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American
Flamingos
in the U.S.

Pochard
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The ABA
Checklist
Committee
in an
Evolving
World



The ABA Checklist Committee in an Evolving World

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At the benefit of dating myself, I recently pulled out my first life list, logged in the original version of Jim Tucker's *Combination List for Birds of North America*, published in 1968. My earliest entry was of a Kirtland's Warbler—perhaps soon to be Jack Pine Warbler, but I am *not* going there in this piece—on 7 Jun 1966, when I was eight years old. My father and I observed it while on a family camping trip near Jones Lake, Michigan, en route to Hawaii from Washington, D.C. I had kept lists before this, but decided to christen my "Tucker" with this as the earliest entry, and later, dutifully listed every bird that I saw in every state through my teenage years. My family had bounced back to D.C. for this formative period of mine, and when they returned to Hawaii in 1975, my dad left me his '65 VW bug as a high school graduation present. *See you later!* I was off to bird North America. These days, I'm pleased to see some younger birders following in my tire tracks. Among these is San Francisco's Logan Kahle, for whom the vehicle of choice is now a beat-up 2013 Toyota Prius.

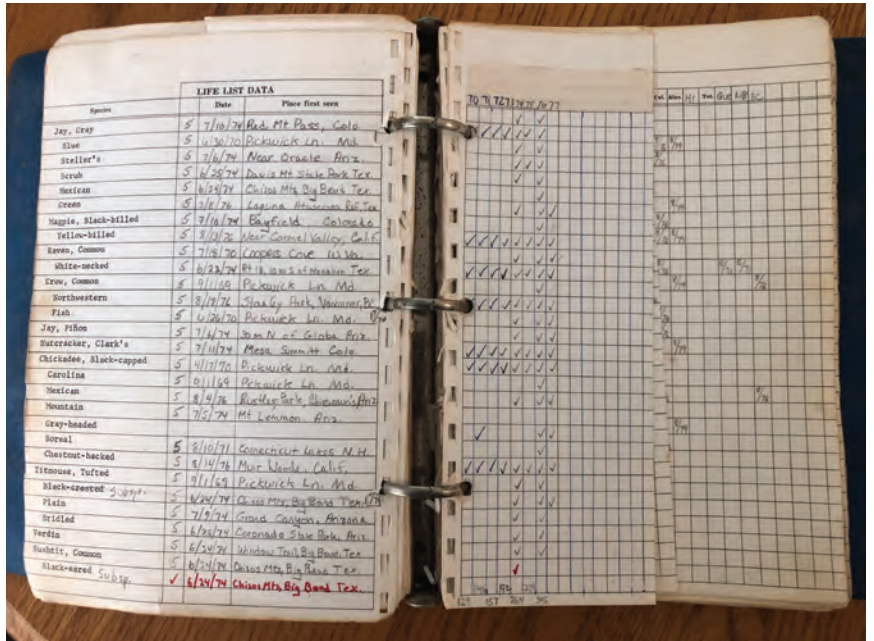
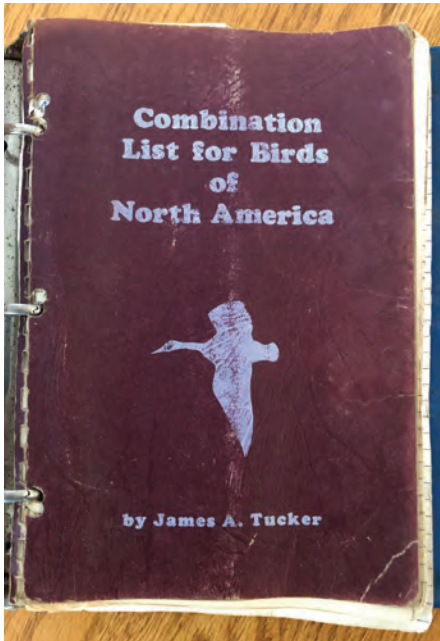
Flipping through the perforated pages and semi-pages of my *Tucker* I noted that I'd seen Sparrow Hawk on 21 Feb 1970, Wood Ibis on 15 Aug 1970, Screech Owl on 28 May 1972, Wied's Crested Flycatcher on 29 Jun 1974, Lichtenstein's Oriole on 8 Mar 1976, and New Zealand Shearwater on 22 Aug 1976, but I had yet to see Scaled Petrel, Cape Pigeon, or Ground Chat. Would today's young—and perhaps not so young—birders even know what those species are? Bird names and other sayings come and go. When I saw Kirtland's Warbler in 1966, for example, I probably exclaimed *neato!* For many of my subsequent years it would have been *awesome, dude*. When's the last time you heard a young person say this? When Keith Hansen and I spotted a Red-faced Warbler on California's Farallon Islands in 1992, it was, simply, *\$\$\$&!* Yesterday it was *rad*, then *OMG*, and now *GOAT*. That is, until the next *GOAT* comes along, and young birders have *lmk* that *\$\$\$&!* is still popular. What will it be tomorrow?

My father was a compatriot of Stuart Keith and the aforementioned Jim Tucker when they founded the ABA in 1969, and he quickly signed on to head the "Listing Rules Committee," tasked with figuring out what species could be counted on lists in order to standardize listing totals for ABA members (Wilds 1994). The first thorny subject, as I recall, was if "heard-only" birds should count, followed by whether and when populations

of "exotic," i. e., non-native or introduced, species should be considered established. In due course, ethical questions were posed around disturbing birds while birding. And there was the prickly matter of validating new vagrant species in the ABA Area. For example, was the record of a "Cape Pigeon" (Cape Petrel per many, Pintado Petrel by others) from Monterey Bay, California on 9 Sep 1962 (McCaskie 1970) valid? Or might it have been a pigment-challenged Sooty or Black-vented Shearwater? In order to provide a standardized list of countable species in the ABA Area, the ABA Checklist Committee (ABA-CLC) was also formed in 1969 and headed up by another of my dad's cronies, Arnold Small (see Small 1969, Wilds 1984). Being the overlords of the ABA rules and its *Checklist* was then, as now, considered presumptuous, pompous, and periodically political. But somebody has to do it!

