

Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee Recommendations for Council of the American Ornithological Society (AOS)

This is a final report to AOS leadership. The document incorporates substantial revisions to an earlier proposal based on discussions with Council and written feedback received by the AOS Executive Committee, council members, and leaders and members of the North American Classification Committee and the South American Classification Committee.

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Executive Summary

Opportunity

The American Ornithological Society (AOS) maintains a list of scientific and English names for bird species throughout the American continents and associated islands. These names are widely used by ornithologists, the public, and government agencies. Thus, they often serve as a gateway for learning about birds by playing a prominent role in public education, community science, conservation, advocacy, and outreach. Ethical concerns have recently been raised regarding eponymous (honorific) and other English bird names reflecting a legacy of U.S. colonial expansion at the expense of other human populations. Another widespread concern with eponymous and certain other names is that they confer little value to better understand, connect with, or capture the essence of a species. To change these names requires addressing multiple considerations that reflect their twin legacies of science and culture.

Background

In 2022 AOS created the Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee (hereafter “the committee”). From 2022-2023, the committee reviewed and discussed, as its charge, “to develop a process that will allow the [AOS] to change harmful and exclusionary English bird names in a thoughtful and proactive way for species within AOS’s purview.” These include species that have historically occurred in the areas covered by the North American Classification Committee (NACC) and South American Classification Committee (SACC). To consider the multiple impacts of name changes, the committee was deliberately composed of members with relevant but varied perspectives across the broader ornithological and birding communities.

After nine months of bi-weekly deliberations, the committee recommended three actions that would form the basis of this process and be consistent with the AOS’s DEIBJ statement and its mission to advance the scientific understanding of birds, to enrich ornithology as a profession, and to promote a rigorous scientific basis for the conservation of birds.

Recommendations

The committee has three interconnecting recommendations for AOS leadership. These recommendations cover which English bird names should change, as well as the creation of a process that can be used now and in the future. They are to:

1. Change all English names of birds that have been named after people and three additional names. This would include 152 English names on the NACC list and 111 on the SACC checklist; if the latter were to be changed, it should be done in close consultation with ornithologists from the Neotropics. To build AOS’s capacity to manage a new public process, conduct a pilot run of the name-change process, using <10 species names representing a broad cross-section of considerations and challenges.
2. Establish a separate naming committee that will be responsible for changing, creating, and approving English common bird names now and in the future. The new naming committee will work with the NACC and SACC regarding proposed new names, oversee the public process for suggesting new names, and ultimately choose new names.

3. Involve the public in the process leading to selection of new names. The new naming committee will solicit input from the public for input on replacement names before selecting a name.

Rationale

Brief justifications for each of the recommendations are as follows.

1. (a) *Change all eponymous names*: Identifying the scope of names to change was an essential step of developing a detailed process. The central discussion focused on whether to recommend changing names on a case-by-case basis (replacing names honoring people judged to be the “worst actors” while retaining names honoring people judged to merit their eponyms), or to recommend changing all eponymous names. The majority conclusion was that changing all names avoids the value judgments and focus on human morality, both of which are likely to lead to extremely fraught debates, required for a case-by-case approach. The majority of the committee additionally saw the following reasons to uphold its recommendation: Eponymous names are poor descriptors; the use of honorifics itself reflects exclusion in scientific participation; there are other, better opportunities to commemorate historical or living figures who have made important contributions to ornithology; and alternative methods of naming nature that do not imply ownership should be used.
(b) *Change three additional names*: The committee also believes that, in addition to birds named after people, three names with derogatory or culturally unsuitable references should be changed. These are Flesh-footed Shearwater (a pale-pink-footed species whose name implies a default skin tone), Eskimo Curlew (“Eskimo” is a dated term for Indigenous peoples of the far north, now considered offensive), and Inca Dove (widely considered to have been given in error because of confusion by the dominant culture between the geographic locations of the Inca and Aztec civilizations).
(c) *Conduct a pilot run*: We realize the proposal to change all eponyms involves various challenges, and we therefore suggest that the process be completed in several steps. The pilot run will allow the new committee to set up the required communications and technical workflows. Addressing the range of considerations early on will improve understanding of the resources needed for timely and successful completion.
2. *Establish a separate English bird names committee*: The skills we are proposing for choosing future English bird names—which lie in the realm of culture, public communication, outreach, and education—are distinct from the training and expertise of taxonomically focused committees. We believe the most engaging and informative English names will be chosen by a committee whose members are representative of the broader public that uses English names, bring diverse backgrounds and skills, and can leverage a new workflow that explicitly seeks and considers creative ideas from the public.
3. *Involve the public in the selection of new names*: This recommendation speaks to the direct intention for the renaming process to promote transparency and a sense of public engagement and investment, while decreasing perceptions of arbitrary or cosmetic changes. Taking care to reach a diverse public audience also achieves the goal of

making ornithology and birding a more welcoming and inclusive community while building one of the most powerful grassroots ways to counter biodiversity loss: increasing the perceived value of the natural world through buy-in and action.

Conclusion

The debate over English bird names has become one of the most highly charged and publicized issues in the ornithological and birding community. The committee recognizes the impact and scale of its recommendations, and that implementing them means venturing into territory uncharted for any scientific society. We endeavored to identify and address as many of the practical considerations as possible, building in steps like the pilot run and tiered name changes to refine complicated workflows. Nevertheless, we recognize that planning, executing, and iterating a set of completely new processes will be neither easy nor fast, and that a central need is to develop an approach that ensures the longevity and durability of names. Coordination and consultation with the public and with taxonomic committees is key to minimize disruption. We also hope to share lessons learned with similar organizations that are public stewards of species names.

Investing in this issue, and recognizing that collaborative and transparent action can be its own form of stability, means leveraging an opportunity to reexamine and build on existing practices. Our goal is for these actions to foster a more inclusive and engaged community, united around our shared love of birds, that paves the way for the biodiverse, equitable, and healthy futures toward which we all strive.

Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee Recommendations for Council of the American Ornithological Society (AOS)

This report summarizes recommendations by the Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee to the American Ornithological Society Council. The document is intended for public release.

Initial charge from the President

In 2022, the AOS, under the leadership of then-President Dr. Michael Webster, created the [Ad Hoc English Bird Names \(EBN\) Committee](#) to make recommendations regarding official AOS common bird names (American Ornithological Society 2022). The EBN Committee had the charge to “develop a process that will allow the [AOS] to change harmful and exclusionary English bird names in a thoughtful and proactive way for species within AOS’s purview” (i.e., species which have historically occurred in the areas covered by the NACC and SACC checklists) (American Ornithological Society 2021c). This report stems from the work of the Ad Hoc English Bird Names (EBN) Committee.

