

**THE COUES CHECK
LIST OF NORTH
AMERICAN BIRDS**

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The Coues Check List of North American Birds by Elliott Coues

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ELLIOTT COUES

**THE COUES CHECK
LIST OF NORTH
AMERICAN BIRDS**

THE
COUES CHECK LIST
OF
NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

SECOND EDITION,

Revised to Date, and entirely Rewritten, under Direction of the Author,

WITH A DICTIONARY OF THE

ETYMOLOGY, ORTHOGRAPHY, AND ORTHOEPY

OF THE

SCIENTIFIC NAMES,

THE CONCORDANCE OF PREVIOUS LISTS, AND A CATALOGUE OF HIS
ORNITHOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS.



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ESTES AND LAURIAT.
1882.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN 1873, shortly after the publication of the author's "Key to North American Birds," appeared the original edition of this "Check List," which was almost immediately reissued in connection with the same writer's "Field Ornithology," in 1874. That list reflected the classification and nomenclature of the "Key" with much exactitude, although it included, in an Appendix, a few species additional to those described in the "Key," and made some slight changes in the names. Excepting some little comment in foot-notes and in the Appendix, the original "Check List" was a bare catalogue of scientific and vernacular names, printed in thick type on one side of the paper.

Meanwhile, the science of Ornithology has progressed, and our knowledge of North American birds has increased, both in extent and in precision, until the original list, faithful as it was at the time, fails now to answer the purpose of adequately reflecting the degree of perfection to which the subject has been brought. A new edition has therefore become necessary.

The list has been revised with the utmost care. The gratifying degree of accuracy with which it represented our knowledge of 1873 is exhibited in the fact, that it is found necessary to remove no more than ten names. On the other hand, the progress of investigation has resulted in adding one hundred and twenty names to the list, and in showing the necessity or expediency of making many changes in nomenclature. The exact analysis of the differences between the two lists is given beyond.

In revising the list for the main purpose of determining the ornithological *status* of every North American bird, the most scrupulous attention has been paid to the matter of nomenclature,—not only as a part of scientific classification, determining the technical relations of genera, species, and varieties to each other, but also as involved in writing and speaking the names of birds correctly. The more closely this matter was scrutinized, the more evidences of inconsistency, negligence,

or ignorance were discovered in our habitual use of names. It was therefore determined to submit the current catalogue of North American birds to a rigid examination, with reference to the spelling, pronunciation, and derivation of every name, — in short, to revise the list from a philological as well as an ornithological standpoint.

The present "Check List," therefore, differs from the original edition in so far as, instead of being a bare catalogue of names, it consists in a treatise on the etymology, orthography, and orthoepy of all the scientific, and many of the vernacular, words employed in the nomenclature of North American birds. Nothing of the sort has been done before, to the same extent at any rate; and it is confidently expected that the information given here will prove useful to many who, however familiar they may be with the appearance of these names on paper, have comparatively little notion of the derivation, signification, and application of the words; and who unwittingly speak them as they usually hear them pronounced, that is to say, with glaring impropriety. No one who adds a degree of classical proficiency to his scientific acquirements, be the latter never so extensive, can fail to handle the tools of thought with an ease and precision so greatly enhanced, that the merit of ornithological exactitude may be adorned with the charm of scholarly elegance.

The purpose of the present "Check List" is thus distinctly seen to be twofold: First, to present a complete list of the birds now known to inhabit North America, north of Mexico, and including Greenland, to classify them systematically, and to name them conformably with current rules of nomenclature; these being ornithological matters of science. Secondly, to take each word occurring in such technical usage, explain its derivation, significance, and application, spell it correctly, and indicate its pronunciation with the usual diacritical marks; these being purely philological matters, affecting not the scientific status of any bird, but the classical questions involved in its name.

In the latter portion of his task, which, as is always the case when thorough work of any kind is undertaken, proved to be more difficult and more protracted than had been expected, and delayed the appearance of the list for nearly a year after the ornithological portion had been practically completed, the author of the original list has received invaluable assistance from Mrs. S. OLIVIA WESTON-AIKEN, who cordially shared with him the labor of the philological investigation, and to whose scholarly attainments he is so largely indebted, that it is no less a duty than a pleasure to recognize the co-operation of this accomplished lady.

