

**AOS Classification Committee – North and Middle America**

**Proposal Set 2026-C**

**10 July 2026, revised 10 August 2026**

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**Treat Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia bifasciata* as a separate species from White-winged Crossbill *L. leucoptera***

*Note:* This proposal has been forwarded to us from AviList's Palearctic Regional Advisory Group. They voted to accept the proposal to treat *Loxia leucoptera* as two species, and AviList is now seeking input from NACC on this issue, given that the *L. leucoptera* s.s. is a Holarctic species, before forwarding to the AviList Taxonomic Committee for consideration.

**Background:**

The White-winged Crossbill (*L. leucoptera*) is recognized in AviList as a Holarctic species containing two subspecies, *bifasciata* occurring in taiga in Eurasia and *leucoptera* in North America (the latter also recorded accidentally a few times in Iceland). This single-species treatment is also adopted by eBird/Clements, BirdLife International, Howard & Moore, and IOC 15.1. The *Handbook of Western Palearctic Birds* states the following: "Possibly better treated as separate species, but kept together until better studied /.../ Although such a change would probably be reasonable, morphological and vocal differences are relatively small, and we prefer to await the results of a genetic analysis and more comprehensive study of vocalisations and behaviour." The Swedish Taxonomic Committee separated *bifasciata* as a separate species in 2018, before aligning with AviList taxonomy in 2025.

Closely related to the White-winged Crossbill is the highly localized and endangered Hispaniolan Crossbill (*L. megaplaga*), now confined to mountains of Hispaniola but historically also in the Bahamas. The Hispaniolan Crossbill was previously included in *leucoptera*. Since 2003 it has been recognized as a separate species (Banks et al. 2003), being isolated since at least the Pleistocene (Woods et al. 1992) and at most 680,000 years based on mitochondrial DNA analyses (Parchman et al. 2007). Furthermore, *megaplaga* has a much larger bill, closer to Red Crossbill (Benkman 1994, Parchman et al. 2007). Hispaniolan Crossbill is recognised by all the major world lists, including AviList.

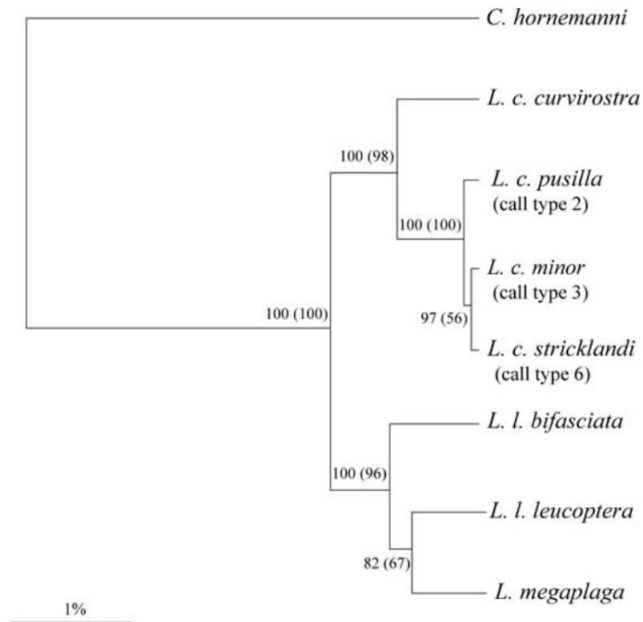
**Genetics:**

Using mitochondrial DNA, Parchman et al. 2007 studied the genetics of the White-winged Crossbill, including *megaplaga*. The results strongly place *megaplaga* closer to North American *leucoptera* than to Eurasian *bifasciata* (see their Fig. 4 on the next page).

**Morphology:**

There are pronounced and consistent differences in morphology between the Nearctic and Palearctic birds. Birds of the World states "Palearctic and Nearctic populations differ in the extent of black dorsally (on adult males, at least), in body size (large in the Palearctic), and bill size and shape (small and narrow in the Nearctic)."

Furthermore: "*leucoptera* has a smaller bill than *L. l. bifasciata* ... has a particularly slender upper mandible relative to other subspecies and species of crossbills; narrow mandibles critical for foraging efficiently on slightly open black spruce cones." Moreover, *bifasciata* has "less black on the mantle and lesser wing coverts; in bill size and shape it resembles large-billed forms of *L. curvirostra* in North America." Lastly, Birds of the World states that there is negligible geographic variation across the species' ranges within North America or within Eurasia.



**Figure 4.** Bayesian phylogenetic tree with a molecular clock enforced. *Loxia leucoptera bifasciata* and *L. c. curvirostra* are Old World crossbills, whereas *L. megaplaga* (the Hispaniola crossbill), *L. l. leucoptera*, *L. c. pusilla*, *L. c. stricklandi*, and *L. c. minor* are New World crossbills, with *Carduelis hornemanni* as an outgroup. The bar in the lower left represents 1% sequence divergence. Values at the nodes represent posterior probabilities from Bayesian analyses and those in parentheses represent bootstrap support based on 1000 replicates in parsimony analyses.



Male and female *Loxia leucoptera leucoptera*.



Male and female *Loxia leucoptera bifasciata*.

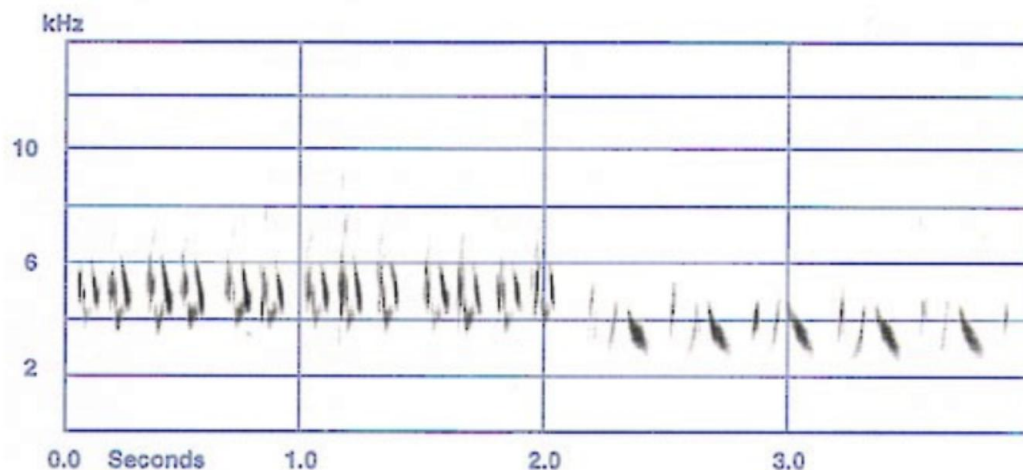
Roselaar (in Cramp & Perrins 1994) gives mean depth of 10.3 mm for 18 males (range 9.7-11.0) and of 10.1 for 14 females (range 9.4-10.7). For *leucoptera*, mean bill depth is given as 8.4 for eight males (range 7.8-8.8) and 8.2 for 10 females (range 7.6-9.0). Other measurements also given by Roselaar in Cramp & Perrins (1994) confirm that *leucoptera* is indeed a considerable smaller bird and it is mentioned that the white on the tips of the greater coverts and tertials is narrower.

In Robb & van der Berg (2002), Magnus Robb is described as spending a week watching and sound-recording *leucoptera* in Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada, where he noticed that *leucoptera* looks strikingly different from *bifasciata*. He also examined two road-killed adult males showed more contrasting black lores and a blacker rear edge to the ear-coverts, as well as a deeper-black wing compared to *bifasciata*. Parts of the plumage, especially the crown, had a quite scaly appearance, due to the colored feathers having extensive black central parts of which only a small part shows. The hidden base of these feathers is gray whereas the colored part is only the very tip of the feather. In *bifasciata*, dark parts of the red-tipped feathers are less black and more grayish.

### Bioacoustics:

Elmberg (1993) described the [song](#) of *leucoptera* as more monotonous than that of *bifasciata*, somewhat reminiscent of a greenfinch, a calling Redpoll or a singing Arctic Warbler. On the other hand, the song of *bifasciata* is described as “rich and varied, consisting mainly of clear (metallic) and slurred whistles, but also of chatters and wheezes”, frequently interspersed with any of the three basic flight calls and more reminiscent of the song of Parrot or Red Crossbill than of *leucoptera*.

In Birds of the World, the song is described as “a series of trills interspersed with chirps and warbles”, with no reference to differences between Palearctic and Nearctic birds (but presumably referring to *leucoptera* s.s.). The following sonogram is from Austin (1968), most definitely *leucoptera* s.s.:



We've found no clear cut sonogram depicting the song of *bifasciata*.

In HWPB, it is stated that *leucoptera* s.s. is “said to have a different song, but this requires further study; available recordings convey fairly similar songs”.

There are surprisingly few recordings on Xeno-canto and therefore hardly more than anecdotal comparisons can be made out of that material. However, just based on these below, we find a discernible difference, in line with Elmberg:

Call & song *leucoptera*: <https://xeno-canto.org/157634>

Call & song *bifasciata*: <https://xeno-canto.org/175957>

In Robb & van den Berg (2002), *leucoptera* is described as having “a strikingly different vocal repertoire”, citing Elmberg 1993 and Magnus Robb (pers. obs).

### **Ecology and Distribution:**

In Birds of the World, it is stated that “large differences in bill structure between *L. l. leucoptera* and *L. l. bifasciata* imply the taxa are ecologically distinct”.

Robb & van den Berg (2002), describe *leucoptera* differing from *bifasciata* in “various aspects of ecology”, although without details. Apart from a handful of accidental records in Iceland, the two taxa are wholly allopatric.

### **Recommendation:**

This is definitely not a slam dunk, as nuclear studies don't seem to be available and more formal vocal studies are lacking. HWPB did find the vocal and morphological differences to be small and preferred to wait for more comprehensive studies.

However, we find the evidence at hand to be compelling enough to recommend a split, based on genetics, song, morphology, ecology and plumage, as had STC. Several previously Holarctic taxa have subsequently been split in two (Whimbrel, Northern Goshawk, Northern Harrier, Common/Wilson's Snipe, etc.) and the Two-barred Crossbill would certainly follow that pattern. The differences are consistent and the populations are wholly allopatric with presumably zero gene flow.

Although the genetic results are solely mitochondrially based, it would certainly be biogeographically reasonable for the Hispaniolan Crossbill to be more closely related to *leucoptera* s.s. than to *bifasciata*. One could easily imagine *megaplaga* to have evolved from overshooting dispersals from this erratically occurring species becoming resident in the pine forests of Hispaniola.

The bird has for a long time been called White-winged Crossbill in America and Two-barred Crossbill in Eurasia. Therefore, it would be reasonable to let *leucoptera* s.s. be called White-winged and Two-barred be reserved for *bifasciata*.

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**Submitted by:** Gustav Asplund, Markus Lagerqvist, Erling Jirle

**Date of Proposal:** 8 December 2025, submitted to NACC on 2 May 2026

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#### **Comments from the Palearctic RAG:**

##### **SchweizerManuel commented on Jan 14:**

Crossbills of the genus *Loxia* are an extremely complex group in terms of their evolutionary history especially in relation to their ecological specialisation. I like the Basketball-Slang that “this is definitely not a slam dunk” which I would entirely agree on. For such a group, I would prefer to await a thorough study on vocalisation and genetics based on many unlinked loci before I dare to give any kind of taxonomic recommendation.  
Looking forward to the opinions of other on this case.

##### **PierreAndreCrochet commented on Jan 26:**

I support this case. For me, the combination of clear acoustic divergence, morphological divergence and mtDNA divergence similar to the one separating *megaplaga* from the other ones is enough.

For sure, as Manuel, i'd prefer a good genomic dataset, but i also feel that we can't wait for this kind of data for all decisions.

For me, this is enough, so a YES

##### **martinstervander commented last week:**

I would like to echo Pierre-André's comments above, as they reflect my thinking as well. There's one partial objection I will make, and that's the statement that mtDNA results of Parchman et al. (2007) "strongly place *megaplaga* closer to North American *leucoptera* than to Eurasian *bifasciata*". The tree figured does strongly group *megaplaga* with the other two wing-barred

taxa, but the sistership with American *leucoptera* is actually not strongly supported, with PP=0.82 and bootstrap support of 67%:

Having said that, the recovered sister relationship of course makes very much sense biogeographically (and, I'd argue, much more sense than *megaplaga* being basal in relation to *leucoptera* + *bifasciata* as sisters), and if so would render the current *L. leucoptera* s.l. paraphyletic.

I have now inquired from various crossbill-strategic folks about possible ongoing genomic efforts, so I hope I should soon have an idea of whether any important work is currently happening. If that is not the case, I vote YES on this proposal.

**PaulJamesLeader commented last week:**

Whilst it would be good to have more data especially on vocalizations, I agree there is sufficient information to support the proposed split. There are more vocalizations of both taxa in the Macaulay Library, it would be good to review these. In addition, I think the bill structure differences are even more obvious than suggested in the proposal; a series of profile head shots would be a useful addition to the proposal.

**balaenazhao commented last week:**

I vote YES on this proposal, and agree on Martin's comments above on biogeography and paraphyly. If we recognize the Hispaniolan taxon *megaplaga* as species, then we should perhaps also elevate *leucoptera* and *bifasciata* to the species level, given the data/results available.

On a different note, I recently read a paper on extirpated Bahamian birds and learned that *megaplaga* was likely extirpated from the Bahamas after the Pleistocene–Holocene transition (<https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1707660114>). During the cooler climates of the Pleistocene, *megaplaga* may have had a much broader distribution across the Caribbean. The paleontologists speculate that the continental *leucoptera* may represent a sister lineage or ancestor of *megaplaga* (although they did not seem to have comparative material from *bifasciata*).

**miliff commented 2 days ago:**

I asked two friends who have a non-profit (FIRN) set up to study crossbills (and to a lesser extent, other finches) and their call types. I asked them to give an opinion on the White-winged vs. Two-barred split. Their comments are here (Word and DF versions).