The ABA-CLC today

Fast forward 50 Februaries... At the invitation of David Sibley and encouragement of then-Chair Bill Pranty, I joined the ABA-CLC as a voting member in 2015. (See aba.org/aba-checklist-committee for past and current members of the ABA-CLC.) Perhaps the ABA brass had a hidden agenda, as I was reluctantly throned Chair in 2017, coincidentally (?) at the same time that ABA members voted to add the Hawaiian Islands to the ABA Area—and



TOP: ■ My first life list logged, at ages 8–18, into Jim Tucker's (1968) *Combination List for Birds of North America*. How many species names on this page have changed? Photos © Peter Pyle.

BOTTOM: ■ Clockwise from near left: Robert Pyle, Rolf Mall, Jacquie Mall, Arnold Small, Mimi Small, Olga Clarke, and Herb Clarke. Little did Robert and Arnold know that, 16 years later, they would be heading up the Listing and Rules and Checklist committees, respectively, for the incipient ABA. Hollywood Bar of Music, Los Angeles, California. 3 Jan 1953. Photo provided by Olga Clarke.



■ Speaking of Arnold Small, his son, Brian, like me, was encouraged to start birding early, and we are both still at it! I had logged this Lichenstein's Oriole (*Icterus gularis*) into my *Tucker* after seeing one in Texas on 8 Mar 1976. Around then, the AOU decided that its older name, "Alta Mira," had "higher value," and it became Altamira Oriole. Hidalgo Co, Texas. 22 Feb 2014. Photo © Brian E. Small.



■ Based on this individual [ABOVE], Kentish Plover was accepted in 2024 to the ABA Checklist. Formerly *Charadrius alexandrinus*, it and six other plovers were placed into genus *Anarhynchus* by Clements/eBird in October 2023 (Table 1). Among these is Siberian (formerly Lesser) Sand-Plover (*A. mongolus*) [BELOW] Kentish Plover. Shemya I., Alaska. 29 May 2023. Siberian Sand-Plover. Shemya I., Alaska. 15 May 2021. Photos © Zak Pohlen.



thus, birds from Hawaii to the ABA Checklist. And—what do you know?—this potentially onerous task fell in my lap, due to my background with that avifauna (see Pyle and Pyle 2017). I guess I deserved it, since my dad got the whole add-Hawaii-to-the-ABA-Area thing going over 50 years ago (Pyle 1971). Happily,

three (Japanese Quail, Lavender Waxbill, and Orange-cheeked Waxbill) were excluded—all three by split votes. More on a couple of these species later...

Following the addition of the species from Hawaii, in 2017 through Apr 2024, the ABA-CLC has added 40 species to the ABA Checklist (34 vagrants and six exot-

however, incorporating Hawaii proceeded rather more smoothly than expected, as the ABA-CLC was able to quickly and painlessly add 105 species to the Checklist that year (Pyle 2017), thanks in part to the efforts of the recently formed Hawaii Bird Records Committee (HBRC; VanderWerf et al. 2018). Only four species, all exotics, required multiple rounds of ABA-CLC deliberation, one of which (Indian Peafowl) was eventually accepted to the ABA Checklist, whereas

ics), and it has considered but not added nine species. (See the ABA-CLC reports for details: aba.org/aba-checklist.) Most of the additions were fairly straightforward, with only a couple of them having some trouble. Small-billed Elaenia, for example, based on a 2012 record in Chicago, was first rejected after three rounds of voting on identification issues, but it was later accepted after further analysis by South American ornithologists who actually knew what they were looking at (Gorleri and Areta 2021). There have now been four records of this species in the ABA Area, including one, dear to my heart, from the Farallons in Sep 2022 (GOAT!). Multiple rounds were also required for species of possible transport by human agency (ship-assisted vagrants, caged birds, escapees, etc.), as discussed later. Of somewhat greater controversy, and therefore of correspondingly greater prurient interest, were some of the rejections. These included Western House-Martin and three species of *Accipiter* hawks—all due to identification issues. For some of these cases, the ABA-CLC disagreed with the relevant regional committees, adding local consterna-



tion. But generally, it was smooth sailing during this period. We were oblivious, however, to some rather stormy seas brewing on the horizon.

ABA-CLC, ABA-RSEC, AOU, AOS, NACC, and...eBird

As early as 1972, one clamorous ABA member argued that the ABA *Checklist* must be independent of the decisions of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), which at the time was the keeper of North American bird taxonomy, sequence, and occasional renaming of birds. The AOU took this last activity to heart when it rebranded itself the American Ornithological Society (AOS) in 2016. Upset that he could only count two species of sapsuckers on his ABA list, and worried that Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers would be lumped by the AOU, John B. Edscorn of Lakeland, Florida pushed for "dumping lumping" vis-a-vis the ABA *Checklist*. He noted that "tail-wagging acquiescence to transient scientific temporizing won't get us a permanent list; surely we have learned this from yesteryear's [AOU] obsession with hair-splitting and today's joyless lumping." Edscorn further argued that some subspecies should be countable. Possibilities included Krider's Hawk, Little Brown Crane, Cuban Yellow Warbler, White-eyed Towhee, and, at the time, Antillean Nighthawk, Great-tailed Grackle, and "the other Traill's Flycatcher." Likewise, he believed that some named hybrids, such as "Würdemann's Heron" and "Brewster's" and "Sutton's" warblers, should count, as well as certain non-established exotic spe-

