

Taxonomic recommendations for British birds: second report

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These recommendations of the Taxonomic Sub-Committee of the BOU Records Committee take effect immediately for the purposes of the British List. Species-level decisions are based on criteria outlined by Helbig *et al.* (2002, Guidelines for assigning species rank; *Ibis* **144**: 518–525). The first report of the Sub-Committee was published in *Ibis* **144**: 707–710.

The Sub-committee has been working with the Association of European Rarities Committees' Taxonomic Advisory Group, which has recently published recommendations online (http://aerc.be/aerc_tac.htm). It should be noted that the contents of the current version of the AERC report are not supported by the BOU, and that the AERC-TAC recommendations do not affect the British List. The reports of the BOURC and its TSC, which are published in *Ibis*, remain the official publications of the BOU.

Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

Bewick's Swan *C. c. bewickii* and Whistling Swan *C. c. columbianus* are diagnosable on the amount of yellow on the bill. This has been reported to be discontinuous (Evans & Sladen 1980. *Auk* **97**: 697–703). Doubts about discontinuity were repeated recently, when Knapton (2000. *Birders Journal* **9**: 130–133) pointed out that a disproportionate number of 'black stripe' Bewick's has occurred as extralimitals in North America, and that some may be Whistling Swans with more yellow than might be expected. It has been suggested that Bewick's has a yellow stripe on the underside of the lower mandible, but it is not known whether this is any more reliable than the amount of yellow on the sides of the bill over large sample sizes. Bewick's and Whistling Swans have sub-

stantially expanded their ranges recently and are now sympatric in north-east Siberia (Syroechkovski 2002. *Waterbirds* **25** (Spec. Publ. 1): 100–113). Mixed pairs and hybrid families have been reported on the breeding and the wintering grounds since the 1970s, but the relative frequency of interbreeding is not known. Mitochondrial DNA differentiation (N. Harvey & D.T.P., unpubl. data) has not resolved evolutionary relationships among holarctic swans. Based on these data, there is insufficient support for recognition of *bewickii* as a separate species under the guidelines of Helbig *et al.* (2002). No change to their current classification is therefore recommended.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

The correct spelling of the scientific name of the Egyptian Goose is *A. aegyptiaca* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* **122**: 257–282).

Willow Ptarmigan (Red Grouse) *Lagopus lagopus scoticus*

The correct spelling of the scientific name of the Red Grouse is *L. l. scotica* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* **122**: 257–282).

Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*

The correct spelling of the scientific name of the Rock Ptarmigan is *L. muta* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* **122**: 257–282).

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*

Morphological, behavioural and molecular studies indicate that the Stilt Sandpiper is better placed as a member of the genus *Calidris* (Jehl 1968. *San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. Memoir* no. 3; 1973. *Wilson Bull.* **85**: 115–146; Borowik & McLennan 1999. *Auk* **116**: 1107–1117). The Stilt Sandpiper becomes *Calidris himantopus*. Stilt Sandpiper is moved to follow

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Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* pending a comprehensive phylogenetic analysis of the genus *Calidris* and closely related taxa.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

The correct spelling of the scientific name of the Spotted Sandpiper is *A. macularius* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* **122**: 257–282).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Long-tailed Skua should be treated as polytypic (*Birds of the Western Palearctic* 3: 685), with two races, both of which are said to have occurred in Britain (from a previous time when the species was considered to be polytypic):

- *S. l. longicaudus* (Scandinavia east to about the Lena delta)
- *S. l. pallescens* Løppenthin (Greenland, North America and Siberia east of Kolyma river)

Intermediates occur between the ranges of these subspecies.

Most migrants in Britain are believed to belong to the nominate race. *S. l. pallescens* was originally added to the List in 1958 on the basis of a specimen from the Meinertzhagen collection (*Ibis* **100**: 299–300). As Meinertzhagen's specimens are now best treated with caution (*Ibis* **135**: 320–325, 493–499), this record and the status of *pallescens* on the List should be reviewed.

