

30th Report of the ABA Checklist Committee 2019

Stejneger's Scoter, Dark-billed Cuckoo, Long-legged Buzzard, and Yellow-chevroned Parakeet added to the Checklist

This is the 30th published report of the ABA Checklist Committee (hereafter, ABA-CLC), covering deliberations during 2019. The primary role of the ABA-CLC is to consider the addition of new species to (and, in rare cases, the removal of species from) the *ABA Checklist*. A secondary role is to review and revise ABA Codes covering ease of observation in the ABA Area.

The ABA-CLC consists of eight voting members who serve staggered four-year terms; each year, two members typically cycle off and are replaced by new or reelected members. Members may be reelected after their first four-year term, but must take at least one year off after two consecutive terms. Since our previous report (Pyle et al. 2018), the terms of Mary Gustafson and Mark Lockwood were up after four years of service. Both members agreed to serve and were voted in for an additional four years. Thus, the ABA-CLC membership remains unchanged between 2019 and 2020.

For each record under consideration, members vote to accept or not accept a species to the *ABA Checklist* based on evidence from one or more records in the ABA Area (Pranty et al. 2008). A tally of 8–0 for acceptance of a record automatically results in the species' addition to the *Checklist*, whereas a tally of 0–8 results in automatic non-acceptance. Intermediate tallies result in automatic recirculation (if 6–2, 5–3, or 4–4) or recirculation at the request of the dissenting (if 7–1) or any accepting (if 3–5, 2–6, 1–7) member. Records can circulate for up to three rounds, at which point an 8–0 or 7–1 tally is needed for acceptance of the species to the *Checklist*.

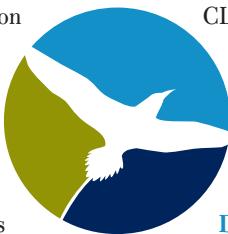
Records Reviewed by the ABA-CLC in 2019

In 2019, the ABA-CLC voted on records of five species from the ABA Area, of which four were added to the *ABA Checklist* and one continues to a second circulation after a split vote. Accounts for all five species are provided below. In addition, and according to *ABA Checklist* convention, all taxonomic and nomenclatorial decisions of the American Ornithological Society (AOS) are automatically recognized. This year, decisions by the AOS's Committee on Classification and Nomen-

clature—North and Middle America (Chessler et al. 2019) resulted in one addition (Stejneger's Scoter; see below) and no removals of species from the *ABA Checklist* on taxonomic grounds (due to splits or lumps); however, the common names of five species and scientific names of 17 species and one family on the *ABA Checklist* were revised, and linear sequences among and within several families were re-ordered, as discussed below. The addition of four species has increased the *ABA Checklist* to 1,116 species.

New Species Accepted to the ABA Area

Stejneger's Scoter (*Melanitta stejnegeri*)—ABA-CLC Record #2019-03 (8-0; Sept. 2019). The AOS (Chessler et al. 2019) split the White-winged (now *M. deglandi*) and Stejneger's scoters and added Stejneger's to the *AOS Check-list of North American Birds* based on photographic records of adult males from Alaska (Dunn et al. 2012). This was an unusual case in which a rare vagrant was added to the AOS area based on a taxonomic decision. To be complete, the ABA-CLC reviewed and unanimously accepted Stejneger's Scoter to the *ABA Checklist*. Subsequent to the five records of Stejneger's Scoter documented by Dunn et



al. (2012), there have been several additional records from Alaska as well as reports from California and Montana (Fig. 1), so the ABA-CLC assigned ABA Code 4 for this species. Adhering to the sequence of the *AOS Check-list*, Stejneger's Scoter follows White-winged Scoter on the *ABA Checklist*.

