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Frank Gill & Minturn Wright on behalf of the International Ornithological Congress: Birds of the World

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Introduction

“Wisdom begins with putting the right name to a thing” (Old Chinese Proverb)

Most of us refer to birds by their English names, which seem to change too frequently, or be the same for different species on different continents, or vary from list to list. Nearly twenty years ago, the leadership of the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) saw the need for better standardized vernacular names. First came French names (Devillers and Ouellet 1993), then Spanish names (Bernis 1995). English names were especially challenging, taking more than fifteen years to compile.

Our goal—a set of unique English-language names for the extant species of the birds of the world—was easier to state than it was to achieve. The names would conform to a set of rules formulated through a consensus of leading ornithologists worldwide.

When one valued colleague saw our work in progress, he exclaimed, “What a total waste of time!” He was bent on saving the world’s oceans and their declining fisheries, both pressing issues. Some colleagues in ornithology expressed similar sentiments when they declined our invitation to participate on one of the committees. “Can’t be done,” they said. “Isn’t that what scientific names are for?” others asserted.

Many others disagreed, committed themselves to participate, and then worked long and hard together for over a decade. Our team view is that an improved and better standardized system of English names based on consensus and a logical set of rules will lead to success in ornithology and the conservation of beleaguered avifaunas worldwide. The proposed names would also increase clear, crisp, and global communication among various stakeholders. These stakeholders include government officials, publishers, and philanthropists, many of whom are not comfortable with or literate in scientific names. Many stakeholders also contribute as amateur ornithologists, not as taxonomists. Global birders need improved standardization and greater simplicity of

English names. So does the vital community of conservation biologists. So do the editors of the growing industry of books on the birds of different countries and different families. All stakeholders need to communicate clearly without using hyphens in four different ways and without trying to reconcile the treatment of different names in varied authoritative works.

So, on behalf of the IOC we submit this list of recommended International English names of the extant birds of the world. The members of the IOC Standing Committee on English Names endorse these names and encourage their use by our colleagues in ornithology, and by book publishers, government agencies, checklist committees, and conservation organizations.

Passions about bird names run high. We know that adoption of the names on this list will be strictly voluntary, perhaps piecemeal, and probably slow. The same colleagues who professed no interest in the initiative likely will rush to defend their preferred names of favorite birds. But we truly believe that the list of names recommended here has important strengths, and, if used widely, will promote consistency and authority.

The names are:

- based on rules that simplify and standardize name construction
- selected to involve minimal use of hyphens for group names
- anglicized without glottal stops, accents, and the like
- based on interregional agreement and global consensus, with compromises
- selected with deference to long-established names
- aligned with current, though ever-changing, species taxonomy
- recommended but not mandatory; local adoptions are wholly voluntary
- sponsored and endorsed by the IOC and by committee members

This is not primarily a taxonomic work. Rather, it supplements the third edition (Dickinson 2003) of Howard and Moore's (H&M) Checklist of the Birds of the World. We started with the world list of Sibley and Monroe (1990). In the end, we adopted H&M as the taxonomic reference for this work. We employed H&M's family classification, generic sequences, and assignments to "incertae sedis," with few exceptions and updates. Many changes are forthcoming, informed by DNA-based phylogenetic analyses. Paramount among these will be overhauls of the relationships and classification of the sylvioid "warblers" of Eurasia and Africa. Also informing future editions of this list will be major new works such as Rasmussen and Anderson's *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide* (2005). We adhered to H&M's conservative species taxonomy, unless committee chairs requested otherwise. We accepted species additions to the world list published prior to December 31, 2004, and endorsed by committee chairs.

We offer this list as our recommendations to the communities of ornithologists and their publishers. It is a first edition and a work in progress that will benefit from use, evaluation, and thoughtful feedback. It does not achieve some potentially desirable consistencies, for instance, with respect to using the same group name for all members of a genus (e.g., raven versus crow [*Corvus*], serin versus canary [*Serinus*], tit versus chickadee [*Poecile*]). But it is a major step in the direction of logic and standardization. Some will use it in its entirety, others will pick and choose the parts they like. Still others will reject it, at least initially. We ask only that our colleagues explore its merits and seek out its deficiencies diligently. It has, we believe, depth built on the expertise of some of the best ornithologists of our generation. Each found balance between local traditions and progressive improvements.