[WWCR and TBCR split FIRN 4 30 26.pdf](#)  
[WWCR and TBCR split FIRN 4 30 26.docx](#)

**Add two species to the Checklist, one species to the U.S. list, and five species to Appendix 1**

The 2025 ABA Checklist Committee report (Pyle et al. 2025) added six species to the ABA Checklist. Three of these species, European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Eastern Cattle-Egret *Ardea coromanda*, and Little White-Tern *Gygis microrhyncha*, are already on the Checklist due to recent splits from other species (Chesser et al. 2025). However, the other three species represent additions to either the AOS Checklist (two species) or our U.S. list (one species) based on newly accepted distributional records. In addition, six species were considered but not accepted as additions to the ABA Checklist. Five of these species are proposed as additions to our Appendix 1, which consists of species reported from the AOS area with insufficient evidence for placement on the main list. This also includes reports of individuals of uncertain identification.

Prior to 2025, we dealt with distributional additions in individual proposals, but beginning last year we consolidated all the ABA additions into a single, stripped-down proposal. Further details for these records are available in the ABA CLC report at [https://www.aba.org/pdfviewer/2025-clc-report/?auto\\_viewer=true#page=&zoom=page-fit&pagemode=none](https://www.aba.org/pdfviewer/2025-clc-report/?auto_viewer=true#page=&zoom=page-fit&pagemode=none)

**The two species proposed to be added to the Checklist are the following:**

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on a partial wing found on Attu Island, Alaska, in early June 1999. The ABA CLC failed to accept this record in April 2024, but following confirmation of the identification using mitochondrial DNA from the wing (Withrow et al. 2024), the record was unanimously accepted. This species would precede Northern Harrier *C. hudsonicus* in our linear sequence.

Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* – unanimously accepted by the ABA CLC based on a record including photographs from Shemya Island, Alaska, on 27 May 2024. This species would follow Hook-billed Kite *Chondrohierax uncinatus* in our linear sequence.

**The single species proposed to be added to the list of species known from the United States is the following:**

Pearly-eyed Thrasher *Margarops fuscatus* – accepted by the ABA CLC based on a record from Key West, Florida, from March to April 2024. This species has previously occurred as a vagrant on several Caribbean islands outside of its normal range, supporting the provenance of this individual as a naturally occurring vagrant.

**The five species proposed to be added to Appendix 1 as hypothetical species are the following:**

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* - not accepted due to uncertain identification. Most experts on European swifts consulted by the ABA CLC agreed that an apparent juvenile found on a street in Montreal, Quebec, on 7 or 8 June 2007, was likely a Pallid Swift. However, some doubt remained concerning separation of juveniles of this species from those of Common Swift *Apus apus* (the record had originally been accepted by the Quebec Bird Records Committee as the latter species).



Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla* - not accepted due to insufficient documentation and uncertain identification. A crake, which may have been this species but could also have been Little Crake *Z. parva* or perhaps a juvenile Sora *Porzana carolina*, was flushed several times on Attu Island, Alaska, on 20-21 September 2000. The bird was described and sketched but not photographed. This record was also considered unsubstantiated by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Tobish 2001, Alaska Checklist Committee 2024).

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* - not accepted due to uncertain identification. Two poor photographs taken 25 June 2012 (probably of the same individual previously seen on 13 June), as well as a description and sketch, suggest that the bird was this species but were considered insufficient to rule out American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*. This record was also considered unsubstantiated by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Alaska Checklist Committee 2024).

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* - not accepted due to concerns about provenance. The individual, seen in various localities in Florida from February 2016 to at least January 2021, was accepted as a naturally occurring vagrant by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee. However, although *P. onocrotalus* is known as a vagrant in Eurasia outside its breeding and wintering range in central Asia, India, and Africa, the ABA CLC preferred to see more evidence of longer-distance movements in this species before accepting it as a natural vagrant to the southeastern US (presumably via Siberia and Beringia).

Asian Tit *Parus cinereus* - this species and Great Tit *Parus major* (the ABA CLC voted on both identifications) were not accepted due to insufficient documentation and uncertain identification. The ABA CLC concluded that a bird seen on Little Diomed Island, Alaska, on 2 September 1988, was very likely *P. cinereus* rather than *P. major* (it had been accepted by eBird as *P. major*), but there is no documentation of the record other than two descriptions. This record was also considered unsubstantiated by the Alaska Checklist Committee (Alaska Checklist Committee 2024).

### **Recommendation:**

The ABA CLC does a great job of vetting records, and we almost always follow their decisions. I recommend that *Circus cyaneus* and *Pernis ptilorhynchus* be added to the Checklist, that *Margarops fuscatus* be added to the US list, and that five of the six species not accepted by the ABA CLC be added to our Appendix 1. *Parus major* would be mentioned in the account for *P. cinereus* rather than in a separate account. In my view, there's no need to include two species accounts for a single bird.

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**Submitted by:** Terry Chesser

**Date of Proposal:** 14 May 2026

**Adopt English names for genus *Mitrephanes* and species *M. phaeocercus* s.s. and *M. aurantiiventris***

With the split of *Mitrephanes aurantiiventris* (with *berlepschi*) from *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* (with *tenuirostris*), there is an urgent need for English names to be decided.

The names currently in use by SACC, NACC, BirdLife International (del Hoyo and Collar 2016), and eBird/Clements are these:

- *Mitrephanes olivaceus*: Olive Flycatcher
- *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* (s.l.): Tufted Flycatcher

IOC 15.2 and AviList v2025 use these names (and don't generally use hyphens):

- *Mitrephanes olivaceus*: Olive Tufted Flycatcher
- *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* (s.l.): Northern Tufted Flycatcher

This proposal requires two parts. Part I relates to what, if any, group name to use for *Mitrephanes*, while Part II relates to the modifiers for the three species. With the hope of resolving this issue by mid-July 2026 in order to meet deadlines for AOS-NACC, eBird/Clements, and AviList v2026, this proposal is intended for AOS-NACC, SACC, and AviList ENC to consider concurrently with a goal towards consensus and alignment.

## **PART I**

Just in the New World, there are 105 species across 31 genera that bear the name of "flycatcher". For the lay birder, it certainly can be hard to keep track of which English name goes with which genus without knowing the bird very well. Only the two Royal Flycatchers have a name that helps tie them together and distinguish from the other tyrannids. If the Old World is considered, yet another 151 species across 22 additional genera are involved, although Crested Flycatchers, Blue Flycatchers, and Jungle Flycatchers do help to orient birders toward assemblages of congeneric, or at least similar, species. While adopting Tufted Flycatcher would not solve the core problem of there being too many unrelated birds with the name of "flycatcher", it would help birders to orient correctly on *Mitrephanes* and to transfer familiarity more readily from one species to another.

Tufted Flycatcher is also a highly appropriate name that would be a shame to lose with this revision. Although a lot of tyrannids have elongated crown feathers that can be raised as a crest, there are very few others with such long and pointed crests as *Mitrephanes* (the two species of *Xenotriccus*, which may not be sister to *Mitrephanes*, being another). For a notoriously difficult-to-identify family, *Mitrephanes* is wonderfully straightforward to identify precisely because of their sharply pointed crests that are usually fully raised. We strongly feel that maintaining the most distinctive feature of the genus within the name of all its members follows best practices for naming.

Furthermore, the name “Tufted Flycatcher” has long been in use by the IOC World Bird List and was adopted by AvIList v2026, so this change would help ongoing efforts for more alignment on English names globally. Since this carries forward the name from *M. phaeocercus* and is very appropriate for the genus (they all have distinctive head tufts that are more extreme than most other genera), it seems like an obvious choice.

Additionally, Olive Flycatcher is an extremely ambiguous and non-distinctive name for *M. olivaceus*—how many tyrannids and flycatchers in other groups could be described as olive? Using Olive Tufted-Flycatcher would be a significant improvement, as it is the only *Mitrephanes* that is aptly described as olive.

Significantly, NACC recognized Tufted-Flycatcher as the name for groups within *Mitrephanes* in AOU (1998), Olive Tufted-Flycatcher for *olivaceus* and Common Tufted-Flycatcher for *phaeocercus s.l.*, so that use of Tufted-Flycatcher would be a return to a group name previously used. When NACC recognized *M. olivaceus* as a separate species in 2018 ([Proposal set 2018-A](#)) six voters opted to follow SACC in adopting Olive Flycatcher as the English name rather than using the name in AOU (1998), in large part because following SACC actions for species endemic to their area is standard practice. However, other voters felt it was important not to use the ambiguous name Olive Flycatcher and voted for Olive Tufted-Flycatcher instead. With 3 species now in this genus (and the potential for more), it feels even more important to use the compound name to tie all *Mitrephanes* together as Tufted-Flycatchers.

**We strongly recommend using the group name Tufted-Flycatcher for all species of *Mitrephanes***; the NACC and SACC rules for hyphenation would dictate the use of a hyphen (for a monophyletic clade and unique name for a specific genus), while AvIList would follow IOC rules and presumably not hyphenate it.

This would require a SACC change from Olive Flycatcher to Olive Tufted-Flycatcher; AvIList would require no change.

## Part II

The names to use for a restricted *M. phaeocercus* (with *tenuirostris*) and broad *M. aurantiiventris* raise more difficult questions, since there is little precedent for these taxonomic concepts and no perfect geographic handle for them.

Dyer and Howell (2023) used Costa Rican Tufted Flycatcher for *M. aurantiiventris* (and Mexican Tufted Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus*); their appendix suggests that *berlepschi* would not be included since they give a range of “Costa Rica and Panama”. Obviously Costa Rican Tufted-Flycatcher would be an imperfect name for a concept that includes *aurantiiventris* (occurring from Costa Rica to at least central Panama) and *berlepschi* (occurring from at least eastern Panama to Ecuador). If and when *berlepschi* is split, we believe that Choco Tufted-Flycatcher would be an obvious and appropriate name, and that would mean that Costa Rican Tufted-Flycatcher could be seriously considered. Since half of the species’ range is in Panama, Isthmian Tufted-Flycatcher could also be considered (given the precedent for Isthmian Wren *Cantorchilus elutus*), although our preference is not to expand the usage of that particular

moniker. Regardless, these are not considerations at this stage since *berlepschi* is being treated as conspecific with *aurantiiventris*.

Mexican Tufted-Flycatcher has been used (e.g., in Valley and Dyer *Birds of Central America*) for the concept of *M. phaeocercus* being considered here (i.e., including *tenuirostris*) and is more appropriate, but also is imperfect. The center of the species' range is certainly Mexico, but it also occurs throughout the highlands of Guatemala and Honduras, in the highlands of western Nicaragua, and even reaches El Salvador. Nevertheless, if *berlepschi* were to be split in the future from *M. aurantiiventris*, but *M. phaeocercus* were to remain united with *tenuirostris* (the 3-way split recommended in NACC proposal 2026-B-10), the symmetry of using Mexican Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus* along with Costa Rican Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. aurantiiventris* and Choco Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. berlepschi* seem ideal, and should be given serious consideration. The fact that it has already been used in published field guides gives further weight to that option. (Note, however, that if *tenuirostris* were to be split in the future from *M. phaeocercus*, a possibility raised in the SACC comments but perhaps not likely, Mexican Tufted-Flycatcher would be a highly appropriate name for what would then be a Mexican endemic, but use of this name for *M. tenuirostris* would likely be precluded by its prior use for a different taxonomic concept.)

Northern Tufted-Flycatcher is a poor choice since it has been used previously for a *M. phaeocercus sensu lato* concept that includes *phaeocercus*, *tenuirostris*, *aurantiiventris*, and *berlepschi*, in an attempt to distinguish those subspecies from *olivaceus* (the most southerly taxon). Thus, Northern would be best avoided.

Habitat-based names might also be possible, and the northern taxon is quite closely tied to pine or pine-oak forest. That would raise the possibility of Pine, Pinewoods, or Pine-forest Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus*. However, although *aurantiiventris* occurs in highlands dominated by cloud-forest, using Highland Tufted-Flycatcher or Cloud-forest Tufted-Flycatcher would be patently inappropriate for *berlepschi* and thus should be avoided. Because of this lack of symmetry, and the fact that *aurantiiventris* and *berlepschi* occupy such different habitats, we don't think habitat-based species names are a good choice here.

Solely for the sake of stability, Olive Tufted-Flycatcher clearly should be retained for *M. olivaceus*. It might make for nice symmetry to opt for plumage-based names for the remaining two species, or at least for *M. aurantiiventris*, for which we have been unable to come up with good names based on geography or habitat. In terms of plumage, *M. phaeocercus* s.s. is quite tawny or cinnamon-colored overall, unlike most flycatchers and its congeners, whereas *M. aurantiiventris* is strikingly yellow on the belly in both subspecies. However, subspecies *aurantiiventris* is also quite tawny or cinnamon on the breast, which could lead to confusion. Accordingly, we propose these plumage-based names:

- Tawny Tufted-Flycatcher or Cinnamon Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus* s.s.
- 
- Yellow-bellied Tufted-Flycatcher, Yellowish Tufted-Flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, and Pale-bellied Flycatcher for *M. aurantiiventris* [note that the last two names have been added in this revision of the original proposal]



It is worth noting that Cinnamon Flycatcher already is used for *Pyrrhomyias cinnamomeus*, Yellowish Flycatcher for *Empidonax flavescens*, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher for *E. flaviventris*. Although using Tufted-Flycatcher as the group name would mitigate much of the confusion, in our view the similarity in names would argue against adopting Cinnamon Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus* and Yellow-bellied Tufted-Flycatcher or Yellowish Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. aurantiiventris*. Thus, we prefer Tawny Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus* and Lemon-bellied Flycatcher for *M. aurantiiventris*, if adopting plumage-based names for these species.

