AOS Classification Committee – North and Middle America Proposal Set 2025-D 28 April 2025

No. Page Title

- 01 02 Establish English names for three species of Gygis
- 02 06 Treat Formicarius destructus as a separate species from Black-headed Antthrush F. nigricapillus
- 03 13 Treat Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* as more than one species
- 04 21 Add three species to the Checklist and six species to the U.S. list

Establish English names for three species of *Gygis*

Both NACC and SACC have voted to treat the former *Gygis alba* as three species: *G. alba*, *G. candida*, and *G. microrhyncha*. In establishing English names for the new species, we would appear to have two basic options. First, we could base group names for the new species on the current English name White Tern. Second, we could base group names for the new species on the prior English name Fairy Tern.

Ordinarily, we would base the group name on the current English name; this is our standard operating procedure. However, Pratt and VanderWerf, in their proposal to split *G. alba*, advocated a return to a form of the prior name Fairy Tern, in large part because of the persistence of this name despite the "official" name having been changed to White Tern some 40+ years ago. Here's their discussion from NACC Proposal 2025-A-3:

As a single iconic species, *G. alba* has long been, and continues to be, called "fairy tern" by the lay public (Wilds, in litt.). That name has now been restricted by various "official" lists, including AOS, to *Sternula nereis* of southern Australia and New Zealand, but its use persists elsewhere for *G. alba*, especially where the birds are conspicuous to large English-speaking populations. Even among those who use "White Tern", that name is often, perhaps usually, followed by some phrase such as "also known as fairy tern," most recently by Hosein (2024). In Honolulu, where the bird is an official city icon, the hybrid name "White Fairy Tern" has gained popularity as an informal way to get around the problem (see Pratt 2020 for references, especially Floyd 2019). Note that, according to NACC guidelines, if we recognize 3 species of *Gygis*, the unmodified name White Tern would be reserved for the original unsplit species.

Most NACC voters were sympathetic to this line of argument, but most SACC voters advocated a group name based on White Tern. Based on seemingly minor "indexing issues" and the perceived need for a novel name to distinguish them from noddies and terns, Pratt and VanderWerf argued for use of the single, unhyphenated name "Fairytern" rather than Fairy Tern or Fairy-Tern as the group name. Many SACC voters expressed particular dislike of this neologism. Others argued that use of Fairy Tern for the Australian species *Sternula nereis* precluded use of a version of this name as the group name for species of *Gygis*.

One SACC voter, A. W. Diamond, expressed strong support for the use of Fairy Tern as the group name based on continued local persistence of this name in the range of the species:

I see that most respondents prefer some version of White Tern because *Sternula nereis* has co-opted Fairy Tern, but throughout the Indian Ocean (and I think in Hawaii too?) the common name among both local people and visitors unaware of the existence of *S. nereis* is Fairy Tern, and since they are so numerous there, more weight should be given to local usage and acceptance. The arcane 'rules' of English bird nomenclature are irrelevant to most people who live among the birds. Also 'White Tern' is as bland and unappealing as 'Black Tern' - surely we can do better?

Another indication of the persistence of Fairy Tern for *Gygis* is the fact that eBird/Clements changed the English name of *S. nereis* from Fairy Tern to Australian Fairy Tern because eBird users were regularly submitting records of Fairy Tern *S. nereis* when they actually meant to report White Tern *G. alba*.

Regarding use of Fairy Tern for *S. nereis* precluding use of this as the group name for species of *Gygis*, the principle that a species name for one species should not be used as the group name for other species is generally followed, but there are exceptions involving both hyphenated (or two-word) group names and single word group names. For example, Rock Pigeon is recognized by NACC, SACC, and many others as the English name for *Columba livia*, but two species of Australian pigeons (*Petrophassa* species) use the group name Rock-Pigeon. (In 2018 NACC considered a proposal to change Rock Pigeon to Rock Dove specifically because of use of the group name Rock-Pigeon for the Australian species, but this proposal was rejected.) The various species of Grasswren (*Amytornis*) of Australia provide an exception involving a single-word, unhyphenated group name for *Cistothorus platensis*. Thus, use of some version of Fairy Tern for *Gygis* would not violate a hard-and-fast rule, and we believe that the options for group names should be judged on their merits rather than ruling out one alternative. We contend that "Fairy-Tern" is a better name for *Gygis*, both because it is more appropriate and because it is widespread in popular usage.