The naming of birds is an ongoing work-in-process. New discoveries and new tastes will produce new names. We hope that we have started down the road of progress. We welcome ideas on how to proceed.

HISTORY

The project to standardize the recommended English names of every extant bird species in the world was set in motion at the 1990 meeting of the IOC, which appointed a committee of eminent ornithologists to consider the matter. The late Burt L. Monroe Jr. was named as chair of the committee, and he in turn named eleven well-known ornithologists as committee members.

Monroe created an initial list of all the species and subspecies of birds from the monumental "Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World" authored by himself and Charles Sibley. The project had to have a starting point, and this was a natural one. Monroe and his committee engaged in extended preliminary discussions and debates. Their votes on a series of issues revealed a great deal of disagreement on how birds should be named and what the jurisdiction of the committee should be. The project thus proved to be more difficult and time-consuming than had been expected, and Monroe died before much had been accomplished. The project then went into abeyance.

It was revived in late 1994 by Frank Gill and Walter Bock. Speaking for the IOC, Bock invited Gill to take over the project, which he did early in 1995. Gill asked Minturn Wright, a lawyer by profession and world birder by avocation, to act as recording secretary and organizer of the process the project would follow. Bock named Gill and Wright to act as co-chairs of the committee. Gill then asked each person on Monroe's committee to rejoin the project; most of them did. Gill expanded the committee by the addition of another twelve or thirteen eminent ornithologists, bringing the committee to twenty-eight ornithologists from fourteen countries (see Acknowledgments) plus the co-chairs (Gill and Wright) for a total of thirty. The committee operated through six regional subcommittees, chaired as follows: Palearctic—Christopher Perrins; Nearctic—Stephen M. Russell; Africa—Peter G. Ryan and the late G. Stuart Keith; Neotropics—Robert S.

Ridgely; Oriental Region—Nigel Redman; Australasia—Richard Schodde.

PROCESS AND PRINCIPLES

The creation of the committee and the organization of its process were based on the following principles:

- The committee operated almost exclusively through its six regional subcommittees. The members of each subcommittee were experts on the birds of that region.
- In an effort to resolve many of the problems that had plagued the Monroe committee, the committee adopted at the outset a set of basic rules or principles that would be applied in the selection and spelling of names.
- The project was not to be a vehicle for the wholesale changing of the names of birds but rather an effort to standardize names.
- The subcommittees would strive for consistency, an important aspect of standardization, but if long usage and common sense required inconsistencies the committee would accept them.
- No special consideration would be given to the names on the Sibley-Monroe list, which was selected as the initial working list.
- The project was to standardize the names of full species and would not include subspecies (although the Sibley-Monroe list covered both). This decision was made to give the project a manageable scope. A corollary was that the description of a taxon by Sibley-Monroe as a full species or subspecies would not govern the committee's selection of the taxon. The committee decided early on that as a general rule it was not within its province to make taxonomic decisions, but as the project progressed it became necessary to do so to some extent.
- Similarly, in the course of the work, taxa were noted that did not appear on

the Sibley-Monroe list. Each committee was free to decide whether to add those taxa to the list under the basic principles adopted. Looking ahead, we expect this process to continue for new species (either discovered or split off from existing species).

The process agreed to was as follows:

- The entire list of names was divided among the six subcommittees, each of which took the initiative with respect to the names assigned to it. Two or more committees shared an interest in some widespread species. In most cases, however, it was clear which subcommittee had precedence.
- Each subcommittee came up with its list of names, which often involved compromises and sometimes non-unanimous decisions within the subcommittee.
- Through their chairs, each subcommittee was given the opportunity to comment on the names submitted by the other subcommittees, and while their comments were often accepted, each subcommittee had the final say as to the names on its list in most cases. In those cases where a taxon is substantially present in two or more regions, a general consensus was sought.
- The lists were reviewed by the co-chairs to determine compliance with the basic principles that had been adopted (mentioned above and detailed below). Finally, the co-chairs had the responsibility of ensuring that the six lists were consistent not only with the basic principles but with one another, and of resolving any differences that remained.