## Recommendations:

For Part I, we recommend adopting **Tufted-Flycatcher** as the group name for all species of *Mitrephanes*, including *M. olivaceus*. For Part II, we've discussed geographical, habitat, and plumage-based names for *M. phaeocercus*, although each name has drawbacks. In the end, we recommend adopting **Mexican Tufted-Flycatcher** for this species. This name describes the heart of the distribution, it is already in use, and it would be symmetrical with the proposed distributional English names for daughter species *aurantiiventris* and *berlepschi* if *M. aurantiiventris* were to be split in the future. In contrast, we have been unable to come up with geographical or habitat-based names that encompass both subspecies of *M. aurantiiventris*, so we recommend adopting **Lemon-bellied Tufted-Flycatcher** for this species.

## Voting:

**Part I:** Vote YES or NO to adopt the use of Tufted-Flycatcher across *Mitrephanes*, including a change from Olive Flycatcher to Olive Tufted-Flycatcher for *M. olivaceus*

**Part II:** Indicate your ranked preferences for:

### *M. phaeocercus*

- A. Mexican Tufted-Flycatcher
- B. Pine, Pinewoods, or Pine-forest Tufted-Flycatcher (specify which)
- C. Tawny Tufted-Flycatcher
- D. Cinnamon Tufted-Flycatcher
- E. other (specify)

### *M. aurantiiventris*

- A. Yellow-bellied Tufted-Flycatcher
- B. Yellowish Tufted-Flycatcher
- C. Lemon-bellied Flycatcher
- D. Pale-bellied Flycatcher
- E. other (specify)

**Submitted by:** Marshall Iliff and Terry Chesser

**Date of Proposal:** 7 July 2026, revised 22 July 2026

**Change the linear sequence of the Certhioidea  
(Sittidae, Certhiidae, Polioptilidae, and Troglodytidae)**

**Background:**

The Certhioidea contains the families Sittidae, Certhiidae, Polioptilidae, and Troglodytidae. These groups range from being predominantly Holarctic (Sittidae and Certhiidae) to predominantly or entirely Nearctic and Neotropical (Polioptilidae and Troglodytidae). All families include both broad-ranging polytypic species complexes and localized monotypic endemics. In recent decades, several studies focused on Certhioidea have resulted not only in major shuffles within these groups, but also in the recognition of multiple new taxa split from previously recognized taxa. Notably, work within Polioptilidae resulted in a clarification of species limits within the NACC area, including the elevation to species status of the taxonomically ambiguous *Polioptila albiventris* (Smith et al. 2018).

The current linear sequence for these families is as follows:

- Sittidae
  - o *Sitta*
    - *S. canadensis*
    - *S. carolinensis*
    - *S. pygmaea*
    - *S. pusilla*
    - *S. insularis*
- Certhiidae
  - o *Certhia americana*
- Polioptilidae
  - o *Ramphocaenus melanurus*
  - o *Microbates cinereiventris*
  - o *Polioptila*
    - *P. schistaceigula*
    - *P. lembeyi*
    - *P. albiventris*
    - *P. bilineata*
    - *P. caerulea*
    - *P. melanura*
    - *P. californica*
    - *P. nigriceps*
    - *P. albiloris*
- Troglodytidae
  - o *Salpinctes obsoletus*
  - o *Microcerculus*
    - *M. philomela*
    - *M. marginatus*
  - o *Catherpes mexicanus*

- *Hylorchilus*
  - *H. sumichrasti*
  - *H. navai*
- *Pheugopedius*
  - *P. spadix*
  - *P. atrogularis*
  - *P. rutilus*
  - *P. maculipectus*
  - *P. felix*
  - *P. fasciatoventris*
- *Cantorchilus*
  - *C. leucopogon*
  - *C. thoracicus*
  - *C. modestus*
  - *C. zeledoni*
  - *C. elutus*
  - *C. nigricapillus*
  - *C. semibadius*
  - *C. leucotis*
- *Henicorhina*
  - *H. leucosticta*
  - *H. leucophrys*
- *Cyphorhinus phaeocephalus*
- *Uropsila leucograstra*
- *Thryophilus*
  - *T. rufalbus*
  - *T. sinaloa*
  - *T. pleurostictus*
- *Campylorhynchus*
  - *C. albobrunneus*
  - *C. zonatus*
  - *C. megalopterus*
  - *C. chiapensis*
  - *C. griseus*
  - *C. humilis*
  - *C. rufinucha*
  - *C. capistratus*
  - *C. gularis*
  - *C. jocosus*
  - *C. yucatanicus*
  - *C. brunneicapillus*
- *Thryomanes bewickii*
- *Thryothorus ludovicianus*
- *Troglodytes*
  - *T. aedon*
  - *T. musculus*
  - *T. beani*

- *T. martinicensis*
- *T. mesoleucus*
- *T. musicus*
- *T. grenadensis*
- *T. sissonii*
- *T. tanneri*
- *T. rufociliatus*
- *T. ochraceus*
- *T. pacificus*
- *T. hiemalis*
- *Ferminia cerverai*
- *Cistothorus*
  - *C. stellaris*
  - *C. platensis*
  - *C. paludicola*<sup>1</sup>
  - *C. palustris*
- *Thryorchilus browni*

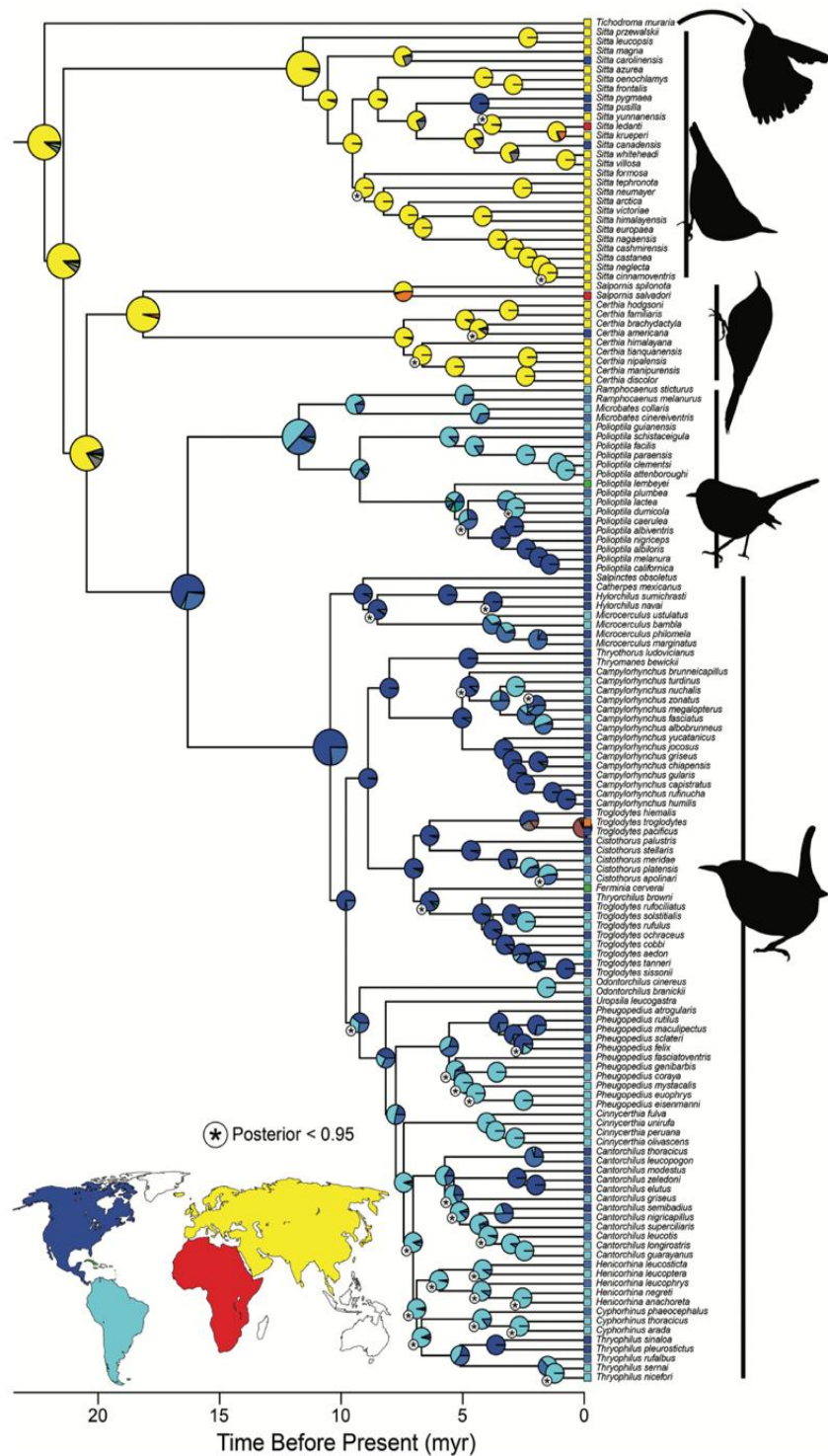
### New information:

Imfeld *et al.* (2024) evaluated a robust phylogeny (Figs. 1 and 2) of the aforementioned families using a supermatrix of 13 loci: 9 nuclear and 4 mitochondrial. This phylogeny (see Figs. 1 and 2 below) included >95% of the members of every family, providing a heretofore unprecedented view of the evolution of these groups. These analyses included creating ultrametric Bayesian phylogenies and evaluating relationships via a RAxML phylogeny as well (Imfeld *et al.* 2024). This study caps off a series of other studies using fewer genes or smaller taxonomic groups that have clarified the evolutionary history of this group as a whole (and that we reference in footnotes in the following revised taxonomic sequence). All these studies indicate that a significant reshuffling of taxa is needed throughout the group.

Imfeld *et al.* (2024) sampled all but a few species of Certhioidea, lacking mainly several recently split species (*Sitta insularis*, *S. solangiae*, *Polioptila bilineata*, *Pheugopedius schulenbergi*, *Pheugopedius spadix*). One of their main findings was the recovery of three main clades of Troglodytidae; 1) the geophilous wrens (*Microcerculus*, *Salpinctes*, *Catherpes*, and *Hylorchilus*), 2) a primarily North American clade (*Thryothorus*, *Thryomanes*, *Campylorhynchus*, *Ferminia*, *Thryorchilus*, *Troglodytes*, and *Cistothorus*), and 3) a primarily South American group, including *Odontorchilus*, *Pheugopedius*, *Cinnycerthia*, *Cyphorhinus*, *Uropsila*, *Thryophilus*, *Cantorchilus*, and *Henicorhina*. The Imfeld *et al.* (2024) phylogeny recovered numerous nodes with less than 95% bootstrap support but did not indicate the bootstrap values for these low-support nodes or whether they conflicted strongly between phylogenetic methods. We downloaded the phylogeny from the “unconstrained” BEAST analysis (Fig. 2) to ascertain the bootstrap values for these nodes, and for nodes with low support we have made no changes to linear sequence, although we have noted when these would affect the linear sequence of North American species.

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<sup>1</sup> Split from *C. paludicola* provisionally, pending review of 2026 AOS proposal on the complex.



**FIGURE 1.** Phylogeny and biogeographic history of Certhioidea. Color-coded map corresponds to the tip and node colors on the tree, and ranges comprising more than one area are a mix of the two. Gray is an exception and represents a Holarctic range (North America + Eurasia). Nodes with adjacent circles and asterisks had posterior probabilities < 0.95 in the BEAST tree. Silhouettes and bars represent certhioid families; (from top to bottom) Tichodromidae, Sittidae, Certhiidae, Polioptilidae, and Troglodytidae.

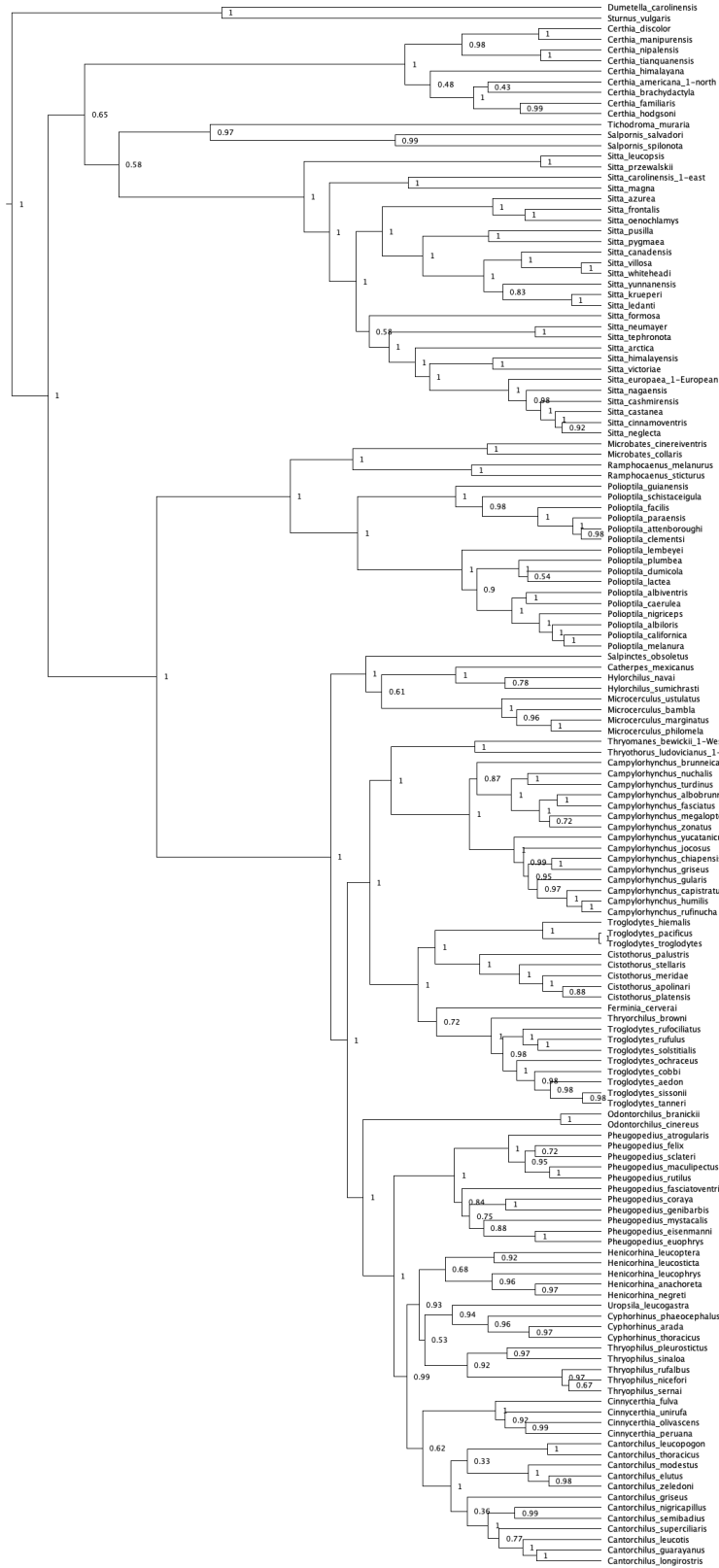


Figure 2. Phylogeny from the “unconstrained” BEAST analysis of Imfeld et al. (2024) showing posterior probabilities.