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*

Studies of mitochondrial DNA sequences (Blechschi Schmidt *et al.* 1993. *Zool. Jb. Syst.* **120**: 379–387; Cohen *et al.* 1997. *Proc. R. Soc. London B* **264**: 181–190; Brumfield & Braun 1998. *Proc. R. Soc. London B* **265**: 995–999), allozymes (Cohen *et al.* 1997), parasites (Cohen *et al.* 1997; Andersson 1999a. *Proc. R. Soc. London B* **266**: 1579–1585) and behaviour (Andersson 1999b. *J. Avian Biol.* **30**: 205–215) indicate that Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* is more closely related to the great skuas *Catharacta* than to Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus* and Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus*. However, two mitochondrial DNA studies (Blechschi Schmidt *et al.* 1993; Cohen *et al.* 1997) and a phylogenetic analysis of the presence of ectoparasite taxa in skua species (Andersson 1999a) have suggested that Pomarine and Great Skua form a monophyletic group that is the sister-taxon of the remaining species of *Catharacta*. This would render both *Catharacta* and *Stercorarius*, as currently recognized, paraphyletic.

Brumfield and Braun (1998) and Andersson (1999a) pointed out that the nuclear DNA data in the study of Cohen *et al.* (1997) support monophyly of *Catharacta*. Brumfield and Braun (1998) also concluded, on the basis of a maximum likelihood analysis of the mitochondrial DNA data of Cohen *et al.* (1997), that a tree topology in which *Catharacta* is monophyletic is not significantly worse than the most likely mtDNA topology. Andersson (1999a) also concluded that the mtDNA phylogeny obtained by Cohen *et al.* (1997) is not the true species phylogeny. He suggested that the similarity of mtDNA sequences and ectoparasites of Pomarine and Great Skua can be explained by introgressive hybridization, resulting in transfer of mtDNA and feather lice from Pomarine to Great Skua.

Brumfield and Braun (1998) and Andersson (1999a, 1999b) suggested that the most likely phylogenetic hypothesis is a sister-group relationship of *Catharacta* and Pomarine Skua, and that this clade is sister to (Arctic + Long-tailed Skua). This hypothesis, according to which *Catharacta* is monophyletic but *Stercorarius* is paraphyletic, is consistent with all molecular, parasitological and behavioural data (Andersson 1999b). Andersson (1999b) suggested that many of the differences in morphology, behaviour and habitat between adult *Catharacta* and the remaining species of skua may be due to the retention of immature character states (i.e. neoteny) in *Catharacta*.

We accept the phylogenetic hypothesis of Brumfield and Braun (1998) and Andersson (1999a, 1999b) and recognize *Catharacta* as a monophyletic group that is the sister of Pomarine Skua. We follow the recommendation of Andersson (1999b) that all skuas should be treated as a single genus *Stercorarius*. Thus, Great Skua becomes *Stercorarius skua*.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

The Black-legged Kittiwake was treated as polytypic in the 4th BOU checklist (BOU 1952. *Check-list of the birds of Great Britain and Ireland*), but as monotypic in the 5th edition (BOU 1971. *The status of birds in Britain and Ireland*), presumably following Vaurie (1965. *The birds of the Palearctic fauna, Non-passeriformes*). Recent work (Chardine 2002. *Condor* **104**: 687–693) has confirmed that there are significant phenotypic differences between the Atlantic and Pacific populations. We recommend that Black-legged Kittiwake should be treated as polytypic, the race occurring in Britain being nominate *tridactyla*. Preliminary work (Patirana

et al. 2000. Poster presentation at the 11th Pacific Seabird Group meeting, Napa, California, <http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/pubs.html>) suggests there may be mtDNA differences between the two taxa as well. The implications of this will be reviewed following publication of the full results.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*

The review of Black Guillemot geographical variation in Cramp (1985. *Birds of the Western Palearctic* 4: 208–219) concluded that the race breeding in Britain was

- *C. g. arcticus* (Brehm) (North America, southern Greenland, Britain, western Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Murmansk, White Sea).