We strongly suspect that a major reason for the persistence of the name Fairy Tern for *G. alba* is the appropriateness of this evocative, ethereal name for this species, as opposed to White Tern, which has been called bland and insipid. Species of *Gygis*, it is true, are the whitest of terns (or erstwhile terns) and this is an apt name in this sense, but almost all terns are mostly white, rendering the name somewhat redundant. Nevertheless, the name White Tern is appropriate for a tern with entirely white plumage, and it has been the established name for more than 40 years, garnering acceptance among many.

Many names for *Gygis* in other cultures have a mystical quality to them. In our view, the fact that we don't currently have a similarly evocative name in English is unfortunate. For example, in the Hawaiian language, the bird is known as Manu-o-Kū, named after the god of war. In Samoan, it is Manusina, a bird that predicts the tides and guides fisherman to their fish. European languages other than English use Fairy Tern for this species (e.g., its name in German is Feenseeschwalbe). Many voters on the SACC proposal (and early commenters in NACC) suggested that "fairy" more appropriately captures the ethereal quality of this bird.

For the reasons stated above, especially the arguments referencing widespread local persistence and the existing exceptions to naming conventions, we recommend adopting the group name Fairy-Tern for the newly recognized species of *Gygis*. We prefer this name to "Fairy Tern" (unhyphenated) because it emphasizes the relatedness of these three species and the fact that they form a distinctive subfamily divergent from other terns, and we prefer "Fairy-Tern" to the novel term "Fairytern" both because the indexing issues that apparently prompted it seem negligible to us and because we are not convinced that the concatenation is necessary. In fact, Pratt (2020) indicated that NACC's guidelines make Fairy-Tern a viable option.

As to names for the individual species, the species epithets Atlantic for *G. alba* and Little for *G. microrhyncha*, as in AOU (1998), seem like obvious choices, and these were endorsed by almost all NACC and SACC voters. The species name for *G. candida* is less clear. AOU (1998) used Pacific but, as noted by Pratt and VanderWerf, this name is too restrictive because the species is widespread outside of the Pacific. They suggested Common because this species is the most common of the three and the one most likely to be encountered, although they acknowledged that "common" is currently in some disfavor as an English name. Other possible names include Indo-Pacific, which describes the distribution more accurately and is used for a variety of marine organisms of similar distribution (this name was used in Howell and Zufelt 2019), and Blue-billed, a descriptive name based on the color at the base of the bill unique (in *Gygis*) to this species.

Recommendation:

We recommend adopting Atlantic Fairy-Tern for *G. alba* and Little Fairy-Tern for *G. microrhyncha*. For *G. candida*, we recommend either Blue-billed Fairy-Tern or Indo-Pacific Fairy-Tern.

Update from Chesser:

SACC has received six votes so far on the new English names proposal and no one has changed their vote from White-Tern to Fairy-Tern, based mainly on the potential for confusion of this group name with the Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis*, as discussed above. Although the area of overlap forms a small part of the range of both taxa, especially in *Gygis*, this is a fair concern. The proposal makes good arguments for making an exception to our usual naming conventions based on persistent local usage and appropriateness, as well as noting some existing exceptions, and three of four NACC voters have so far endorsed Fairy-Tern. However, I think we would need to have strong support from both committees to make an exception, so at this point I think we should probably bow to convention and adopt White-Tern as the group name for species of *Gygis*. Also see the emailed comments discussing the likely negative Australasian reaction to a resurrection of Fairy-Tern for *Gygis*. For reference, the SACC comments on this proposal are at https://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCprop1045.htm

Regarding the species names for *G. candida*, my current recommendation is for Indo-Pacific, which provides information concerning the distribution and matches the range very well. Common is also accurate, given the extensive range and large population size relative to the other two species, and it is a shorter name, so this would also be a good choice. Blue-billed references the blue at the base of the bill and would be acceptable for designating birds that can be observed closely, but most of the bill is black and the blue base would be difficult to observe on birds at sea, so this is my third choice.

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2025-D-2 N&MA Classification Committee p. 370

Treat Formicarius destructus as a separate species from F. nigricapillus

Effect on NACC:

If passed, this proposal will result in the elevation of extralimital taxon *destructus* to species status, resulting in a monotypic *Formicarius nigricapillus* and a monotypic *F. destructus*. This will require changes to the English name, distributional statement, and Notes for *F. nigricapillus*.