Below is the new linear sequence, arranged using the standard practice of sister clades with fewer species preceding those with more species, and of species distributed more northwesterly preceding sister species distributed to the south or east. Species indicated in bold are in a different position than our current linear sequence.

- Sittidae
  - *Sitta*
    - *S. carolinensis*
    - *S. pygmaea*
    - *S. pusilla*
    - *S. insularis*<sup>2</sup>
    - ***S. canadensis***
- Certhiidae
  - *C. americana*
- Polioptilidae
  - *Ramphocaenus melanurus*
  - *Microbates cinereiventris*
  - *Polioptila*
    - *P. schistaceigula*
    - *P. lembeyi*
    - *P. albiventris*
    - *P. bilineata*<sup>3</sup>
    - *P. caerulea*
    - *P. nigriceps*
    - *P. albiloris*
    - ***P. melanura***
    - ***P. californica***
- Troglodytidae
  - *Salpinctes obsoletus*
  - *Microcerculus*<sup>4</sup>
    - *M. philomela*
    - *M. marginatus*
  - *Catherpes mexicanus*
  - *Hylorchilus*
    - *H. sumichrasti*
    - *H. navai*
  - *Thryomanes bewickii*
  - *Thryothorus ludovicianus*
  - ***Campylorhynchus***
    - ***C. brunneicapillus***
    - ***C. albobrunneus***

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<sup>2</sup> Not included in supermatrix, but all evidence indicates this taxon is sister to *S. pusilla* (Mlodinow et al. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Not included in supermatrix (Imfeld et al. 2024), sister to South American *P. plumbea* (Smith et al. 2018) along with the monotypic *P. albiventris*.

<sup>4</sup> Imfeld et al. (2024) placed *Microcerculus* after *Hylorchilus* but with 0.61 posterior support, so we retain it in its current position.



- *C. zonatus*
- *C. megalopterus*
- *C. yucatanicus*
- *C. jocosus*
- *C. chiapensis*
- *C. griseus*
- *C. gularis*
- *C. capistratus*
- *C. humilis*
- *C. rufinucha*<sup>5</sup>
- *Ferminia cervicalis*<sup>6</sup>
- *Nannus*<sup>7</sup>
  - *N. pacificus*<sup>8</sup>
  - *N. hiemalis*
- *Cistothorus*
  - *C. paludicola*<sup>9</sup>
  - *C. palustris*
  - *C. stellaris*
  - *C. platensis*
- *Troglodytes*<sup>10</sup>
  - *T. browni*<sup>11</sup>
  - *T. rufociliatus*
  - *T. ochraceus*
  - *T. tanneri*<sup>12</sup>
  - *T. sissonii*
  - *T. aedon*
  - *T. musculus*
  - *T. beani*
  - *T. martinicensis*
  - *T. mesoleucus*
  - *T. musicus*
  - *T. grenadensis*
- *Pheugopedius*

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<sup>5</sup> Placed to follow *C. humilis*, as this is the more easterly of these sister species.

<sup>6</sup> Relationships to *Nannus*, *Cistothorus*, and *Troglodytes* unresolved, so we place it before these genera. See also NACC Proposal 2026-B-7.

<sup>7</sup> *Nannus* Billberg 1828, was resurrected for *Troglodytes troglodytes*, *T. hiemalis* and *T. pacificus*, and has been regularly used in the literature for this clade over the past several decades (Rice et al. 1999, Gómez et al. 2005, Barker 2017, Albrecht et al. 2020, Imfeld et al. 2024). See also Proposal 2026-B-7.

<sup>8</sup> *N. pacificus* is the outgroup to a complex *N. troglodytes*-*N. hiemalis* clade based on five loci (Albrecht et al. 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Placed here if *C. paludicola* considered separate from *C. palustris*. See Proposal 2026-B-2.

<sup>10</sup> This linear sequence within the *T. aedon* complex is based on a more comprehensive phylogeny for this group (Klicka et al. 2023) than the Imfeld et al. (2024) supermatrix-based phylogeny.

<sup>11</sup> Placed here if *browni* is considered to be in *Troglodytes*. See Proposal 2026-B-7.

<sup>12</sup> *Troglodytes sissonii* + *tanneri* are sister to the *aedon* complex, but with the split of *aedon*, there are more species in the the *aedon* complex so that group goes after *sissonii* + *tanneri*.

- ***P. atrogularis***
- ***P. spadix***<sup>13</sup>
- ***P. maculipectus***
- ***P. rutilus***
- *P. felix*
- *P. fasciatoventris*
- *Cantorchilus*<sup>14</sup>
  - ***C. thoracicus***
  - ***C. leucopogon***
  - *C. modestus*
  - *C. zeledoni*
  - *C. elutus*
  - *C. nigricapillus*
  - *C. semibadius*
  - *C. leucotis*
- *Henicorhina*
  - *H. leucosticta*
  - *H. leucophrys*
- *Cyphorhinus phaeocephalus*
- *Uropsila leucogastra*<sup>15</sup>
- *Thryophilus*
  - ***T. sinaloa***
  - ***T. pleurostictus***
  - ***T. rufalbus***

## Recommendation:

We recommend a YES to adopt the linear sequence shown above.

## References:

- Albrecht, F., J. Hering, E. Fuchs, J. C. Illera, F. Ihlow, T. J. Shannon, J. M. Collinson, M. Wink, J. Martens, and M. Päckert (2020). Phylogeny of the Eurasian Wren *Nannus troglodytes* (Aves: Passeriformes: Troglodytidae) reveals deep and complex diversification patterns of Ibero-Maghrebian and Cyrenaican populations. *PLOS ONE* 15:e0230151.
- Barker, F. K. (2017). Molecular phylogenetics of the wrens and allies (Passeriformes: Certhioidea), with comments on the relationships of *Ferminia*. *American Museum Novitates* 2017:1–28.
- Billberg, G. J. (1828). Synopsis faunae Scandinaviae. Holmiae, Stockholm.
- Gómez, J. E. M., B. R. Barber, and A. T. Peterson (2005). Phylogenetic position and generic placement of the Socorro Wren (*Thryomanes sissonii*). *The Auk* 122:50–56.

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<sup>13</sup> Not sampled genetically, but thought to form a species complex with *P. atrogularis*

<sup>14</sup> Conflicting evidence regarding the relationship of *Cantorchilus* to the rest of the *Cinnycerthia* / *Thryophilus* / *Cyphorhinus* / *Henicorhina* clade, so we retain it here.

<sup>15</sup> *Uropsila* recovered as sister to *Pheugopedius* in the constrained tree, but in its current position sister to *Cyphorhinus* in the unconstrained tree. We retain it here pending additional studies.

Imfeld, T. S., F. K. Barker, H. Vázquez-Miranda, J. A. Chaves, P. Escalante, G. M. Spellman, and J. Klicka (2024). Diversification and dispersal in the Americas revealed by new phylogenies of the wrens and allies (Passeriformes: Certhioidea). *Ornithology* 141:ukae007.

Klicka, J., K. Epperly, B. T. Smith, G. M. Spellman, J. A. Chaves, P. Escalante, C. C. Witt, R. Canales-del-Castillo, and R. M. Zink (2023). Lineage diversity in a widely distributed New World passerine bird, the House Wren. *Ornithology* 140:ukad018.

Mlodinow, S. G., P. F. D. Boesman, G. L. Slater, J. D. Lloyd, J. H. Withgott, and K. G. Smith (2021). Bahama Nuthatch (*Sitta insularis*), version 1.0. *Birds of the World*. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.bnhnut2.01>

Rice, N. H., A. T. Peterson, and G. Escalona-Segura (1999). Phylogenetic patterns in montane *Troglodytes* wrens. *The Condor* 101:446–451.

Smith, B. T., R. W. Bryson, W. M. Mauck, J. Chaves, M. B. Robbins, A. Aleixo, and J. Klicka (2018). Species delimitation and biogeography of the gnatcatchers and gnatwrens (Aves: Polioptilidae). *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 126:45–57.

**Submitted by:** Jacob C. Cooper & Oscar Johnson

**Date of Proposal:** 8 July 2026

**Add Audouin's Gull *Ichthyaetus audouinii* to the Main List****Effect on NACC:**

This would add a species to the Main List based on an accidental record of a bird that remained on Barbados for at least four months in 2024.

**Background:**

The Audouin's Gull is a medium sized gull that is confined mostly to the Mediterranean region of the Western Palearctic. It is casual to northwestern Europe. Its overall population has greatly increased in recent decades, due to an increase of the breeding population in the western Mediterranean; the Ebro delta currently supports some 15,000 pairs (Svensson et al. 2023). Svensson et al. (2023) stated that the species nests both colonially and singly on small rocky islands. It is both coastal and pelagic, feeding almost exclusively on fish and rarely scavenging. Audouin's Gull rests on wave-washed rocky coasts and bays or sandy beaches. Although the greatest numbers are concentrated in the western Mediterranean, it occurs throughout the Mediterranean, breeding in small colonies east to coastal Turkey and Lebanon. Olsen and Larson (2004) gave context to the population increase, stating that the world population had grown from 1,000 pairs in 1966 to 22,000 pairs in 2000. They noted that in Spain they breed mainly in the Ebro Delta (0 in 1980, 10,500 pairs in 2000). Considerable numbers also breed in the Chafarinas (or Zafarin) Islands (4,136 pairs), which are a part of Spain situated off the northern coast of Morocco. They stated that around 825 pairs breed in the Balearics. Olsen (2018) indicated that some 2/3 of the world's population breeds at the Ebro Delta, Spain. Recently the breeding range has expanded to Algarve, Portugal. Olsen (2018) indicated the species breeds mainly on flat sandy islets with short vegetation, a different description from that in Svensson et al. (2023). Olsen and Larson (2004) mentioned that the culling of the Yellow-legged Gulls (*Larus michahellis*) enabled the Audouin's Gull population to increase.

Olsen and Larson (2004) described a regular southwest migration past Gibraltar from July-October and a return passage in March-April. They stated that most individuals spend the winter on the Moroccan coast; they are scarcer south to Mauritania, Senegal and the Gambia. They are regular on the Canary Islands in the winter. Olsen and Larson (2003) detailed accidental and casual records to western France (several), the UK (1), the Netherlands (1), Germany (1), Switzerland (5), Czech Republic (1), Georgia (1), Bulgaria (1), Türkiye (Sea of Marmara), Israel (17, six at Eilat), and Sinai (3). Olsen (2018) added that they are vagrants to southern Scandinavia and Jordan. The first record for the Azores came in 2009.

**New Information:**

The species was unknown in the Americas until recent years, but over the last decade there have been roughly a half dozen records from northern South America, including from Trinidad and Tobago, the first being from Trinidad in 2016. Photos from some of these records have been attached here, gleaned from eBird. No doubt the huge increase of the Ebro delta breeding population is an important factor contributing to these extralimital occurrences. Reports from



**Nigel Lallsingh, 10 Dec 2016,**  
Brickfield, Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo,  
Trinidad and Tobago ML90338661  
*Observation Details:* First record for Trinidad  
and the Western Hemisphere. eBird Checklist  
S43765380



**Matt Kelly, 13 Mar 2024,** Charlotteville,  
Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago  
ML616004395  
*Observation Details:* Found by Zolani Frank this  
morning. Head and breast all white, bill is bright  
red from base to 2/3 out, then a black stripe,  
with a dark orange tip. Eye colour is dark olive.  
Back is creamy light gray, with black tail feathers  
and gray legs and feet. Bird was keeping itself  
fairly solitary from the 200 or so Laughing Gulls  
in the area.  
eBird Checklist S164728508  
gray legs, red bill with black ring and light tip.  
eBird Checklist S155812267



**John Bruin, 05 Dec 2023,** Demerara Harbour  
Bridge, Guyana ML611915799  
*Observation Details:* First report of this species  
for Guyana! First seen by Steve Howell, sitting  
on a post in the river. Light gray body, greenish

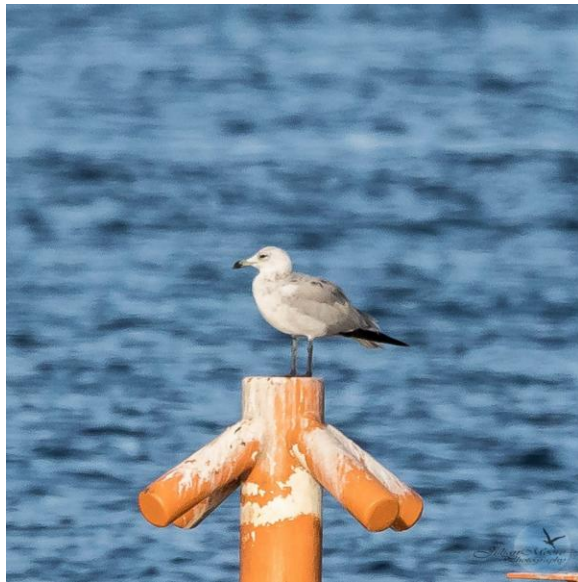


**Hugo Foxonet, 02 Apr 2023,** Pointe de la  
Roche Bleue, French Guiana ML557276121  
*Observation Details:* Probably the same as two  
years ago. eBird Checklist S132547221

eBird come from Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. These records include both adults and immatures, most of which are documented by photos.

