

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Thirty-first meeting of the Animals Committee
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PROPOSED NEW CITES STANDARD REFERENCES
FOR NOMENCLATURE OF BIRDS (CLASS AVES)

The attached information document has been submitted by the Secretariat at the request of the Birdlife International's Taxonomic Working Group in relation to agenda item 37.

Information Document

To: CITES Animals Committee – Intersessional Working Group on Zoological Nomenclature
From: BirdLife International – Taxonomic Working Group
Subject: Proposed New CITES Standard References for Nomenclature of Birds (Class Aves)
Date: 05 November 2020

Purpose: a) to provide the members of the CITES Animals Committee Intersessional Working Group on Zoological Nomenclature with further information on the *Handbook of the Birds of the World/BirdLife International Checklist of the world's birds*; b) to address and clarify a number of issues raised in the consultant's report on the implications of adopting a new standard nomenclature reference for birds at the family and order level (CoP18 Doc. 99 Annex 5)

Introduction (drawing from paragraphs 34 to 42 of [CoP18 Doc. 99](#) and 2 to 4 of [AC31 Doc. 37](#))

In 2016, CITES CoP Decision 17.311 directed the Secretariat to: a) commission an analysis of the implications of adopting a new standard nomenclature reference for birds at the family and order level, taking into account the 3rd and 4th editions of the Howard & Moore [H&M] complete checklist of the birds of the world, and both volumes of the Handbook of the Birds of the World and BirdLife International [HBW&BLI] Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World, as well as the Animals Committee [AC] discussion regarding a new standard reference for bird nomenclature at the genus and species levels; and b) report the results to the AC. Decision 17.312 directed the AC to: a) evaluate the results of the analysis; and b) develop a recommendation for decision [by] at CoP18.

In 2018, Decision 17.311 was implemented by commissioning an independent consultant (Ronald Orenstein), whose report was submitted in November 2018 ([CoP18 Doc. 99 Annex 5](#)). As it was not possible for the AC to consider and discuss this report and make a recommendation to CoP18, the Parties renewed Decision 17.312 and tasked the AC to come to a decision regarding bird nomenclature.

Considering the number and complexity of the nomenclatural changes that would result from the adoption of either proposed checklist as a standard nomenclature reference, the likely need to retain some of the adopted standard references for particular species, and possibly the inclusion of additional standard references, a detailed evaluation is necessary. Given the limited time available in regular AC meetings, and as AC31 did not take place in July 2020 owing to COVID-19, an intersessional working group on zoological nomenclature was established in September 2020. Amongst other responsibilities, it was tasked with considering the findings of the consultant's report and developing a recommendation for decision at CoP19 in 2022.

The aim of this document is to provide the members of the intersessional working group with additional and updated information about the HBW&BLI Checklist, to address and clarify a number of issues raised in the consultant's report, and thereby to inform the group's discussions and recommendations.

Creating, maintaining and updating the HBW&BLI Checklist

From 2010, BirdLife joined forces with *Handbook of the Birds of the World* [HBW] to produce the *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World*, with Volume 1 (covering non-passerines) published in 2014 and Volume 2 (passerines) in 2016. This enterprise made extensive use of systematic criteria by which species rank can be consistently assessed where this is necessary (e.g. for newly described species or proposed splits). These criteria ([Tobias et al. 2010](#)) involve weighting morphological and acoustic differences as compared with the nearest believed relative, and are particularly

intended to help make decisions involving allopatric taxa (but also parapatric and hybrid zone situations). Further details on the basis of the Checklist, the application of these criteria and the incorporation of molecular data are given in the Introductions to Volumes 1 and 2. These introductions, together with full taxonomic justifications for the changes adopted by the Illustrated Checklists and the underlying morphological and vocal data, can all be downloaded [here](#). As a result of the application of the new criteria and a thorough review of the taxonomic status of each recognized species, the HBW&BLI Checklist recognizes more species than any of the other three widely used global bird taxonomies, and is the only one that presents detailed taxonomic justifications for its treatment of each species. As BirdLife is the IUCN Red List Authority for birds, the HBW&BLI Checklist is the taxonomy that underpins all global Red List assessments.