Background information:

The current SACC note reads " 1c. Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025) provided vocal evidence for treating South American *destructus* as separate species. SACC proposal needed."

Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025) summarized the situation as follows:

The Black-headed Antthrush (*Formicarius nigricapillus*) includes two allopatric subspecies: nominotypic *nigricapillus* in Costa Rica and Panama, and *destructus* in Colombia and Ecuador (Ridgway 1893; Hartert 1898; Wetmore 1972; Krabbe and Schulenberg 2003, 2020). Although the taxon *nigricapillus* was originally described as a species by Ridgway (1893) and treated as such by some authors (Chapman 1917, Cory & Hellmayr 1924), it was often considered to be a subspecies of the Black-faced Antthrush (*F. analis*) (Hartert 1902, Ridgway 1911). Conversely, the taxon *destructus* was originally described as a subspecies of *F. analis* by Hartert (1898), and was subsequently either considered as such (Hartert 1902), rarely afforded species-level status (Salvadori and Festa 1899; Howell and Dyer 2022), or most often considered to be a subspecies of *F. nigricapillus* (Chapman 1917, Cory & Hellmayr 1924, Wetmore 1972, Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003).

New information:

In Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025), we assessed species limits in *F. nigricapillus* using vocal, plumage, and morphometric data, concluding that *nigricapillus* and *destructus* are better treated as two separate biological and recognition species (Paterson 1985). For more detailed explanations and discussions stemming from historical taxonomic references, please refer to the publication. What follows is a blend of selected copied and reorganized text and images from Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025) with some minor adjustments to facilitate reading.

Songs: After discarding duplicates, Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025) compiled a total of 57 songs of *nigricapillus* and 129 songs of *destructus* that were assessed aurally and through examination of spectrograms. The song of *nigricapillus* is a rapid series of around 25 clear, pulsated whistled notes that begins with a few more spaced notes that become mostly evenly paced with a slight rise in pitch halfway through the song and a relatively monotonous ending (sigmoid-like spectrographic contour; Fig. 1). The song of *destructus* is a very rapid, eerie series of around 40 ventriloquial notes that fall and rise in pitch and decrease markedly in pace in the second half (smile-like spectrographic contour; Fig. 1). The vocalizations of *nigricapillus* and

destructus have been described accurately in field guides, but the importance of their differences has not been fully realized. The song of *nigricapillus* was described as "a rapid, pulsating series of ca. 20 deep, resonant, whistled notes, the first 2-3 slower, more staccato, the next 6-8 rising in pitch, the last 10-12 on the same pitch, with the final 2 notes slower, the entire series lasting 4-5 sec" (Stiles and Skutch 1989, p. 287), whereas that of *destructus* "resembles that of Rufous-capped Antthrush, but shorter, an eerie, quavering glissando of about 30 notes in 3 sec, sliding upscale and slowing noticeably at the end; ventriloquial" (Hilty and Brown 1986, p. 417). The song of *nigricapillus* has been aptly likened to the shorter song of Thicket Antpitta *Myrmothera dives* (Garrigues and Dean 2007; Vallely and Dyer 2018), a comparison that does not apply to the song of *destructus*.

The quantitative acoustic characterization showed that songs of both taxa are 100% diagnosable (n=21 *nigricapillus*, n=38 *destructus*). Acoustic data showed that 13 out of 15 variables differed significantly between *nigricapillus* and *destructus*, the differences in 10 of these 13 variables were very marked with non-overlapping mean±SD, automatically indicating that they belong to statistically different populations. Taxon *nigricapillus* showed lower song peak frequency, longer mean note duration and mean interval between notes, fewer notes per song, slower pace, relatively even pace in the first and second halves of the song, lower peak frequencies of first, median, and final note, and longer duration of first, median, and final note. In contrast, *destructus* had higher song peak frequency, shorter mean note duration and mean interval between notes, more notes per song, faster pace, a marked deceleration in the second half of the song, higher peak frequencies of first, median, and final note (Table 1). The songs of both taxa were clearly separated in multivariate space (Fig. 2A) and a cluster analysis also revealed two distinct groups, unambiguously including all *destructus* samples clustered separately from all *nigricapillus* recordings (Fig. 2B).