### **Status in the NACC area:**

The first and to date only record of an Audouin's Gull for the NACC area was established on 20 June 2024 when a 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar-year bird was found at the Pile Bay Fishing Complex in St. Michael on Barbados. The bird was seen well and photographed and it remained until at least 12 October. The bird was found by Julian E. Moore and identification was confirmed by Ed Massiah. Photos were sent to Nigel Lallsingh, a friend of Ed's who was familiar with the species having found the first record for the Americas in Trinidad in 2016. It was thought to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird, but I believe the bill color indicates a younger bird.



**Julian E. Moore, 20 Jun 2024, Pile Bay, Saint Michael, Barbados ML620640949**  
*Observation Details:* ID confirmed by Ed Massiah. A white head, pronounced gonydeal angle, light gray mantle, dark primaries. Dark line on secondaries in flight - 1st record for

Barbados and the West Indies. eBird Checklist S182610062



**Michael St John, 28 Sep 2024, Pile Bay, Saint Michael, Barbados ML624321153**  
*Observation Details:* Continuing bird. Seems to have moulted and new feather pattern emerging resembling second summer plumage.  
eBird Checklist S196967149

This is a distinctive species and we have seen no reservations about the identification being of anything else other than an Audouin's Gull. Good separating characters of the immature on Barbados included the dark legs, sloping forehead, and long wings. Given the significant increase in the overall population, it would seem likely that more records will follow from the West Indian region and perhaps for the coastal southeastern United States.

**Recommendation:**

We recommend that this species be added to the main list. The identification is well-established and we see no issues involving origin. The record fits in with a suite of northern South American records. Given the very large increase in the world population, it should perhaps not be surprising that birds made it over to the Caribbean region. The fact that it is at least partly a pelagic species may have also facilitated birds reaching the Americas. It had long been predicted that the Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* would be the next new European gull to reach North America, but despite the northern expansion of its range into northwest Europe, it has yet to be recorded in the New World.

The gull is named for Jean Victor Audouin, who was born on 27 April 1797 in Paris and died there on 9 November 1841. He was well known for his entomological studies but also contributed to several other branches of natural history, including ornithology. B.C. Payraudeau in his *Annales des Sciences Naturelles* the first description of Audouin's Gull states that he found the gulls "tolerably abundant" around Corsica and Sardinia. He named the species after his friend Audouin. The above was gleaned from the account of Audouin in Mearns and Mearns (1988).

**Literature Cited:**

- Mearns, B. and R. Mearns. 1988. Biographies for Birdwatchers, The Lives of Those Commemorated in Western Palearctic Bird Names. Academic Press, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.
- Olsen, K.M. 2018. Gulls of the World, a Photographic Guide. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford.
- Olsen, K.M. and H. Larsson. 2004. Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford.
- Svensson, L., K. Mullarney and D. Zetterström. 2023. Birds of Europe, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. William Collins, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, London and Princeton University, Princeton.

**Submitted by:** Jon L. Dunn and Fernanda Araujo

**Date of Proposal:** 8 July 2026

**Add Little Swift *Apus affinis* to the Main List**

The Little Swift is a widespread polytypic species found in sub-Saharan Africa east to Southwest Asia. Although largely resident, northernmost and southernmost populations are at least partly migratory; the population in Türkiye is known only from the breeding season (Chantler and Driessens 1995). The population increased substantially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of adaptation to man-made habitats. In the Western Palearctic it is common to scarce and is best known from northwestern Africa but also breeds very locally in southern Spain (Svensson et al. 2023). Little Swifts breed colonially in towns and smaller villages, but also on cliff faces (Svensson et al. 2023). Individuals have occurred casually north to Ireland and the UK, where there were nine records up to the mid-1990's (Cottridge and Vinnicombe 1996).

**Status in the NACC area:**

The first record of Little Swift in the New World was established on Barbados on 3 June 2023 from the Emmy Bourne Highway, Cambridge, Saint Joseph. It was photographed by Julian E. Moore. Presumably the same bird, perhaps another, was photographed by David Hollie over the Barbados Hilton, Needhams Point, on 24-25 June 2023. Photos show a small dark swift with a white throat and a slightly notched tail. The bird was presumably *A. affinis*, although we haven't looked carefully at how the polytypic House Swift (*A. nipalensis*) of the Himalayas and East Asia, which shares the white throat and white rump, can be eliminated. Chantler and Driessens (1995) stated that the tail of *A. affinis* is "rather square-ended when closed and rounded when



**Julian E. Moore, 03 Jun 2023**, Emmy Bourne Highway, Cambridge, **Saint Joseph, Barbados**  
ML613989648



**Julian E. Moore, 03 Jun 2023**, Emmy Bourne Highway, Cambridge, **Saint Joseph, Barbados**  
ML61398964

*Observation Details:* White rump, throat patch, V tail. Positive ID made possible by the intensive work by GERALD Driessens (Swifts of the World) & Justin Jansen (Naturalis Biodiversity Center). This is a first record for Barbados and for the Americas. eBird Checklist S140353653 - Julian E. Moore, Jason Moore, R. McKay





**David Hollie, 24 Jun 2023**, Barbados Hilton at Needhams Point, **Saint Michael, Barbados**  
ML589181391

*Observation Details:* \*\*\*MEGA - I noticed a swift and immediately recognized it wasn't a Chaetura swift or Black Swift, the most likely swifts given the location. At first I thought the pale throat was from the light, but I still observed the paleness even when the throat was shadowed. Then it banked, revealing the white rump patch. Difficult ID made through the intensive work by GERALD Driessens (Swifts of the World) & Justin Jansen (Naturalis Biodiversity Center).

Probably the same bird as was seen 3 weeks ago in St Joseph district (but some speculation that they are two different birds), constituting the first Barbados and first Western Hemisphere record. eBird Checklist S142526956

open, although it sometimes seems rather uneven and often shows a slight cleft." Compared to Little Swift, the House Swift has a more pronounced tail-fork (5-8 mm), appears longer tailed, and is blacker overall.

We compared images of *A. affinis* on the Macaulay Library website (see next page) to the photos from Barbados, given that the "V tail" mentioned in the Observation Details on the Ermy Bourne Highway bird might be suggestive of a deeper notch. Some individuals in the photos of *A. affinis* are clearly square shaped, some have a very slight notch, and others show a more noticeable notch. On the next page are four photos of Little Swifts, one from Morocco, two from Spain and the individual photographed at Neehams Point, Barbados on 24 June 2023. The first two photos appear to show differing tail shapes, one squared, one slightly notched. The next two, including the Barbados bird show a very slight tail notch. They certainly appear to us to be of the same species, but we welcome other information on the identification, particularly if a different swift species might be involved..

### **Taxonomy:**

The Little Swift was formerly sometimes treated as conspecific with House Swift, as in Rasmussen and Anderton (2005): "The split of *Apus nipalensis* advocated by Sibley & Monroe (1990) is not adopted here, as there is a continuum of racial characters from west to east, a trend echoed from north to south in Indian Subcontinent. Vocalizations of all forms studied seem very similar. However, evidence for sympatry between *affinis* and *nipalensis* in Himalayas requires study."

Chantler and Driessens (1995) recognized six subspecies of Little Swift for which the partially migratory *galilejensis*, the taxon occurring in North Africa, might be the most likely. It is the palest of the subspecies. The subspecies to the south in Africa, *aerobates*, is darker, darker even than the nominate *affinis* (Chantler and Driessens 1995).



**António Gonçalves, 6 May 2013**  
 Larache - Alcácer Quibir  
**Tanger-Tétouan, Morocco**  
 ML73836901  
 – Typical squared tail



**Steve Kelling, 13 Jun 2016**  
 Chipiona--Puerto  
**Cádiz, Andalucía, Spain**  
 ML31441961  
 – Tail with slight notch



**Miguel Ángel Mora Quintana, 30 Aug 2022**  
 Chipiona--Puerto  
**Cádiz, Andalucía, Spain**  
 ML589370931  
 – Tail with very slight notch



**David Hollie, 24 Jun 2023**  
 Barbados Hilton at Needhams Point  
**Saint Michael, Barbados**  
 ML589181391  
 – Tail with slight notch

### **Recommendation:**

We do not claim to be swift experts, but the size, coloration, tail shape, and white rump certainly appear to indicate this species. The Little Swift has expanded its range and numbers in North Africa and is now found in southern Spain with records north to Ireland and the UK. We tentatively recommend accepting the identification of this individual as a Little Swift and adding the species to the main list. In addition, we see no origin issues with this record.

**Literature Cited:**

Chantler, P. and G. Driessens. 1995. Swifts, a Guide to the Swifts and Treeswifts of the World. Pica Press, Sussex.

Cottridge, D.M. and K. Vinicombe. 1996. Rare Birds of Britain & Ireland, a Photographic Record. Harper Collins Publishers.

Rasmussen, P.C. and J.C. Anderton. 2005. Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide. Volume 2. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D.C. and Barcelona.

Svensson, L., K. Mullarney and D. Zetterström. 2023. Birds of Europe, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. William Collins, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, London and Princeton University, Princeton.

**Submitted by:** Jon L. Dunn and Fernanda Araujo

**Date of Proposal:** 8 July 2026

**Add Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* to the Main List**

The Squacco Heron is one of a group of related Old World species, which includes Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Indian Pond-Heron *A. grayii*, Chinese Pond-Heron *A. bacchus*, Javan Pond-Heron *A. speciosa*, Madagascar or Malagasy Pond-Heron *A. idae*, and Rufous-bellied Heron *A. rufiventris*. Of these, Squacco Heron and Chinese Pond-Heron are the most migratory. Basic plumaged Squacco Heron, Indian Pond-Heron, Chinese Pond-Heron, and Javan Pond-Heron are all very similar and at least in Southeast Asia where two species are found (e.g., in parts of Thailand), no effort is made to separate birds in basic plumage to species. Rufous-bellied Heron appears distinct in all plumages.

The Squacco Heron is a widespread breeder in the western Palearctic, breeding largely in Europe, but breeds east to southwest Asia and largely winters in Africa, mostly south of the Sahara. It is a rare or casual stray to northern Europe, including the UK and Fennoscandia, and has reached the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, Cabo Verde and the Azores.

**Status in the NACC area:**

There are three recent records for the Lesser Antilles (Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Barbados), all of which are substantiated by photos in the associated eBird reports (see photos on subsequent pages):

**10 November 2018** - Terrain de foot du Bourg (La Désirade), Guadeloupe: photos of basic plumaged bird.

**4 April 2021** - Champs Quest Etang du Galion, Martinique: photo of alternate plumaged bird with straw-colored back and bill with yellow base and dark tip.

**26 Nov. 2021** - Graeme Hall Swamp, Christ Church, Barbados: photos of basic plumaged bird.

The photos of the Guadeloupe and Barbados birds show birds in basic plumage and although very probably of Squacco Herons, we are uncertain that Indian Pond-Heron and Chinese Pond-Heron can be eliminated from consideration. The latter species has been recorded twice in western Alaska (Attu and St. Lawrence Islands, both photographed birds in striking alternate plumage). On the other hand, the Martinique bird is in alternate plumage and thus can be identified with confidence as a Squacco Heron.

## Recommendation:

We believe that the records from the Lesser Antilles, all documented with photos, are clearly of *Ardeola* herons and on probability, Squacco Heron is by far the most likely species from these Leeward Islands. An argument could be made to accept all three as Squacco Herons, but in any event the spring bird from Martinique (shown above) is in alternate plumage and we believe leaves no doubt that it is a Squacco Heron. We recommend that *A. ralloides* be added to the main list.

**Submitted by:** Jon L. Dunn and Fernanda Araujo

**Date of Proposal:** 9 July 2026



**Anthony Levesque, 10 Nov 2018**, Terrain de foot du bourg (La Désirade), Guadeloupe  
ML122883771

*Observation Details:* 1ère donnée Guadeloupe, Caraïbes, Amérique du Nord... [First record: Guadeloupe, Caribbean, North America...] eBird Checklist S49838084



**Anthony Levesque, 10 Nov 2018**, Terrain de foot du bourg (La Désirade), Guadeloupe  
ML122883821



**Glyn Foley/Ryan Chenery, 26 Nov 2021**,  
Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary, Christ Church,

Barbados ML391074231

*Observation Details:* Good views of streaking on head and neck sides and of two-toned beak. Plumage is white and buff. Yellow legs. Bird first seen by Glyn and Helen Foley. **Photo by Glyn Foley.**

eBird Checklist S269658823 - Ryan Chenery





**Julian E. Moore, 27 Nov 2021**, Graeme Hall Swamp - East Side, Christ Church, Barbados ML391449121

Observation Details: continuing bird  
eBird Checklist S98150387 - Julian E. Moore, Jason Moore, Sahara Moore and Sophia Moore



**Beatriz Conde, 04 Apr 2021**, Champs Ouest Etang du Galion, Martinique ML640861538

Observation Details: première donnée pour la Martinique. [First record for Martinique]  
eBird Checklist S313000509- Beatriz Conde and David Belfan

### Add White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* to the Main List

The White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* is a widespread species in South America although it is absent from the Pacific slope (Turner and Rose 1989). It is largely a resident species, although southernmost austral breeders in northern Argentina and Brazil (presumably Paraguay as well) are present only in the breeding season from September to mid-April. Turner and Rose indicated that where those austral southern breeders go in the non-breeding season (late April through August) is not known, but they presumed they are found then in the northern part of the breeding range in the Guianas, Venezuela and Colombia. The species is also resident on Trinidad where Ffrench (1991) termed it a “very local resident in Trinidad, not uncommon at Pointe-a-Pierre, also seen at various points of the W and S coasts from Chaguaramas to Erin, and at Navet Reservoir; usually found near water, especially reservoirs.” Ffrench (1991) wrote that it is less gregarious than other swallows, usually seen as singles or small groups, rarely up to 20 together. The species coloration and habits (around water) remind us of a larger Mangrove Swallow (*Tachycineta albilinea*), but it lacks the white supraloral stripe and, of course, has a strikingly different spread wing pattern.