Guiding principles

A process for addressing official AOS English common bird names is important for the society because it provides an actionable opportunity to:

- Capitalize on the fact that official AOS English bird names are key tools in the Americas for standardizing communication among users of such names, for engaging the substantial English-speaking audience interested in birds, and for increasing participation in science and conservation efforts.
- Demonstrate the value and importance of the naming processes employed by the AOS with broader audiences.
- Create and foster ways for people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to bring new creativity, effectiveness, and leadership throughout ornithology.

Background context

(Note: Throughout the document, links are provided for websites but not for academic articles—including both preprints and published papers—or books.)

- The [mission](#) of the AOS is to advance the scientific understanding of birds, to enrich ornithology as a profession, and to promote a rigorous scientific basis for the conservation of birds. To achieve its mission, the society has five main goals: (1) to support ornithological science and research, (2) to increase access to ornithological science, (3) to promote avian conservation science, (4) to grow and diversify the AOS community, and (5) to provide career development opportunities (American Ornithological Society 2023a).
- In line with these goals, education and outreach to the general public, and access by diverse communities to ornithological science relevant to bird conservation, are critical in a time of biodiversity loss. Increasing the perceived value of natural systems through

engagement, action, and advocacy is one of the most powerful grassroots ways to counter and reverse losses.

- A standardized list of official English names of the birds of North America was created in 1886 by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU, one of the two societies whose recent merger led to the formation of the AOS), primarily for ease of communication. A guiding principle of the committees maintaining the list ever since has been to foster stability for the sake of effective communication (Winker 2022). Recent changes to English names in the list have thus mostly resulted from taxonomic changes, especially changes to species limits (i.e., mostly splits and lumps). For new species' descriptions (most of which in the recent past are from South America), decisions about English names have recently been based primarily on recommendations made by the authors of those publications.

Current context

- The AOS has long been accepted as the main governing body for codifying avian taxonomy and scientific and English bird names in the Americas. Official AOS English names are chosen by a vote of members of two independent AOS checklist committees of taxonomic experts: one for North America and the Antilles (the North American Classification Committee, NACC) and one for South America and associated islands (the South American Classification Committee, SACC). The NACC also maintains a list of French bird names; it is arbitrated by the former manager of Bird Collections of the Canadian Nature Museum in Ottawa, who does not participate in other decisions made by NACC. The SACC is not involved in producing a list of standardized [Spanish names](#) (South American Classification Committee 2001).
- Official common bird names and scientific bird names serve two largely different but overlapping purposes and audiences. Common names have near-exclusive use in the general public in countries like the U.S. and Canada, making them key to community-based education, engagement, wildlife management, and conservation efforts. Scientific names are primarily used by professional ornithologists to communicate taxonomic relationships and identities in the academic literature. However, professional ornithologists also use common names in publications and in their daily work, and non-scientists and birding guides (especially in Latin America) may often use scientific names.
- Understanding barriers to inclusivity in science requires understanding how current power structures are shaped by systemic inequities stemming from legacies of colonialism (Trisos et al. 2021, Cronin et al. 2021). Within the ornithological and birding community, this work has led to increasing awareness of the position bird names play in reflecting such inequities and legacies. The most prominent recent effort is the [Bird Names for Birds](#) movement, led predominantly by younger generations and people of color. The movement's concerns include the following: (1) that some names honor people who were involved in or supported by oppressive colonialist practices (e.g., slavery, ethnic cleansing); 2) that a very high proportion of the names honor men of European ancestry, reflecting the disproportionate and important role of these men in early Western scientific descriptions of especially, but not limited to, North American bird

species, and that this demographic reality may send implicit messages regarding inclusion and exclusion in ornithology and science; and (3) that it is a questionable premise that species should be named after specific humans at all, as if bird species were possessions or trophies.

- Calls from the public for action by the AOS regarding eponyms consolidated around a petition submitted by the Bird Names for Birds initiative (with more than 2500 signatories) in 2020 which called upon AOS “to publicly and directly address the issue of eponymous honors and other potentially derogatory, oppressive, or simply irrelevant holdovers in English common names” (Bird Names for Birds 2020). These concerns have been expressed elsewhere, including [short films](#) produced for the North American Ornithological Congress (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2020) and in a 2020 [essay](#) by Drew Lanham (Lanham 2020), among other instances.
- Some members of the scientific community have called for an elimination of eponymous species’ names in general (Guedes et al. 2023), and some societies have begun the process of changing problematic common names in [other taxa](#) (Entomological Society of America 2021). A discussion in the scientific literature has ensued, with varying views on the issue in both scientific and vernacular nomenclature across taxa (e.g., Antonelli et al. 2023, Jost et al. 2023, Mabele et al. 2023, Orr et al. 2023, Roksandic et al. 2023, Thiele 2023) and within taxa (Pillon 2021, Chen-Kraus et al. 2021, Tracy 2022), including birds (DuBay et al. 2020, Driver and Bond 2021, Winker 2023a).
- The vigorous discussion around eponymous names has led to the rise of unofficial and alternative names. For example, one research group has published multiple papers, including in AOS journals, that explicitly decline to use an official AOS English bird name (Wang et al. 2020, 2021; Ore et al. 2022). Similarly, although usually using AOS names, the IOC and eBird/Clements checklists have explicitly avoided adopting new eponymous names, including those recommended in the description of two species of *Grallaria antpittas* (Isler et al. 2020); in contrast, the Chair of SACC [opted](#) instead to break the SACC’s internal deadlock by adopting the eponyms (South American Classification Committee 2022).
- The AOS recognizes the power of [diversity](#) and is committed to “addressing and dismantling the historic barriers that have prevented us from fully supporting diversity in our membership. By empowering and promoting historically excluded communities, the AOS will bring new creativity, effectiveness, and leadership to [its] work throughout ornithology” (American Ornithological Society 2023b). Taking action regarding official English bird names is well aligned with the current AOS vision, which includes leading by example to “make diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice (DEIBJ) core strengths among our membership.”

Recent actions by the AOS

- In 2019, the NACC revised its “[Guidelines for English Bird Names](#)” to facilitate the changing of certain names “to reflect present-day ethical principles or to avoid ongoing harm” (American Ornithological Society 2019a). Although the revised NACC policy advocated that well-established eponyms should be changed “only in unusual

circumstances,” it opened the door to changing English bird names for reasons of equity and inclusion.

