae (Owls) Genus: Megascops Species: *guatemalae*

Map Legend

Subspecies
- **hastatus** · Ridgway, 1887

Unclassified
- No subspecies specified
- In background of another recording

Credits

Ranges shown based on **BirdLife International and NatureServe (2011)**

Other Resources

Avibase | GBIF | IBC | HBW | Birdlife datazone | Macaulay Library | AVoCet | Wikipedia | EnjoyNature

Note: External sites may use a different taxonomy than Xeno-canto.

Seasonal occurrence: Resident | Breeding | Non-breeding | Passage | Uncertain

https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Megascops-guatemalae

Vermiculated Screech Owl · *Megascops vermiculatus* · Ridgway, 1887

Order: STRIGIFORMES Family: Strigidae (Owls) Genus: Megascops Species: *vermiculatus*

Map Legend

Subspecies
- **vermiculatus**

Unclassified
- No subspecies specified
- In background of another recording

Credits

Ranges shown based on **BirdLife International and NatureServe (2011)**

Other Resources

Avibase | GBIF | IBC | HBW | Birdlife datazone | Macaulay Library | AVoCet | Wikipedia

Note: External sites may use a different taxonomy than Xeno-canto.

Seasonal occurrence: Resident | Breeding | Non-breeding | Passage | Uncertain

https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Megascops-vermiculatus

Choco Screech Owl · *Megascops centralis* · (Hekstra, 1982)

Order: STRIGIFORMES Family: Strigidae (Owls) Genus: Megascops Species: *centralis*

Map Legend

Unclassified
- No subspecies specified
- In background of another recording

Credits

Ranges shown based on BirdLife International and NatureServe (2011)

Other Resources

Avibase | GBIF | IBC | HBW | Birdlife datazone | Macaulay Library | AVoCet | Wikipedia

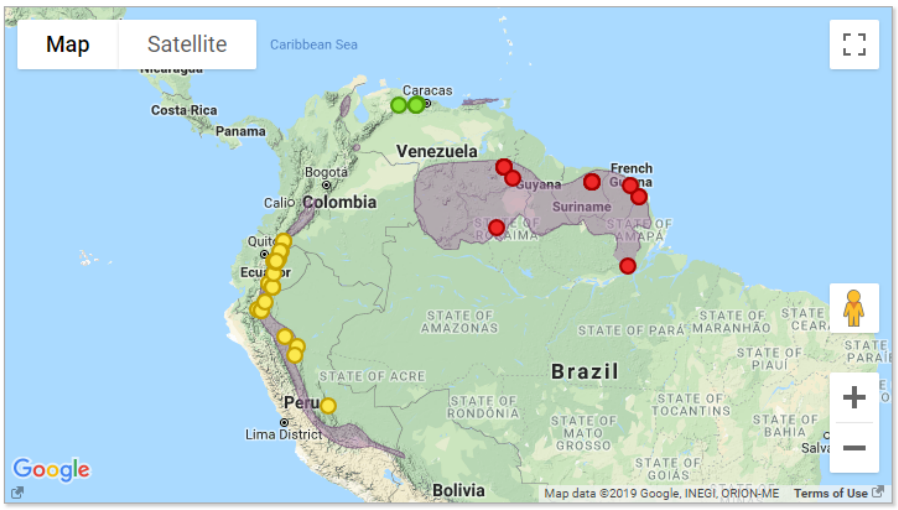
Note: External sites may use a different taxonomy than Xeno-canto.

Seasonal occurrence: Resident | Breeding | Non-breeding | Passage | Uncertain

https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Megascops-centralis

Foothill Screech Owl · *Megascops roraimae* · (Salvin, 1897)

Order: STRIGIFORMES Family: Strigidae (Owls) Genus: Megascops Species: *roraimae*



Map Legend

Subspecies
- ?
- napensis · (Chapman, 1928)
- pallidus · (Hekstra, 1982)
- roraimae · (Salvin, 1897)

Unclassified
- No subspecies specified
- In background of another recording

Credits

Ranges shown based on BirdLife International and NatureServe (2011)

Other Resources

Avibase | GBIF | IBC | HBW | Birdlife datazone | Macaulay Library | AVoCet | Wikipedia

Note: External sites may use a different taxonomy than Xeno-canto.

Seasonal occurrence: Resident | Breeding | Non-breeding | Passage | Uncertain

https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Megascops-roraimae

Add Thick-billed Warbler *Arundinax aedon* to the Main List

Background:

From 8-13 September 2017, a Thick-billed Warbler (*Arundinax aedon*) was present at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. The record was detailed in Rosenberg et al. (2018), including photographs. The record was accepted unanimously by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Gibson et al. 2018) and by the ABA Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018).

Recommendation:

This record is non-controversial and has been endorsed by all. Unlike many other Old World warblers that present complex difficulties for identification, this large warbler with a dark eye standing out starkly in a blank, un-patterned face, is distinctive. Identification issues are discussed extensively by Rosenberg et al. (2018). This Asian species is highly migratory with records from Japan and from as far afield as the United Kingdom, where casual. I recommend that the species be added to the Main List.