■ Three species of *Porphyrio* suffer from list discrepancies. The poster child for name confusion in the ABA area has been Purple Swamphen (*P. porphyrio*), according to the AOS [BOTTOM RIGHT], but based on a split, it is considered Gray-headed Swamphen (*P. poliocephalus*) by Clements and on your eBird checklists from Florida. Not to be outdone, Purple Gallinule [TOP RIGHT] is regarded as either *P. martinica* or *P. martinicus*. At least all agree on the English and scientific names of Azure Gallinule (*P. flavirostris*) [LEFT], but, until 2023, it was the only species accepted to the AOS *Check-list* but not the ABA-CLC *Checklist* (see Table 2). Gray-headed Swamphen. 26 Jan 2018. Palm Beach Co, Florida. Photo © Bob Gress. Purple Gallinule. Palm Beach Co, Florida. 2 Jul 2014. Photo © Hal Snyder and Kirsten Snyder. Azure Gallinule. Sucumbios, Ecuador. 9 Jan 2021. Photo © Sibylle Hechtel.



cies that the AOU did not list (e. g., Ring-necked Pheasant, Budgerigar, and Rock Dove). About the last, Edscorn believed they were “no more dependent on man’s largesse than are House Sparrows or, for that matter, Trumpeter Swans, which are so hooked on the dole they no longer migrate.” His bottom line: “We can count whatever most of us want to count, AOU-kosher or not, and still be entirely proper if we simply designate the currently-correct AOU status of any ‘extra’ ABA birds... Always count them! [all-caps lowered for de-emphasis].” Edscorn hoped that his suggestions “would stimulate some long thoughts”. Perhaps, thankfully, they did not stimulate enough thoughts to be adopted, but he did bring up an issue that has relevance today: How independent should the taxonomy and acceptability of species on the ABA Checklist be vis-a-vis those of the AOS and, more troublesomely, those of several additional lists that are coming along, including that of Clements (Clements et al. 2023; see tinyurl.com/Clements-list) as followed by eBird? (See Table 1.)

Back in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, when we found a rare bird, my father would dutifully call the three other birders in the D.C. area, Claudia Wilds, Chan Robbins, and Paul DuMont, and hope they were home (they almost always were), since there were as yet no answering machines. As technology slowly advanced, Claudia took charge of the Audubon Naturalist Society’s bird tape, a 4–5 minute drone summarizing sightings in the D.C. area over the past week or two. A couple of times, when she was out of town, she put me in charge of it, and I spent hours preparing a script and nervously recording it, cracked early-teen voice and all. It’s a rather tired saying, “things used to be a lot simpler,” but whether referring to 70 years ago or last month, there is no

questioning its validity. Nowadays, how quickly do we report our bird sightings, and in how many different thumb-tapping ways? Things certainly evolve, and so it is with ever-expanding official lists of birds, following varying taxonomies, differing sequences in which species are listed, and conflicting common and/or scientific names. There is now more than one way to list a bird!

By stipulation, the ABA-CLC automatically follows AOS’s North American Classification Committee (AOS-

NACC) regarding taxonomy and nomenclature. For example, decisions by AOS-NACC from 2017–2024 resulted in the addition of Mexican Duck, Short-billed Gull, Cassia Crossbill, and Chihuahuan Meadowlark due to splits, the removal of Thayer’s Gull and Northwestern Crow due to lumps, and the reduction of an additional species from the ABA Checklist based on the lumping of Pacific-slope and Cordilleran flycatchers as Western Flycatcher. In a classic case of mutual back-scratching, the AOS-NACC, in return, largely rubber stamps ABA-CLC decisions on the validity and provenance of vagrant records. For example, the additions of Common Shelduck, European Robin, Mistle Thrush, Long-legged Buzzard, Common Wood Pigeon, Pallas’s Gull, and Inca Tern to the ABA Checklist were followed by AOS-NACC. In this regard, the ABA-CLC serves a worthy scientific function beyond its role in ABA-Area listing. Personally, I’m also pleased that it has taken a rather conser-



■ The scientific name of Bluethroat has been in dispute. Should it be *Cyanecula svecica* (Clements/eBird), or the more traditional *Luscinia svecica* (AOS)? Nome, Alaska. 13 Jun 2022. Photo © Miles Tindal.

vative tack accepting bird records.

The ABA's erstwhile Listing Rules Committee of the 1970s has evolved into today's ABA Recording Standard and Ethics Committee (ABA-RSEC—see aba.org/rsec). Generally, the ABA's CLC and RSEC operate independently, the latter being more in charge of ethical considerations and countability rules. One such rule stipulates that, to count a species, it must be on the ABA *Checklist*. Maintenance of the Checklist is, in turn, the function of the ABA-CLC, which adds species based on the most defensible vagrant record or, in the case of exotics, an established population. Only recently did we have a small kerfuffle, regarding whether or not ship assistance *per se* should be considered an acceptable method of bird vagrancy. This came to head over a Black Catbird that rode a large research vessel from waters off Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula to the edge of the ABA Area off Louisiana (see Pyle et al. 2023 for details). The ABA-CLC's position has been that ship assistance is a complicated issue, with each record requiring evaluation on a case-by-case basis. Seabirds, such as frigatebirds, boobies, and even Inca Terns, may generally be less problematic, as riding ships is widely considered part of what they do, and they have historically been accepted to the ABA *Checklist* and other checklists irrespective of unfettered ship-riding. But for land birds, such as the aforementioned Black Catbird, or for Great-tailed Grackles riding ships to Hawaii (and, recently, the U. K. and even Tahiti!), ABA-CLC members have historically been free to consider such factors as feeding on board the ship and whether a vagrant could make it to the destination without the benefit of a ship or other human agency, the latter including as a captive in a car or a cage, or as escapees from zoos or waterfowl collections.