- In 2020, a subgroup of the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee of the AOS conducted individual listening sessions with scientists, birders, educators, data/wildlife managers, and field guide authors to hear their perspectives about the debate over changing English eponyms. Members of the D&I Committee had no prior knowledge of stakeholder perspectives aside from those of NACC and Bird Names for Birds. These sessions allowed the subgroup to learn about the issue and solicit interest in a public forum around ideas on the name change process. All stakeholders with whom D&I spoke were then invited to be panelists on the [Community Congress on English Bird Names](#) held by AOS in 2021 (transcript available [here](#)); those who accepted the invitation shared their thoughts on the intent, process, and impact of name changes (American Ornithological Society 2021b).
- Based on analyses of the listening sessions and public forum, the D&I subgroup summarized broad agreement among participants in three main areas: (1) advancing DEIBJ efforts is a valid reason to modify names; (2) technical, decision-making, and public engagement aspects of name changes must be considered; (3) abundant educational opportunities around name changes exist, and capitalizing on such opportunities is critical to achieving AOS’s goals of increasing diversity and belonging in birding and ornithology.
- In 2022, the AOS created the [Ad Hoc English Bird Names \(EBN\) Committee](#) to make recommendations regarding official AOS common bird names (American Ornithological Society 2022). As stated in a an from AOS leadership ([blog post](#)), The EBN Committee has the charge “to develop a process that will allow the [AOS] to change harmful and exclusionary English bird names in a thoughtful and proactive way for species within AOS’s purview” (i.e., species which have historically occurred in the areas covered by the NACC and SACC checklists) (American Ornithological Society 2021c).
- Pending these recommendations, NACC has paused reviewing proposals for English bird name changes unrelated to taxonomic revisions (American Ornithological Society 2019a). The pause has been in effect since the Thick-billed Longspur naming decision in 2020 (Chesser et al. 2021).

Limits to the mandate of the Ad Hoc EBN Committee

- The charge of the committee is to make recommendations on a *process to change names* that includes the perspectives from stakeholders in the broader ornithological and birding communities. Identifying the scope of names to change was an essential step to develop a detailed process. However, the committee is not changing English bird names.
- The committee is not making recommendations on the NACC list of French names.
- The committee is also not making recommendations on scientific names. As in all of zoology, avian scientific naming procedures follow the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN), which is beyond the purview of the AOS. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature recently established its position opposing the

use of ethical reasons alone to justify the renaming of scientific Latin names of taxa (Ceriaco et al. 2023).

Ad Hoc EBN Committee majority and minority views

All members of the committee contributed to the discussion and influenced the consideration of recommendations and final language. Personal views of many committee members shifted over time based on the committee discussion. On all issues, more than three-quarters of the committee embraced the final position. This document uses the terms “the committee” and “we” while acknowledging that unanimity was not achieved on all issues. Specific alternative positions are noted where relevant in the sections below.

Recommendations

The committee has three primary and interconnecting recommendations for the AOS leadership. These recommendations cover which English bird names should change, as well as the creation of a process that can be used now and in the future. The recommendations are:

1. Change all English names of birds that have been named directly after people and three additional names.
2. Establish a separate standing committee that will be responsible for common name changes now and in the future. ([Jump to Recommendation #2](#))
3. Involve the public in the process leading to the selection of new names. ([Jump to Recommendation #3](#))

Recommendation #1: Change all English names of birds that have been named directly after people and three additional names.

The committee recommends that the AOS ultimately replace all eponymous English bird names. This would apply to all English bird names named directly after people and within the geographic purview of the society. We call English species names in this set *primary eponyms*.

Specifically, this would include all 144 English names on the NACC list and 111 additional species found only on the SACC list that have a genitive possessive construction (i.e., -'s), as well as the five eponymous bird names without a genitive construction: Blackburnian Warbler, Montezuma Oropendola, Montezuma Quail, Barolo Shearwater, and Zenaida Dove.

The committee also recommends that, in addition to birds named after people, three names with derogatory or culturally unsuitable references or origins should also be changed. These are Eskimo Curlew, Flesh-footed Shearwater, and Inca Dove. Thus, the total is 263 names to be changed, representing about 5.5% of the English bird names that the AOS oversees.

Our recommendations do not include changes to species named after places which were named after people (e.g., American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Baltimore Oriole¹, Hudsonian Godwit, St. Lucia Warbler, Juan Fernandez Petrel). We call this set of names *secondary eponyms* to distinguish them from the focal set of primary eponyms. Likewise, we are not recommending changes to names based on places (e.g., Canada Jay, Florida Scrub-Jay, Aztec Thrush, Mayan Antthrush), be they nations, states, or regions associated with specific people groups, languages, or cultures.

The minority view is that potentially offensive names should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and that only those names which cause offense for reasons other than simply having

¹ After consulting the literature, the committee considered Baltimore Oriole to be a secondary eponym, as the bird's name comes from its similarity to the colors of the crest adopted by George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore (Rising and Flood 2020). It is our understanding that it was not named specifically to honor him, nor was it named after the eponymous city.

been named after a person should be changed. The rationale for the majority decision to recommend removing all eponyms is described below.

Justification for changing all eponyms

The committee sees several interlocking reasons for changing all eponyms:

1. **We found a case-by-case approach to be intractable.** The initial view of several committee members was that each eponym should be examined on an individual basis. This selective approach would replace names honoring people judged to be the “worst actors,” while retaining names honoring people whose ornithological contributions, morality, and actions were judged to merit their eponyms. We engaged in many discussions about the scope of names to change, and outlined our reasoning for why it became the minority view, with almost all members ultimately favoring changing all eponyms.

We considered the conditions under which a selective approach would be viable. First, a group of people would have to be chosen to make decisions about which names to discard versus retain. Second, a list of criteria would have to be generated by which each historical figure is judged to be sufficiently harmful (or meritorious). Third, information would have to be gathered about each individual that paints the most accurate and complete portrait of that individual. Certain standards of information would have to be decided upon so that consistent decisions could be made, accounting for circumstances such as incomplete information.

On its surface, the selective approach seemed like a methodical one. However, in envisioning exactly how each step would be realistically and equitably accomplished, we felt that developing a workflow to decide who is “worthy” of having their names preserved would likely lead this endeavor into extremely fraught debates. In fact, the exercises the committee undertook to break down names into categories quickly showed that there is no obvious place to draw lines between categories, because individual and structural acts of oppression are intertwined. Trying to identify the people who committed harmful acts broadened into identifying people who did not individually commit harmful acts but whose work produced or was used to support state-sanctioned acts of violence, or to identifying people who did not individually commit harmful acts but who were supported and enfranchised by a system of inequity and exploitation.