Genus and linear placement in the Checklist:

The genus of the species is a matter of some debate and even within the same issue of Western Birds (Volume 49, No. 2), the authors of different papers used different genus names for this species: Gibson et al. (2018) placed it in *Acrocephalus*, in which this species was long placed. Rosenberg et al. (2018) put it in *Iduna* following Fregin et al. (2009). In both papers there is extensive discussion of the genus issue. Rosenberg et al. (2018) mentioned that more recent genetic studies since Fregin et al. (2009) "corroborate its differences in morphology and behavior from other members of *Iduna*, such as tail shape and structure, nest construction, and especially song structure (Kennerley and Pearson 2010, Arbabi et al. 2014). They supported placing the Thick-billed Warbler in a monotypic genus, for which *Arundinax* is the oldest name, according to Pittie and Dickinson (2013)". Gibson et al. (2018) stated in their Notes: "This species has been maintained long and widely in *Acrocephalus* J.A. and F. Naumann, 1811 (see Vaurie 1959, Watson 1986, Parkin et al. 2004, Bairlein 2006, OSJ 2012). Some recent authorities have included it in the genus *Iduna* Keyserline and Blasius, 1840 (Fregin et al. 2009, Clements et al. 2017), while others have emphasized its distinctiveness by assigning it to a monotypic genus – to *Arundinax* Blyth, 1845 (Dickinson and Christidis 2014), to *Phragamaticola* Jerdon, 1845 (Kennerley and Pearson 2010), or to (the emended) *Phragmaticola* Blyth, 1849 (Dickinson 2003)." I have not read the papers listed above, but the species doesn't seem to belong in either *Acrocephalus* or *Iduna*. Kennerley and Pearson (2010) stated: "Thick-billed Warbler is often included within *Acrocephalus* although its many distinctive structural characters, together with its habitat preferences and distinctive song have been used to justify its inclusion within the monotypic genus *Phragamaticola*. In their summary of relationships within the *Acrocephalus* and *Hippolais* warblers of the Western Palearctic, Parkin et al. (2004) concluded that Thick-billed Warbler has more in common with large *Acrocephalus* species such as Great Reed and Clamorous Reed Warblers than with any other group within the *Acrocephalus/Hippolais* complex, and recommended that it should be retained within *Acrocephalus.* However, the findings of a more recent molecular phylogenetic study (Fregin et al. 2009) indicated that Thick-billed Warbler should be returned to *Phragamaticola*, and we have followed this recommendation." However, Pittie and Dickinson (2013) concluded that *Arundinax*

has priority over *Phragamaticola*, and this name was used in Dickinson and Christidis (2014) and subsequently adopted by the other global checklists.

English name:

Thick-billed Warbler is the widely used name.

Placement on Checklist:

Dickinson and Christidis (2014) placed *Arundinax aedon* to precede *Iduna* and *Acrocephalus*, and this was followed by Clements et al. (2017).

Subspecies:

We don't usually discuss this subspecies issues, especially where the one record is *not* substantiated by a specimen. This should certainly be the policy here. Two subspecies are generally recognized, but they are only weakly differentiated. Kennerley and Pearson (2010) stated about more easterly *stegmanni*: "When fresh, the upperparts including the tail are marginally darker and more rufescent than those of the nominate race. This distinction is only apparent when comparing series and is not readily detectable in a single individual. Both races fade to duller brown with wear, effectively becoming inseparable. Justification for retaining *stegmanni* is poor and relies on its slightly smaller size and shorter wing. There is, however, considerable overlap and many cannot be positively assigned to a specific race". Photos of the Gambell bird show it as having fresh plumage but Kennerley and Pearson (2010) indicated that once young birds have had a complete post-juvenile molt in early autumn, "young birds and adults are inseparable using plumage features alone". But under Ageing they stated: In early autumn, young birds with unworn primaries are readily distinguished from adults in which primaries and tail feathers are abraded. Criteria for ageing birds after autumn moult are not known." Pyle et al. (2018) stated the Gambell bird had formative-plumage.

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Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 20 March 2019

Add River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* to the Main List

Background:

A River Warbler (*Locustella fluviatilis*) was seen and photographed at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, on 7 October 2017. After a bit of time figuring out what was seen and photographed, it was tentatively identified that evening. It was not conclusively seen again. The record was accepted unanimously by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Gibson et al. 2018) and the by the ABA Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018). The record is detailed (with published photos) by Lehman (2018).

Recommendation:

I recommend that this record be accepted. Lehman (2018) provided the rationale for identifying the bird as a River Warbler. Peter Kennerley reviewed and endorsed the identification.

English name:

River Warbler is the widely accepted English name, although Clements et al. (2018) used the English name of Eurasian River Warbler.

Position on Check-list:

Clements et al. (2018) placed River Warbler between Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella ochotensis*) and Lanceolated Warbler (*L. lanceolate*). On the other hand, the linear sequence inDickinson and Christidis (2014) was Middendorff's, Lanceolated, and River. Kennerley and Pearson (2010) listed River Warbler second within *Locustella* after Savi's Warbler (*L. luscinioides*).

References:

Clements, M.F., T.S. Schulenberg, M.J. Iliff, D. Roberson, T.A. Fredericks, B.L. Sullivan, and C.L. Wood. The eBird-Clement check-list of birds of the world, v. 2018 (tinyurl.com/eBird-Clements). Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

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Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, D. Sibley. 2018. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee, 2018. Birding 50:30-40.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 20 March 2019

Add European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* to Main List

Background:

From 21 February to 7 March 2015, a European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) in formative plumage was at a feeder in North Wales, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The record was accepted by the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee on its second round and also in its second round by the ABA Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018). A color photo of the bird appears in Pyle et al. (2018). The only question on this record involved origin, but given the long-distance migratory habits of at least part of the species (primarily northern populations) and because there were a number of records from Iceland the previous fall (*in* Committee comments, tinyurl.com/EURO-ABA-CLC; Pyle et al., 2018), the record was eventually accepted.

Recommendation:

I recommend that the species be added to the Main List. Perhaps a record from Newfoundland might be a little more straightforward than this one, but European passerine strays not only occur there, but elsewhere in Atlantic Canada (plus Ontario) and the northeastern U.S. That said, I would prefer a better pattern of records, but hopefully that will happen. Still, my slight unease isn't sufficient for me to recommend reaching a different conclusion from the ABA CLC and the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

No publication is cited by Pyle et al. (2018) about this occurrence, and I am not aware of any, so the authority, including the published color photo, is Pyle et al. (2018).