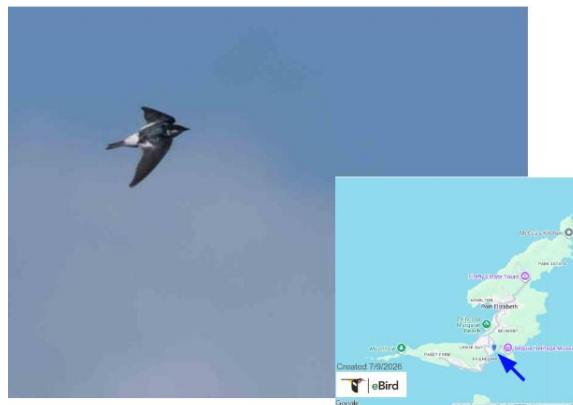
#### Status in the NACC area:

In recent years (since 2019) White-winged Swallows have been present on Grenada and have presumably bred locally since juvenile birds have been seen. There are over 70 eBird reports. One was also recorded on Carriacou Island just north of the main island of Grenada. In addition to those records there is an older sight record on 10 August 1993 from Martinique, plus one photographed at the south end of Bequia in the Grenadines. Although outside of our area there are numerous recent records for Tobago; these also include photos of adults feeding young. Ffrench (1991) did not mention any records for Tobago.



#### Martinique historical records 972, 10 Aug 1993, Schoelcher, Martinique

Observation Details: Observed by Arnaud Le Dru  
eBird Checklist S15002730 (no photo)



#### Gordon Biggs, 18 Jan 2023, Bequia Marina Grenadines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines ML530457681

Observation Details: Flying at about 50 feet from the shore at height of about 50 feet.  
eBird Checklist S127387991



**Kenrith Carter and Kate Charles, 24 Sep 2020**

Carriacou Island--Roseau Pond

Southern Grenadine Islands, Grenada

*Observation Details:* White rump and patch on wings.

Glossy bluish back. White underparts. Seen with barn swallows foraging over pond.

eBird Checklist S74010791 (no photo)



**Will Wright and Kim Nelson, 26 Dec 1993**

Coyaba Beach Resort, Saint George, Grenada

eBird Checklist S305732475 (no photo)



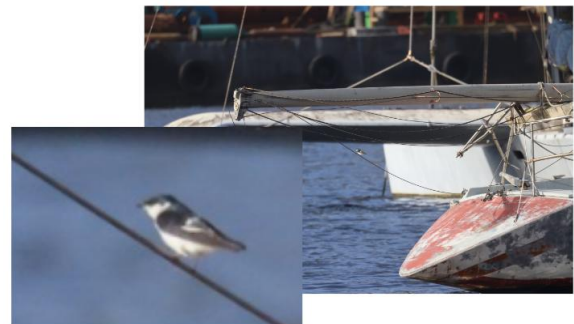
**Archipelagics Birding, 25 Jun 2019**

Port Louis, Saint George, Grenada

ML249742751

eBird Checklist S71545684

-First eBird record with photo



**Prakash V.A.K. Ramdass, 15 May 2026**

Woburn MPA - Observation Tower

Saint George, Grenada ML657635964

eBird Checklist S339217753

-Most recent eBird record with photo





**Kenrith Carter, 2 Jun 2023**

National Stadium, Saint George, Grenada

ML580498431 (cropped)

*Observation Details:* photo 2 adult 5 juvenile.

eBird Checklist S71545684



**David Hollie, 20 Jun 2023**

Town of St. George, Saint George, Grenada

ML603350911

*Observation Details:* Continuing, presumably one of the birds reported by Kenrith Carter and Kate Charles. Juvenile feeding with Caribbean Martin over the canal on the south side of the Grenada National Cricket Stadium. eBird Checklist S142217355

In Colombia the species' range gets very near the Panama border on the Caribbean coast and we note that the species is on the Panama Avibase bird checklist with the annotation as rare or accidental. Louis Bevier pointed out to us that there is an eBird record of three birds together from the Darién on 6 July 1996. The sighting was made from a boat by Gilles Seutin and includes a convincing description. Louis knows the observer and stated that he is very trustworthy. The List of the Birds of the Republic of Panama compiled by the Records Committee of the Panama Audubon Society shows the 1996 record was accepted based on the documentation included in the published note by D. Engleman (The Toucan, 1997, 23(3):4-6. The report can be found on the eBird checklist S208944985 submitted by Gilles Seutin. This is the only record for Panama and since there was no photo, the record is treated on the official Panama list as hypothetical, but we find the description pretty convincing. In any event, the species will no doubt soon be documented in Panama.



**Gilles Seutin, 6 July 1996, Darién, Panama - eBird checklist S208944985**

## Recommendation:

Documentation of *T. albiventer* from the NACC area, in the form of photos from Grenada (many records) and a photo of the single record from Bequia in the Grenadines, is convincing. We recommend that the species be added to the main list. We should add that there is a credible sight record from Darién, eastern Panama.

**Acknowledgement:** We thank Louis R. Bevier for assistance with this proposal.

## Literature Cited:

French, R. A. 1991. Guide to the Birds of Trinidad & Tobago. Comstock Publishing Associates, a Division of Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.  
 Turner, A., and C. Rose. 1989. Swallows & Martins, an Identification Guide and Handbook. Houghton Mifflin Company.

**Submitted by:** Jon L. Dunn and Fernanda Araujo

**Date of Proposal:** 9 July 2026

### Treat Little Swift *Apus affinis* and House Swift *A. nipalensis* as a single species

*Note from Chair:* The proposal below was originally submitted to AviList's Tropical Asian Regional Advisory Group and later to AviList's Taxonomic Committee, both of which approved the proposal unanimously. NACC added *Apus nipalensis* to Appendix 1 of the Checklist in Chesser et al. (2019) and this year is considering a proposal (2026-C-6) to add *A. affinis* to the Main List based on recent records from Barbados. Because *A. nipalensis* was originally added to the Checklist under the two-species taxonomy, it is necessary for us to consider a proposal to adopt the single-species taxonomy. Adoption of the single-species taxonomy will resolve most questions regarding the species-level identification of the birds in Proposal 2026-C-6.

#### AviList proposal

#### Apodidae: Lump *Apus nipalensis* with *Apus affinis*

These are treated as two distinct species in AviList and this proposal examines the validity of this treatment. The null hypothesis is that all taxa under *Apus affinis* and *Apus nipalensis* belong to a single species.

Draft 1 (20082025): Initial draft submitted to Tropical Asian RAG by Praveen J & Tim Inskipp

Draft 2 (22092025): Comments from James Eaton, Keren Sadanandan, Wich'yanan (Jay) Limparungpatthanakij, and Bob Dowsett incorporated. All agree with the proposal.

AviList 1.0

| Taxa                               | Authority                             | Range                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Apus nipalensis nipalensis</i>  | ( <a href="#">Hodgson, BH, 1837</a> ) | Nepal to southeastern China, Myanmar, Thailand, Indochina, and Philippines                                            |
| <i>Apus nipalensis subfurcatus</i> | ( <a href="#">Blyth, E. 1849</a> )    | Malayan Peninsula to Borneo, Sumatra, and adjacent islands; perhaps this form spreading through Sulawesi and Moluccas |
| <i>Apus nipalensis furcatus</i>    | <a href="#">Brooke, RK, 1971</a>      | Java and Bali; probably this form spreading through Lesser Sundas                                                     |
| <i>Apus nipalensis kuntzi</i>      | <a href="#">Deignan, HG, 1958</a>     | Taiwan                                                                                                                |

|                                  |                                        |                                                                                |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Apus affinis galilejensis</i> | ( <a href="#">Antinori, O. 1855</a> )  | northern and sub-Saharan Africa and eastward to Pakistan                       |
| <i>Apus affinis bannermani</i>   | <a href="#">Hartert, EJO. 1928</a>     | Bioko, São Tomé, and Príncipe (Gulf of Guinea)                                 |
| <i>Apus affinis aerobates</i>    | <a href="#">Brooke, RK. 1969</a>       | southwestern Mauritania to Ethiopia, Somalia, central Angola, and South Africa |
| <i>Apus affinis theresae</i>     | <a href="#">Meinertzhagen, R. 1949</a> | western and southern Angola to southern Zambia and South Africa                |
| <i>Apus affinis affinis</i>      | ( <a href="#">Gray, JE. 1830</a> )     | southern Somalia to northern Mozambique, Pemba Island, and Zanzibar, to India  |
| <i>Apus affinis singalensis</i>  | <a href="#">Madarász, G. 1911</a>      | southern India and Sri Lanka                                                   |

#### Diagnosability of *A. nipalensis* (following [Birds of the World](#))

1. Slightly longer tail.
2. Slight, though usually discernible, tail fork.
3. Blacker, notably on head and tail-coverts.
4. Narrower white rump band.

#### Diagnosability of *A. nipalensis* in South Asia (where they 'meet' *A. affinis*) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012)

1. Smaller and better-defined white throat-patch.
2. Narrower white rump-band, not visible from below.
3. Little or no pale on forehead.
4. The tail is more definitely forked than *affinis* s.s., but less forked than eastern subspecies of *nipalensis* s. l. Tail can appear rounded when fanned.

#### Subspecies Diagnosability (following [Birds of the World](#))

5. *subfurcatus*: **blacker**, especially on the upper head (vis-a-vis *nipalensis*).
6. *furcatus*: has the deepest **tail-fork** and browner underparts.
7. *kuntzi*: intermediate between *nipalensis* and *subfurcatus*, with the most heavily streaked rump of any subspecies.
8. *galilejensis*: very pale, especially on tail-coverts and forehead (vis-a-vis *affinis*).
9. *theresae*: like *galilejensis*, but with slightly darker upper-tail coverts.
10. *aerobates*: **darker** (vis-a-vis *affinis*), especially on wings and tail, with '*gyratus*' birds **darkest** and largest within the *affinis* group.
11. *bannermani*: **darkest** subspecies, with heaviest throat-streaking.
12. *singalensis*: **blacker** (vis-a-vis *affinis*), especially on head and uppertail-coverts, some showing slight **tail-fork**.

## Types of the species

*Cypselus Nipalensis* Hodgson, 1837, central region of Nepal, restricted to Kathmandu Valley, Nepal by B. Biswas

*Cypselus affinis* J. E. Gray, 1830, Ganges [=Ganga], India, restricted to Cawnpore [=Kanpur] by E. C. Stuart Baker

## Traditional Treatments

### Treatment as two distinct species - *Apus affinis* and *Apus nipalensis*

- All editions of *Howard & Moore* from 2nd edition corrigenda onwards.
- All versions of BirdLife International from 2007 (V.00) onwards.
- All versions of Clements checklist from 4th edition onwards.
- All versions of IOC checklist from 1.0 onwards.

### Treatment as a single species

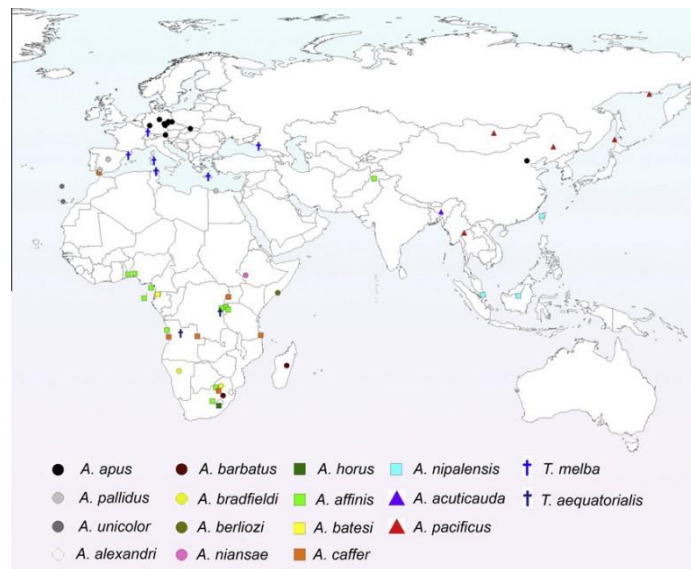
- All versions of Peter's checklist.
- Vaurie's checklist of Western Palearctic
- All editions of *Howard & Moore* up to and including 2nd edition
- Both editions of *Birds of South Asia - the Ripley Guide* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005, 2012)
- All editions of Birds of the Indian Subcontinent including Grimmett *et al.* 2011.

No other taxonomic treatment has ever been proposed.