Thus, through the combination of myriad small considerations, along with varying member philosophies on the subject of ship-assistance and provenance in general, the ABA-CLC (generally followed by the AOS-NACC) voted against accepting the Black Catbird (based on records from both Louisiana and Texas; see



LEFT: ■ European or Siberian or Asian or Amur Stonechat? It's now "Amur (Asian) Stonechat" and "*Saxicola stejnegeri (mauri)*" on the ABA Checklist (see Table 1). Colville River Delta, Alaska. 15 Oct 2017. Photo © James Helmericks.

RIGHT: ■ Another Asian species with conflicting English names is this Fork-tailed (Pacific) Swift. (*Apus pacificus*). Shemya I., Alaska. 18 Sep 2022. Photo © Zak Pohlen.



below), as well as Variable Hawk (Colorado) and Red Warbler (Arizona), but it went along with accepting Southern Lapwing (Michigan, Maryland, and Florida), Hooded Crane (Alaska, after previously rejecting it based on records from several Midwestern states), European Robin (Pennsylvania), Black-backed Oriole (Pennsylvania and California), and Tricolored Munia (Florida). We will soon have a chance to deliberate these issues further, as we will consider House Crows in Florida, a Cattle Tyrant in Texas, and Blue Rock-thrush(es) in Oregon and California.

However, the ABA-CLC also recognizes a growing opinion among birders, espoused by at least some members of

the ABA-RSEC, that ships could be considered part of the “natural landscape” and that, even a Great-tailed Grackle that decides on its own to take a vacation to Tahiti or, for an extreme hypothetical, a Great Tinamou that walks onto a boat in Panama and walks off it in Newark, New Jersey, should count as long as it was not held captive aboard the ship at any time. (See Ted Floyd’s ABA blog post at tinyurl.com/Floyd-ship-happens for more on this viewpoint.) Many other land birds can be considered members of the frequent-sailor’s club: not only Great-tailed Grackles, but Bramblings and House Crows, and there is little question that some accepted landbird vagrants, un-

knowingly by us, had hitched a ride along the way. The ABA-CLC will likely evolve in this direction, perhaps slowly, like a sailboat crossing the Gulf of Mexico doldrums, but read on for more on this topic.

I believe only five species are accepted by the AOS-NACC but not by the ABA-CLC. Prior to 2023, the only vagrant record among these is of an Azure Gallinule based on a carcass that a cat dragged to a doorstep in Suffolk County, New York on 13 Dec 1986 (see Remsen and Parker 1990, Dunn et al. 1999, and Wilson et al. 2005). But now there are two more possibilities of additional vagrant species: Eurasian Goshawk based on a specimen from Labrador and a poorly



photographed bird in Alaska and Western House-Martin (for the ABA Area) based on a poorly photographed bird from St.-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Both of these records were accepted by the AOS-NACC in 2023, but they were recently rejected by the ABA-CLC due to identification issues. Might the AOS-NACC reconsider these? The house-martin is already accepted to its checklist based on valid records from the Caribbean, so its decision on this is not too consequential. Regarding the goshawk, the AOS-NACC would like to perform genetic analysis on the Labrador specimen before reconsidering its acceptance to its *Check-list* (T. Chesser, pers. comm.). The remaining two discrepancies

involve exotic species: AOS-NACC lists Japanese Quail and Lavender Waxbill as established in Hawaii, contrary to the decision of the ABA-CLC (see above). The ABA-CLC plans to take up one or both species again, based on new information gathered by the Hawaii Bird Records Committee, and given that the AOS-NACC continues to list them.

But three species with AOS-NACC/ABA-CLC discrepancies pale when the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Clements Checklist, upon which eBird is based, enters the picture. Most of us love eBird for its functionality, its incredible collection of mostly scientific data, and, of course, the phenomenally useful Macaulay Library image catalog. The last is where I spend half of every working day studying molts of various far-flung species in my role as an editor of the "Birds of the World" plumages and molt sections (cf. Pyle 2022). By virtue of eBird's popularity and, importantly, that it automatically counts lists for users, why should today's young birders bother with differences in acceptability between eBird and ABA when the former is just a click or two away? Indeed, what use do they have, in any capacity, to the (mostly) old farts on the AOS and ABA committees?

Taxonomic and Name Discrepancies between the Clements/eBird and ABA Checklists

Both the AOS-NACC and Clements/eBird update their taxonomy and nomenclature annually: the former in late June or early July and the latter during the third week of October. Thus, even if the two were in complete agreement on species names and taxonomy, there would be multi-month

gaps in which the lists differ. And, beyond this, the lists are not always aligned due to different standards for splitting and lumping: Clements/eBird at times prefers the taxonomy of the International Ornithologists' Union Working Group (see tinyurl.com/WG-IUO) to that of the AOS-NACC. The poster children for such a discrepancy have been the swampheens. A single swampheen species is on each of the AOS-NACC and ABA checklists due to an established population in Florida, but these individuals are called Purple Swampheens (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) by AOS-NACC and Gray-headed Swampheens (*P. poliocephalus*) by Clements/eBird. This is based on Clements/eBird but not AOS-NACC splitting Purple Swampheens into a number of species, one being Gray-headed Swampheens and another, not found in North America, being Western Swampheens, which has the same scientific name as the un-split Purple Swampheens! Understandably, many birders in Florida have wondered why Gray-headed Swampheens, listed on their eBird checklists, is not on the ABA *Checklist*. In order to help alleviate confusion, where there are discrepancies, the ABA-CLC now lists the Clements/eBird names on the ABA *Checklist*, followed by the AOS-NACC name in parentheses, for example "Gray-headed (Purple) Swampheens," and *Porphyrio poliocephalus (porphyrio)*".