Since the publication of Volume 2 in 2016, BirdLife's Taxonomic Working Group [BTWG] has continued to update the Checklist on an annual basis, reflecting both the discovery of new species and, more frequently, changes to existing species limits based on the latest research. In the latter case, BTWG often undertakes independent research and detailed examination of specimen evidence before making a decision. It continues to use and promote the objective scoring methods that make the HBW&BLI Checklist unique in the transparency and objectivity of its decision-making, and continues to provide full justification for all the changes adopted. The BTWG **welcomes external input to the work undertaken, and anyone can propose taxonomic issues or provide new information for consideration by posting a message on the [BirdLife Forum](#) or by emailing taxonomy@birdlife.org**. Once revisions to the current treatment are adopted, there is a necessary time-lag before revised taxa are assessed against the IUCN Red List Criteria and subsequently published on the BirdLife Data Zone and IUCN Red List websites, and included in new versions of the Checklist, which are usually released at the end of each year. The current version of the Checklist is always available for download [here](#), in both Excel and PDF formats (and earlier versions are available in Excel). From December 2020, users will also be able to download a list of recognized subspecies and a full set of detailed taxonomic notes justifying the treatment of each taxon. Further details of all the species recognized by the HBW&BLI Checklist, including range maps and lists of threats, are provided through BirdLife's [Data Zone](#).

Implications of the integration of *HBW Alive* into *Birds of the World*

The annually updated list is known as the HBW&BLI *Digital Checklist of the Birds of the World*, and v.5 of this checklist will be released in December 2020. This also formed the taxonomic underpinning of Lynx Edicions' online platform *HBW Alive*, until its recent integration into the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Birds of the World* platform. As Cornell uses a different taxonomy to that used by BirdLife, currently recognising 10,721 species compared to BirdLife's 11,158, the list of species currently displayed in *Birds of the World* does not exactly match the HBW&BLI Digital Checklist. However, BirdLife and Cornell are now working towards full alignment of these two essential references, with the aim of ensuring that the species displayed in *Birds of the World* exactly match those on the BirdLife Data Zone and the IUCN Red List. The integration of *HBW Alive* into *Birds of the World*, and the ongoing evolution of the latter, therefore does not mean there will be any reduction in effort on the part of BirdLife to maintain, update and promote its objective and transparent taxonomic checklist to support conservation and science; further details are available [here](#).

Adoption and use of the HBW&BLI Checklist

Since 2014, the taxonomy and nomenclature of the HBW&BLI Checklist has been adopted for use by multiple international conservation agreements, policy conventions, intergovernmental processes and other bodies:

- United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**
 The Parties adopted Volume 1 as the standard reference for taxonomy and nomenclature for non-passerine species at CMS CoP11 in Ecuador in November 2014 (https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/Res_11_19_Taxonomy_%26_Nomenclature_of_Birds_E.pdf), and Volume 2 for passerine species at CMS CoP12 in the Philippines in October 2017 (https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop12_res.12.27_taxonomy-nomenclature_e.pdf). Article 6 of the latter document “*Instructs* the Scientific Council to review the updated online version of the bird reference for the species listed on the Appendices at its last meeting before each meeting of the Conference of Parties and make recommendations as to whether the name of any listed species should be updated”.
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)**
 The Parties adopted Volume 1 as the standard reference for waterbird species taxonomy and nomenclature at MoP6 in Germany in November 2015. Recognising the dynamic nature of this field, they also “requested the AEWA Technical Committee to monitor the changes in the waterbird species taxonomy and nomenclature to be reflected in the adopted AEWA standard taxonomic and nomenclature reference and to advise on the updates of Annex 2 to the Agreement, when appropriate” (https://www.unep-ewa.org/sites/default/files/document/aewa_mop6_res1_adoption_amend_en_0.pdf)
- Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MoU)**
 Raptors MOU explicitly follows the parent convention CMS on such matters and has wording to that effect in its agreement text. Therefore it has no need to officially adopt any documents. It has accepted updates to its Annexes based on the online version of the checklist and has used BirdLife taxonomy/nomenclature since its inception.
- European Union (EU)**
 In 2015, the European Commission and EU Member States Signatories adopted Volume 1 of the HBW&BLI Checklist as the standard reference for non-passerine species taxonomy and nomenclature in the official list of bird species in the EU, for use for the implementation of Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law and Directive 2014/35/EC on environmental liability with regards to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage. They adopted Volume 2 similarly in 2018, updating the official list of EU birds accordingly:
https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/eu_species/index_en.htm
- European Bird Census Council (EBCC)**
 In 2018, the EBCC Board adopted the HBW&BLI Checklist as its reference for species nomenclature and taxonomy, for use in all the supranational projects coordinated by EBCC, including the European Breeding Bird Atlas, EuroBirdPortal and the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme. Although primarily based on the two printed volumes (2014, 2016), it has also adopted changes made since 2016, including e.g. the split of Cyprus Scops-owl *Otus cypricus* recognised in 2019 (<https://www.ebcc.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/bcn-30-2.pdf>).