Dark-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus melacoryphus*)

ABA-CLC Record #2019-04 (8-0; Sept. 2019). The ABA-CLC had previously considered adding Dark-billed Cuckoo to the *ABA Checklist*, based on a record from Weslaco, Texas, of a bird brought into a rehabilitation facility on Feb. 10, 1986, which later died and is now a specimen (Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science #23733). Despite the Texas Bird Records Committee's acceptance of this record in 1998 (Lockwood 1999), the ABA-CLC did not accept it to the *ABA Checklist* because the recovery location prior to accession to the rehabilitation facility was unknown, and could conceivably have been in Mexico (Robbins et al. 2003). Subsequently, a second record of Dark-billed Cuckoo, from Delray Beach, Florida, Feb. 6–10, 2019 (Kratter et al. unpublished manuscript), was accepted unanimously by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee, and this time resulted in a unanimous ABA-CLC vote to add the species to the *ABA Checklist*.

The committee reviewed both the Texas and Florida records, and most members were comfortable that both were acceptable, given the proximity of the initial February observation dates (four days apart), which are expected for the occurrence of austral migrants in North America (Howell et al. 2014, Kratter et al. unpublished manuscript). However, the ABA-CLC only votes to add a species to the *ABA Checklist* and does not otherwise render an official opinion on specific local records. Based on the shape and pattern of the rectrices, both the Texas and Florida Dark-billed Cuckoos are first-cycle birds, retaining juvenile flight feathers (Fig. 2). The Dark-billed Cuckoo receives ABA Code 5. Following the

CHANGES IN BRIEF

Species Added Based on Established Populations or New Distributional Records

- ❑ **Stejneger's Scoter**
(*Melanitta stejnegeri*), Code 4
- ❑ **Dark-billed Cuckoo**
(*Coccyzus melacoryphus*), Code 5
- ❑ **Long-legged Buzzard**
(*Buteo rufinus*), Code 5
- ❑ **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet**
(*Brotogeris chiriri*), Code 2

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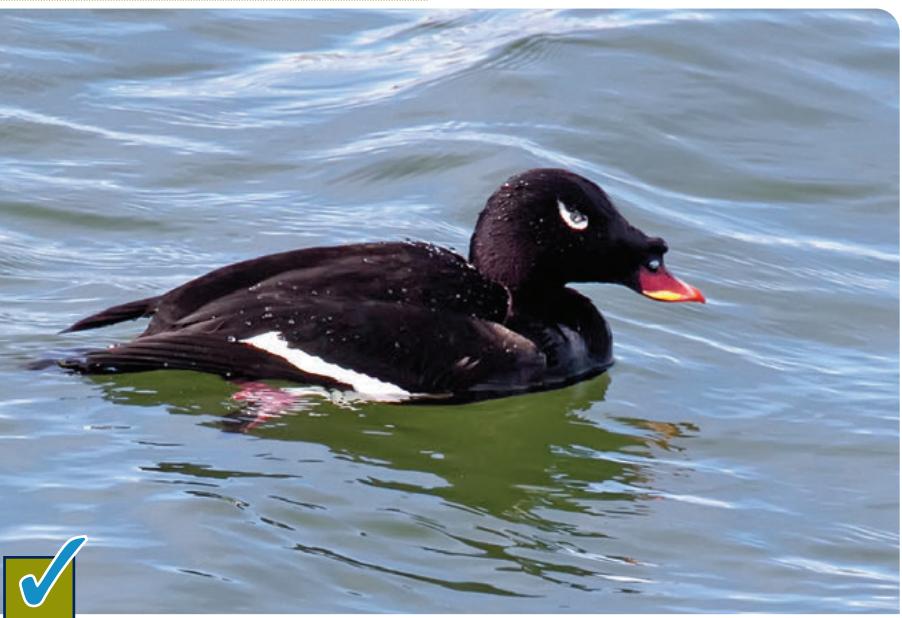
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Fig. 1. This adult male scoter was found and photographed prior to a three-way split by the American Ornithological Society of the White-winged Scoter. In light of the recent taxonomic revision, the photo has been reassessed and determined to show a Stejneger's Scoter, based especially on the narrow bill and greater distal extension of the ornamental bill knob (see Fig. 91 in Pyle 2008). A similar observation and reassessment of identification concerned an adult male scoter photographed in Santa Cruz County, California, Jan. 15, 2014. Lewis and Clark County, Montana; Apr. 15, 2015. Photo by © Robert Martinka.



revised sequence for Cuculidae by the AOS (Chesser et al. 2019), it falls between Oriental and Yellow-billed cuckoos as the first species of the genus *Coccyzus* on the *ABA Checklist*.

Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*)—ABA-CLC Record #2018-01 (8-0; Aug. 2019). A surprising record of this central Asian and African species was of an individual that spent the winter period, Nov. 15, 2018–Apr. 7, 2019, on St. Paul Island, Alaska (Fig. 3). After being accepted unani-

mously by the Alaska Checklist Committee, the ABA-CLC followed suit. Commentary to the Alaska Checklist Committee from several Eurasian raptor experts confirmed the identification as a pure Long-legged Buzzard (the species is known to hybridize in Eurasia with other buteos) and indicated that it was an adult of the nominate central Asian subspecies. Following Clements et al. (2019), the Long-legged Buzzard is listed after the Ferruginous Hawk as the last species of Accipitridae in the *ABA Checklist* sequence. It is given ABA Code 5.

Yellow-chevroned Parakeet (*Brotogeris chiriri*)—ABA-CLC Record #2019-05 (8-0; Sept. 2019). The population of this species in Los Angeles, California, has greatly ex-

lar and formerly conspecific White-winged Parakeet, and that it was of the nominate subspecies of Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, *B. c. chiriri*. A naturalized population of up to a few hundred individuals also exists in the Miami, Florida, area (Pranty and Garrett 2011), but it has not yet been considered by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee. Due to the substantial but rather local population size of the Yellow-chevroned Parakeet in the ABA Area, the ABA-CLC has assigned it ABA Code 2, and following Clements et al. (2019), it is listed after White-winged Parakeet in the sequence of the *ABA Checklist*.

Species Still Pending as Additions to the ABA Area

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)—ABA-CLC Record #2018-02 (4-4; Sept. 2019). At the request of the observer, the ABA-CLC considered and circulated a report of a Eurasian Sparrowhawk from Adak Island, Alaska, Sept. 21, 2016 (Fig. 5). The record includes two photographs of the upperparts, partially obscured by vegetation, and an analysis by the observer of the bird's size that concluded it was too small for a Northern Goshawk, the most likely contending species. The Alaska Checklist Committee deliberated over this record in 2017 and considered it likely correct, but, despite support of the identification from Eurasian raptor experts, it was deemed insufficiently substantiated to add the species to the state list (by a 2-4 vote). A split vote on the record was also recorded by the ABA-CLC on the first round, but with four members in favor of the identification, the record automatically continues on to the second round. The status of this record will be updated in the next ABA-CLC report.

AOS Taxonomic and Nomenclatorial Changes Affecting the ABA Checklist

The 60th supplement to the *Check-list* (Chesser et al. 2019) presents changes that

expanded over the past 30 years (Benson et al. 2019; Fig. 4). By 2019, an estimated population of 1,000 individuals was considered to be increasing, and the species had expanded in range throughout the Los Angeles Basin. Based on these increases, the California Bird Records Committee accepted the species to the state list (by an 8-1 vote), and the ABA-CLC followed by accepting it to the *ABA Checklist*. Benson et al. (2019) determined that the population was of pure individuals, not showing hybrid characters with the simi-



affect the naming and placement of species on the *ABA Checklist*. These changes are as follows:

- The scientific name for White-winged Scoter is changed to *Melanitta deglandi* (from *M. fusca*).
 - Stejneger's Scoter (*Melanitta stejnegeri*) is recognized as a species and added to the *ABA Checklist* (see above).
 - The scientific name of Erckel's Francoolin is changed to *Pternistis erckelii* (from *Francolinus erckelii*).
 - Hyphens are removed from the common names of Common Ground Dove and Ruddy Ground Dove.
 - The common names of Blue-throated Mountain-gem, respectively.
 - The scientific name of Bahama Woodstar is changed to *Nesophlox evelynae* (from *Calliphlox evelynae*).
 - The genus of 11 species of storm-petrels formerly placed in *Oceanodroma* is changed to *Hydrobates*. The species names of Fork-tailed and Leach's storm-petrels also change gender, to *furcatus* and *leucorhous*, respectively.
 - Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroura*) is changed to Gray-faced Petrel (*P. gouldi*).