Currently (Nov 2023–Jun 2024) there are 29 species with name discrepancies between the Clements/eBird and ABA checklists (Table 1): 13 species with differing English names, 12 species with differing scientific names, and four species that differ in both English and scientific name. Discrepancies vary from as little as the presence or absence of a hyphen in the English name (five species; important, by the way, as it affects the four-letter alpha code; see tinyurl.com/IBP-data for details) to changes in scientific and sometimes English names due to differing taxonomic opinion regarding splits and lumps (six species). Otherwise, six species have differing English names, and 12 species have differing scientific names, with particularly minor cases involving just a single letter (Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush/



■ Despite this cattle egret being in eastern North America, its name will now be Western Cattle-Egret (*Bulbicus ibis*) after the separation of it and Eastern Cattle-Egret (*B. coromandus*) from Asia Palm Beach Co, Florida. 14 Mar 2020. Photo © Judd Patterson.

Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush and *Calidris pygmaea/Calidris pygmaea*) and what grammatical gender to make the specific epithet of Purple Gallinule (*martinicus* vs. *martinica*). One tangled case, that of Wandering/Antipodean Albatross, will be reflected upon below.

Adding Provisional Species to the ABA Checklist

Another issue is eBird's "Provisional" categorization for species in the ABA Area. Many of these species are counted for ABA-Area lists and its subdivisions on eBird-website-generated lists, but they

are not countable by current ABA-RSEC rules because they are not on the ABA Checklist (see above). As of May 2024 there were 44 such cases, as indicated in Table 2. Although this only represents a small proportion of all ABA-Checklist species ($\approx 3.7\%$), in these internet days,

small things become disproportionately magnified, especially regarding the sanctity of one's eBird "Top 100" lists.

Marshall Iliff and others on the team at eBird have carefully considered where and why species should be listed as *Provisional* on eBird (see tinyurl.com/eBird-exotic). One broad category includes exotic

Table 1 ■ Discrepancies in common (English) and scientific names between those of the AOS-NACC and those of Clements/eBird, as of November 2023 to June 2024. The ABA Checklist indicates these discrepancies in form, e. g., "Erckel's Francolin (Spurfowl)" and "*Anarhynchus (Charadrius) wilsonia*." Twice per year, this list will change, as based on new taxonomic decisions and on attempts to better align these and other bird checklists by the recently formed Working Group Avian Checklists (tinyurl.com/WGAC-IOU). This committee, sponsored by the International Ornithological Congress (IOC), aims to unite taxonomy and names among the IOC World Bird List, BirdLife Taxonomic Working Group, eBird/Clements team, AOS-NACC, South American Classification Committee, and former members of the Howard and Moore team (see Dickinson 2014), among other "authorities," including AviBase, which seems to accept everything even remotely possible for the ABA Area; see tinyurl.com/Avibase-ABA. It appears that up to 15 of the 29 discrepancies in this table may be aligned by eBird or AOS in the coming year (M. Iliff, T. Chesser, pers. comm.).

AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY			CLEMENTS/EBIRD		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Alpha	Common Name	Scientific Name	
Gray Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	GRFR	Gray Francolin	<i>Ortygornis pondicerianus</i>	
Erkel's Franklin	<i>Pternistis erckelii</i>	ERFR	Erckel's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis erckelii</i>	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	CWPI	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	
Fork-tailed Swift	<i>Apus pacificus</i>	FTSW	Pacific Swift	<i>Apus pacificus</i>	
Antillean Palm-Swift	<i>Tachornis phoenicobia</i>	ANPS	Antillean Palm Swift	<i>Tachornis phoenicobia</i>	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	COMO	Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	
Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinicus</i>	PUGA	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinica</i>	
Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	PUSW	Gray-headed Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>	
Eurasian Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	EUDO	Eurasian Dotterel	<i>Eudromias morinellus</i>	
Lesser Sand-Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	LSAP	Siberian Sand-Plover	<i>Anarhynchus mongolus</i>	
Greater Sand-Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	GSAP	Greater Sand-Plover	<i>Anarhynchus leschenaultii</i>	
Wilson's Plover	<i>Charadrius wilsonia</i>	WIPL	Wilson's Plover	<i>Anarhynchus wilsonia</i>	
Collared Plover	<i>Charadrius collaris</i>	COPL	Collared Plover	<i>Anarhynchus collaris</i>	
Mountain Plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>	MOPL	Mountain Plover	<i>Anarhynchus montanus</i>	
Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>	SNPL	Snowy Plover	<i>Anarhynchus nivosus</i>	
Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pygmaea</i>	SBSA	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pygmaea</i>	
Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	YNAL	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	
Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	WAAL	Antipodean Albatross	<i>Diomedea antipodensis</i>	
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>	INEG	Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>	
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	CAEG	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	BCNH	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	YCNH	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	
Japanese Bush-Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone</i>	JABW	Japanese Bush Warbler	<i>Horornis diphone</i>	
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	LEWH	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	
Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax pectoralis</i>	GNLA	Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush	<i>Pterorhinus pectoralis</i>	
Hwamei	<i>Garrulax canorus</i>	HWAM	Chinese Hwamei	<i>Garrulax canorus</i>	
Bluethroat	<i>Cyanecula svecica</i>	BLUE	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	
Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	RTRT	Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	
Asian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	ASST	Amur Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	

■ **Blue-gray Tanagers** (*Thraupis episcopus*) of the white-shouldered, cis-Andean population once flew freely in south Florida, and the species was included in the original ABA *Checklist* in 1969. By 1982, it had been removed due to diminished or extirpated populations. ABA members can count this species if observed before 1982 but not thereafter. It is one of five such exotic species that have flipped on and off the *Checklist* (Table 2d). Manaus, Brazil. 25 Oct 2020. Photo © Hector Bottai.