English Name:

European Robin is pretty widely accepted now and I know of no other reasonable alternative.

Position on Check-list:

Clements et al. (2018) placed the species between White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*) and Rufous-tailed Robin (*Larvivora sibilans*). This linear sequence was also followed by Dickinson and Christidis (2014).

References:

Clements, J.F., T.S. Schulenberg, M.J. Iliff, D. Roberson, T.A. Fredericks, B.L. Sullivan, and C.L. Wood. 2017. The eBird/Clements checklist of birds of the world, version 2016; www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/. The world, version 2016; www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/.

Dickinson, E.C., and L. Christidis (eds.). 2014. The Howard and Moore complete checklist of birds of the world, 4th ed., vol. 2: Passerines. Aves Press.

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 2018. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee, 2018. Birding 50:30-40.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 20 March 2019

Add Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* to the Main List

Background:

A Pied Wheatear (*Oenanthe pleschanka*) was present at Cape Nome, Alaska, from 4 July to 4 August 2018. It was widely seen and photographed during its month-long stay. The record was accepted by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Gibson et al. 2018) and by the ABA Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018). The same image of the bird, which shows extensive blackish about the head and chest, was published in color in both Gibson et al. (2018) and Pyle et al. (2018). There is a bit of confusion about the sex of the bird. Gibson et al. (2018) indicated that it is a second-year female, the "age and sex inferred by P. Alström in litt." On the other hand, Pyle et al. (2018) stated that the "plumage suggested a first-summer (one-year-old) male that had not replaced many head feathers during the prealternate molt…"

The ABA Checklist Committee had a bit of back and forth on the record, and one member ultimately chose not to endorse the record; thus, it passed 7-1. There was some concern about other members of *Oenanthe* not being conclusively eliminated, particularly Variable Wheatear (*O. picata*). The documentation was sent to European experts (Per Alström, Lars Svensson, and Hadoram Shirihai). Pyle et al. (2018) stated that "all agreed that the Alaska bid was acceptable as a worn adult or first-spring female Pied Wheatear. Also cited in support of the record were the Alaska bird's long primary projection and Alström's remark that Pied is 'a thousand times more likely in Alaska than Variable Wheatear.' Gibson et al. (2018) mentioned that the Ornithological Society of Japan (2012) stated that there are at least sixteen records in spring and fall for Japan. The species is highly migratory. The only other *Oenanthe* that might reasonably occur in North America is the very different Isabelline Wheatear (*O. isabellina*).

Recommendation:

I recommend adding this species to the Main List. The confusion/uncertainty over the sex of the bird doesn't negate the correctness of the identification to species.

English name:

I only know of the English name Pied Wheatear.

Position on Check-list:

Both Clements et al. (2018) and Dickinson and Christidis (2014) listed the Pied Wheatear after Northern Wheatear (*O. oenanthe*).

References:

Clements, J.F., T.S. Schulenberg, M. J Iliff, D. Roberson, T.A. Fredericks, B.L. Sullivan, and C.L. Wood. The eBird-Clements check-list of birds of the world, v. 2018 (tinyurl.com/eBird-Clements). Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Dickinson, E.C., and L. Christidis (eds.). 2014. The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the world, 4th ed., vol. 2: Passerines. Aves Press.

Gibson, D.D., L. H. DeCicco, R.E. Gill, Jr., S.C. Heinl, A.J. Lang, T.G. Tobish, Jr., and J. J. Withrow. Fourth report of the Alaska Checklist Committee, 2013-2017. Western Birds 49:174-191.

Ornithological Society of Japan (OSJ). 2012. Check-list of Japanese birds. 7th rev. ed. Ornithol. Soc. Japan.

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 2018. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee. Birding 50:30-40.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 20 March 2019

Add Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* to the Main List

Background: From 9 December 2017 to 21 March 2018 a Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) in formative plumage was present at Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada. It was widely seen and well photographed. It was accepted by the New Brunswick committee, and later by the ABA Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018; including a color photo).

Recommendation:

This record is non-controversial. The species is casual to Iceland, with 46 records through 2006. I recommend that the species be added to the Main List.

English name: The only name used for this species is Mistle Thrush.

Position on Check-list: Pyle et al. (2018) pointed out that Clements et al. (2018) and AOS differ in their linear sequence for *Turdus* thrushes. Dickinson and Christidis (2014) listed it first in the linear sequence within *Turdus*, just before Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).

References:

Clements, J.F., T.S. Schulenberg, M.J. Iliff, D. Roberson, T.A. Fredericks, B.L. Sullivan, and C.L. Wood. 2018. The eBird-Clements checklist of birds of the world, v. 2018 (tinyurl.com/eBird-Clements). Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Dickinson, E.C., and L. Christidis (eds.). 2014. The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the world, 4th ed., vol. 2: Passerines. Aves Press.

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 2018. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee, 2018. Birding 50:30-40.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 20 March 2019

Add Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhunchus* to U.S. list

Background:

The Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhunchus*) was added to the Main List a few decades ago on the basis of records from Atlantic Canada. (I believe Newfoundland had the first record.) In the late 1990's the first records for the U.S. occurred, and the species is now annual. It is recorded mainly from New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Paul E. Lehman (pers. comm.) thinks it has been recorded in all of the northeastern states south to Maryland and Delaware (including Pennsylvania). In addition, there are more problematical records from the Great Lakes states and single records from Colorado, Washington, and British Columbia. I do not know how state committees have handled these records. None of the records have involved obvious escapes. Most are with flocks of wild geese, and none have summered, or have been present at a park duck pond. There are plenty of photos of birds that have occurred in the U.S. The breeding population in Greenland has substantially increased.