The committee's first job was to agree on and frame the basic principles that would govern the selection and spelling of names. It took years of discussion and debate to do so. The following basic rules were adopted:

1. Existing usage would be the predominant guideline. A long-established name

would not be changed just to correct a perceived inaccuracy or misdescription. “Inaccurate” names like Philadelphia Vireo and Dartford Warbler would stand. Names utilizing widespread words like *Warbler* and *Robin* for many groups of unrelated species would not be changed. Names with faulty descriptions of taxa were subject to change if the taxa had had several names, or if the name or the taxon was not widely known (as is notably the case for a number of tropical taxa). On occasion it was hard to draw the line between the importance of retaining a long-used name and the need to correct a misdescription, and some subcommittees drew the line more strictly than others.

2. Local vernacular names would not prevail over established formal names. The committee rejected the many “local” names for species of waterfowl and the names used, for example, by native Jamaicans to describe some of their birds (e.g., Old Man Bird). If a local nickname or vernacular name had been long used as the chief or only name for a taxon, however, the committee retained it (e.g., Go-away Bird, Morepork, Jacky Winter).
3. If a name was offensive to a substantial group of people, it would be changed. Kaffir Rail was an example, as were names using the former name of a certain country or region, such as Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) or Formosa (now Taiwan). The name of a former country was not changed just to reflect a new name if no one was offended by the old name or there was uncertainty about acceptance of the new name, such as Burma instead of Myanmar.
4. Every taxon would have only one recommended International English name throughout the world. The co-chairs consistently rejected suggested compromises that would list alternative names (e.g., Bearded Vulture or Lammergeier, Little Auk or Dovekie). This principle appears

obvious and easy to state, but it presented serious problems for members of the Nearctic and Palearctic subcommittees, who favored one or the other of the different names used in Great Britain or the United States for the same taxa.

5. The name of each taxon must be different from the names of all other taxa. This principle generated the corollary that where two or more taxa had basically the same name, modifiers would have to be added to distinguish them. Thus three “Black Ducks” had to be named American, African, and Pacific and two “White Ibises” American and Australian. A related rule that the committee adopted was that the full name of one species should not be included in the longer name of another species, which required modifiers to be added to taxa that for centuries were one-word names like Swallow, Wren, and Robin in Britain. It would also prohibit a pair of names like Black-headed Gull and Great Black-headed Gull.
6. Since the project was undertaken to create a list of recommended English names, the committee adopted the principle that only English words should be used. A name did not have to reflect its taxonomic name, which is usually in either Greek or Latin, but the committee decided that just because a bird’s long-standing name was in fact its taxonomic name, it did not have to be changed to an English word. Usage would govern. Thus names like Junco, Vireo, and Rhea have been retained. This is of particular significance in names of tropical birds, many of which are the taxon’s generic names (e.g., *Elaenia*, *Jacana*, *Dacnis*, *Attila*, *Myzomela*). The committee rejected the idea of a wholesale renaming of these taxa, while recognizing that ongoing revisions of bird genera will continue to create odd mismatches. The committee likewise accepted a large number of Spanish words on the basis of long usage (e.g., Doradito, Monjita, Tapaculo) and

even a number of Amerindian ones (e.g., Quetzal, Cacique). These latter two names are now in such wide usage that they appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The committee decided that non-English words that have been in common use for a substantial time have in effect become “English,” at least in the absence of any recognized English alternatives.

The most troublesome question was whether to adopt Hawaiian-language names for endemic Hawaiian birds. The spelling of those names with generally unfamiliar accent marks made this an even closer call. In the end the committee decided to follow such authorities as the *New York Times Atlas of the World* (for country names that are included in a species name), the AOU Checklist (7th ed.), and others, and to use anglicized versions of Hawaiian bird names and other established non-English names.