BirdLife International uses the HBW&BLI Checklist as the basis for much of its priority-setting work, including in its role as Red List Authority assessing the global extinction risk of all birds for the IUCN Red List, and for identifying Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), the largest subset of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

From October 2020, the latest (2020) digital version of the HBW&BLI Checklist is also underpinning the first [quantitative global review of trade in wild birds](#), funded by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative’s Collaborative Fund, led by BirdLife, and involving TRAFFIC, IUCN, UNEP-WCMC and the University of Cambridge. This project, for which a letter of support was received from CITES, will identify key species, trade sectors and countries, to inform conservation policy and practice.

Clarifications of some specific points raised in the consultant's report ([CoP18 Doc. 99 Annex 5](#))

Regarding whether to adopt [Forshaw \(2006\)](#) for the **parrot species** (p. 5):

- The BirdLife Taxonomic Working Group [BTWG] remains tuned into recent developments in taxonomy, many of which vindicate its approach and some of which stimulate it to reassess its findings. For example, a recent paper (Braun *et al.* 2017) vindicated most of the BTWG's position regarding ***Trichoglossus haematodus***, but also proposed a four-way split of ***Eclectus roratus***; the BTWG's independent analysis of this latter suggestion supported the change, which BirdLife adopted in 2019. Similarly, after examining three specimens in the American Museum of Natural History [AMNH], the BTWG adopted the split of ***Pyrrhura (melanura) chapmani*** proposed in 2016 (Donegan *et al.* 2016).

Regarding the list of nine cases on pp. 5-6:

- The splits of ***Loriculus sclateri*** and ***L. tener*** were initiated by the BTWG, and the case for that of ***Prioniturus waterstradti*** was first fully made in print by the BTWG. Moreover, the Checklist offers clear explanations of the BTWG's rejection of ***Psittacara brevipes*** and ***P. strenuus*** and of ***Pezoporus flaviventris***.

Regarding the taxonomy of ***Poicephalus robustus*** and ***P. fuscicollis*** (p. 8):

- The BTWG split these taxa in 2017, following its own exhaustive examination of the evidence (Collar & Fishpool (2017). BirdLife has recognised and assessed them separately since 2017.

Regarding the specific issues raised on pp. 9-10 of the consultant's report, please see the brief responses in bold capitals after each (and note that many BTWG decisions have had to be put on hold owing to the COVID-driven closure of the UK's Natural History Museum bird collections, which form an important research resource):

- ***Amazona gomezgarzai* (Psittacidae)**: The validity of this newly-described taxon from the Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico, has been questioned (Escalante *et al.*, 2017). **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND REJECTED BY BTWG IN 2020**
- ***Anthocephala berlepschi* (Trochilidae)**: A proposed split from *A. floriceps*. See discussion at <http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCprop654.htm>. **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED BY BTWG IN 2019**
- ***Campylopterus calcirupicola*, *C. diamentinensis*, *C. obscura* (Trochilidae)**: *C. calcirupicola* is a new species described from Minas Gerais, Brazil. In the same paper (Lopes *et al.*, 2017) the authors propose treating the subspecies of *C. largipennis* as separate species except for *C. l. aequatorialis*, which they treat provisionally as a subjective junior synonym of *obscura*. See discussion at <http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCprop756.htm>. **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND REJECTED BY BTWG IN 2019**
- ***Colibri cyanotus* (Trochilidae)**: Remsen *et al.* (2015), in a broad study of the Polytminae, "propose that nominate [*Colibri*] *thalassinus* and the *cyanotus* group should be treated as separate species until data indicate otherwise". This split has been accepted by the American Ornithologists' Union (Chesser *et al.*, 2016). **CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY BTWG**
- ***Eugenes spectabilis* (Trochilidae)**: This split has been accepted by the American Ornithologists' Union (Chesser *et al.*, 2017). **CASE PENDING**
- ***Lophorina niedda*, *Lophorina minor* (Paradisaeidae)**: Splits resulting from a review of the genus on molecular, morphological and behavioural grounds. The separation of *L. niedda* has been supported by studies of its courtship displays (Scholes & Laman, 2018). **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED BY BTWG IN 2019, BUT WITH DIFFERENT NAMES – SEE** <https://www.biotaxa.org/Zootaxa/article/view/zootaxa.4732.1.2>
- ***Megascops gilesi* (Strigidae)**: This taxon, which has awaited description for a number of years, was described from the Santa Marta Mountains in Colombia. It appears to be a distinctive new species with no close relatives within *Megascops*. See discussion at <http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCprop769.htm>. **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED BY BTWG IN 2019**