There is also a lack of societal consensus for individuals who appear to merit their eponyms. As a diverse society, the lands within the AOS’s purview, and even just the U.S. and Canada, are also lands of many narratives. For example, white settler culture regularly honors historical figures such as Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, yet for many members of our society, these people bring painful memories or even revulsion. With respect to bird names, Lewis and Clark are remembered as pioneering heroes (and each has a bird named in his honor) by many in America, but they are viewed as key figures in settler-colonial expansion and ethnic cleansing by others (Clark was the

Superintendent of Indian Affairs for sixteen years and oversaw the push to relocate all Indigenous people to west of the Mississippi River; Thwaites 1907, Smith 2016). Because of the existence of these multiple narratives, we recommend that the AOS, as a multinational organization that recognizes the strength of diversity to achieve its mission, avoid becoming “morality police,” the act of which inherently weighs some narratives and histories to count more than others. The majority opinion was that focus on which eponyms to change felt like a deviation and, potentially a large distraction, from the goal of a public re-naming effort focused on birds, their natural history, and conservation.

2. **Eponymous names are poor descriptors.** Eponyms are poor names when it comes to describing a bird. Names that describe the bird (e.g., Spotted Sandpiper, Red-breasted Nuthatch), its habitat (e.g., Marsh Wren, Pinyon Jay), its range (e.g. Eastern Wood-Pewee, Mexican Chickadee), or something else about the species (e.g., Fish Crow, Northern Mockingbird) convey more information. This, of course, is not a new idea (e.g., Strickland 1837), but the AOS has traditionally favored maintaining stability over introducing changes to nomenclature to make names more informative (reviewed by Winker 2022, 2023b).

Given the current interest of the AOS in addressing English names for reasons of diversity and inclusion, changing eponymous names would give the additional opportunity to introduce more evocative and informative descriptions of the birds themselves. Some languages and cultures put a premium on descriptive names. Educator [Joseph Pitawanakwat](#) describes how bird names in Anishinaabemowin often have double or even triple meanings: onomatopoeias mimicking the birds’ calls while using words describing the birds’ appearances or habitats (Toronto Public Library 2020). Likewise, Mapuzugun bird names from the Araucanía region of Chile are based on voices, behavior, or cultural significance, conveying information about how birds are experienced locally (Soares et al. 2023). A majority of the committee agreed with Robin Wall Kimmerer’s statement in *Braiding Sweetgrass* that the names of species should reflect their “natural essence” (Kimmerer 2013).

The committee is aware that other, non-eponymous names vary in their descriptiveness and that some may even be confusing (e.g., Ring-necked Duck, Red-bellied Woodpecker). However, we do not here recommend that they be changed, as this was outside the charge of our committee.

3. **The use of honorifics itself reflects exclusion in scientific participation.** The intent of these recommendations is not to strip away honors for the sake of doing so. We recognize that many individuals featured in species’ names made extremely important ornithological contributions. The intent is instead to interrogate a practice that the majority of the committee feels, by definition, to be an elite and insider one.

While many of the individuals honored by English eponyms contributed significantly to the growth of ornithology in the Americas, the fact that nearly all eponyms honor white

men is a function—and a reminder—of practices by which women and people of color were excluded from education and science (DuBay et al. 2020). By no accident was only a narrow sliver of the population privileged enough to participate in the formal academic ornithological process. Eponyms themselves are reminders of this differential treatment, as many of the few eponyms honoring women (e.g., Lucy’s Warbler, Virginia’s Warbler, Anna’s Hummingbird) do so by their familiar and less deferential first names (a notable exception is Snethlage’s Tody-Tyrant).

These patterns of underrepresentation continue due to accumulated disparities in material wealth and other capital, coupled with rules established by groups in power that undervalue marginalized groups who are judged by those rules (Syed 2017, Settles et al. 2022). The result of these barriers is that, by the time full-fledged scientists have arrived at an opportunity to name newly described species and wish to recognize their colleagues, many demographics are scarcely represented. Also, substantial inequities in the process of naming birds relate to differences in wealth, power, and scientific capacity among countries. For example, 95% of the bird species described between 1950 and 2019 occur in the Global South, yet the describers of these species were disproportionately from the Global North, and 68% of the eponyms established in this period honored individuals from the Global North (DuBay et al. 2020). Such patterns reflect the broader issue of systematic exclusion of professionals from the Global South within ornithology in the Americas (Ruelas Inzunza et al. 2023, Soares et al. 2023).

The above issues are particularly relevant because the AOS and other educational and scientific bodies are actively invested in trying to end these biases. Moreover, today a much more diverse mix of the public participates in ornithology, birding, and conservation. The AOS, in its [DEIBJ statement](#), recognizes that partnering with the full diversity of the public is critical for bird conservation. The names we advocate changing echo decades of messaging and policy that prevented the full public from contributing to and benefiting from scientific discovery. Retaining these names would underscore such inequities and signal resistance to making the changes needed to address them. Conversely, publicly replacing names—paired with material investment in outreach and engagement—would be a concrete commitment to promote equitable participation in the scientific process.

A related concern from scholars in favor of retaining the use of eponyms is that eliminating them (and ceasing to name species after people) would hurt science because it would prevent researchers from honoring their peers who belong to historically marginalized demographics, especially in areas of the world where this has not been possible historically (Jost et al. 2023). Specifically, because such a tradition for recognition has long been part of the scientific culture in the Global North (even in naming species from the Global South), opposers argue that banning eponyms at a time when researchers from the Global South finally have the opportunities, tools and expertise enabling them to engage in the research related to naming species may effectively contribute to global inequities in the scientific process of naming nature.

Our committee recognizes that geographic asymmetries in who has been in a position to name species, where, and after whom are undeniable and continue (DuBay et al. 2020, Pillon 2021). Nonetheless, for reasons explained in the next section, we believe there are other ways in which scholars can be recognized and celebrated by their communities—ways which avoid pitfalls in the practice of naming nature after people. It is also telling that recommendations for how to include and recognize the work of ornithologists in the Neotropics based on reflections by more than 100 authors from the region did not include providing greater opportunities for establishing new eponyms (Ruelas Inzunza et al. 2023). Instead, this group of ornithologists (1) questioned the often enforced use of English bird names as a form of language hegemony which involves practices of cultural appropriation, and (2) celebrated the richness of local bird names which convey information on the natural history of species (Ruelas Inzunza et al. 2023, Soares et al. 2023).