7. Many bird names include the names of persons, often discoverers or eminent ornithologists. Using patronyms in bird names has been popular or unpopular over the years, depending on the tastes or principles of the namers. The committee adopted a neutral stance. There would be no bias for or against patronyms. This had the effect of letting long usage largely govern these names, although the differing tastes and attitudes of the various committee members have played a role.
8. A bird’s name may consist of a single word (e.g., Brolga, Killdeer, Twite). The committee rejected the contrary view that every name must have a modifier. Yet it agreed that a taxon could have a two-word name even where it is the only taxon in its group and could therefore potentially have a one-word name (e.g., Kinglet Calyptura, Marvelous Spatuletail). Despite such rare exceptions, we adopted the general principle that brevity and simplicity are virtues and that each name

should be as short as reasonably possible and with rare exceptions never exceed four words, hyphenated or not.

9. If a name includes an island or islands, the word *island* or *islands* will not be included except where the resulting name is misleading (e.g., Pitt Shag and Christmas Frigatebird, but Inaccessible Island Rail).
10. For group names, defined as a word or words that apply to two or more taxa, the committee adopted several basic principles. A group name may be applied to two or more unrelated groups (e.g., Warbler [Parulidae, Sylviidae] and Robin [Turdidae, Petroicidae, *Erethacus*]). A group name can consist of one, two, or more words (e.g., Warbler, Eagle-Owl, Green Pigeon). A single genus may have two or more group names within it (e.g., Duck, Wigeon, Shoveler, and Teal within *Anas*).

PROBLEMS OF SPELLING

The selection of names proved to be easier than agreement on how to spell them. Some spelling problems were simple and readily agreed to by the committees. Briefly, the rules are as follows:

1. Official English names of birds are capitalized, as is the current practice in ornithology (e.g., Yellow-throated Warbler).
2. Patronyms are used in the possessive case (e.g., Smith’s, Ross’s).
3. Names on this list do not include diacritical marks.
4. There are compromises between British and American spellings in this list.
5. Those who adopt the list should spell and add pronunciation marks as preferred.
6. Geographical words in a name may be in noun or adjective form but must be consistent for that location (e.g., Canada, not Canadian).

7. Compound words conform to a series of rules that consistently address relationships between the two words and readability.
8. Use of hyphens is minimized.
9. For compound group names, hyphens are used only to connect two names that are birds or bird families (e.g., Eagle-Owl, Flycatcher-shrike) or when the name would be difficult to read (e.g., Silky-flycatcher, White-eye).

A detailed discussion of the thinking behind these rules follows.

1. **Capitalization.** An important rule adopted at the outset was that the words of an official bird's name begin with capital letters. While this is contrary to the general rules of spelling for mammals, birds, insects, fish, and other life forms (i.e., use lowercase letters), the committee believed the initial capital to be preferable for the name of a bird species in an ornithological context, first because it has been the customary spelling in bird books for some years, and also because it distinguishes a taxonomic species from a general description of a bird. Several species of sparrows could be described as "white-throated sparrows," but a "White-throated Sparrow" is a particular taxonomic species.

2. **Patronyms and accents.** It was agreed that if a name contained a patronym it would be stated in the possessive case (e.g., Smith's Longspur), and if the patronym ended with an *s* the apostrophe would be followed by an *s* (e.g., Ross's Turaco). There was general agreement to spell a patronym the way the person spelled it, even where the name was not English and the English spelling of the name differed (e.g., spelling a German name with an umlaut over the *u*, not the English *ue*). Initially the committee decided to use diacriticals on all words that in the language of origin were spelled with accents, even though accents are not used in English spelling, such as the French grave and acute accents, the Spanish cedilla and accents for Spanish place names, and the

German umlaut. A major point of contention was whether to adopt the glottal and other diacritical marks used in the Hawaiian language since, unlike other accent marks, they are almost totally unfamiliar to English-speakers. The committee decided against using such accents for that reason. This then led to a reconsideration of the use of accents generally. In the end the committee chairs decided to follow the precedent of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Committee on Classification and Nomenclature and the *New York Times Atlas* among others and to use no accents, except umlauts for certain proper names of people.