Recommendation:

I recommend that the species be added to the U.S. list. The failure to not having considered the issue previously was an oversight on my part. It was already on the AOU/AOS list, so that additional records actually in the U.S. had been neglected.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 21 March 2019

Add Nazca Booby *Sula granti* to the U.S. list

Background:

The Nazca Booby (*Sula granti*) has long been on the Main List on the basis of its presence in Middle America. Its appearance in the U.S. was long anticipated. It was added by the ABA Checklist Committee on the basis of records from Hawaii (Pyle 2017). Pyle indicated that there were four records from Hawaii (2006-2015) and included a color photo of one adult from 28 February 2006 on Moku Manu Islet off Oahu. The caption of the photo stated that it might have been paired with a Masked Booby.

The species was added to the California list on the basis of a specimen of an immature (first or second cycle) found dead at McGrath State Beach, Ventura County (specimen WFVZ #56922) on 23 July 2013. Species identification was based on genetic analysis (Yang et al. 2016), which determined that the bird was conclusively a Nazca, and the record was later accepted by the California Bird Records Committee (Rottenborn et al. 2016). There was subsequently an avalanche of records with some 40 records now accepted, most with photos, and some additional specimens. A number of other records are pending, but are likely to be accepted. In addition to adults and sub-adults (accepted) there have been younger birds that have been accepted as Masked/Nazca. There has been plenty of discussion and debate about whether these birds can be identified beyond the species pair. Suffice it to say the issue is fluid! In the last two years, it can be said that both Masked and Nazca are rare, but it would seem that Nazca is about as likely as Masked. This appears to be a change from former status in which all, or nearly all, sub-adult birds were Masked Boobies. Nazca Booby was recently documented from off Alaska waters, an adult photographed on 30 August 2017, 21 km off East Amatuli Island, Barren Islands, entrance to Cook Inlet. The record was accepted by the Alaska Checklist Committee and a color photo was published in the report (Gibson et al. 2018).

The issue of not having included the species for inclusion of the U.S. list for AOS was one that fell through the cracks, and I'll take responsibility for that. I normally scrutinize the regular ABA Checklist reports published in the December issue of Birding. The species was added to the ABA list based on a Hawaii record (now part of the ABA Checklist area) and was published in a different publication of the ABA. It had been accepted a year earlier by the California Bird Records Committee.

Recommendation:

I recommend that the species be added to the U.S. list. I apologize for the delayed submission.

References:

Gibson, D.D., L.H. DeCicco, R. E. Gill, Jr., S.C. Heinl, A.J. Lang, T.G. Tobish, Jr., and J.J. Withrow. 2018. Fourth report of the Alaska Checklist Committee. Western Birds 49:174-191.

Pyle, P. 2017. ABA Checklist Committee update: adding Hawaii-only species. Birders Guide to Listing & Taxonomy 29 (No. 3, October 2017): 32-34.

Rottenborn, S.C., G. McCaskie, B.E. Daniels, J. Garrett. 2016. The 39th annual report of the California Bird Records Committee: 2013 records. Western Birds 47:2-26.

Yang, D., S.C. Rottenborn, S. Terrill, A.J. Searcy, and F.X. Villablanca. 2016. First California records of the Little Stint and Nazca Booby confirmed through molecular analysis. Western Birds 47:58-66.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 21 March 2019

Add Black-backed Oriole *Icterus abeillei* to the U.S. list

Background:

The ABA Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018) added the Black-backed Oriole to the U.S. list on the basis of a wintering adult male at a feeder in Reading, Pennsylvania, from 26 January to 10 April 2017 (Slater 2018). Later that spring an adult male Black-backed Oriole was photographed on 7-8 May 2017 in Massachusetts and "likely the same bird" (Pyle et al. 2018) was reported again from Stamford, Connecticut, on 14 May 2017. Pyle et al. (2018) used photographs to demonstrate by feather patterns that the Pennsylvania and Massachusetts birds are the same individual. I don't know if the Connecticut sighting was substantiated by photographs.

Before addressing the issues concerning origin with the records listed above, note that an adult Black-backed Oriole had previously turned up at Smuggler's Gulch just south of Imperial Beach, California, on the Mexican border just above Tijuana. It was present 9 April – 1 July 2000, 28 April – 4 July 2001, and 2 -13 January 2002. The bird was photographed and the record discussed by the California Bird Records Committee (2007). The origin of this bird was widely debated, and after it disappeared in July 2001 and returned and then left the following year in July. It was felt that it was returning to mainland Mexico. The timing of its presence reflected the timing of adult male Bullock's Orioles that have mostly departed California by about the 10th of July. Many Bullock's were at the same location, and the adult males departed at about the same time the Black-backed "left." The California Bird Records Committee actually briefly accepted this record, but before it was published in a report, it was found at the same location in winter! The return trip to Mexico in July scenario collapsed. The bird had likely been there, or nearby, the entire time. A strong majority of the CBRC did not accept the record on origin grounds, but later put it on the Supplemental List, a list in which the identification is unquestioned, but the origin is uncertain. That lists includes Demoiselle Crane, Blue Mockingbird, Gray Silky-Flycatcher, Gray Thrasher, and Black-backed Oriole.