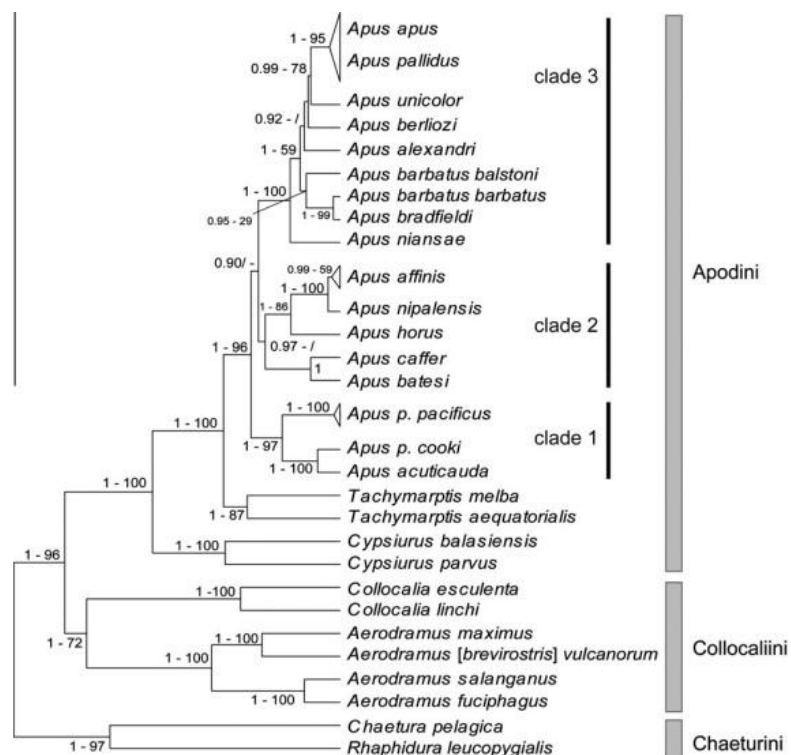
## Genetics

In a molecular phylogeny study ([Päckert \*et al.\* 2012](#)) for Old World swifts of genera *Apus* and *Tachymarptis* (tribe *Apodini*) based on a taxon-complete sampling at the species level with phylogenetic reconstructions based on two mitochondrial and three nuclear markers, all samples under both species clustered in an African-Asian clade along with *A. caffer*, *A. batesi*, and *A. horus*. *A. affinis* and *A. nipalensis* were consistently found to be paraphyletic but the work did not strongly recommend a taxonomic consequence due to limitations in sampling. There were no samples from the Himalaya; except for an *A. affinis* specimen from Pakistan, no other samples from the Indian subcontinent were used, and *A. nipalensis* sample was from Taiwan (see Fig.1 below). Despite having no specimens from the presumed contact zone, molecular evidence for this split was equivocal. **They suggested a classification retaining both under the same species, as in Peters (1940) & Vaurie (1965), despite the morphological distinctiveness on grounds of tail furcation.**

Incomplete mitochondrial lineage sorting with cytochrome-b haplotypes shared among species and across large geographic distances was observed in this pair. Mitochondrial introgression caused by extant or past gene flow was ruled out as an explanation for the low interspecific differentiation because all nuclear markers appeared to be highly unsorted among other *Apus* species too. Apparently, these originated from very recent dispersal and/or speciation events, they concluded.

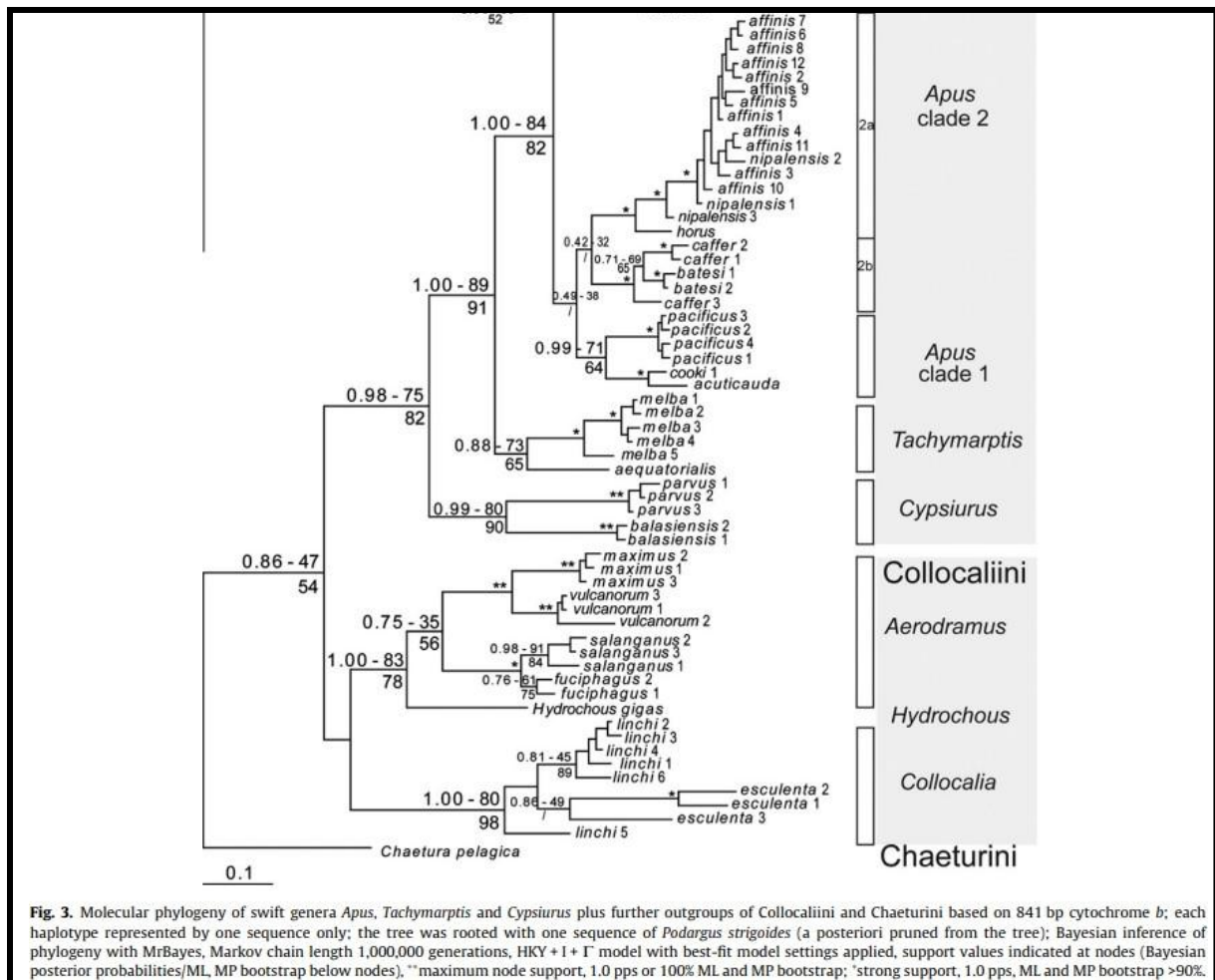


**Fig. 1.** Origin of samples used in this study, shown for 17 swift species of genera *Apus* and *Tachymarptis*; map based on georeferenced locality data, constructed with DIVA-GIS 5.2.0.2 (Hijmans et al., 2001).



**Fig. 2.** Multigene phylogeny of Old World swifts based on 3601 bp of concatenated mitochondrial and nuclear sequences (cytb: 887 bp; 12S rRNA: 1016 bp; fib7: 951 bp; GAPDH11: 372 bp; 12884: 375 bp); Bayesian inference of phylogeny BEAST, Markov chain length 30,000,000 generations, burnin: 9000, partitioned by gene and codon (codon partition for cytb); the tree was rooted with *Amazilia tzacatl* as a distant outgroup (a posteriori pruned from the tree; multiple outgroups a priori assigned in RAxML analysis *Amazilia* plus the two Chaeturini sequences); node support from posterior probabilities and from likelihood analysis with RAxML indicated at nodes; species showing intraspecific fragment length polymorphism (marker 12884) represented by two different individuals (*A. p. pacificus* and *A. affinis*), also two Palearctic species showing strong incomplete mitochondrial lineage sorting (*A. apus*, *A. pallidus*) represented by two individuals each; for *A. alexandri* only mitochondrial sequences were available.





## Morphology (museum studies)

[Abdulali \(1966\)](#) and [Brooke \(1971\)](#) are the two works that examined the morphology of the specimens in the museum collections.

Abdulali found some differences in the Nepal specimens from the Indian specimens but found the Sri Lankan specimens to be intermediate in terms of the shades of upper plumage. He did not propose a clear two-way divide amongst the examined subspecies, and hence the variation seems to be largely clinal. Also, see [Abdulali \(1972\)](#).

[Brooke](#)'s analysis was no different - though the darkest subspecies was clearly *subfurcatus*, a range of intermediate features were described in other subspecies and a clean phylogeny based on morphology and morphometrics seem impossible. However, Brooke made a closing statement that served as the defining suggestion of this split.

**"If *nipalensis* does not intergrade with nominate *affinis*, are the long and fork tailed, barred races of east Asia a separate species despite the similarity in breeding habits?"**

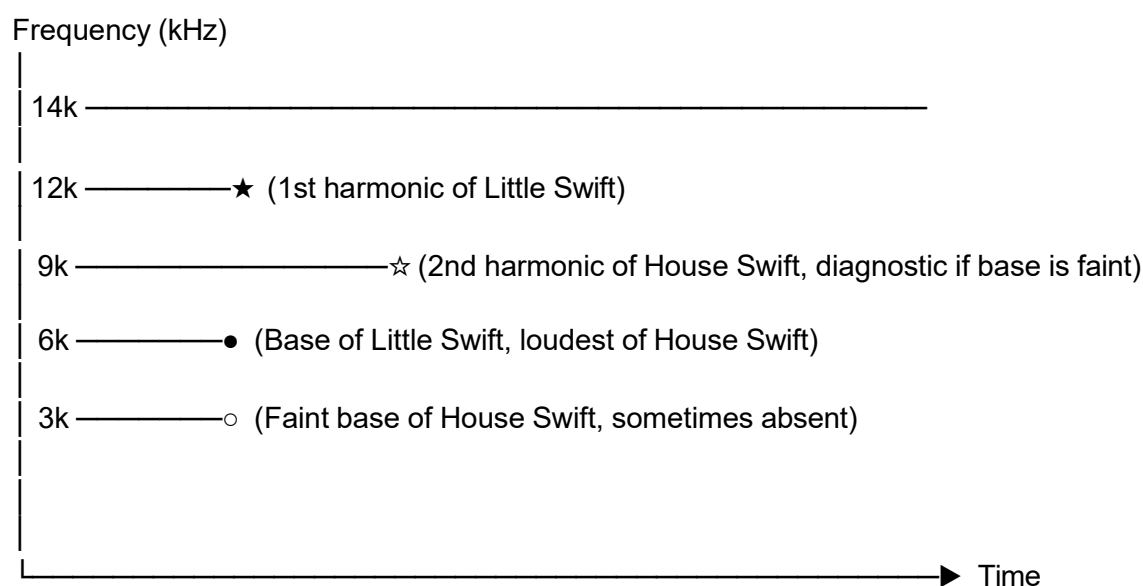


## Vocalisations

There are no published studies examining the vocalisation of different populations. However, the following detail from the [Birds of the World](#) (presumably by P. F. Boesman), that seem to indicate different harmonic spacing for the trill call (6 KHz for *A. affinis* and 3 Khz for *A. nipalensis*) -

- *A. nipalensis* has a faint base frequency around 3kHz (sometimes seemingly absent).
- *A. affinis* typically has trill starting around 6kHz [=loudest] with first harmonic at **12kHz**. For *A. nipalensis*, the loudest harmonic is at 6kHz, and next one at **9kHz**.

Details of the sample size and their geography are not provided. However, no clear differentiation within the subspecies of *A. affinis*, as per this analysis.



*An illustration of the differences mentioned in Birds of the World*

Aurally, *A. affinis* calls may be more shriller, metallic and clearer while *A. nipalensis* calls sound a bit grating or slightly harsher or raspy. Please listen to the recordings in *Merlin - affinis* from Kenya and *nipalensis* from Malaysia.

## Identification complexities based on morphology

Separation based mainly on constantly longer, more forked tail and narrower rump-band is questionable for the South Asian subspecies. Although the longest tailed *nipalensis* are outside the range of *affinis*, there is considerable overlap. It is likely that no specimens from the western Himalaya (Himachal Pradesh east to Nuwakot) have been sampled, thus leaving open the possibility that tail length and other measurements are clinal. The width of the rump-band is not a useful feature – based on measurements [n=120] in [Abdulali \(1966\)](#) *affinis* in north-west India have a narrower band than *nipalensis* from Kathmandu. Infact [Abdulali \(1966\)](#) could not assign a particular specimen from Mumbai to either *affinis* or *nipalensis* group. No information on measurements of the depth of the tail-fork in *A. n. nipalensis* has been traced but a drawing of the tail (locality of specimen not stated) in Chantler and Driessens (2000) shows a very slight fork compared with other eastern subspecies, and this may be matched

by some individuals of [A. \*affinis singalensis\*](#) from Sri Lanka or [northern Kerala](#), which ‘can show slight tail-fork’ (Chantler and Driessens 2000). Birds from south-west India are believed to be *singalensis* or related to the same ([Abdulali 1966](#)). A review of photographs on the Macaulay Library website indicates that geographical variation in the extent of the tail-fork is complex and requires further investigation. Some individuals that should be *affinis*, e.g. from Gujarat ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)) and West Bengal ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) show a slight tail-fork – and one migrant from [Lakshadweep](#) shows a very distinct fork. Conversely, individuals that should be *nipalensis*, e.g. from [Sikkim](#), Hong Kong ([1](#), [2](#)) and Malaysia ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)) show no fork, whereas [one nesting individual from Jalpaiguri \(West Bengal\)](#) shows a much deeper fork than *A. n. nipalensis* as illustrated by Chantler & Driessens (2000). However, there are a few Andaman records where the photographed birds ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) almost certainly belong to *subfurcatus*, making them the westernmost distribution for that subspecies.

### Identification complexities based on vocalization

There is a very small number of good quality *trill* recordings in public domain (ML & XC) from the region of interest - Nepal, NE India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, W. Bengal, Myanmar, and Thailand. However, listen to the more grating [recordings](#) of birds from the range of *A. a. singalensis* - making it once again difficult to assign a clean phylogeny. Similarly, recordings from the *affinis* range like this one from [South Africa](#) sounds as grating as recordings from [Taiwan](#) or [Malaysia](#), making vocal separation really hard or even impossible.

### Sympatry

Potential sympatry in the Himalaya questionable.

The only evidence for the occurrence of *A. affinis* in Nepal is the presence of 14 specimens in the collection of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (2008), all collected from Nuwakot, Nuwakot District, in March 1967, by [C. Maser](#). Three of these are described as embryos, five more as nestlings preserved in alcohol, and the remaining six are described as preserved in alcohol (see Fig. 4, 5). Most of them show a slight tail-fork, like that of *A. n. nipalensis* illustration in Chantler & Driessens (2000). There are also several specimens of *A. nipalensis* in the same collection, collected from Hetauda in May-June 1947 by Koelz and Rupchand, and examined by B. Biswas ([Biswas 1961](#)). [Brooke \(1971\)](#) gave the distribution of *A. affinis* as extending ‘into the foothills of the Himalaya as far as Hetora [Hetauda] in Nepal, beyond which it is replaced by *nipalensis* there and in the Assam hills.’ He provided no reference for this information but in his introduction he stated that ‘I have seen material from the places named except where an authority is cited.’ Presumably he examined the material in FMNH and considered that Hetauda specimens were *affinis* not *nipalensis*. There are no specimens of *affinis/nipalensis* from Nepal west of Nuwakot so it is not possible to verify Brooke’s statement that all birds west of that site are *affinis*.