Supporting this difficult decision is our view that the list of International English names is not a guide to correct pronunciation, the sole purpose of using accents in local languages of the world. That said, the committee is neutral as to the wishes of authors of regional works, who should feel free to add pronunciation marks that they consider to be appropriate for their intended audience.

3. **British versus American spellings.** The names reflect the committee's view that spelling should be consistent throughout the list. Easily stated and on its face obvious, this rule became very difficult to apply where the same words have for centuries been spelled differently in different English-speaking countries. The problem essentially involves British and American spellings, with some countries being on one side and some on the other. The gray/grey difference is the most pervasive and best known, but other variant words are color/colour, mustache/moustache, racket/racquet, ocher/ochre, somber/sombre, saber/sabre, miter/mitre, sulfur/sulphur, and perhaps others. The committee decided to encourage each author and publisher to select whatever spelling of these words is deemed appropriate (since that would undoubtedly happen anyway). But in publishing its master list the committee decided to select one spelling for each variant word, because to state these words in the alternative in every case would produce a cumbersome list. The spellings selected by the

committee represent a compromise. *Grey* is used because far more taxa have traditionally used that spelling than *gray*. The list likewise adopts the British spelling of *sombre*, *sabre*, *sulphur*, *mitre*, *ochre*, and *moustache*, and the American spelling of *color* and *racket*. This tilt to the British side is justified by the fact that both spellings of every one of these variant words is considered correct in typical American dictionaries, such as the unabridged *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. We hope this solution will find favor with most users of the list.

The list of recommended names uses particular spellings merely as dictated by the decision to provide one name. Those who use the list should feel free to adopt the appropriate spelling.

4. Geographical nouns versus adjectives. An additional spelling question surfaced during the course of the project: whether to spell a geographical word in its noun or adjective form. An in-depth review of existing names revealed that, in general, places of large size have been spelled in the adjective form (e.g., *African*, *Mexican*, *Japanese*), while smaller places are spelled as nouns (e.g., *Timor*, *Kentucky*, *Nepal*). Continents and major regions have always been spelled in adjective form, while small islands and cities have always been spelled as nouns. Countries and large islands are treated inconsistently. Some countries are always found in adjective form (e.g., *Egyptian*, *Chinese*), while others are always in noun form (e.g., *Canada*, *Gabon*). The same is true of large islands (e.g., *Javan* and *Bornean*, on the one hand, and *Madagascar* and *Sulawesi* on the other). The committee decided that to achieve complete consistency among names would require the wholesale changing of familiar names. It would also pose too many difficult decisions on which way to go—noun or adjective—and where to draw the line between large and small. We decided to leave the names the way they were, and to make only such changes as were necessary to create consistency in the use of each individual name (e.g., to use *Tahiti* consistently and not have both *Tahiti* and *Tahitian*). This required remarkably few changes.

5. Compound names. The most difficult problem to resolve, because of widely disparate attitudes within the committee, was the spelling of compound words, particularly where found in group names. In general, a compound word is a combination of two words that in theory could be spelled as one word, as two words, or as two words hyphenated (e.g., *Woodpigeon*, *Wood-Pigeon*, or *Wood Pigeon*). In bird names a fourth alternative spelling is to follow the hyphen with a lowercase letter (e.g., *Wood-pigeon*). The problem is complicated by the use of variant spellings over many years. For example, Audubon used hyphens freely (as in *Meadow-lark*), in cases where now single words are used. The trend has been toward greater use of single words because it achieves a greater distinctiveness for the species. (Here the committee decided that usage was not as important in resolving spelling questions as it was in name selection, because it is hard to establish usage. Attitudes about hyphens have changed repeatedly over the decades.) The committee adopted the following principles:

A. Single words. Compound names are spelled as single words if the second word is *bird* (e.g., *Bluebird*, *Tropicbird*, *Secretary-bird*) or its equivalent (e.g., *Woodcock*, *Waterhen*); or where the second word is a body part of a bird (e.g., *Hookbill*, *Bufflehead*, *Yellowlegs*); or if the name describes a bird's call or song (e.g., *Chickadee*, *Dickcissel*, *Poorwill*, *Killdeer*); or if it describes a bird's behavior or activity (e.g., *Flycatcher*, *Roadrunner*, *Honeyeater*). The only exception is to use a hyphen if otherwise the name would be hard to pronounce or would look odd (e.g., *White-eye*, *Wattle-eye*, *Thick-knee*, *Huet-huet*, *Chuck-will's-widow*). "*Whip-poor-will*" was deemed borderline and the committee decided to follow perceived general usage.