4. **There are other, better opportunities to commemorate historical or living figures who have made important contributions to ornithology.** It has been argued that markers of ornithological history will be lost if all eponyms are changed. While we acknowledge that, for many, encountering these eponyms in English bird names is their first introduction to Wilson, Cooper, Baird, and other important men involved with in the development of Western ornithology in North America, serious students of ornithological history will still encounter these names in many other ways. The honor and ornithological contributions of these figures still stand, and their influence and work can be read in the many publications they produced. Most of the species recommended for name changes will continue to carry the eponym in their scientific names, and many of these individuals are also honored as the nomenclatural authority for a given name. Additionally, previous and alternate names for birds are routinely available and presented in species accounts and online directories.

A disproportionate number of eponyms were coined in the American West in the mid-1800s. One member of the committee found that, of the 78 eponyms in Tier 1, 62% are from the West, primarily the Southwest; 77% of these were named between 1825 and 1875. Prior to that time and place, eponyms were relatively rare: Only 9 of the potentially 78 eponyms in Tier 1 were named before 1825. The eponyms from the American West largely honor and were conferred by “soldier scientists” traveling with the U.S. Army during the Mexican-American War and various Indian wars.

Because eponyms disproportionately represent one side in one chapter of American history, and because no deliberative and inclusive criteria existed for eponymous naming (it was simply the right of the person who described a species to Western science to pick its scientific name, which often served as a basis for its common English name), eponyms are neither a systematic nor comprehensive index of ornithological history. For example, Elliot Coues, one of the founders of the American Ornithologists’ Union, has no species currently named after him. Neither does William Bartram, who collected the type specimens for over a dozen species (although he does have a genus named after him). Thomas Say has only a single bird named after him, yet he described many western

species. Conducting research before the popularity of eponyms in the West, Say gave his birds descriptive names (e.g., Band-tailed Pigeon, Rock Wren, Lark Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting).

Finally, we must also ask ourselves whose history we are commemorating through this list of names. Equating these names with the history of ornithology, or implying that ornithological history will be lost with the changing of these names, disregards the contributions and knowledge of populations that are not represented (see previous point).

In sum, the committee does not believe that honorific bird names are effective teaching tools for ornithological history. Instead, we hope to see more efforts to promote scientific history in forums such as classrooms and conferences (e.g., the exhibition at AOS 2019 celebrating European and U.S. women ornithologists) as well as publications (e.g., the recent recognition of Elizabeth Kerr, a woman whose notable field work in South America was eclipsed through ornithological history; Soto-Patiño et al. 2023) and [outreach initiatives](#) (e.g. the website and activities honoring the work by Emilie Snethlage in Brazil; Del-Rio 2019) that equitably recognize the individuals on whose shoulders we stand.

5. **Alternative methods of naming nature that do not imply ownership should be used.** Eponyms, bestowed as honors and awards to specific people, not only ignore and conceal attributes of birds, they imply ownership or possession of an entire species by one human. To paraphrase a recent [article](#) in *The Atlantic* about naming nature, species have their own worth and stories which can be reflected in their names (Yong 2023). Under this view, wildlife does not belong to anyone and should not be named as if it does.

For the above reasons, most committee members who initially considered a selective approach moved toward the decision to endorse a holistic approach. (As stated, the minority view continues to be the selective approach.) Although changing all eponyms involves more species, the most important reason for our decision is that it avoids the value judgments of a case-by-case approach. Changing all eponyms is significantly easier to communicate to, and be understood by, the public than would be a series of individual decisions. Finally, the decision to change all eponyms reflects a belief that many of us arrived at over our year of discussion: that at the root of these recommendations is not so much the specific question of which names are harmful or exclusionary, but how scientific practices themselves can be examined in light of their legacies and utility and, where necessary, overhauled to reflect AOS's stated values.

Addressing potential concerns of changing all eponyms

1. **Stability.** AOS's stewardship role in establishing and maintaining standardized English bird names is important for public education and conservation. Official English bird names enable a wide array of people and organizations, from backyard birders to

amateur and professional scientists to government policymakers, to converse with the same terminology.

One of the main arguments against changing English bird names is that such an initiative would negatively affect stability, which is widely viewed as a cornerstone of taxonomy. While stability in naming systems is indeed crucial for scientific research and communication, the names used to refer to birds frequently do change for various reasons, one of which is increased scientific knowledge leading to taxonomic splits or lumps. Instability from such accepted name changes is regularly tolerated and expected across users of bird names.

Name changes occur annually, and dozens of name changes occurred in 1957 and 1973 (American Ornithologists' Union 1957, Eisenmann et al. 1973). Both annual and periodic name changes were implemented without the assistance of the internet in streamlining communication and minimizing confusion. Given such a precedent, and because scientific names (which are required for scientific publication) serve as anchors to which English names are attached, any confusion caused by changing a subset of English names, although an acknowledged concern and accompanied by some impact to AOS, can be minimized through leveraging technology.

Changes to taxonomy, including lumps and splits, require changes in English and scientific nomenclature. While English name changes are important for communicating about taxonomic changes, for many English name users the changes can simply feel arbitrary and confusing. For example, a 50-year-old lifelong Los Angeles birder will have had to learn new names for, among others, Brown Towhee, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Plain Titmouse, Scrub Jay (and then again for Western Scrub-Jay), Western Flycatcher (and then again for Pacific-slope Flycatcher, and most recently back to Western Flycatcher again), and Xantus's Murrelet. This birder may not be at all familiar with the other taxa (mostly extralimital to urban Los Angeles) involved in the split, and in such cases, these may just feel like "unstable" names to them. Yet birders and other bird name users quickly and readily adopt these changes and adapt to this instability; we do not believe further changes will be any different.

It is also debatable whether stability as applied to scientific nomenclature should be extended in the same way to common names. As new phylogenies, analyses of species' limits, and species' descriptions are published, specialists need to weigh potential taxonomic changes. But such changes, and taxonomy in general, can exist entirely without English names; indeed, the system is built to function outside of English or any other language's naming system. Nonetheless, and arguably because of the invaluable service that AOS taxonomic committees have provided by cataloging English names, part of the ornithological community has embraced the idea that some rules developed for taxonomy (science) are to be used in the consideration of English names (culture). Therefore, some believe that English names must adhere to principles such as stability and that they should be constructed to provide information about phylogeny—as seen in

some rules of [hyphenation](#) in English names (South American Classification Committee 2018)—or even that they should match or relate to the scientific name. We believe that English names (and common names in general) should be considered a reflection of culture and, therefore, not treated as exclusively within the realm of science.

Accordingly, concerns regarding nomenclatural stability voiced by scientists (Winker 2022) and considered in AOS guidelines must necessarily be pondered within the broader societal contexts in which English names are used. We believe a balance can be struck between changing names to reduce harm and avoiding setting precedents for frequent disruption.