Hummingbird and Amethyst-throated Hummingbird are changed to Blue-throated Mountain-gem and Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem, respectively.

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Fig. 2. A Dark-billed Cuckoo found and photographed in Delray Beach (Fig. 2a, left) was unanimously accepted by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee and subsequently by the ABA Checklist Committee. An earlier record, of a salvage specimen from Texas (Fig. 2b, right), was more vexing. Note the brownish, narrow, rounded rectrices on the Florida bird (matched by the specimen), indicating a bird in its first year. FIG. 2A: *Delray Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida; Feb. 8, 2019. Photo by © Mark Berney.* FIG. 2B: *From Weslaco, Texas; Feb. 10, 1986. Specimen in care of the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science; photo by © Donna Dittmann.*

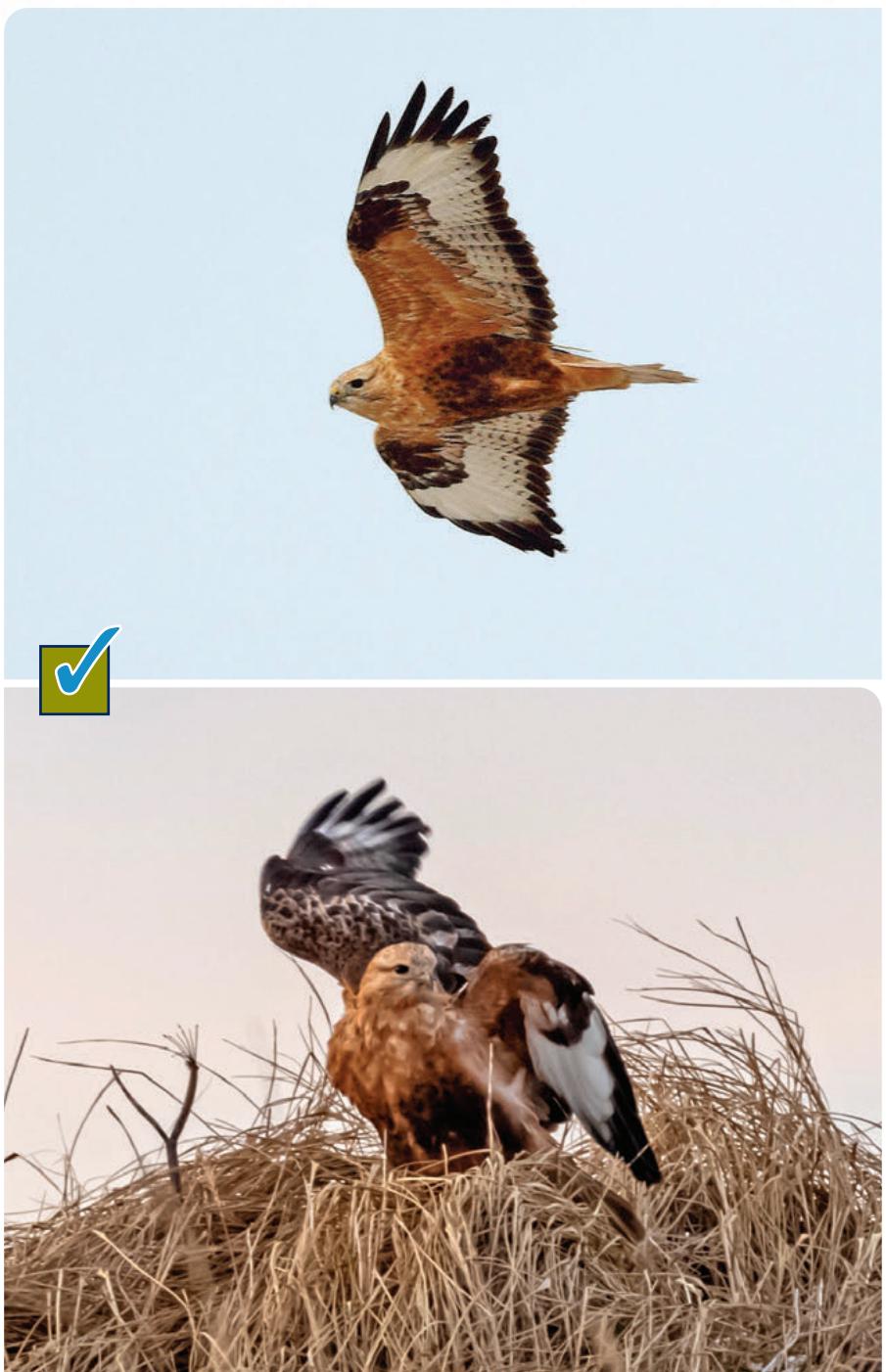


Fig. 3. The Bering Sea region of Alaska is legendary for rarities in spring and fall, but this surprising **Long-legged Buzzard** bucked the trend. It was discovered in mid-November, after the departure of almost all birders, and it remained at least through early April of the following year. FIG. 3A, TOP: St. Paul Island, Alaska; Nov. 15, 2018. Photo by © Barbara Lestenof.

FIG. 3B, BOTTOM: St. Paul Island, Alaska; Dec. 8, 2018. Photo by © Barrett Pierce.

- The family name of laughingthrushes is changed to Leiothrichidae (from Timaliidae).
- The scientific name for Black-faced Grassquit is changed to *Melanospiza bicolor* (from *Tiaris bicolor*).
- Per Chesser et al. (2019), species sequences are rearranged for the eight species within the Cuculidae (cuckoos, roadrunners, and anis); four species of *Nesophlox*, *Calypte*, and *Atthis* hummingbirds; 12 species of *Charadrius* plovers; families Oceanitidae, Hydrobatidae, and Procellariidae; three species of frigatebirds (Fregatidae); 15 species of swallows (Hirundinidae); seven species of Eurasian *Turdus* thrushes; and 44 species of towhees and sparrows (Passerellidae).

For additional details on AOS taxonomic and nomenclatorial changes as they affect the *ABA Checklist*, see Michael L. P. Retter's "Checklist Redux-2019," beginning on p. 50 of this issue.

Additional Changes to the ABA Checklist