ANALYSIS OF THE TWO EDITIONS.

THE original edition of the "Check List" ostensibly enumerates only 685 species of North American Birds. This is owing to the fact that only full species are numbered, the many subspecies being given as *a*, *b*, &c., and some names being interpolated without corresponding numbers, both in the body of the list and in the Appendix. By actual count there are found to be, in the body of the list, 750; to which 28 are added in the Appendix: 750 + 28 = 778.

First, with regard to subtractions. It is in gratifying evidence of the general accuracy of the original list, that it is found necessary to remove only *ten* (10) names. *Four* of these are extra-limital; *six* are mere synonyms. The following is the —

LIST OF SUBTRAHEND NAMES.

1. *Ægialothus fuscescens*. Summer plumage of *Æ. linaria*.
2. *Centronyx ochrocephalus*. Fall plumage of *Passerculus bairdi*.
3. *Sphyrapicus williamsoni*. Male of *S. thyroides*.
4. *Lampornis mango*. Extra-limital.
5. *Agyrtria lunsei*. Extra-limital.
6. *Momotus oceruleiceps*. Extra-limital.
7. *Ibis thalassina*. Young of *Plegadis guarana*.
8. *Ardea wuerdemanni*. Dichromatism of *A. occidentalis*.
9. *Sterna "longipennis"*. Meaning *S. pikii* Lawr. Young of *S. macrura*.
10. *Podiceps cristatus*. Extra-limital, as far as known.

On the other hand, the numerous accessions to the list are in no less gratifying evidence of the progress of our knowledge. There are no fewer than one hundred and twenty additions to be made. The large majority of these are *bona fide* species, and actual acquisitions to the North American list, being birds discovered since 1873 in Texas, Arizona, and Alaska, together with several long known to inhabit Greenland. It may be here remarked that although the Greenland Fauna has long been usually claimed and conceded to be North American, yet the full list of Greenland

birds has never before* been formally incorporated with the North American, as is done in the present instance. Aside from such additions, the increment is represented by species or (chiefly) subspecies named as new to science since 1873; by a few restored to the list; and by two imported and now naturalized species. The following is the full—

LIST OF ADDEND NAMES. [Continued on p. 10.]

1. *Turdus migratorius propinquus*. Since described by Ridgway. Western U. S.
2. *Turdus iliacus*. Greenland.
3. *Harporhynchus curvirostris* (verus). Restored. Arizona.
4. *Cyanocitta stelleri*. Alaska.
5. *Regulus satrapa olivaceus*. Recognized as a subspecies.
6. *Parus rufescens neglectus*. Since described by Ridgway. California.
7. *Parus cinctus*. Alaska.
8. *Psaltriparus melanotis*. Restored. Nevada. Arizona.
9. *Catherpes mexicanus* (verus). Restored. Texas.
10. *Thryothorus ludovicianus miamensis*. Since described by Ridgway. Florida.
11. *Anorthura troglodytes pacificus*. Recognized as a subspecies.
12. *Telmatoctes palustris paludicola*. Recognized as a subspecies.
13. *Alauda arvensis*. Greenland; "Alaska;" Bermudas.
14. *Motacilla alba*. Greenland.
15. *Mniotilta varia borealis*. Recognized as a subspecies.
16. *Parula nigrilora*. Since described by Coues. Texas.
17. *Helminthophaga lawrencii*. Since described by Herrick. New Jersey.
18. *Helminthophaga leucobronchialis*. Since described by Brewster. Mass.
19. *Helminthophaga cincinnatiensis*. Since described by Langdon. Ohio.
20. *Peucedramus olivaceus*. Arizona.
21. *Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea*. Since described by Ridgway.
22. *Sturnus naevius notabilis*. Since described by Grinnell. Wyoming.
23. *Cardellina rubrifrons*. Arizona.
24. *Vireo flavoviridis*. Restored. Texas.
25. *Vireo solitarius cassinii*. Recognized as a subspecies.
26. *Passer montana*. Naturalized.
27. *Leucosticte atrata*. Since described by Ridgway. Colorado.
28. *Leucosticte australis*. Recognized as a species.
29. *Leucosticte tephrocotis litoralis*. Recognized as a subspecies.
30. *Ægiothus linaria holboellii*. Recognized as a subspecies.
31. *Ægiothus hornemanni*. Greenland.
32. *Astragalinus notatus*. Restored. Kentucky.
33. *Passerculus sandwichensis alaudinus*. Recognized as a subspecies.
34. *Ammodramus caudatus nelsoni*. Since described by Allen. Illinois.
35. *Peucaea aestivalis illinoensis*. Since described by Ridgway. Illinois.
36. *Peucaea ruficeps boucardi*. Arizona.
37. *Junco hiemalis anneotens*. Recognized as a subspecies.
38. *Junco hiemalis dorsalis*. Recognized as a subspecies.
39. *Junco hiemalis cinereus*. Arizona.
40. *Passerella iliaca megarhyncha*. Recognized as a subspecies.
41. *Molothrus senex*. Texas.
42. *Sturnella magna mexicana*. Texas.