■ THE ABA CHECKLIST COMMITTEE IN AN EVOLVING WORLD

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	EBIRD STATUS	ABA STATUS	LOCAL STATUS
A • Exotic Species				
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed UT, CA
Japanese Quail	<i>Coturnix japonica</i>	Naturalized	Rejected - 2017	Accepted HI
Golden Pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed HI
Tanimbar Corella	<i>Cacatua goffiniana</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed HI
White Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua alba</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed HI
Salmon-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua moluccensis</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed HI
Red-lored Parrot	<i>Amazona autumnalis</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed HI
Yellow-headed Parrot	<i>Amazona oratrix</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed CA
White-fronted Parrot	<i>Amazona albifrons</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed TX
Orange-winged Parrot	<i>Amazona amazonica</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed FL
Burrowing Parakeet	<i>Cyanoliseus patagonus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed CA
Blue-and-yellow Macaw	<i>Ara ararauna</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed FL
Chestnut-fronted Macaw	<i>Ara severus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed FL
Blue-crowned Parakeet	<i>Thectocercus acuticaudatus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed FL
White-eyed Parakeet	<i>Psittacara leucophthalmus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed FL
Swinhoe's White-eye	<i>Zosterops simplex</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed CA
Northern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed CA, HI
Lavender Waxbill	<i>Glaucostrelda caerulea</i>	Naturalized	Rejected - 2017, Recirculating	Accepted HI
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpada</i>	Provisional	Rejected - 2017	Accepted HI
Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed CA
B • Vagrant Species of Ship-assisted or Uncertain Origin				
West Indian Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna arborea</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Provisional VA
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Provisional	Rejected - 2003	Unreviewed Nun
Azure Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio flavirostris</i>	Accepted	Rejected - 1999	Accepted NY
Demoiselle Crane	<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Provisional CA, AK
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	Provisional	In Circulation	Accepted FL
Variable Hawk	<i>Geranoaetus polyosoma</i>	Accepted	Rejected - 2022	Accepted CO, Rejected NM
Cattle Tyrant	<i>Machetornis rixosa</i>	Provisional	To be Circulated	In Circulation, TX
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Provisional, ship-assist	In Circulation	Accepted FL
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Provisional, ship-assist	Unreviewed	Unreviewed NJ
Black Catbird	<i>Melanoptila glabrirostris</i>	Accepted, TX	Rejected - 2023	Accepted TX, Rejected LA
Gray Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma cinereum</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Provisional CA
Tropical Mockingbird	<i>Mimus gilvus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed TX
Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed CO
Striped Sparrow	<i>Oriturus superciliosus</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed TX
Lesson's Seedeater	<i>Sporophila bouvronides</i>	Provisional	Unreviewed	Unreviewed Que
C • Vagrant Species of Tentative Identification				
Baillon's Crane	<i>Zapornia pusilla</i>	Accepted	In Circulation	Unsubstantiated AK
Antipodean Albatross	<i>Diomedea antipodensis</i>	Accepted	Rejected - 2024	Unreviewed CA, OR
Great (Eurasian) Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Accepted	In Circulation	Unsubstantiated AK
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Accepted	In Circulation	Accepted AK
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Accepted	Rejected -2020, Recirculating	Unsubstantiated AK
Barred Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilus doliatus</i>	Accepted	Rejected - 2007	Accepted TX
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Accepted	In Circulation	Unsubstantiated AK
Western House-Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Accepted	Rejected - 2024	Unreviewed SPM
D • Species now Extinct or Extirpated				
Labrador Duck	<i>Camptorhynchus labradorius</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1858
African Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>	Not Listed for ABA Area	Extirpated Exotic	Listed 1969-1994, CA, TX, AL, FL
Passenger Pigeon	<i>Ectopistes migratorius</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1914
Eskimo Curlew	<i>Numenius borealis</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1962
Great Auk	<i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1844
Ivory-billed Woodpecker	<i>Campephilus principalis</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1944
Carolina Parakeet	<i>Conuropsis carolinensis</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1939
Yellow-headed Parrot	<i>Amazona oratrix</i>	Not Listed for ABA Area	Extirpated Exotic	Listed 1975-1982, FL
Budgerigar	<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	Provisional Exotic	Extirpated Exotic	Listed 1975-2015, FL
Crested Myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	Naturalized Exotic	Extirpated Exotic	Listed 1969-2003, BC
Bachman's Warbler	<i>Vermivora bachmanii</i>	Not Listed	Extinct	Last year 1937
Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>	Not Listed for ABA Area	Extirpated Exotic	Listed 1969-1982, FL

Table 2 ■ Exotic and vagrant species listed as *Provisional* by eBird that are not on the ABA Checklist. Through mutual back-scratching, we are working to reduce the number of species listed as accepted outright in eBird but not by the ABA-CLC (see text).

species with populations in the ABA Area that are not currently established according to ABA rules (see aba.org/rsec) but appear to be headed in that direction. There are currently 20 species in this category (Table 2a), 18 of which are marked as *Provisional* by eBird and two of which are accepted as *Naturalized*, indicating that populations are established (the aforementioned Japanese Quail and Lavender Waxbill in Hawaii). A prime example among these 18 *Provisional* species is Swinhoe's White-eye, which is close to being considered by the California Bird Records Committee and has yet to be voted on by the ABA-CLC. Although now marked as *Provisional* (with an orange asterisk in a pale circle) on eBird Checklists, the eBird team also decided to have these "count" in Top 100 rankings in order to encourage birders to record them. This should help to document populations and whether establishment can be considered complete (at which point, in eBird, they are re-categorized as *Naturalized* and marked with a gray asterisk), a rationale I support.

