

Additions, deletions and changes to the official list of North American birds

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The latest supplement to the American Ornithological Society's checklist of North and Middle American birds is being published in *The Auk: Ornithological Advances*, and it includes several major updates to the organization of the continent's bird species. The official authority on the names and classification of the region's birds, the checklist is consulted by birdwatchers and professional scientists alike and has been published since 1886.

Birdwatchers eager to build their "life lists" will be especially interested in the five species added to the checklist due to "splits," where scientists have determined that [bird populations](#) once believed to be part of the same species are actually distinct; these newly-recognized species include the Choco Screech-Owl, Socorro Parakeet, and Stejneger's Scoter. Eight species from Eurasia and South America have also been added to the list as a result of recent sightings in North America, and one species familiar to parrot fanciers, the Budgerigar, was removed from the list. Native to Australia, escaped pet "budgies" established a wild breeding population in central Florida in the 1950s. However, the population had been declining for decades, and as of 2014, Florida's budgies have died out, possibly due to competition for nest sites from other non-[native birds](#).

More than just a list that species are added to and deleted from, however, the checklist is also the authority on how North America's [bird species](#) are sorted into genera and families based on their evolutionary relationships. This year, new genetic data led to the rearrangement of

several of these groups. A genus of Neotropical tanagers called Tangara was split up, and a group of seabirds known as storm-petrels that were previously classified into two genera have now been lumped into a single genus called Hydrobates. AOS's North American Classification Committee, the group of scientists responsible for the checklist, also made several tweaks to the names and classifications of hummingbird species, including taking the step of changing the official English name of one species that occurs in the southwestern U.S. and Mexico from "Blue-throated Hummingbird" to "Blue-throated Mountain-gem."

"There are seven hummingbird species in the genus Lampornis, and all but two of them already had the common name 'mountain-gem,'" explains committee chair Terry Chesser, USGS Research Zoologist at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. "Usually we don't like to change the English names just to make them 'better,' because you could go through and make practically any bird name better if you wanted to, but in this case we thought it was worthwhile. We hope that calling all the [birds](#) in that genus by the name 'mountain-gem' will help birders understand a little bit more about the birds they're looking at, both in terms of associating these seven species with each other and in recognizing them as distinct from [species](#) in other genera simply called 'hummingbird.'"

More information: "Sixtieth Supplement to the American Ornithological Society's Check-list of North American Birds" [DOI: 10.1093/auk/ukz042](#)

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