Another category of compound words eligible for use as single words includes those where the second word is a kind of bird (e.g., *Nighthawk*, *Bushtit*, *Waterthrush*, *Meadowlark*). The critical point here is that

the spelling chosen should not suggest that the taxon is a member of the bird family named if it is not one. A Meadowlark is not a Lark; a Cuckooshrike is not a Shrike. Thus the name cannot be spelled as two words without a hyphen (e.g., Meadow Lark), or spelled with a hyphen followed by a capital letter (e.g., Cuckoo-Shrike). The committee adopted the rule that a single word will be used except where it would be hard to pronounce or look odd (e.g., Silky-flycatcher, Stone-curlew, Flycatcher-shrike).

A corollary of this rule is that if the second word is a type of bird and the taxon is in that bird family, the name would be spelled with two words, either without a hyphen or with a hyphen followed by a capital letter (e.g., Bush Lark, Eagle-Owl). Converting these to single words can suggest that the taxon is not in that family but is rather something different. Exceptions have been made in a few cases where long and widespread usage dictates a single word, such as Goldfinch, Skylark, Woodlark, and Sparrowhawk.

B. *Two words.* The most difficult problem is with compound words that are not to be spelled as single words. The choices for Storm Petrel, for example, are Storm Petrel, Storm-Petrel, or Storm-petrel. After much debate and in the absence of a clear majority in favor of any one of the alternative relevant rules we decided that the third of these—a hyphen followed by a lowercase letter—was appropriate only where the taxon is not a member of the family or taxon stated, such as Silky-flycatcher or Stone-curlew. That is the only correct spelling of such names if they are not spelled as a single word.

The choice, then, in most such cases was whether to hyphenate the two words or not, and this became the single most contentious point in the entire project because the committee members had very different attitudes toward the hyphen. At one extreme was the position that a hyphen should never be used except when absolutely necessary to clarify pronunciation or make a necessary word connection. Tied to this position were arguments that hyphens tend to violate otherwise ordinary rules of grammar; that common

usage usually does not support hyphens; and that hyphens violate the principle that names should be simple. At the other extreme is the view that hyphens should be used liberally in bird nomenclature to indicate relationships among taxa, and that if two or more taxa have the same “last name” the words should be hyphenated.

Faced with these differing viewpoints, the committee decided that a middle ground was essential. It adopted the following rules for the use and spelling of two-word compound names:

1. Two words should be used to spell all names not falling within the rules for single-word names.
2. As a general rule a hyphen should not be used, and both words should begin with capital letters (e.g., Black Tyrant, Screech Owl, Green Pigeon, Storm Petrel, Wood Partridge).
3. Where both words are the names of birds or bird families a hyphen should be inserted to signify that the taxon belongs to the family of the second word, not the first (e.g., Eagle-Owl, Nightingale-Thrush).
4. If a name covered by #3 is of a taxon that is not a member of the stated bird family, the letter after the hyphen should be lowercase to clarify that status (e.g., Flycatcher-shrike). This is a companion to the rule, described above, applicable to single-word names that hyphenates them to avoid confusion, as in Silky-flycatcher or Stone-curlew.
5. If application of any of the above rules would produce a name that is contrary to long-established and widespread usage, the rule may be modified or not applied. For example, Goldfinch, Skylark, and Sparrowhawk—all taxa that are within the family name stated and thus do not come within the single-word rules described above—can nevertheless be spelled as single words, despite #1, because of long usage.