There are also reasons why not acting to change English names at this moment could, in fact, undermine stability and consistency in the near future. We are cognizant that the AOS authority for creating official bird names is conditioned upon acceptance by the public, ornithologists, and various governmental and non-governmental entities. As mentioned above, some professional ornithologists, as well as members of the public, already refuse to use some current AOS English names. Finally, it is also essential to recognize that there exist at least four global taxonomic authorities (eBird/Clements, IOC, BirdLife International, Howard and Moore) and dozens of field guides which use their own names and taxonomies; all of these groups make their own judgment calls on English names. Not all defer to AOS names currently, and their likelihood to defer to AOS-endorsed names in the future will be contingent on AOS's perceived continued authority in matters of nomenclature and taxonomy. Continued and expanded public rejection of AOS English names risks the creation of a confusing array of alternative names and further erosion of AOS's nomenclatural authority.

By addressing the English bird name issue assertively, comprehensively, and transparently, the AOS can maintain its position as the authoritative ornithological body with respect to English bird names in the Americas.

We recognize that the act of changing names may generate momentum to change names often, thus creating instability in English names. To mitigate this, a future standing committee should develop criteria to guide its process in evaluating and choosing names, so that they will be durable and thus avoid needing subsequent changes.

2. **Feasibility.** Given that all birds have a scientific name that will not be changing under this process, the committee believes that English bird names—even 263, or 5.5% of all current English bird names—can be changed without extensive confusion or loss of information, especially in our increasingly online world. This extent of change was shared by a number of participants in the 2021 Community Congress. Ornithological databases typically track taxa using additional alphanumeric codes and store English names as versioned changes with each revision. For example, alphanumeric codes used by eBird ([yeejun2](#)) and Avibase ([avibase-ED47BE9D](#)) for Baird's Junco (*Junco bairdi*) have been more stable than the English and scientific names, which as recently

as 2016 were “Yellow-eyed Junco (Baird’s)” and “*Junco phaeonotus bairdi*,” respectively, indicating that a split occurred in 2017. Our current recommendation focuses on only one variable, the English name, making tracking via databases relatively simple. Likewise, online services such as Birds of the World, eBird, and Merlin, already track multiple English names (e.g., U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, etc.) for the same taxon, and they could theoretically use this feature to facilitate public learning of any new names.

Most additional English name changes implemented have been due to taxonomic lumps and splits. Such changes have been accepted by the birding and ornithological communities via the supplements to the checklist published by the NACC and information on the SACC website, and such changes are routinely incorporated in platforms like Birds of the World and eBird following consultation with taxonomic committees.

Finally, the amount of time needed to implement the entire scope of the proposed changes can be used to the process’s advantage. The list of names to be changed will be circulated well ahead of the revisions themselves, giving users sufficient time to prepare before names are replaced. Current names may continue to be used while certain species are “on deck” to be changed. We make this recommendation after consulting the Entomological Society of America, which regretted revoking the English name of *Lymantria dispar* before replacing it with [Spongy Moth](#) (Entomological Society of America 2022); this resulted in a period of time during which the species confusingly had no official English name (J. Rominiecki pers. comm.).

3. **Finding alternative names.** We acknowledge that new English names that distinguish species from one another are sometimes difficult to find, especially in contexts where many species look similar and occupy similar habitats and ranges. Thus, eponyms can provide a useful way to distinguish two similar species. The English language, however, is rich. The committee believes that, by tapping into the creativity of the public in the naming process, the umbrella of conventional names will be expanded. For example, recent informal public polls in which people were asked to suggest and vote on potential alternative names have yielded a wide array of creative names. When it came to Say’s Phoebe, the public quickly landed on the predictable Black-tailed Phoebe but went on to embrace more evocative names such as Mesa Phoebe, Cinnamon Phoebe, and Sunset Phoebe. Aside from these names reflecting aspects of the species’s habitat and appearance, they also are an indicator of the creativity, transparency, and educational opportunities that a public re-naming process can create. The committee is confident that a public process will produce good options for new names.

Justification for the three additional (non-eponymous) species

1. **Flesh-footed Shearwater.** This is a pale-pink-footed species formerly known as Pale-footed Shearwater. The word *flesh* may imply that all—or at least “normal”— skin

resembles that of white people. The definition of “flesh-colored” as the color of the skin of a white person was outlined by Gould (1844), among others. To suggest that the default skin tone is that of a white person is inherently an exclusionary standard.

2. **Eskimo Curlew.** *Eskimo* is a dated term used by colonizers for Indigenous peoples of the far north. It is now considered derogatory by Inuit in Canada and by most Inuit and Yupik people in Alaska (Svartvik and Leech 2006). For this reason, the U.S. government has replaced the term with *Alaska Native* in federal laws. For the same reason, the committee recommends re-naming this species.
3. **Inca Dove.** Widely considered to have been given in error, the name of this North American endemic species seems to arise from profound confusion of the geographic locations of the historic Inca and Aztec cultures. While mistakes in bird names are not unknown (e.g., the specific epithet of Snowy Egret, *thula*, is instead the Mapudungun word for Black-necked Swan; Jobling 2023), in this case English speakers conflated two distant and very different cultures not their own, which suggests a careless insensitivity that should be corrected.

Pilot of the process

We realize the proposal to change all eponyms involves building new workflows and addressing various challenges, and we therefore suggest that the process be completed in several steps. We strongly recommend an initial pilot of the process to build AOS’s capacity to manage a new public process. The pilot will assess some of the many considerations that will surface in the process of large-scale bird name changes.

Species ($n < 10$) should be chosen to represent a broad cross-section of considerations and challenges, including species with and without pre-existing alternative names, species with more or less distinctive features within their genus, and species that have distributions that would ideally involve input from experts and nomenclatural committees from outside the Americas. To focus on implementation while minimizing controversy, the selection should consist of North American cases of low to moderate difficulty; very complicated cases should not be included in this first run of changes. We believe that addressing a set of species with this varied set of challenges (listed below) will best demonstrate the full scope of challenges that will be encountered and will help forge a stronger committee by addressing each of these early in the process.

- Species named after people known to have committed explicitly racist acts (i.e., species with the most highly publicized information about their namesakes).
- Species that occur in the U.S., Canada, and beyond and that have widely known and/or appropriate alternative names.
- Species with distinctive plumage and which occur mainly in the U.S./Canada but do not have widely-known alternative names.
- Less distinctive species without widely-known alternative names and that stray regularly to the Palearctic.
- Recently named species, or species with recent taxonomic revisions, with limited range in the U.S./Canada.