- ***Northiella narethae* (Psittacidae):** A split based on a molecular study (Dolman & Joseph 2015) showing that the isolated subspecies *narethae* from the Nullarbor Plains, Australia, is genetically distinct from all other populations of *N. haematogaster*. **CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY BTWG**
 - ***Ocreatus addae*, *Ocreatus annae*, *Ocreatus peruanus* (Trochilidae):** Split resulting from a review (Schuchmann et al., 2016) of the genus, recognizing *addae*, *annae*, and *peruanus* as monotypic species, with the subspecies *underwoodii*, *discifer*, *incommodus*, *melanantherus*, and *polystictus* retained within the polytypic *O. underwoodii*. **CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY BTWG**
 - ***Oreotrochilus cyanolaemus* (Trochilidae):** This new species, apparently endemic to the southwestern highlands of Ecuador, was described (Sornoza-Molina, 2018) on the basis of “striking” plumage differences from related species. It is probably closest to *O. stolzmanni*. The authors evaluate it as Critically Endangered based on its limited distribution and lack of protection of its habitat. **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED BY BTWG IN 2020**
 - ***Otus cypricus* (Strigidae):** The scops owl population of Cyprus is split off as an endemic species on the basis of plumage and vocalizations from the widespread *Otus scops*. See also Flint & Richardson (2017). **ACCEPTED BY BTWG IN 2019**
 - ***Strix ‘omanensis’* / *Strix hadorami* / *Strix butleri* (Strigidae):** The names of the owls *Strix butleri* and the recently-described *S. omanensis*, both listed in HBW&BLI, have been a source of confusion because of the uncertain provenance of the type specimen of *butleri* and the fact that *omanensis* was described based on photographs and recordings, without tangible specimen evidence (Brewer, 2018). *Strix butleri* is listed in H&M3 and H&M4, but *omanensis* was described too late to be included in these publications. Robb et al. (2015) were able to obtain a cytochrome *b* sequence from a presumed *omanensis* netted in Iran, and demonstrated that this was identical to a sequence from the type specimen of *butleri*. As a consequence the name *butleri* had to be shared with the population described as *omanensis*, while the population generally referred to as *butleri* required a new name. Kirwan et al. (2015) reviewed the entire complex, applied the name *butleri* (with *omanensis* as a synonym) to the populations of Iran and the eastern Arabian Peninsula, and described the populations of the western parts of the Middle East formerly attributed to *S. butleri* as a new species, *S. hadorami*. This change has been adopted in the online version of HBW, which follows Kirwan et al. (2015) in assigning the name *hadorami* to the populations formerly known as *butleri* (Desert Tawny Owl) and *butleri* to the populations described as *omanensis* (Omani Owl). As this reflects a correction of a nomenclatural error, Parties may wish to adopt Kirwan et al. (2015) as a standard reference for *S. hadorami* and Robb et al. (2015) as a standard reference for *S. butleri*. **INDEPENDENTLY REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED BY BTWG IN 2019**
 - ***Tyto furcata*, *Tyto javanica* (Tytonidae):** Aliabadian et al. (2016) propose splitting *Tyto alba* into three species, *T. alba* (Africa, Europe), *T. furcata* (New World), and *T. javanica* (Australasia), based on a phylogenetic and ecological review. This split has been supported in a recent molecular study (Uva et al., 2018). **CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW BY BTWG**
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