* "A Catalogue of the Birds of North America," by Robert Ridgway, in *Pr. Nat. Mus.*, II, pp. 163-246, published since the above was written, includes Greenland birds, together with various Mexican species not yet found within our limits.

43. *Icterus vulgaris*. Restored. South Carolina.
44. *Quiscalus purpureus senens*. Recognized as a subspecies.
45. *Cyanocitta stelleri anneotens*. Recognized as a subspecies.
46. *Perisoreus canadensis fumifrons*. Since described by Ridgway. Alaska.
47. *Sturnus vulgaris*. Greenland.
48. *Pitangus derbianus*. Texas.
49. *Myiodynastes luteiventris*. Arizona.
50. *Myiarchus erythrocerus*. Texas.
51. *Empidonax saviventris difficilis*. Restored. Western U. S.
52. *Ornithium imberbe*. Texas.
53. *Nyctidromus albicollis*. Texas.
54. *Selasphorus alleni*. Since described by Henshaw. California.
55. *Calothorax lucifer*. Arizona.
56. *Amazilia fuscicaudata*. Texas.
57. *Amazilia yucatanensis*. Texas.
58. *Jacho latirostris*. Arizona.
59. *Chordeiles popetue minor*. Florida.
60. *Orotophaga sulcirostris*. Texas.
61. *Picus stricklandi*. Arizona.
62. *Scops asio maxwellae*. Since described by Ridgway. Colorado.
63. *Scops trichopsis*. Inserted on Ridgway's authority. Arizona.
64. *Strix cinerea lapponica*. Recognized by Ridgway. Alaska.
65. *Strix nebulosa alleni*. Since described by Ridgway. Florida.
66. *Surnia funerea nida*. Recognized by Ridgway. Alaska.
67. *Spectyto cucularia floridana*. Since described by Ridgway. Florida.
68. *Astur atricapillus striatulus*. Recognized as a subspecies. Western N. Am.
69. *Falco sacer obsoletus*. Recognized as a subspecies.
70. *Falco islandicus*. Restored. Greenland.
71. *Falco sparverioidea*. Florida.
72. *Buteo albicaudatus*. Texas.
73. *Urubitinga anthracina*. Arizona.
74. *Thrasyaetus harpyia*. Texas.
75. *Haliaeetus albicilla*. Greenland.
76. *Engyptila albifrons*. Texas.
77. *Coturnix dactylisonans*. Naturalized.
78. *Charadrius fulvus (verus)*. Alaska.
79. *Charadrius pluvialis*. Greenland.
80. *Aegialites histicola*. Greenland.
81. *Vanellus cristatus*. Greenland.
82. *Hæmatopus ostrilegus*. Greenland.
83. *Gallinago media*. Greenland.
84. *Arquatella couesi*. Since described by Ridgway. Alaska.
85. *Pelidna alpina (vera)*. Greenland.
86. *Actodromas souminata*. Alaska.
87. *Limosa sagocephala*. Greenland.
88. *Rhyacophilus ochropus*. Nova Scotia.
89. *Numenius phæopus*. Greenland.
90. *Ardea cinerea*. Greenland.
91. *Grus canadensis (vera = fraterculus)*. Recognized.
92. *Parra gymnotoma*. Texas.
93. *Rallus longirostris saturatus*. Since described by Henshaw. Louisiana.
94. *Porzana maruetta*. Greenland.
95. *Cygnus ferus*. Greenland.
96. *Cygnus bowicki*. Restored. Arctic America.