The pilot run will allow the new committee to set up the required communications and technical workflows, including by:

- Establishing relationships with professional, educational, recreational, and other organizations for the public engagement process (see [Recommendation #3](#) for details).
- Establishing relationships with existing regional and international taxonomic committees for consensus-building and coordination.
- Establishing relationships and cohesion within the team itself.
- Building AOS-hosted websites and other tools to be used for public engagement, official announcements, or other resources. AOS's website already has a directory of [English Bird Names](#) (American Ornithological Society 2021a), though a different structure may be needed.
- Setting up tools for internal communications and project management (e.g., Slack, Google Drive, Asana/Trello).
- Clarifying administrative needs at each step of the process.
- Iterating processes before embarking on the four tiers of name changes outlined in Recommendation #1. This is especially relevant if AOS is working with organizational partners for cost-sharing and co-implementation (see [Recommendation #3](#)).
- The renaming process will be evaluated and improved after this initial run.

Tiering of name changes

We suggest guidelines for prioritizing the order in which names are changed by using four tiers.

Tier 1: Species that breed in the U.S. and/or Canada and whose distributions are primarily limited to the Americas.

We rank this tier first because making changes to the names of well-known U.S./Canadian breeding species begins the effort with species familiar to most AOS members and English-speaking birders in the Americas. This addresses growing concerns (especially prevalent in the U.S. and Canada) about the inequity that exists in these names, and it allows the process to begin with stakeholders from within the AOS community and other English-speaking bodies in the U.S. and Canada.

Tier 2: Species that are not exclusively or primarily native to the Americas (vagrant, pelagic, introduced, and/or circumpolar species).

We rank this tier second because the renaming process should strive for widespread, global consensus on modifications of eponymous names in the cases of species that breed or occur regularly in areas outside the Americas. The new committee should undertake additional outreach and consensus-building with stakeholders from within the other regions of occurrence, especially in English-speaking countries.

Tier 3: Middle American-and-Antillean-only-species and/or SACC-only species.

The AOS English names list does not change or preclude local usage of non-English, or even colloquial English names within the Americas. We rank this tier third because outreach and consensus-building in communities that primarily speak non-English languages would benefit from a multilingual panel and outreach to a different set of communities and even, potentially, a different organizing body which would require changing the committee structure of the AOS taxonomic committees. In general, changes in this tier should be done in close consultation with ornithologists from the Neotropics.

Tier 4: Species with likely or pending species-level taxonomic changes.

Reserving species with likely or possible upcoming taxonomic changes for the last stage allows for the opportunity to revise the names at the same time as a revision to the taxonomy, which does maintain stability in that the eponymous name is reserved for a species concept that is no longer treated as a species.

Recommendation #2: Establish a separate standing committee that will be responsible for common name changes now and in the future.

To enact the above recommendation, we strongly recommend the AOS create and authorize a new standing committee that will oversee the process of changing, creating, and approving common English bird names.

The new committee should work with the NACC and SACC regarding proposed new names (e.g., by including NACC/SACC members within the committee, establishing a liaison arrangement, or adding a consultation step in the workflow). It is critical that the naming committee, like taxonomic committees, use a careful approach that considers the longevity and durability of a name. The new committee will oversee the public process for suggesting new names and ultimately choose new names.

The minority opinion was that the new committee should be primarily responsible only for eponymous name changes and that taxonomic committees should continue to be primarily responsible for name changes due to changing taxonomy. The rest of the committee felt the rationale supporting a separate new committee, with its unique skill set, would be applicable to all new English bird names. Additionally, the potential benefits from public engagement, and of consistently dividing roles, justified the authority of the new committee over all English bird names. Consultation among NACC, SACC, and the new committee would be critically important.

The new committee must be diverse with respect to experience, education, expertise, and connections to multiple communities. We strongly suggest that the AOS executive team invite membership to this committee with the following attributes as guidelines:

- People who are constructive, collaborative, engaging, thoughtful, open-minded, big-picture oriented, and active listeners.
- People who have been part of a renaming process, especially for species or place names.
- A broad representation of bird name users whose work interacts with or is impacted by name changes (e.g., ornithologists, birders, field guide authors, publishers, wildlife/database managers, environmental educators).
- People whose work reflects the interaction between social sciences, ethics, equity and justice, and taxonomic expertise.
- People in the creative, communications, or PR/marketing fields (e.g., art, poetry, nature writing, science communications).
- People with broad expertise in the birds of the Americas/world and/or expertise with the species in question.

To avoid delays associated with creating a committee from scratch, and to provide a degree of institutional knowledge, we recommend for the pilot run that some members of the current Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee be charged with this effort, with the addition of at least 2–3 members whom the committee and AOS leadership nominate and invite. For future committee membership, a call for nomination will be broadcast over social media and AOS communications platforms, and people interested in participating can nominate themselves or others.

We suggest the new committee be initially convened by an experienced external facilitator so that the time required to establish trust-building and basic group functions can be used efficiently. Facilitation should not be a one-time occurrence; we also suggest incorporating it when new committee members are onboarded to ensure the same process of trust-building be repeated.

Justification for a separate standing committee

Under current practice, new English bird names are created and established by the NACC and SACC, with no specific public process. The primary task of these committees is to maintain an up-to-date taxonomy by reviewing the scientific literature and interpreting evidence relevant to matters such as species limits, which typically change via lumping and splitting. Specifically, for example, NACC “evaluates and codifies the latest scientific developments in the systematics, classification, nomenclature, and distribution of North and Middle American birds” (American Ornithological Society 2019b). To that end, members of the NACC and SACC are generally academic ornithologists with expertise in this specific field.

The skills we are proposing for choosing future English bird names—which lie in the realm of culture, public communication, outreach, and education—are distinct from the training and expertise of taxonomically focused committees. We believe the most engaging and informative English names will be chosen by a committee whose members are representative of the broader public that uses English names, bring diverse backgrounds and skills, and can leverage a new workflow that explicitly seeks and considers creative ideas from the public.

That taxonomic expertise is distinct from the interest and skills necessary for choosing English names is evident from the current workings of SACC, one of AOS's two taxonomic committees. The AOS has made considerable progress in adding more Latin American scholars, including women, to SACC over the past few years. However, newer members of SACC who are not native English speakers [abstain from voting](#) on decisions involving English names (South American Classification Committee 2023). In these cases, the chair solicits input from English-speaking ornithologists external to the committee. Separate yet overlapping groups of people making decisions about taxonomy and English bird names is therefore not without precedent at AOS.