This subspecies is therefore added to the British List. Two individuals ringed in western Sweden (also *C. g. arcticus*) have been recovered in Britain. *C. g. grylle*, which breeds in the Baltic Sea, should be removed from the British List.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

Molecular phylogenetic analysis (Wink & Heidrich 1999. In König *et al.* (eds) *Owls: a Guide to the Owls of the World*: 39–57; Wink & Heidrich 2000. In Chancellor & Meyburg (eds) *Raptors at Risk*: 819–828) groups the monotypic genus *Nyctea* among a clade of *Bubo* and *Ketupa* owls as the sister taxon of Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* and Magellan Horned Owl *B. magellanicus*. In addition, there is no osteological basis for separating *Nyctea* and *Bubo* (Ford 1967. *A systematic study of the owls based on comparative osteology*. PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; S.L. Olson *in litt.*). Differences between *Nyctea* and *Bubo*, such as the former's white plumage, small ear-tufts, dense plumage, short bill, eyes largely concealed by long and dense feathers, and feathered claws, can be explained as adaptations to arctic environments and do not rule out a phylogenetic position within *Bubo*. Snowy Owl is therefore included in *Bubo* and becomes *Bubo scandiaca*.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

M. s. superciliosus, *M. s. philippinus* and *M. s. persicus* differ in multiple, well-established plumage characters (e.g. Fry 2001. *Handbook of the Birds of the World* 5: 337–338) and should be treated as separate species:

- **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *M. persicus* (northern Africa and Middle East to north-west India)
- **Olive Bee-eater** *M. superciliosus* (southern Africa, east Africa, Madagascar and Comoro Islands)

- **Blue-tailed Bee-eater** *M. philippinus* (northern Pakistan, south-west Asia to New Guinea and New Britain)

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater was added to the British List in 2003 on the basis of a record from 1921 (*Ibis* 145: 179). *M. persicus* is polytypic, the race having occurred in Britain being nominate *persicus*.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

The correct spelling of the scientific name of the House Martin is *D. urbicum* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* 122: 257–282).

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, and subspecies

S. t. maura*, *S. t. variegata

The correct spelling of the scientific names of Stonechat taxa is *Saxicola torquatus*, *S. t. maurus*, *S. t. variegatus* (David & Gosselin 2002. *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* 122: 257–282).

The taxonomy of the *S. torquatus* complex is under active review by the TSC.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Pied Wheatear should be treated as two species on the basis of differences in song, female plumage, the extent of sexual dimorphism in plumage and biometrics, habitat selection, behaviour and possibly moult (Christensen 1974. *Ornis Scand.* 5: 47–52; Sluys & Van den Berg 1982. *Ornis Scand.* 13: 123–128; Svensson 1992. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*, 4th edn; Small 1994. *Dutch Birding* 16: 177–185; Flint 1995. *Br. Birds* 88: 230–241):

- **Pied Wheatear** *O. pleschanka* (monotypic)
- **Cyprus Pied Wheatear** *O. cyprica* (monotypic)

Only the former has occurred in Britain and there is no change to the English or scientific names of the species on the British List, though it should now be treated as monotypic.

Genus *Sylvia*

Phylogenetic analyses of DNA–DNA hybridization distances (Blondel *et al.* 1996. *J. Evol. Biol.* 9: 871–891), mitochondrial DNA sequences and morphology (Shirihai *et al.* 2001. *Sylvia Warblers*) have clarified the evolutionary relationships within the genus. The species in the genus *Sylvia* should be listed in the following sequence:

- **Blackcap** *S. atricapilla*
- **Garden Warbler** *S. borin*
- **Barred Warbler** *S. nisoria*
- **Lesser Whitethroat** *S. curruca*
- **Orphean Warbler** *S. hortensis*

- Asian Desert Warbler *S. nana*
- Common Whitethroat *S. communis*
- Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata*
- Dartford Warbler *S. undata*
- Marmora's Warbler *S. sarda*
- Rüppell's Warbler *S. rueppelli*
- Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans*
- Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala*

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*

Descriptions of plumage and song of *S. nana* and *S. deserti* (*Birds of the Western Palearctic* 6: 396–405; Shirihai *et al.* 2001. *Sylvia* Warblers) have documented diagnostic differences between these taxa. *S. n. theresae*, by contrast, is poorly differentiated and this name is now considered to be a synonym of *Sylvia nana* (Shirihai *et al.* 2001). These data suggest that Desert Warbler is best treated as two monotypic species.