Because the foregoing rules allow for exceptions (see #4 and #5, above) the results produce a fair number of inconsistent names. A notable example is the use of “finch,” where we have eleven single-word names and twenty-one two-word names. We concluded that perfect consistency is impossible without offending many people or turning usage on its ear. We strove to minimize these exceptions.

Throughout, the committee adopted conservative views on changing names. The temptation was great to standardize group names within genera, for example, to name all species of *Columba* “pigeons” or all species of *Turdus* “thrushes.” But the recommended standardization of bird names will be useful only insofar as the birding public and ornithologists accept it. Various committee members from time to time suggested more radical changes in bird names. One interesting suggestion was to scrap most of the current names for taxa in the bird-of-paradise family in favor of new, more attractive, and more interesting names, like those of hummingbirds for example. The committee could not find substantial approval of changes like these. But many of the ideas so far expressed are good ones and are at least worthy of further consideration. These should commend themselves to bird-name committees of the future.

In the end most of the difficult decisions were the result of great teamwork and compromises by the subcommittees. We decided some by executive decision, playing Solomon and striving to balance wins and losses of preferred names. Radical name changes, however, are few.

One example of an executive recommendation is that of “Angel Tern” for *Gygis alba*. Resolution between its previous two names, “Fairy Tern” and “White Tern,” was not possible without an executive decision. “Fairy Tern” was assigned years ago to *Sterna nereis* of Australia and New Zealand, leaving us with the truly bland generic name “White Tern” for one of the world’s most endearing seabirds. “White Noddy” arose as a possible solution, but the evidence supporting its

relationship to the *Anous* noddies was deemed not yet conclusive. So we sought an improvement, and found comfort in “Angel Tern,” a name that fits the bird and also invites interesting possibilities for naming potential new species of *Gygis*.

RANGES

A brief description of the geographical region occupied by each species is included to clarify the species to which the name refers and to allow for electronic sorting of the list. Geographical terminology and abbreviations used include the following:

General regions

- North America (NA)—includes the Caribbean
- Middle America (MA)—Mexico through Panama
- South America (SA)
- Latin America (LA)—Middle and South America
- Africa (AF)—entire continent rather than south of Sahara
- Eurasia (EU)—Europe, Asia from the Middle East through central Asia north of the Himalayas, Siberia and northern China to Japan
- Oriental Region (OR)—South Asia from Pakistan to Taiwan, plus Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and Greater Sundas
- Australasia (AU)—Wallacea (Indonesian islands east of Wallace’s line), New Guinea and its islands, Australia, New Zealand and its subantarctic islands, the Solomons, New Caledonia, and Vanuatu
- Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Tropical, Temperate, and Southern oceans (AO, PO, IO, TrO, TO, SO)
- Antarctica (AN)

The Excel files on the CD include more information on the range of each species. A

second column provides a qualifier from the most general “widespread” to “e, se,” referring the general region specified in the first column to the more specific countries or parts thereof, for example, “e, ne China” to “New Caledonia.” A third column specifies a species’ non-breeding range if it differs substantially from the breeding range.

INDEX

The index includes both English and scientific group names, primarily genera and families, of birds. We assume some familiarity with current classifications of the birds of the world, such that the reader will easily locate the family, genus, or group name of interest and then home in quickly on the target species of interest. We list the bird families and their starting page numbers in the preceding section of front matter. Full indices of scientific names are available in Dickinson (2003), a valued companion volume and guide to synonymies of avian taxonomy down to the subspecies level.

ELECTRONIC VERSIONS

We include with the book a CD that contains the three principal files that composed this work: (1) Nonpasserines; (2) Suboscine Passerines; (3) Oscine Passerines. These species files are formatted in Excel spreadsheets, which allows many options for sorting, finding, editing, and exporting to other widely used word processing and database programs. The files also include additional details on the range of each species.

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The IOC is the preeminent international forum of ornithologists. It promotes worldwide collaboration and cooperation in ornithology and the other biological sciences through its meetings every four years and through its standing committees.

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We accept full responsibility for the errors of accuracy that surely still lurk in this first edition work.

Frank Gill and Minturn Wright
Co-chairs, IOC Standing Committee on
English Names
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