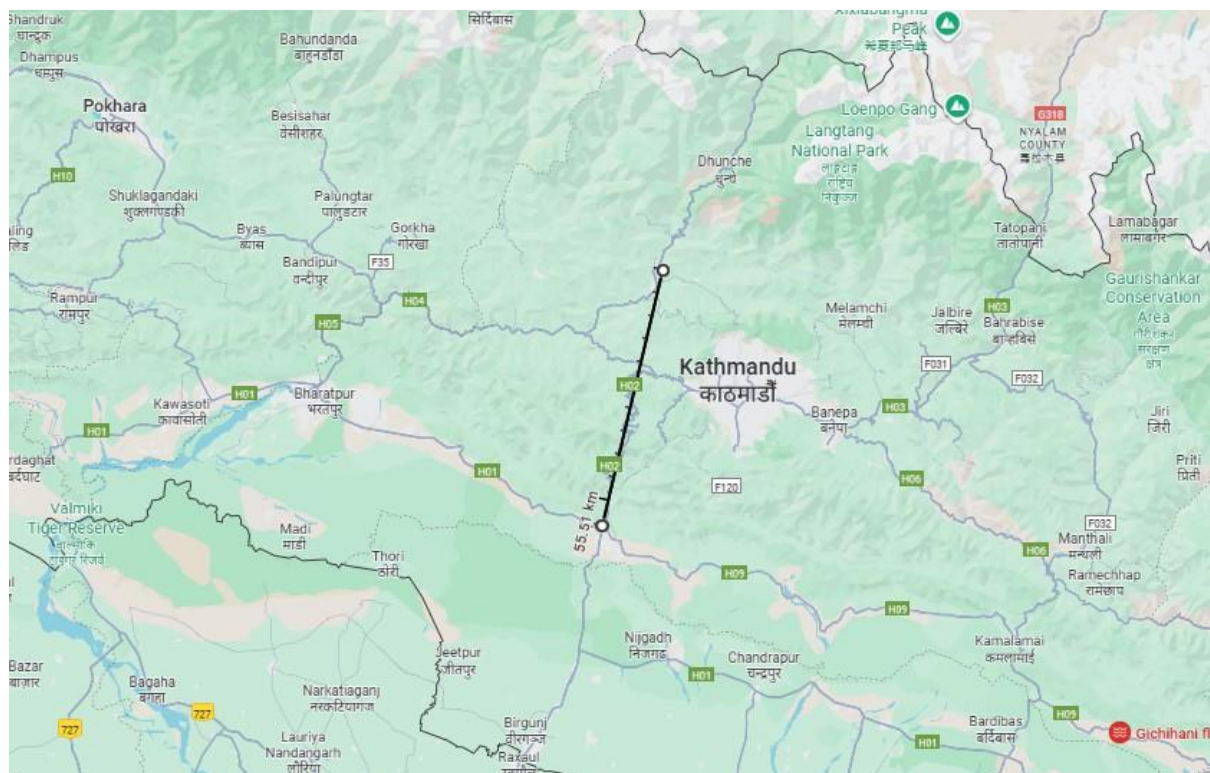


Fig 4. Map showing the proximity of Nuwakot district (north point, where Fig 5, 6 came from) and Hetauda (south point).



Fig 5. Photos of *Apus affinis/nipalensis* (dorsal) from Nuwakot, Nepal. Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH





Fig 6. Photos of *Apus affinis/nipalensis* (ventral) from Nuwakot, Nepal. Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH

Photographs of the full series (Fig. 7-11) indicate that presence of a tail fork/notch does not seem to be a useful feature in Nepal. Colouration of the upper parts is variable with extreme examples visibly different - but no clear way to separate them into two groups.



Fig 7. A series from Hetauda, Nepal (ventral view). Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH



Fig 8. Dorsal view of the same series as Fig. 7. As can be seen there is a gradation on the upper part colours, particularly on the crown and forehead, with some individuals being at the extremes of the scale while others being intermediate. Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH



Fig. 9: Two specific individuals from the above series depicted to show the extremes. In the photo of the full series, these are the fourth and the first specimen from the left. Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH



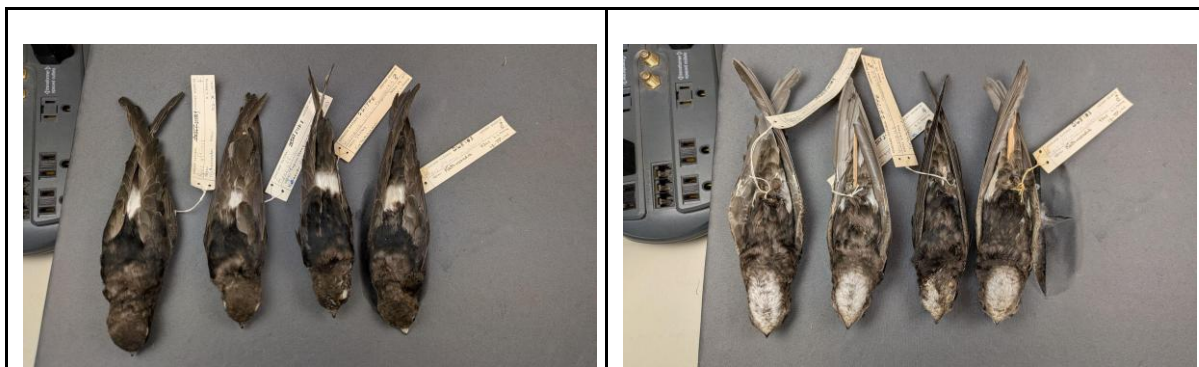


Fig. 10. Specimens from Kathmandu. Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH

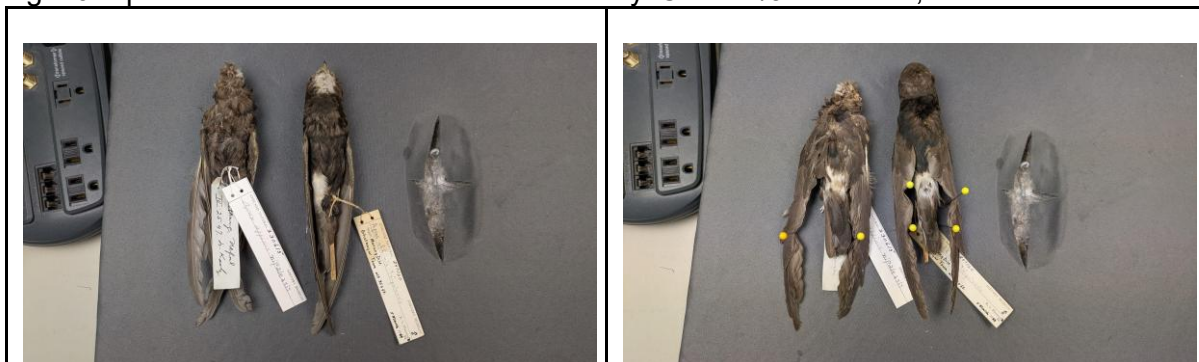


Fig. 11. Specimen from Chitlang, near Kathmandu (left) and from Morang district (right) in extreme SE Nepal, in the terai. See map below. Photo: Daryl Coldren/John Bates, FMNH

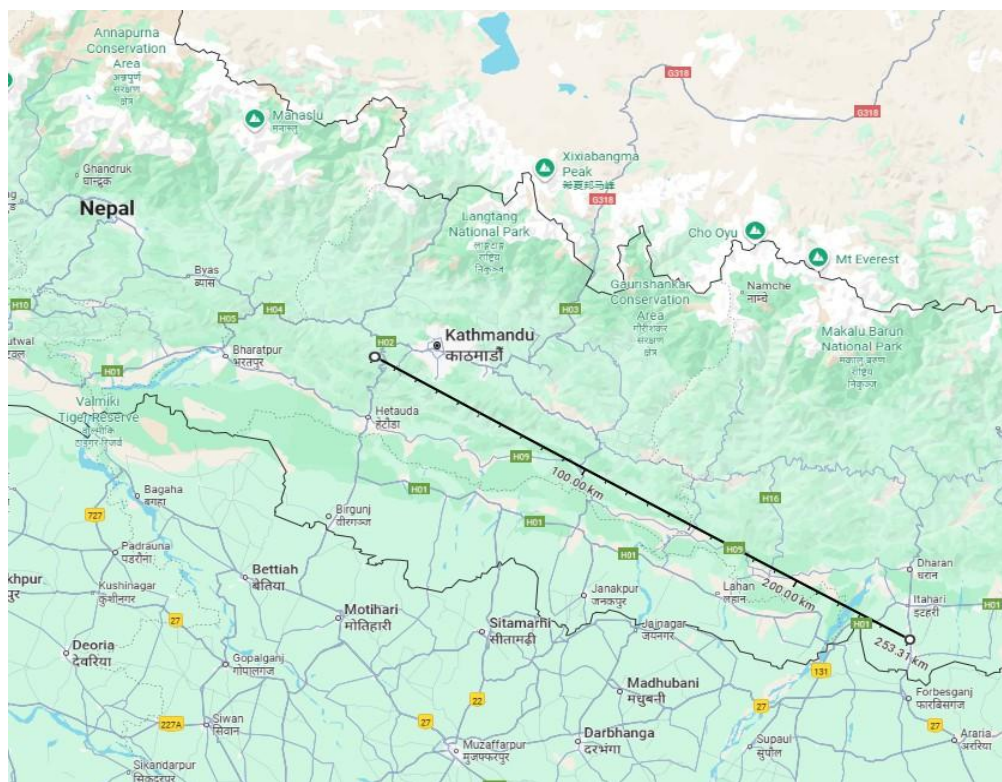


Fig. 12. Map showing the location of Chitlang near Kathmandu and Morang in SE Nepal

## Conflict

A further complication arises from [Hodgson's \(1837\)](#) original description of *nipalensis*: 'Sooty black, glossed with green: chin, throat, and top of the neck in front, confluent white: a white bar across the rump: talons and bill, black: iris brown: nude part of toes, dusky-grey. Size small; 5½ by 12½ inches; and barely one oz. in weight: sexes alike: structure typical: tail, short and even.' Note the lack of forked tail. [Brooke \(1971\)](#) seems to have been the first author to describe *nipalensis* with a forked tail but he may have only examined specimens from the eastern part of its range, i.e. extralimital to the Indian subcontinent. It was necessary to re-examine the type specimen(s) of *nipalensis* in the Natural History Museum, where four specimens were listed by [Salvin & Hartert \(1892\)](#) but it is not included in [Warren's \(1966\)](#) type catalogue, so presumably the specimens have been overlooked as possible types, or have been dismissed as not types. The specimen has now been located and it lacks a fork in the tail (Fig. 13).



Fig 13. Hodgson 'type' specimen of *Apus nipalensis* from Nepal, NHMUK #1845.1.9.549 '[type label removed](#)'. Photo: Tim Inskipp

## Possible alternative two-species treatments

1. Recognise *nipalensis* (and *kuntzi*?) as belonging to the *affinis* group, with the remaining subspecies in that group bundled under the oldest name - *subfurcatus* - the depth of the tail-fork might be the main (only?) defining features.
2. Recognise *singalensis* as belonging to the *nipalensis* group.



These require more work in the future with possibly a biogeographic study of all subspecies and diversification patterns.

## Conclusion

There is no current published evidence that demonstrates *A. affinis/nipalensis* complex is more than one species due to below reasons.

- Clear morphological features that can segregate all subspecies in *affinis* group and all subspecies in *nipalensis* group do not exist. Features like the width of rump band and extent of tail fork defined previously to separate the subspecies are untenable due to overlap. Even specimens in hand are difficult to assign to subspecies. Morphological traits may be clinal.
- No published analysis for different vocalisations with sufficient sample sizes.
- Presumed sympatry in Nepal is not proven and probably does not exist.
- Published diagnosability not valid for the type specimen of *nipalensis*.
- Molecular phylogeny equivocal and recommends single species.

Considering the taxonomic uniformity of Avilist, the situation is similar to other cases (e.g. *Apus pacificus*, *Saxicola maurus*) where Avilist voted to keep species lumped together when evidence is equivocal or sampling was sparse.

Hence, we propose *A. nipalensis* and all its subspecies be treated as subspecies of *A. affinis* in Avilist.

Side Remark: Historical changes in subspecies distribution likely play a role, for e.g, southern *aerobates* and northern *galilejensis* now come into contact in Mauritania and Western Sahara. However, addressing this issue falls under the responsibility of the African RAG.

Acknowledgements: Daryl Coldren and John Bates from FMNH so kindly analysed their skins and sent us numerous photographs to elucidate the problem, we acknowledge their help, and also, all RAG members for their comments and suggestions.

- Tim Inskipp & Praveen J

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## Recommendation for NACC:

For the many reasons enumerated in the excellent and thorough AviList proposal, I recommend that *A. affinis* and *A. nipalensis* be treated as the single species *A. affinis*. This will require one of the following additional actions:

(1) If Proposal 2026-C-6 passes, then Little Swift *A. affinis* will be added to the Main List, *A. nipalensis* will be removed from the Appendix, and the record of *A. nipalensis* currently listed in the Appendix will be listed under *A. affinis*.

(2) If Proposal 2026-C-6 does not pass, then the account for *A. nipalensis* in the Appendix will be replaced by an account for *A. affinis*.

**Submitted by:** Tim Inskipp and Praveen J, slightly modified for NACC by Terry Chesser

**Date of Proposal:** 10 August 2026