Also considered accepted outright or as *Provisional* by eBird, but not listed on the ABA Checklist due to uncertain provenance in the ABA Area (see Pranty 2007 for more on past ABA-CLC rationale in considering such cases), are 15 potential vagrant species: three accepted outright by eBird (Azure Gallinule, Variable Hawk, and Black Catbird) and 12 considered

TOP: ■ Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) was recently added to the ABA Checklist based on records from Michigan (here), Maryland, and Florida. The only concern was provenance, as this bird was present at an airport that received occasional flights from South America. But given multiple records from these states and increasing records from the West Indies, Mexico, Central America, and—now—Texas, natural vagrancy seems a better bet. Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport, Iosco Co, Michigan. 20 Jul 2022. Photo © Tammy McQuade.

BOTTOM: ■ Lavender Waxbill (*Glaucostrelda caerulea*) is accepted outright by eBird and the AOS as an established exotic species on Hawai'i Island, but it was not accepted by the ABA-CLC in 2018 (Table 2a). The ABA-CLC is currently reconsidering this decision based on new information from the past six years. Keauhou, Hawai'i, Hawaii. 25 Feb 2022. Photo © Barry Blust.



as *Provisional* (Table 2b). Interestingly, eBird accepted Black Catbird based on a specimen from Texas (see Pyle et al. 2023) but not based on the ship-assisted bird from Louisiana. Whether or not eBird considers such species accepted or *Provisional* follows decisions by local (state, provincial, or territorial) records committees (e.g., the Louisiana Bird Records Committee rejected Black Catbird, but the Texas Ornithological Committee accepted it), whereas the ABA-CLC reserves the right to not always accord with such local decisions, especially concerning issues of provenance. A couple of the *Provisional* species (Great White Pelican and House Crow) listed in Table 2b have recently been accepted by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee and are currently in circulation with the ABA-CLC. As mentioned above, Cattle Tyrant and Blue Rock Thrush will also be considered once the local committees render decisions on recent (2023–2024) records.

Attempting to avoid an existential meltdown (or, as the youth might say, *triggered* by eBird), **the ABA-CLC and ABA-RSEC have been working together and decided that 1) the ABA-CLC will add a Provisional List to the bottom of the ABA Checklist, and 2) by virtue of these additions, *Provisional* species listed in Tables 2a and 2b will now count on ABA members' lists if they also comply with the other rules outlined by the ABA-RSEC.** Note that eBird also categorizes as *Provisional* species in certain local jurisdictions (e.g., Mute Swan in California), or even individual birds (e.g., a Guadalupe Murrelet chucked from a boat into San Diego Harbor on 16 Oct 2022); these have always been countable at the discretion of the lister by RSEC rules, as they were already on the *ABA Checklist*. Check the current *ABA Checklist* (aba.org/aba-checklist/) for the latest *ABA Provisional List*, as species may come and go more frequently than we've become accustomed to.

Another category of species (listed in Table 2d) is for native species which have gone extinct (seven) and naturalized exotic species that were once considered



■ **ABA'ers who see / This bird at sea / May fore'er be at a loss / As per CLC / Its ID may be / Antipodean/ Snowy/Tristan/Amsterdam (Wandering) Albatross! (Presumed) Antipodean Albatross. Antipodes Island. 15 Jan 2024. Photo © Oscar Thomas.**

established but have essentially become extirpated (five). Two well-known examples of the latter include Crested Myna, which was considered established in British Columbia by the ABA-CLC throughout the 20th century up until 2003, and Budgerigar, for which populations in Florida exploded during the 1970s only to blink out during the 1990s (Pranty 2001). Budgerigar was thus considered established by the ABA-CLC from 1975–2015. The differing eBird treatment between these two extirpated exotic species, *Naturalized* for the myna but *Provisional* for the budgie, revolves around whether or not the latter should have ever been considered established in Florida. **The ABA-RSEC allows counting of both extinct and extirpated exotic species (Table 2d) only when observed during periods of acceptance on the ABA Checklist** (see "Extirpated Exotics" at aba.org/aba-checklist/). This may be the case for some very old ABA members who were around to see an Eskimo Curlew or a Bachman's Warbler, and many other sort-of old members who may have seen the other exotic species listed in Table 2d during periods of ABA acceptance. See Pranty et al. (2008) and recent ABA-CLC reports for the date ranges of accepted exotic species that are currently on the ABA Checklist. The ABA-CLC will be adding the species in Table 2d to the ABA Checklist with indication of year ranges in which they can be counted.

OK, so far so good. But what of the last category: vagrants that have been rejected or not yet reviewed by the ABA-CLC but are accepted by eBird? There are eight such species, listed in Table 2c. A record of Eurasian Sparrowhawk, from Adak Island, Alaska on 21 Sep 2016, was not accepted by the ABA-CLC in 2020, although it gained support on each circulation, going from 4-4 to 5-3 to 6-2; it fell only one vote shy of acceptance in the end. The record's acceptance by eBird and consideration of eBird's rationale may be enough of a reason for the ABA-CLC to put this species to another vote. Three species from Alaska, Bailon's Crake on Attu Island on 20–21 Sep 2000 (ebird.org/checklist/S66113632), Great (Eurasian) Bittern on Buldir Island on 25 Jun 2012 (...S61702555), and Great (or possibly Japanese; cf. Howell et al. 2014) Tit on Little Diomed Island on 2 Sep 1988 (...S66873346), are of interest to the ABA-CLC, as they have not been

reviewed due to their listing as unsubstantiated by the Alaska Bird Records Committee (AK-CLC) and as hypothetical by Howell et al. (2014). Irrespective of these interpretations, these will be circulated within the ABA-CLC (along with a specimen record of Hen Harrier collected on Buldir Island in Jun 1999, which was accepted by AK-CLC). A sixth species, based on a 10 p.m. recording of a Barred Antshrike song in Harlingen, Texas on 1 Sep 2006, was not accepted by the ABA-CLC due to the odd circumstances and lack of visual confirmation (Pranty et al. 2007), while the identification of a seventh species, Western House-Martin on St. Pierre et Miquelon on 26 May–1 Jun 1989, was recently rejected by the ABA-CLC, as mentioned earlier. **The ABA-RSEC has decided that, despite being accepted by eBird, these species will not be countable on ABA-Area lists, as stipulated by ABA-RSEC listing rules, unless and until identifications are accepted and the species is added to the ABA Checklist by the ABA-CLC.**