Version 8.0.5 (2018) of the *ABA Checklist* contained a couple of errors, necessitating the following changes:

- The scientific name for Thick-billed Warbler is *Arudinax aedon* (not *Iduna aedon*).
- The sequence for four species in the family Muscicapidae should be Siberian Blue Robin, Rufous-tailed Robin, Bluethroat, and Siberian Rubythroat.

ABA Code Updates

The ABA has developed a coding system to reflect the abundance of a species in the ABA Area and the ease of observation (Pranty et al. 2008; and see tinyurl.com/ABA-codes). The codes range from 1 (most common and easily seen) to 5 (five or fewer records in the ABA Area) and 6 (presumed extinct). ABA codes are used by eBird in its algorithms for rare bird notifications, relied on by many birders.



Changes to ABA codes in 2019, approved by the ABA-CLC, are as follows. Two vagrant species recorded in Alaska have now accumulated more than five records, resulting in ABA Code changes from 5 (accidental) to 4 (casual); these are the Rufous-tailed Robin and Tree Pipit. The Black-headed Gull changes from Code 3 (rare but annual) to Code 2 (easily identified within its restricted range); this reflects the increased ease of observation of the species, and aligns the *ABA Checklist* codes with those of the eBird codes. A few code inconsistencies remain between the ABA and eBird lists for practical reasons—for example, as related to eBird rare bird alerts in the ABA Area–Continental for species more easily observed in Hawaii (Pyle et al. 2018). However, the above changes result in the two lists largely being aligned.

Four-letter Alpha Codes

In 2017, at the request of ABA members, four-letter alpha codes were added to the *ABA Checklist*. These alpha codes are abbreviations of avian common names used by ornithologists and birders as shorthand, allowing quicker data recording and entry than full species names. Alpha codes are also now an option for eBird data entry, and the

Fig. 5. This accipiter from Adak Island was evaluated by the Alaska Checklist Committee, which voted against acceptance of the record as a Eurasian Sparrowhawk without ruling out that possibility. At the request of the observers, the ABA Checklist Committee has undertaken review of the record. *Adak, Alaska; Sept. 21, 2016. Photo by © Franklin C. Haas.*



Possible Future Votes and Other Decisions

Other than the Eurasian Sparrowhawk discussed above, the ABA-CLC has no records.