The records from 2017 from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts were reviewed by the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee and the Massachusetts Avian Committee. I'm not sure what the Connecticut committee has done. To cut to the chase, the Pennsylvania committee accepted their record, but the Massachusetts committee rejected theirs. The ABA Checklist Committee extensively discussed this record and after a second round of voting (two dissenting votes on the first round of voting, one dissent on the second round, but later that member switched to acceptance), they accepted the record. Comments in support of the record mentioned that other Mexican land birds had turned up far north of their regular range. These records included a Streak-backed Oriole in Wisconsin, an Amethyst-throated Hummingbird in Québec, and an Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush in South Dakota. One ABA CLC member included a map (included *in* Pyle et al. 2018) showing a near direct flight path from the species native range in Durango, Mexico to Reading, Pennsylvania, and then Sutton, Massachusetts.

Recommendation:

I don't have a firm recommendation as to how the AOS should handle this issue of adding the species to the U.S. list. On the one hand we normally follow the ABA CLC on issues of identification and origin. Azure Gallinule is one instance in which the AOS and the ABA reached

different conclusions. On the other hand, the ABA CLC normally follows the decisions from state committees on origin issues, and two of three state committees (not sure what Connecticut did), did not accept their records on origin issues. Moreover, a split ABA CLC did not accept the Hooded Crane records despite the fact that state committees from Nebraska, Indiana, and Tennessee had accepted their records.

I'm neutral on the issue. I am not overly persuaded by the arguments for acceptance detailed in Pyle et al. (2018). The Streak-backed Oriole in Wisconsin was indeed far afield, but there are other records from New Mexico, Colorado and eastern Texas (not far from Houston); thus, there is a better pattern of connecting records. The Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush occurred in the Black Hills of South Dakota, but this species is somewhat migratory, and there are spring migration records for southern Texas and a recent record for the Zuni Mountains in northern New Mexico. The Amethyst-throated Hummingbird in Québec was pretty startling, but there is a widespread pattern of Mexican hummingbirds with short-distance movements from throughout eastern North America, as far afield as southern Canada. I was not persuaded by the map with the flight path line going from Durango to southeast Pennsylvania and then Massachusetts. You draw a straight line between two points. Yes, the Massachusetts record continues the northeast trajectory, but how to explain the Connecticut sighting (if the same bird). It should have turned up next in Nova Scotia or Newfoundland; instead it started a southwest path. I view all of this as a sideshow that doesn't add much to the discussion. I guess my slight preference is to await a clearer pattern of connecting records (just a few) before adding the species to the U.S. list. I believe I would not have voted for this record had I been on the ABA CLC, but I wasn't. Records from New Mexico, Kansas, or west Texas might well push the needle for acceptance, at least for me. But now that the species is accepted by the ABA, is it worth taking a different position?

References:

California Bird Records Committee (R.A. Hamilton, M.A. Patten, and R.A. Erickson, eds.). 2007. Rare birds of California. Western Field Ornithologists.

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 2018. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee, 2018. Birding 50:30-40.

Slater, M. 2018. Pennsylvania's Black-backed Oriole. Birder's Guide 30 (2):18-24.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 21 March 2019

Add White-cheeked Starling *Spodiopsar cineraceus* to the Appendix

Background:

Pyle et al. (2018) detailed a record of this species at a golf course at Tofino from the western side of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. It was present from 27-29 April 2016. The record was reviewed by the ABA Checklist Committee after an ABA CLC member requested it, and it was not accepted. The record, with a published color photo, was reviewed in Pyle et al. (2018). Previously, it had not been accepted by the British Columbia Bird Records Committee (Hentze 2017). During ABA CLC circulation, one member noticed from photos that the bird appeared to be missing a right hind toe, a sign that the bird had been in captivity (all detailed in Pyle et al. 2018). ABA CLC members did think that a vagrant of this Asian species was possible from the ABA area.

Pyle et al. (2018) mentioned a previous record from the Homer Spit, Alaska, 1-6 June 1998. This bird was thought to have arrived on a wood-chip ship from Japan and was not reviewed by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Pyle et al. 2018). I do not know if photos of this individual are archived anywhere, but will check with Aaron Lang, a member of the ABA CLC who lives in the Homer area.

Recommendation:

I recommend that the species be added to the Appendix. This species is highly migratory and regularly occurs north to the southern regions of the Russian Far East. Most from the northern part of its range, even Japan, withdraw southward, wintering mainly in southeastern China. It is casual in winter to the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar (all distribution information from Feare and Craig, 1999). Thus, a record for western Alaska is certainly possible. The non-acceptance from the British Columbia Bird Records Committee (Hentze 2017) and the ABA Checklist Committee (2018), the latter including a disclosure that the bird appeared to be missing a hind-toe, of the Vancouver Island bird, and the lack of acceptance by the Alaska Checklist Committee (and maybe no archived documentation) of the Homer bird, warrant placing the species in the Appendix, rather than for consideration for inclusion on the Main List. I am reminded of a rather parallel situation with the Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), which is included in our Appendix based on a photograph of *M. s. philippensis* from the Vancouver region of British Columbia, and a sighting with no archived documentation from the eastern Aleutian Islands (Unalaska Island).

Grey (or Gray) Starling is a widely used alternative English name, at least formerly. The species is treated as monotypic.

References:

Feare, C., and A. Craig. 1999. Starlings and mynas. Princeton University Press.

Hentze, N.T. 2018. British Columbia Field Ornithologists Bird Records Committee report for 2016. British Columbia Birds 27:49-51.