Overall, I am in ongoing discussions with Marshall Iliff and the eBird team about reducing the number of species that are accepted by Clements/eBird but not by the ABA-CLC, and *vice versa*. As mentioned above, decisions by Clements/eBird have prompted the ABA-CLC to reconsider some past decisions and, in the other direction, Clements/eBird has now removed Eurasian Goshawk from the ABA Area all together following its rejection by the ABA-CLC. The eBird team has also relied on the ABA-RSEC's guidance (tinyurl.com/aba-introduced-spp) regarding which species are established—and where—within the ABA Area.

And, so, what about that eighth entry in Table 2c?

Rime of the Antipodean Albatross

*And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.*

As a teenager I marveled at the report of a Wandering Albatross in California and also read Coleridge (1798), as cited above and below, with the same fascination that I read Melville (and cf. Philbrick on *The Essex*), James Cook, Georg Steller, Archibald Menzies, Richard Henry Dana, Ernest Shackleton, Rollo Beck, etc., about life at sea from the 18th to early 20th centuries, and before (cf. Leitão 2016). But little did I realize that the *Ancient Mariner's* rash and regretful decision could well have involved a Wandering Albatross, in the Southern Seas, among the ice that was here, the ice that was there, and the ice that was all around.

On 11 Jul 1967, non-birding residents of California's "Sea Ranch" (a utopian enclave designed for residents "to join the natural environment with minimal impact," photographed a large, mostly white bird, and the next day watched as it "stretched its great wings, waddled into the wind, and took off over the bluff and out to sea" (Mrs. William E. Rand in Paxton 1968). Some 41 years later, on 13 Sep 2008, a large, mostly dark tubenose was spotted on a pelagic trip 40 miles (64 km) off Rock Point, Lincoln Co, Oregon (eBird.org/checklist/S20412940); remarkably, this same bird was photographed by Southwest Fisheries Science Center researchers 267 miles (430 km) off Point Arena, California, 12 days later (Pyle and Sullivan 2010). These are the only two re-

ords of Wandering Albatross in the ABA Area (although the last observation, >200 miles offshore, was outside of it), and both were accepted by the relevant state bird committees. So...all was *chill*, that is, until:

*'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.*

In 2023, the Wandering Albatross was splintered into four species by Clements/eBird (see tinyurl.com/debate-FR-JP for details). This split seems to have been precipitated by an earlier recommendation that one of the taxa, the critically endangered Amsterdam Albatross, be split based on its conservation needs (see Pyle 2012 for discussion of this). In plumage, the four species (Snowy, Tristan, Antipodean, and Amsterdam) differ as adults but are basically identical as juveniles. Each shows different plumage maturation strategies to achieve a cryptic appearance, the whitest of the four (Snowy Albatross) nesting on the snowiest islands (Prince et al. 1997, Howell and Zufelt 2019). As they mature, the plumages of birds in their 2nd and a few later cycles can be aged by molt patterns among remiges, but the appearance of their body feathering is all over the place, as is that of "definitive plumage," if there even is such a thing within each of these species; they may just keep get-

ting whiter with older age, as is the case with male Snowy Owls. Indeed, with the exception of Snowy Albatrosses of 10+ years in age, can any of these species be safely identified in the field?

Clements/eBird concluded that the ABA records pertained to Antipodean Albatross, while the AOS-NACC has not yet rendered a decision on the split or the identification of the ABA-Area birds. To best resolve how to list this entry in the ABA Checklist (using the format described above), the ABA-CLC put Antipodean Albatross to a vote in early 2024. Comments were solicited from Jeff Davies of New Zealand and from Steve Howell, both of whom were hesitant to endorse it as an Antipodean to the exclusion of any or all of the other taxa (see above, and also Howell 2012, Howell et al. 2014, Howell and Zufelt 2019). On this basis, the ABA-CLC rejected adding Antipodean Albatross to the ABA Checklist. But, then, how do we list it? "Antipodean/Snowy/Tristan/Amsterdam (Wandering) Albatross"?

Rather, being the grumpy old lumper that I am (Pyle 2012), I am tempted to heed Edscorn's (1972) words of wisdom toward bucking authority, but instead of "dumping on the lumping" I'd be "spitting on the splitting" and will suggest listing it as, simply, Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) on the ABA Checklist. This would also save us having to assign an undigni-

■ **Beginning in May 2024, the ABA Checklist will include a list of Provisional species, similar to those considered as such by eBird. Most of these are exotic species with populations that may be on their way to establishment (Table 2a), and eBirders should always include them in their checklists to help track population status. Swinhoe's White-eye (*Zosterops simplex*) in California is a prime example of a species with populations on their way to establishment. Orange Co, California. 10 Dec 23. Photo © Braxton Landsman.**



fied four-letter code for Antipodes Albatross. However this goes....it appears to be, that at-sea ID, of these *Diomedea*, will be forever cursed.

*Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.*

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