

AOU Announces Taxonomic Changes

In the July 2003 issue of *The Auk*, 120(3):923-931, The American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature announced changes to the AOU's *Check-list of North American Birds* in the form of the 44th Supplement to the *Check-list's* 7th Edition (1998). With this publication, the Committee will begin publishing Supplements yearly instead of biennially.

The Supplement announced the placement of *Anseriformes* and *Galliformes* prior to *Gaviiformes* in the official *Check-list*, and hinted at numerous sequential changes to come in the 8th Edition due in part to the increasing influence of molecular genetics in describing the systematic relationships of birds. The AOU follows the British Ornithological Union in this decision. Other revisions to the *Check-list* of interest to birders in the ABA Area follow:

- The English name of *Larus belcheri* is changed from band-tailed gull to Belcher's gull.
- The generic name of three regular North American pigeon species is changed from *Columba* to *Patagioenas*: white-crowned pigeon is now *Patagioenas leucocephala*, red-billed pigeon *P. flavirostris*, and band-tailed pigeon *P. fasciata*.
- The English name rock dove for *Columba livia* is changed to rock pigeon.
- New World species formerly in genus *Otus*, with the exception of flammulated owl *O. flammeolus*, are now in the new genus *Megascops*: for the ABA area, western screech-owl is now *Megascops kennicottii*, eastern screech-owl *M. asio*, and whiskered screech-owl *M. trichopsis*.
- The genus *Nyctea* having been merged into *Bubo*, the scientific name of snowy owl becomes *Bubo scandiaca*.
- As a result of a split, the New World form of three-toed woodpecker becomes American three-toed woodpecker *Picoides dorsalis*; the Old World form retains the nominate species name *P. tridactylus*, with the English name Eurasian three-toed woodpecker. These new species are probably distinguishable in the field, and both may have occurred in Alaska.
- For grammatical reasons, the scientific name of black-capped vireo is changed to *Vireo atricapilla*.
- For grammatical reasons, the scientific name of black-capped chickadee reverts to *Poecile atricapillus*.
- For grammatical reasons, the scientific name of ovenbird is changed to *Seiurus aurocapilla*.
- A split among the New World crossbills separates Hispaniolian crossbill *Loxia megalaga* from white-winged crossbill *L. leucoptera*.

Far more details on all the above decisions, and many others affecting the avifauna of Central America, may be found in the July 2003 issue of *The Auk*. The new *Check-list* is on the Web at <www.aou.org/aou/birdlist.html>. The Supplement offers hints about future revisions, including ongoing consideration of one or more splits in seaside sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*. The report concludes by saying the Committee is "aware of reports in our area of several species not now on our list, but are awaiting consideration of these reports by our sister committee of the American Birding Association." —Ed. 🐦



This singing sedge wren was photographed in Butler County's Voice of America Park in July 2003 by Bob Royse.