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee, 2018. Birding 50:30-40.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 21 March 2019

Add House Swift *Apus nipalensis* to the Appendix

Background:

On 18 May 2012 a House Swift (*Apus nipalensis*) was found dead in the Global Container Terminal at Deltaport, Ladner, British Columbia, Canada (Szabo et al. 2017). The identification is based on DNA sequencing and morphometric characters (Szabo et al. 2017). The specimen (round study skin, spread wing, partial skeleton, tissue samples) is at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum Cowan in British Columbia (catalogue number B017056). Szabo et al. (2017) extensively discussed how the identification was determined but also discussed origin issues. Plane and ship transport were discussed, but not considered likely, and the authors argued that the bird had likely reached British Columbia under its own power. The condition of the specimen was discussed in detail. It was not fresh. The record was reviewed by the British Columbia Bird Records Committee (Hentze 2018) and was not accepted on origin grounds. They, according to Pyle et al. (2018), considered it plausible that the swift died on one of the many trans-Pacific container ships that come from Asia and dock at Deltaport, and that it did so before it entered North American waters. No member of the ABA CLC requested a separate review of the record, so it was not reviewed by that body.

As pointed out by others (Szabo et al. 2017, Pyle et al. 2018), this polytypic species is basically resident, although Chantler and Driessens (1995) indicated that northern populations of *nipalensis* are believed to be migratory, “although little work has been undertaken into this subject.” They stated “winter specimens of *nipalensis* have been collected from Luzon, Philippines and the Indian subcontinent. Elsewhere, a resident species including most of the range of *nipalensis.* To date, the species is unrecorded elsewhere in North America, including from the most likely location, Alaska, where three species of highly migratory Asian or Eurasian swifts have been recorded (Common, White-throated Needletail, and Fork-tailed), each on multiple occasions. I concur with the decision of the British Columbia Bird Records Committee and the ABA Checklist Committee and think that the bird could well have died on a container ship before it entered North American waters.

Recommendation:

I recommend this species be added to the Appendix, especially considering that the record was published in a peer-reviewed journal.

References:

Chantler, P, and G. Driessens. 1995. Swifts (a guide to the swifts and treeswifts of the world). Pica Press.

Hentze, N.T. 2018. British Columbia Field Ornithologists Bird Records Committee report for 2017. British Columbia Birds 28:34-48.

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 2018. 29th report of the ABA Checklist Committee, 2018. Birding 50:30-40.

Szabo, I., K. Walters, J. Rourke and D.E. Irwin. 2017. First record of House Swift (*Apus nipalensis*) in the Americas. Wilson Journal of Ornithology 129:411-416.

Submitted by: J. L. Dunn

Date of Proposal: 21 March 2019

Add Great Black Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga* to the U.S. list

Background:

A juvenile Great Black Hawk (*Buteogallus urubitinga*) was photographed on 24 April 2018 on South Padre Island, Cameron County, Texas, and was subsequently accepted by the Texas Bird Records Committee. A juvenile in molt was later photographed in Biddeford, Maine, 7-9 August 2018, and again beginning 29 October 2018 (it later relocated to Deering Oaks Park in Portland). Remarkably, careful analysis of the photos (detailed in Pyle et al. 2018) indicated that the two records pertained to the same bird! Pyle et al. (2018) included color photos from both records with arrows to illustrate that certain feathers (primaries and underwing primary coverts) were from the same individual (as determined by diagnostic notches, etc.). In August the bird was preying on nestling birds and bird eggs, but by winter it was feasting primarily on Eastern Gray Squirrels in the park. The bird stayed in Maine into January, but on 20 January it was found on the ground struggling and was picked up and taken to a rehabilitation center (Avian Haven). Its toes had sustained frost bite injuries on both feet. It survived for a time, but once it was determined that it had lost all circulation in its feet and lower leg, it was euthanized on 31 January 2019. I believe that the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife decided that the deceased bird would be prepared as a taxidermy mount and displayed at the Maine State Museum in Augusta. The goal is to educate museum visitors about vagrant birds, according to Maine state raptor biologist Erynn Call. I do not know if there was an internal debate as to whether to save the bird instead as a study skin.

Recommendation

There were no issues for the Texas Bird Records Committee, or the ABA CLC, with the identification or the provenance, and both committees unanimously accepted the record. Pyle et al. (2018) pointed out that the species occurs within 200 miles of south Texas in southern Tamaulipas, Mexico. I see no issues either and I recommend that we add the species to the U.S. list. Pyle et al. (2008) mentioned that one or more Great Black Hawks observed on Virginia Key, FL, 1972-2015, were identified to the nominate subspecies of Great Black Hawk rather than the northern subspecies (*ridgwayi*) and were not accepted by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee or previously reviewed by the ABA CLC. I do not know if there will be an effort to identify this individual to subspecies or whether juveniles are distinguishable.

References:

Pyle, P., M. Gustafson, T. Johnson, A.W. Kratter, A. Lang, K. Nelson, M.W. Lockwood, and D. Sibley. 2018. 29th Report of the ABA Checklist Committee. Birding 50:30-40.

Submitted by: Jon Dunn

Date of Proposal: 26 March 2019

Transfer Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus* from the Main List to the Appendix

Background:

The Budgerigar, *Melopsittacus undulatus***,** an exotic parrot native to Australia and a very common species in the pet trade**,** was added to the main list of the 6th edition of the *AOU Check-list* (AOU 1983) because a population along the Gulf Coast of central Florida was considered established. Pranty (2015) chronicled the rise, in the late 1950s, eventual decline, and finally extirpation, in 2014, of this population, which at its peak may have numbered tens of thousands of individuals. The species was "delisted" from the Official List of Florida by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee in 2015 (Greenlaw 2016) and was removed from the ABA Checklist in 2015. Similarly, the Crested Myna was considered an established exotic (in British Columbia) in the 6th and 7th editions (AOU 1983, 1998), but was moved to the Appendix upon extirpation of the population (Banks et al. 2005).

Recommendation:

I recommend that this species be removed from the Main List and added to the Appendix. Although free-flying Budgerigars can still be found occasionally in the wild in Florida and elsewhere, there are no longer any established populations.