- Asian Desert Warbler *S. nana* (monotypic)
- African Desert Warbler *S. deserti* (monotypic)

A recording of the song of *nana* can be found on Schubert (1982. *Stimmen der Vögel Zentralasiens*); recordings of *deserti* were published by Strömberg (no date. *Moroccan Bird Songs and Calls*), Roché and Chevereau (1998. *Birds of North-West Africa*) and Chappuis (2000. *African Bird Sounds* 1. *West and Central Africa*). Further sonagrams of *nana* can be found in Mauersberger *et al.* (1982. *Mitt. Zool. Mus. Berlin* 58: 11–74).

All records of desert warbler species in Britain are assumed to refer to Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*, and are currently under review by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). This taxonomic change does not therefore affect the numerical total of Category A of the British List.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Male Red-breasted Flycatcher *F. p. parva* and Taiga Flycatcher *F. p. albicilla* are diagnosable on the extent of the red bib, the presence of a greyish band across the lower margin of the red bib and the colour and the pattern of the upper-tail coverts. The breast colour in female and immature birds also differs between *parva* and *albicilla* (Svensson 1992. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. 4th edn; *Birds of the Western Palearctic* 7: 39; Cederroth *et al.* 1999. *Birding World* 12: 460–468). There are differences in the age at which males acquire the adult plumage and in the retention of the red bib after the post-breeding moult (*Birds of the Western Palearctic* 7: 39; Cederroth *et al.* 1999). Songs and calls of

male *parva* and *albicilla* are clearly different (Svensson 1984. *Soviet Birds*; Cederroth *et al.* 1999; Jannes 2003. *Calls of Eastern Vagrants*; Parkin *et al.* in prep.). An unpublished mitochondrial DNA study of *Ficedula* flycatchers indicates that *parva* and *albicilla* show a high level of sequence divergence (U. Olsson *in litt.*). The breeding ranges of *parva* and *albicilla* are likely to be in contact (Mauersberger & Stephan 1967. In Stresemann *et al.* (eds). *Atlas der Verbreitung Palaearktischer Vögel* 2; Cederroth *et al.* 1999) but the extent of overlap and the interaction of these taxa on the breeding grounds is unknown. On the basis of the combination of morphological, vocal, moult and mitochondrial DNA differences we recommend that Red-breasted Flycatcher is best treated as two species.

- Red-breasted Flycatcher *F. parva* (monotypic)
- Taiga Flycatcher *F. albicilla* (monotypic)

Two recent reports of Taiga Flycatcher in Britain are being considered by the BBRC. A paper on the taxonomic status of Taiga Flycatcher has been prepared and will appear elsewhere.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

The Eurasian black and white flycatchers have been treated as three separate species: Pied *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Collared *F. albicollis* and Semi-collared *F. semitorquata*. Adult males are diagnosably distinct on the basis of rump colour, size of forehead patch, extent of white on secondaries and tertials, and extent of white on outer tail feathers. Females can also be separated with care, but there is more overlap.

Populations of *hypoleuca* from Iberia and north-west Africa are allopatric. The Spanish form (*iberiae*) has a larger white forehead than the nominate race, and there is more white in the wings than in populations from further north. Birds from the Atlas Mountains (*speculigera*) have the greater coverts completely white, but with much less white in the outer tail feathers than in *hypoleuca*. The white forehead is more extensive in *speculigera* than in any other forms of *hypoleuca*. *Speculigera* is probably diagnosably distinct from *iberiae* on size of forehead patch. In many ways, *speculigera* is closer to *albicollis*, apart from complete neck collar in the latter.