The song of nigricapillus remains essentially identical through ca. 490km across Costa Rica and into C Panama in our sample, whereas the song of *destructus* remains basically the same through ca. 1130 km extending from NC Colombia to SW Ecuador. The diagnostic song types are separated by a gap of ca. 190 km between NW Colombia (Jardín Botánico del Pacífico, Chocó) and E Panamá (Nusagandi, Guna Yala), and exhibit no sign of intermediacy closer to their respective limits (Fig. 1). Further documented records are needed to properly understand the actual distributional gap between nigricapillus and destructus. The width of the gap is at least 190km as shown by our song-recordings dataset, but possibly much smaller: birds seen, heard, and tape recorded at Cuchilla del Lago on the Colombian side of of the Serranía de Darién in the Cerro Tacarcuna (Renjifo et al. 2017) most likely represent the taxon nigricapillus. This would reduce the gap between *nigricapillus* (Cuchilla del Lago; see guestion mark in Figure 1) and destructus (Reserva La Bonga) to 100 km within Colombia. Unfortunately, the sound recordings were not available at the time of our writing and could not be assessed (J. Avendaño in litt.). Further fieldwork should clarify the extent of their allopatry, and assess whether the Río Atrato and its formidable swamps act as a biogeographic barrier for these taxa (Haffer 1970, 1975, Renjifo et al. 2017). The Cerro Tacarcuna records, if confirmed to be nigricapillus (which seems very likely), would indicate that both taxa (*nigricapillus* and *destructus*) occur in South America.



Fig. 1. Plumage aspect, songs, and geographic distribution of songs of Black-capped Antthrush (*Formicarius nigricapillus*), and Black-hooded Antthrush (*F. destructus*) analysed in this study. Orange circles: *F. nigricapillus* (photo: ML-452131711, San Gerardo Biological Station, Costa Rica, by Mark Hebblewhite; song: ML-220516, Reserva Biológica Bosque Nuboso Monteverde, Costa Rica by D. L. Ross). Blue circles: *F. destructus* (photo: ML-121617911, Rio Silanche Bird Sanctuary, Ecuador by Nick Athanas; song: JIA-10, Reserva de Bosque Seco Lalo Loor, Ecuador by J. I. Areta). Circles with a central dot denote songs measured quantitatively; plain circles denote songs studied aurally (see Appendices 1 and S1); question mark (?) indicates unconfirmed sound recording of *nigricapillus* from Cerro Tacarcuna in Colombia. The differences in plumage (chestnut nape in *nigricapillus*, black nape in *destructus*), song, and morphometrics collectively support the recognition of *nigricapillus* and *destructus* as separate species.

Table 1. Acoustic parameters of songs of Black-capped Antthrush (*Formicarius nigricapillus*), and Black-hooded Antthrush (*F. destructus*). Values shown are mean \pm SD [range], n= sample size. Asterisk denotes significant statistical differences in the Mann-Whitney non-parametric test (α <0.05), and plus symbol denotes non overlapping mean \pm SD. See Appendix 1 for measured sound recordings.

Variable	<i>F. nigricapillus</i> (n=21)	<i>F. destructus</i> (n=38)
Bandwidth 90% (Hz)		207.93±38.45 [140.6-
	205.35±56.37 [93.8-281.2]	281.2]
Duration 90% (s)*	2.38±0.33 [1.74-3.00]	2.64±0.44 [1.92-3.88]
Peak frequency (Hz)* ⁺	1484.37±61.75 [1406.2-	1689.91±61.7 [1546.9-
	1593.8]	1781.2]
Mean note duration (s)* ⁺	0.06±0.01 [0.05-0.09]	0.04±0.01 [0.02-0.07]
Mean interval between notes (s)* *	0.08±0.01 [0.05-0.10]	0.04±0.01 [0.03-0.06]
Number of notes*+	24.95±1.69 [22-29]	37.62±5.57 [28-52]
Sound density	0.56±0.06 [0.46-0.67]	0.6±0.08 [0.47 - 0.79]
Pace*+	5.98±0.42 [5.44-6.96]	9.61±1.09 [7.76-11.81]
	1.04±0.09 [0.88-1.19]	0.76±0.07 [0.63-0.93]
Pace change (second/first half)* ⁺	(8.63±1.2/11.37± 1.08)	(6.18±0.32/5.99±0.66)
	[5.61-6.67/5.25-7.58]	[6.82-11.46/9.02-12.82]
Peak frequency first note (Hz)* *	1345.97±68.13 [1218.8-	1650.24±93.23 [1406.2-
	1500]	1781.2]
Peak frequency median note (Hz)*	1412.91±47.54 [1312.5-	1617.82±58.76 [1453.1-
+	1500]	1781.2]
Peak frequency final note (Hz)* +	1477.67±60.46 [1406.2-	1703.12±69.11 [1546.9-
	1593.8]	1875]
Duration first note (s)*	0.04±0.02 [0.01-0.06]	0.02±0.01 [0.01-0.03]
Duration median note (s)* *	0.09±0.02 [0.04-0.14]	0.12±0.03 [0.04-0.10]
Duration final note (s)*	0.14±0.04 [0.10-0.26]	0.11±0.03 [0.06-0.21]