Fig. 4. Based on an increasing and expanding population in the Los Angeles Basin, the **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet** has been added to the *ABA Checklist*. Native to central tropical South America, the species has been present in California for several decades. A population in Florida may also be established, but has not been evaluated by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee. *Los Angeles County, California; May 20, 2019. Photo by © Kimball L. Garrett.*

codes employed by both the *ABA Checklist* and eBird follow those maintained by the Institute for Bird Populations, which are updated each year in July following announcement of the AOS *Check-list* supplement. Codes for the four species newly added to the *ABA Checklist* are: Stejneger's Sooty Tern, STSC; Dark-billed Cuckoo, DBCU; Long-legged Buzzard, LLBU; and Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, YCPA.

Changes to alpha codes on the *ABA Checklist* affected by name changes or status changes by the AOS (Chesser et al. 2019) are as follows: Common Ground Dove (formerly Common Ground-Dove), from COGD to CGDO; Ruddy Ground Dove (formerly Ruddy Ground-Dove), from RUGD to RGDO; Amethyst-throated Mountain-gem (formerly Amethyst-throated Hummingbird), from ATHU to ATMG; Blue-throated Mountain-gem (formerly Blue-throated Hummingbird), from BTHH to BTMG; Broad-tailed Hummingbird, from BTAH to BTHU; Gray-faced Petrel (formerly Great-winged Petrel), from GWPE to GFPE; and Great Black Hawk, from GBLH to GBHA. See tinyurl.com/IBP-codes for details.

ready for review or in the process of circulating. The committee usually awaits the decisions of local bird record committees before circulating records of potentially new species for the *ABA Checklist*. Currently, there are local records being considered for Common Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*, from La Romaine, Québec, May 9, 2019), Pallas's Gull (*Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*, from Shemya Island, Alaska, May 2, 2019), Variable Hawk (*Geranoaetus polyosoma*, from Gunnison, Colorado, every spring/summer between Aug. 1987 and Aug. 1994, and from Torrance County, New Mexico, Oct. 2, 2017), Pallas's Grasshopper-Warbler (*Locustella certhiola*, from Gambell, Alaska, Sept. 9–12, 2019), and an elaenia (possibly Small-billed Elaenia, *Elaenia parvirostris*, from Chicago, Illinois, Apr. 17–22, 2012; see Sweet 2013). The ABA-CLC will con-

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sider these records following decisions by local committees.

In 2019, the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee was petitioned to reconsider a record of Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) from J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge (off and on from Feb. 28, 2016, to spring 2019) as a wild vagrant rather than an escape, but declined to re-review the record following its decision not to accept this record in 2017. In making its decision, that committee considered the lack of records from any islands off the west coast of Africa (for example, Cape Verde, Canary, Madeira, or Azore islands) and lack of evidence for the crossing of even any offshore waters. Following this decision, the ABA-CLC elected not to review the record.

Corrigendum

The photo of the Thick-billed Warbler in Fig. 4 of the 29th ABA-CLC report (*Birding*, Dec. 2018, p. 34) was taken on Sept. 9, 2017, not Oct. 9, 2017.

Acknowledgments

The decisions of local bird records committees are instrumental in ABA-CLC evaluation of records, and we thank the following committees and their corresponding members for providing comments or additional information on species considered herein: Alaska Checklist Committee (ABA-CLC member Aaron Lang), California Bird Records Committee (Tom Benson), Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee (ABA-CLC member Andy Kratter), and Texas Bird Records Committee (ABA-CLC member Mark Lockwood). Marshall Iliff generously provided suggestions on ABA codes based on eBird data, and Paul Lehman pointed out the error in the 29th ABA-CLC report. Finally, we thank all of the photographers listed in this report for permission to publish their images, and we are grateful to the many ABA members and other birders who contributed or posted photographs of these birds to help with the ABA-CLC’s evaluations.

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