Effect on Check-list:

Also remove the heading Subfamily LORIINAE: Lories and Allies from the Main List, as *Melopsittacus undulatus* is the only species under that taxon. The Appendix does not have headings for taxa above genus.

References:

American Ornithologists' Union. 1957. Check-list of North American Birds, 5th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

American Ornithologists' Union. 1983. Check-list of North American Birds, 6th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Banks, R. C., C. Cicero, J. L. Dunn, A. W. Kratter, P. C. Rasmussen, J. V. Remsen, Jr., J. A. Rising, and D. F. Stotz. 2006. Forty-sixth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union check-list of North American birds. Auk 123: 926-936.

Greenlaw, J. 2016. Twenty-fifth Report of the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee: 2015. Florida Field Naturalist 44:116-131. [tinyurl.com/FOSRC-2015]

Pranty, B, J. Barry, J.L. Dunn, K. L.Garrett, D.D. Gibson, T. Johnson, A. Lang, M. W. Lockwood R. Pittaway, P. Pyle, D. A. Sibley. 2015. 26th report of the ABA Checklist Committee. Birding 47: 26-33.

Pranty, B. 2015. Extirpation of the Budgerigar **(***Melopsittacus undulatus)* from Florida. Florida Field Naturalist 43: 105-138.

[https://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/2.%20PRANTY%2C%20BUDGERIGARS%2C%20FFN%2043%283%29.pdf]

Submitted by: Andrew W. Kratter. Florida Museum of Natural History

Date of Proposal: 28 March 2019

Reinstate *Nesophlox* for *Calliphlox evelynae* and *C. lyrura*

Current situation:

The hummingbird genus *Calliphlox* as currently constituted (Schuchmann 1999, Dickinson & Remsen 2013) consists of five species, four of them found in the NACC area; they share similarities in plumage and size that have been interpreted as indicating a monophyletic group. We currently endorse this classification (implicitly, even for extralimital *C. amethystina*, the type species for the genus):

Calliphlox evelynae (Bahama Woodstar) (Bahamas archipelago except for Inagua)
Calliphlox lyrura (Inagua Woodstar) (Inagua; see Feo et al. 2015 for treatment as separate species from *C*. *evelynae*, as in Ridgway (1911); split endorsed by NACC: Chesser et al. 2015)
Calliphlox bryantae (Magenta-throated Woodstar) (montane Costa Rica and W. Panama)
Calliphlox mitchellii (Purple-throated Woodstar) (Chocó region from E. Panama to E. Ecuador)
Calliphlox amethystina (Amethyst Woodstar) (lowland South America east of Andes)

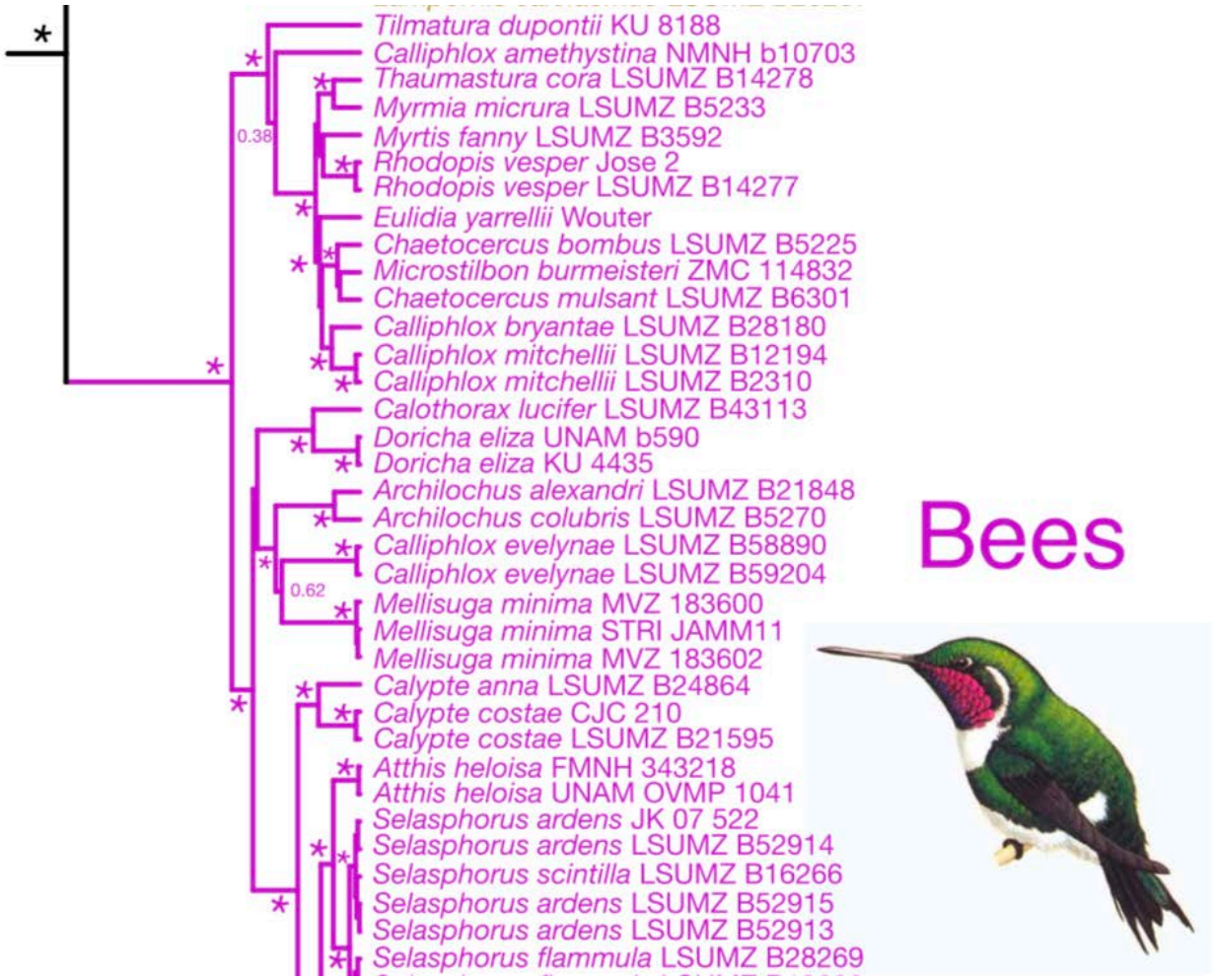
History:

The major classifications of hummingbirds have treated them as follows:

(1) Ridgway (1911) restricted *Calliphlox* to *amethystina* (and implicitly then-extralimital *C. mitchellii*) and used *Nesophlox* Ridgway 1910 (type species *evelynae*) for *bryantae*, *evelynae*, and *lyrura* (treated as a species).
(2) Cory (1918) followed Ridgway exactly and explicitly placed *mitchellii* in *Calliphlox.*
(3) Peters (1940) without explanation restricted *Calliphlox* to *amethystina*, and treated *mitchellii*, *bryantae*, and *evelynae* in *Philodice*, with *lyrura* demoted to subspecies of *evelynae*.
(4) AOU (1983) returned *evelynae* and *bryantae* to *Calliphlox*.
(5) Sibley & Monroe's *Calliphlox* contained only the type species, *amethystina*, plus *evelynae.* They placed *mitchellii* and *bryantae* in *Philodice.*
(6) AOU (1998) followed AOU (1983), also including *mitchellii in Calliphlox* given that it had then been recorded in AOU area; actually, it had been collected in AOU area earlier, in 1938, by Wetmore, but the specimen had been misidentified as *Acestrura heliodor*, as discovered by Robbins et al. (1985) when they collected what they originally thought was the first specimen for the AOU area.
(7) Schuchmann (1999) treated all taxa in *Calliphlox*.
(8) Dickinson & Remsen (2013) followed Schuchmann (1999).

New information:

McGuire et al. (2014) found that broadly defined *Calliphlox* was polyphyletic, with *Calliphlox* coming out in three places in tree, with the only "true" *Calliphlox* being *amethystina*. Here is their tree for the "Bees" (=Mellisugini):



Abrahamcyk et al. (2015), based largely on McGuire et al. (2015), tangentially showed this result again. The reason I haven't brought this up with NACC is that Chris Clark is actively working on a monograph of the Mellisugini, including whole genomic data, which have produced a somewhat different topology (C. Clark, pers. comm.). Although the eventual deposition of two of the NACC species currently misplaced in *Calliphlox* (*bryantae* and *mitchellii*) will await Clark's work, we can at least clean up part of the mess by restoring *Nesophlox* Ridgway 1910 for the West Indian taxa. Even though *Nesophlox* itself could be synonymized with other genera, it will not be merged with *Calliphlox*.

Recommendation:

The reason to vote NO on the proposal is to wait for the full results from Chris Clark's project so that former broadly defined *Calliphlox* can be dismembered at once, and whether *Nesophlox* will be maintained (e.g. as separate from *Mellisuga*) is uncertain. However, Chris Clark (pers. comm.) indicates that this is several years away. Reasons to vote YES are that genetic data are solid that *Calliphlox* is polyphyletic, the West Indian taxa will never again be in that genus, and thus to maintain them in *Calliphlox* is disinformation.

References:

Abrahamcyk, S., D. Souto-Vilarós, J. A. McGuire, and S. S. Renner. 2015. Diversity and clade ages of West Indian hummingbirds and the largest plant clades dependent on them: a 5–9 Myr young mutualistic system. Biological Journal of the Linnean Society 114, 848–859

Chesser, R. T., R. C. Banks, K. J. Burns, C. Cicero, J. L. Dunn, A. W. Kratter, I. J. Lovette, A. G. Navarro-Sigüenza, P. C. Rasmussen, J. V. Remsen, JR., J. A. Rising, D. F. Stotz, & K. Winker. 2015. Fifty-sixth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. Auk 132: 748−764

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Dickinson, E. C., & J. V. Remsen, Jr. (eds.) 2013. The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the World. Vol. 1. Non-passerines. Aves Press, Eastbourne, U.K., 461 pp.

Feo, T. J., J. S. Musser, J. Berv, and C. J. Clark. 2014. Divergence in morphology, calls, song, mechanical sounds, and genetics supports species status for the Inaguan hummingbird (Trochilidae: *Calliphlox* ‘‘*evelynae’’ lyrura*). Auk 132: 248–264.

McGuire, J. A., C. C. Witt, J. V. Remsen, Jr., A. Corl, D. L. Rabosky, D. L. Altshuler, & R. Dudley. 2014. Molecular phylogenetics and the diversification of hummingbirds. Current Biology 24: 1-7.

Peters, J. L. 1940. Check-list of birds of the world, vol. 4. Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Ridgway, R. 1911. The birds of North and Middle America. Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., no. 50, pt. 5.

Robbins, M. B., T. A. Parker, III, & S. A. Allen. 1985. The avifauna of Cerro Pirre, Darién, Panama. Pp. 198-232 in "Neotropical Ornithology" (P. A. Buckley et al., eds.), Ornithol. Monogr. No. 36.

Schuchmann, K.-L. 1999. Handbook of Birds of the World. Vol. 5. Lynx Edicions.

Sibley, C. G., and B. L. Monroe, Jr. 1990. Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the World. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Submitted by: Van Remsen

Date of Proposal: 29 March 2019