*=non-parametric Mann-Whitney test P-value <.05

*=non-overlapping mean±SD

Plumage: To characterize the external appearance of *nigricapillus* and *destructus*, Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025) examined photographs of 37 museum specimens, including the holotypes of both taxa, and vetted 40 good quality photographs on the citizen science platforms eBird (ebird.org) and iNaturalist (inaturalist.org). They found that *nigricapillus* exhibits chestnutbrown hindneck (sometimes extending to neck sides in a handkerchief or semicollar; Figure 1), and typically more chestnut-brown back (Fig. 1), whilst *destructus* exhibits all black hindneck and neck sides (Fig. 1), and typically browner back. There is some variation in back colour of specimens (but not in the back-neck contrast that distinguishes taxa), with some *nigricapillus* being seemingly identical in colour to typical *destructus* (Chapman 1917, USNM specimens). In some *nigricapillus* individuals, the chestnut-brown hindneck is extensive and expands onto the sides of the neck creating a semicollar, which gives these individuals a capped aspect, that is less prominent in birds with less extensive chestnut-brown hindneck. On the other hand, all individuals of *destructus* show a hooded aspect, caused by its wholly black head, hind neck and neck sides (Fig. 1).

a) PCA

b) Cluster analysis (UPGMA)



Fig. 2. Quantitative analyses of songs of Black-capped Antthrush (*Formicarius nigricapillus*), and Black-hooded Antthrush (*F. destructus*). (A) Plot of the first two principal components (PC1 vs. PC2) of the Principal Component Analysis. Ellipses depict 95% confidence intervals. (B) Dendrogram from the agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis (UPGMA). Both methods consistently show that *nigricapillus* and *destructus* differ markedly in songs supporting their treatment as separate species. See Appendix 1 and S1 for songs measured.

Morphometry: based on a limited dataset (n=6 *nigricapillus*, n=9 *destructus*), Areta & Benítez Saldívar (2025) concluded that 1) bill length (exposed culmen) showed no overlap between taxa, with all individuals of *nigricapillus* having a longer bill than *destructus*, and therefore no overlap in mean \pm SD values (Fig. 3a), 2) *nigricapillus* was longer winged than *destructus*, with exact overlap only in their extreme values, and no overlap in mean \pm SD values (Fig. 3b), and 3) tail length was longer in *nigricapillus* than in *destructus*, but the difference was not statistically significant (two tailed t-test p=0.17) (Fig. 3c).

The differences in songs and plumage herein described can be readily appreciated in videos of free-ranging singing birds:

nigricapillus: <u>https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/608419951</u> *destructus*: https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/316228641

Genetics: The coincidental break in plumage and vocalizations between *F. moniliger* and *F. analis umbrosus* (a representative of the *hoffmanni* group) were used as arguments to support the elevation of *moniliger* to species status (Howell 1994). More recently, phylogenetic data have shown that *F. moniliger* is sister to a clade including *F. destructus* as more closely related to *F. analis* (including representatives of the *hoffmanni* and *analis* subspecies groups) (Harvey et al. 2020). This distant relationship between *moniliger* and *analis* further reinforces the species-level split of *F. moniliger* and lends support to vocal differences as a useful tool to



Fig. 3. Morphological measurements of Black-capped Antthrush (*Formicarius nigricapillus*), and Blackhooded Antthrush (*F. destructus*). Figure depicts median and quartiles on box plots. Asterisk denotes significant statistical differences in one-way ANOVA (α <0.05). The morphological differences in bill and wing length coupled to plumage differences give support to the treatment of *nigricapillus* and *destructus* as separate species. See Table 2 for sample sizes and data, and Appendix 2 and S2 for specimens measured and studied.

establish species limits in *Formicarius*. Although there are no available genetic data for nominotypic *nigricapillus*, the vocal distinctions between *nigricapillus* and *destructus* seem as or more marked than those between *F. moniliger* and *F. analis* of the *analis* and *hoffmanni* subspecies groups. In our paper we predicted that *nigricapillus* and *destructus* will exhibit levels of genetic differentiation tantamount to their vocal and morphological distinctions.