The majority of the committee considers that separating the committee that handles taxonomic decision-making based on scientific evidence from that which chooses English names would have the added benefit of enabling the preexisting taxonomic committees (NACC and SACC) to focus their fundamental service to the ornithology and birding communities on the matters for which they have ample expertise. Such focus would allow scientific committees to be populated by the most knowledgeable taxonomists and systematists, who might not have the same skills or interests as people who could contribute most to making decisions about English names. In addition, as NACC and SACC are separate committees which occasionally issue conflicting decisions, a separate English names committee would allow for more standardization of English names for both North and South America. Current differences include NACC using White-winged Parakeet, Tawny-faced Gnatwren, and Ringed Storm-Petrel and SACC using Canary-winged Parakeet, Half-collared Gnatwren, and Hornby's Storm-Petrel, respectively.

By proposing a new standing committee to develop a practical, public, and effective way to change primary eponymous bird names, we are looking to create a space that allows AOS to strengthen its ability to be more open to a broad range of perspectives and to negotiate different opinions in a productive way.

Recommendation #3: Involve the public in the process leading to the selection of new names.

The new committee should implement a robust process of public engagement for name suggestions as a key advisory step toward its final selection of a new name. Once a name is selected, the new committee will also disseminate and educate the public about the new name and the process by which the name was chosen.

A potential workflow (as developed during the pilot) is as follows:



Fig. 1. Schematic of the recommended public-facing portion of the renaming process.

For the first step of public engagement, the committee will put forth a request for input on names. Content to be *communicated* to the public will include the species name to be changed, relevant background information on the species and its taxonomic or nomenclatural history, and logistical information such as the length of an open comment period. Content to be *solicited* from the public will include ideas for replacement names as well as any other information about the species, such as natural history and name precedents (particularly from outside a Western knowledge base). The goal of this communication is to promote transparency and a sense of public investment in cultivating a variety of alternate names from which to choose.

After the initial public comment period is finished, the committee will develop a shortlist of names to share again with the public for input and will use this second round of input and other information to help make its decision. The final authority for selecting a name will rest with the committee after consultation with NACC and/or SACC.

The mechanism for public engagement for both steps of the process will likely require dedicated personnel and resources to create an AOS-hosted platform with the relevant functionalities. Ideally, the online platform will allow users to comment, suggest names, and voice support for potential new names.

Once the new committee chooses a name, it will broadcast the name changes and their accompanying rationales on agreed-upon channels, such as a dedicated space on the AOS website, established databases that host names (e.g., Birds of the World, eBird), or blog posts. Throughout the process, the AOS will need dedicated personnel to be in charge of communications.

Administrative support for this step will not be trivial. For the public comment period, interactive platform(s) will need to be set up in order to moderate and accept the desired input. For broadcasting new names and general publicity, substantial investment will likely need to be made for setting up workflows to track and manage web and social media communications, publish press releases, and handle media relations. The concrete investments in this step will ensure that the “what” and the “why” of name changes are adequately communicated, thus decreasing perceptions of arbitrary or cosmetic revisions and also setting up new names to be accepted broadly. These investments will also reflect the significance conferred upon this step.

We recognize this process is potentially costly. If the cost is prohibitive, then partnerships with other bird-focused organizations may be a step to consider. Different organizations could pool resources to implement each step of the public engagement process and take ownership of different steps in the workflow. This collaboration will add another layer of complexity in project management and require time for strategic planning discussions (e.g., reconciling institutional priorities, actively facilitating dynamics to ensure different groups do not feel differently treated because of what they might be able to contribute). However, partnerships could be potentially

transformative in exploring new models of co-implementation and strengthening relationships with groups typically not consulted in the naming process.

Justification for a public process

The committee sees three critical reasons to involve the public in name changes:

1. It is critical for credibility and acceptance of new names. We recommend the process be as transparent as possible.
2. It will open the doors to more creative name suggestions that transcend traditional avenues for new bird names (see Say's Phoebe example under "[Addressing potential concerns of changing all eponyms](#)").
3. As previously stated, a public process offers an enormous opportunity to engage and educate a diverse public audience about birds and bird conservation, including beginning birders who might benefit the most from more descriptive names. This action speaks directly to the goals of making birding and ornithology a more welcoming community and of increasing interest and investment in both the scientific process and the protection of nature.

Conclusion

With these recommendations, the Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee seeks to foster pathways to bring more voices and support for ornithology and bird conservation. The recommendations are a piece of the larger body of work that AOS has committed to do in this space.

The committee is not suggesting that changing eponymous (and other) bird names solves all the DEIBJ issues for ornithology and birding or that such names are the main barrier to broader demographic participation in birding. Rather, we came to the conclusion that the ultimate barrier to broader participation stems from the unexamined assumptions and systems that govern the naming process (and the field at large). Through many months of reflecting on and discussing this matter, most committee members concluded that the process of naming is one manifestation of the systems that act to exclude broader and deeper participation by more diverse audiences. For that reason, we believe that changing the naming process can be a powerful signal of systematic change. Enacting that change will provide an important space for learning new processes of engagement and ultimately catalyze the kinds of organizational and field-wide changes that will realize AOS's DEIBJ vision and, thus, strengthen ornithology in the long term.

Involving the public is paramount in achieving these goals. Our recommendations speak to the direct intention for the renaming process to promote transparency and a sense of public engagement and investment, while decreasing perceptions of arbitrary or cosmetic changes. Taking care to reach a diverse public audience also strengthens the commitment to make

ornithology and birding a more welcoming and inclusive community while building one of the most powerful grassroots ways to counter biodiversity loss: increasing the perceived value of the natural world through buy-in and action.

The debate over English bird names has become one of the most highly charged and publicized issues in the ornithological and birding community. The committee recognizes the impact and scale of its recommendations, and that implementing them means venturing into territory uncharted for any scientific society. We endeavored to identify and address as many of the practical considerations as possible, building in steps like the pilot run and tiered name changes to refine complicated workflows. Nevertheless, we recognize that planning, executing, and iterating a set of completely new processes will be neither easy nor fast, and that a central need is to develop an approach that ensures the longevity and durability of a name. Coordination and consultation with the public and with taxonomic committees is key to minimize disruption. We also hope to share lessons learned with similar organizations that are public stewards of species names.

Investing in this issue, and recognizing that collaborative and transparent action can be its own form of stability, means leveraging an opportunity to reexamine and build on existing practices. Our goal is for these actions to foster a more inclusive and engaged community, united around our shared love of birds, that paves the way for the biodiverse, equitable, and healthy futures toward which we all strive.

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