DNA sequence data published by Saetre *et al.* (2001a. *Ibis* 143: 494–7) suggest that Pied and Collared Flycatchers are monophyletic, with *speculigera* as their sister group, although the bootstrap support for Pied/Collared relationship is not that strong. Semi-collared is most distinct. Nuclear DNA sequences (Saetre *et al.* 2001b. *Mol. Ecol.* 10: 727–49) support

these findings. The mitochondrial genetic distances between Pied (*hypoleuca* north-west Europe), Collared, Semi-collared, *speculigera* and *iberiae* are all of the order of 3–4%, apart from *hypoleuca* and *iberiae*. These are c. 0.5%, which is closer to the intrataxon differences of 0.12–0.39%.

The evidence suggests that *hypoleuca*, *albicollis*, *semitorquata* and *speculigera* are diagnosably distinct, and with genetic divergences (from both nuclear and mitochondrial DNA) that are supportive of full species status. The Iberian form seems to be intermediate between *speculigera* and *hypoleuca* in morphology, though closer to the latter. The DNA data also suggest that its affinities lie with *hypoleuca*.

We recommend that Atlas Flycatcher *F. speculigera* should be separated from Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*, but that the Iberian form retains its subspecific status as *F. hypoleuca iberiae*. *F. speculigera* has not been recorded in Britain, so this change does not affect the English or scientific names on the British List, or the numerical total of species on Category A.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

Owing to confusion among previous authors, the race of Isabelline Shrike breeding in Mongolia, Transbaikal and northern China, previously called *L. i. speculigerus*, should be called *L. i. isabellinus*. The race breeding in the Tarim Basin, China, previously called *L. i. isabellinus*, should now be called *L. i. arenarius* (Pearson 2000. *Bull. Br. Orn. Club* 120: 22–27; see also Worfolk 2000. *Dutch Birding* 22: 323–362). The identification of subspecies of Isabelline Shrike occurring in Britain should be reviewed.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

The review of Lesser Grey Shrike geographical variation in Cramp & Perrins (1993. *Birds of the Western Palearctic* 7: 499) concluded that the species should be treated as monotypic, a view shared by Svensson (1992. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*, 4th edn). We propose to follow this recommendation.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

The placement of the Corn Bunting in the genus *Miliaria* rather than in *Emberiza* has rested on the

Corn Bunting's sexual dimorphism in size, lack of sexual dimorphism in colour, complete post-juvenile moult, bill structure and behaviour (*Birds of the Western Palearctic* 9: 338). However, phylogenetic analyses of mitochondrial DNA sequences (Lee *et al.* 2001. *Ibis* 143: 299–303; Grapputo *et al.* 2001. *J. Avian Biol.* 32: 95–101) indicate that Corn Bunting is part of the group of *Emberiza* buntings and does not represent a separate lineage. On the basis of this evidence, Corn Bunting is placed in *Emberiza* and becomes *Emberiza calandra*, although further analysis may suggest that *Emberiza* would be better treated as several genera. The sequence of *Emberiza* species on the British List is left unchanged until their relationships are better resolved.

Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea*

The monotypic genus *Guiraca* is merged into *Passerina* as a result of an analysis of mitochondrial DNA (Klicka *et al.* 2001. *Auk* 118: 611–623), which reveals a sister relationship between *G. caerulea* and *P. amoena*. Other characters (e.g. behaviour, moults, plumages) support this treatment (Phillips *et al.* 1964. *The Birds of Arizona*; Blake 1969. *Bird Banding* 40: 133–139; Mayr & Short 1970. *Species Taxa of North American Birds*). *Guiraca caerulea* should become *Passerina caerulea*. Blue Grosbeak is at present included in Category D of the British List.

The species in the genus *Passerina* should be rearranged in the sequence *cyanea*, *caerulea*, *amoena*, *rositae*, *leclancherii*, *versicolor*, *ciris*. This sequence reflects the phylogeny obtained by Klicka *et al.* (2001). Rearrange the species in category E in the genus *Passerina* as follows:

- **Lazuli Bunting** *P. amoena*
- **Leclancher's/Orange-breasted Bunting** *P. leclancherii*
- **Varied Bunting** *P. versicolor*
- **Painted Bunting** *P. ciris*

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