The Formicarius phylogenetic tree from Harvey et al. 2020:



Taxonomic assessment:

The marked differences in vocalizations and morphology, and moderate but consistent plumage differences strongly supports the elevation of the taxon *destructus* to species-level, leading to the recognition of two allopatric and monotypic species, *F. nigricapillus* and *F. destructus*. Areta & Benítez Saldivar (2025) based their taxonomic conclusions on the recognition concept of species (Paterson 1985), whilst the same species would be recognized by applying the biological species concept (Mayr 1963; "isolation concept" fide Paterson 1985). The inferred level of discontinuity between *nigricapillus* and *destructus* is of such a magnitude that presumably any other modern species concept would recognise them as separate species,

whether based on mating or other important attributes, phenotypic distinctiveness, presence of autapomorphies, or phylogenetic independence (Cracraft 1983, Mishler & Brandon 1987, Gill 2014, Areta et al. 2019, Winker 2021). Howell & Dyer (2022:27) wrote that "Differences in plumage and song indicate that Central American *nigricapillus* and South American *destructus* (Choco Antthrush) are best treated as separate species." A view that is amply supported by Areta & Benítez Saldivar (2025).

In terms of plumage, the differences between *nigricapillus* and *destructus* (Fig. 1) would be among the least conspicuous for two *Formicarius* species-level taxa, and comparable to (although less obvious than) those between *F. moniliger* and *F. analis*. They differ most notably by the presence of a rufous-chestnut fore-collar below the black throat in *moniliger*, while the black throat contacts the grey chest directly in the two subspecies groups of *F. analis* (Howell 1994, Vallely and Dyer 2018). However, less obvious plumage differences exist between the *analis* and *hoffmanni* subspecies groups within *F. analis* despite their noticeable vocal differences (Howell 1994) which are compatible with species-level differences in the genus (Krabbe and Schulenberg 2003, van Dort et al. 2023, Benítez Saldívar & Areta in prep.).

English names:

Most species in the genus *Formicarius* carry common English names that refer to plumage features. We propose to adopt the name Black-capped Antthrush for *F. nigricapillus* and Black-hooded Antthrush for *F. destructus*, which focus on one of the main plumage differences between them, and retain a connection to the former Black-headed Antthrush used for the composite species. We find the proposed use of Black-hooded Antthrush for *F. nigricapillus* by Howell and Dyer (2022) to be misleading, as this taxon is capped rather than hooded. The smaller bill of *destructus* is difficult to appreciate in field conditions, and bill features do not seem useful to coin common names here. Finally, Choco Antthrush has been proposed for *destructus* (Howell and Dyer 2022); while a good name, there are other antthrushes in the Choco, and it loses the connection to the former Black-headed Antthrush name.

Recommendation:

(A) We recommend a YES vote to split *F. destructus* from *F. nigricapillus*.

(B) We recommend a YES vote to adopt the English name Black-capped Antthrush for *F. nigricapillus* and Black-hooded Antthrush for *F. destructus*

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Links to supplementary information

https://static-content.springer.com/esm/art%3A10.1007%2Fs10336-025-02265-5/MediaObjects/10336_2025_2265_MOESM1_ESM.xlsx

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Submitted by; Juan I. Areta and M. Juliana Benítez Saldívar

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Treat Eurasian Hoopoe Upupa epops as more than one species

The Eurasian Hoopoe Upupa epops has alternatively been considered a monospecific Palearctic family (Upupidae) with several subspecies (as in Wolters 1976), or as two, three, or four species. The present proposal concerns a split and English name change that is of concern to NACC because U. epops is on the main list of the Check-list, with at least four records (as of 2022; https://ebird.org/checklist/S119671772) from Alaska, two of them in September 2022. The distributional statement of the current Check-list mentions Eurasia, Africa, and Madagascar as part of the range of Upupa epops. This is the traditional single-species treatment of extant species that, among major global checklists, is still only in use by Dickinson and Remsen (2013), the others having long ago adopted at least the split of Madagascar Hoopoe U. marginata. Dickinson and Remsen (2013), although maintaining marginata as a subspecies of U. epops, included the footnote "May merit treatment as a separate species (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993)", but without further explanation. The extinct St. Helena Hoopoe U. antaios (Olson 1975; https://doi.org/10.5479/si.00810266.23.1), which was relatively large but with reduced wing elements and thus presumably reduced flight capability, has been accepted by most major global checklists (including forthcoming first version of AviList v.2025); Dickinson & Remsen (2013) is the one global checklist that does not formally recognize Upupa antaios, although the updated online version does

(https://www.aviansystematics.org/checklist?viewfamilies=90). Conversely, the African Hoopoe *U. africana*, with *marginata* as a subspecies, was recognized as a separate species from *U. epops* by Sibley and Monroe (1990) and the derivative checklist Monroe and Sibley (1993), and subsequently by the IOC-WBL through v.14.2 (Gill et al. 2024). As part of the WGAC/AviList Phase 1 global list alignment process, the question of the species status of *U. africana* was recently reconsidered, since the IOC recognized both *U. africana* and *U. marginata* as distinct species.

Morphology:

On average, the plumage of *africana* is richer, warmer brown, and with a quite different wing pattern than in European subspecies of *U. epops*, so much so that many individuals in tropical and southern Africa are readily identifiable, but two geographically intervening subspecies (*senegalensis* and *waibeli*) are considered to bridge the gaps in plumage characters (Mlodinow and Pyle 2024). To complicate matters further, at least the nominate subspecies winters in northern and tropical Africa (see map on next page).

In morphology, *marginata* is distinctly larger than the other subspecies (Benson 1976-1977), and has multiple distinctive though not especially obvious plumage differences from the European nominate, but is more similar in plumage to eastern Palearctic taxa (summarized in Similar Species section of Mlodinow and Pyle 2024).



Vocalizations:

It has been known for decades (Short et al. 1990) that the song of *africana* is indistinguishable from that of *epops*, both consisting of series of two or three quick hoots:



(P. Boesman, Zambia, https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/277460)

Three-note songs:



(J. Rochefort, France, https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/203693781)



(A. Spencer, Ethiopia, https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/33652221)

Conversely, as shown much earlier (Roché 1971, Dowsett and Dowsett 1993), the song of *marginata* is a rapid series of several run-together hoots:



(P. Boesman, Madagascar, https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/502288271)

Occasionally *U. marginata* may utter slower songs of three or more notes, but interspersed among the more typical series of hoots, though in this case the pace is slower:



(D. Stewart, Madagascar, https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/158795)

The large numbers of recordings now available online make it straightforward for anyone to recognize the vocal differences between *marginata* and the *epops* and *africana* groups. A field study (Turčoková et al. 2012, not seen) has been summarized as showing that the nominate subspecies does not usually respond to the song of *marginata*.

Both groups of taxa give raspy prolonged calls, and these appear to be similar but longer in *marginata* than in *epops*, but verification of this would require further study and measurements.

Genetic data:

We are not aware of genetic data bearing on the question of species limits of *africana* and *marginata*. However, two fairly recent studies that do not include these taxa show that there is a fairly significant amount of genetic structure between certain populations in the nominate group, in one study (Wang et al. 2017) between Armenia vs. Europe

(<u>https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1055790317303731</u>), and in the other (Deef et al. 2021) between Palearctic and Egyptian populations

(https://www.scielo.br/j/babt/a/8WBCjMM8gwJsDjr4Vv9Qgnd/?lang=en#). Thus, it seems quite plausible that there may be deep genetic divergence between *africana* and other taxa, but this remains to be demonstrated.

WGAC treatment:

Given the morphological clinality and indistinguishable songs, the WGAC decision was to lump *africana* with *epops*. WGAC did not vote on the species status of *marginata* because it was not an incongruence between the three global checklists undergoing the process of alignment.

English names:

The name Madagascar Hoopoe has been used very widely for a couple of decades by all global checklists and numerous field guides. However, for several versions (from v.3.5 to 11.2) the IOC list used Madagascan Hoopoe, after which it was decided to standardize usage to Madagascar.

It has been pointed out by members of the South African birding community that the Clements, IOC, and draft AviList name of "Eurasian Hoopoe" is highly misleading when *africana* is lumped with the *epops* group, given the wide residence of the species in Africa. The name "Eurasian Hoopoe" seems to be at least in part a holdover from when *africana* was considered a separate species. Although a perfect English name does not appear to exist for the species when it includes *africana*, the name "Common Hoopoe" has been widely used, including currently by BirdLife International (<u>https://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/common-hoopoe-upupa-epops</u>). It is a relatively common species in some areas (though certainly uncommon in appearance), but here the meaning of common as "familiar" and "widespread" rather than especially numerous or ordinary best applies to this species.

The IOC-WBL (for v.15.2, planned to be the final version) and Clements checklist for 2025 plan to adopt Common Hoopoe instead of Eurasian Hoopoe and AviList will also use this name for its first release (v.2025).

Recommendation:

We strongly recommend a NO vote on splitting *africana* from *U. epops* due to the evidently clinal nature of the morphological differences, and especially the fact that songs appear indistinguishable.

We strongly recommend a YES vote on splitting *marginata* from *U. epops* due to its very different song and the reported lack of response to playback. We consider that the issue of species status for Madagascar Hoopoe *U. marginata* is clear and that its implicit retention (by inclusion of the word "Madagascar" in the range statement) within *U. epops* is a holdover from the past when its song was unreported. We strongly recommend adopting Madagascar Hoopoe for the English name of *U. marginata*, given its already well-established usage and the lack of any known, preferable alternatives for this extralimital taxon.

Finally, assuming non-passage of a), we strongly recommend modifying the English name "Eurasian Hoopoe" to "Common Hoopoe", given that it is so misleading when *africana* is included.

Please vote on:

- a) whether to split africana from Upupa epops;
- b) whether to split marginata from U. epops;
- c) whether to change the English name from Eurasian Hoopoe to Common Hoopoe;
- d) if b) is successful, whether to adopt the name Madagascar Hoopoe for *U. marginata*.

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Submitted by: Pamela C. Rasmussen and Marshall J. Iliff

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2025-D-4 N&MA Classification Committee various pp.

Add three species to the Checklist and six species to the U.S. list

The 2024 ABA Checklist Committee report (Pyle et al. 2024) added 10 species to the ABA checklist. One of these species, Lavender Waxbill *Glaucestrilda caerulescens*, is already on our US list based on an introduced population established in Hawaii. However, the other nine species represent additions to either the AOS Checklist (three species) or our U.S. list (six species). In the past we have dealt with these in individual proposals, but this year we are consolidating all the ABA additions into a single, stripped-down proposal. Details for these records are available in the ABA CLC report at https://www.aba.org/themencode-pdf-viewer/?file=https://www.aba.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024_ABA_CLC_Report.pdf#zoom=page-fit&pagemode=none.

The three species proposed to be added to the Checklist are the following:

Kentish Plover *Anarhynchus alexandrinus* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on a record from Shemya Island, Alaska, on 29 May 2023. This species would follow *A. nivosus* in our linear sequence.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on a record from Adak Island, Alaska, on 21 September 2016. This species would follow *A. poliogaster* in our linear sequence.

Blue Rock-thrush *Monticola solitarius* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on three records: from Goldpan Provincial Park, British Columbia, in 1997; from near Canon Beach, Oregon, in 2024; and from the Farallon Islands, California, in 2024. This species would follow *M. saxatilis* in our linear sequence.

The six species proposed to be added to our list of species known from the United States are the following:

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on records from Florida (1959-2006), Maryland (2006), and Michigan (2022).

Gray Gull *Leucophaeus modestus* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on records of a presumed single bird from Florida and Alabama from June 2023 through at least September 2024 (Pranty 2024).

Ainley's Storm-Petrel *Hydrobates cheimomnestes* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on flight tracks in U.S. waters of several individuals from GPS loggers attached to known breeding birds at Guadalupe Island, Mexico. Breeding birds on foraging trips visited southern Californian waters, and non-breeding birds were tracked to Hawaiian waters (Medrano et al. 2022, 2024).

Yellow-headed Caracara *Milvago chimachima* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on a record from Dade County, Florida, in October 2022.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on analyses of populations from Wisconsin and Illinois that indicate that these are established and increasing in the Great Lakes region (Sell 2021, Craves and Anich 2023)

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on a record from south of Pima, Graham County, Arizona, on 15-17 July 2023.

Recommendation:

The ABA CLC does a great job of vetting records, and we almost always accept species that they have approved (and sometimes ones that they haven't approved or haven't yet approved, as in the case of *Glaucestrilda caerulescens*). I recommend that all these records be accepted.

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Submitted by: Terry Chesser

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