

35th Report of the ABA Checklist Committee 2024

This is the 35th published report of the ABA Checklist Committee (ABA-CLC), covering deliberations during late 2023 and 2024. The primary role of the ABA-CLC is to consider the addition of new species to (and, in rare cases, the removal of species from) the *ABA Checklist*. Secondary roles include reviewing and revising ABA Codes covering ease of observation in the ABA Area and updating and maintaining the *ABA Checklist* regarding taxonomic sequence, common and scientific names, and four-letter alpha codes.

The ABA-CLC consists of eight voting members who serve staggered four-year terms. Each year, two members typically cycle off and are replaced by re-elected or newly elected members. Members may be re-elected after their first four-year term but must take at least one year off after two consecutive terms. Two terms were expiring after 2024, that of Andy Kratter and David Sibley, each after eight consecutive years of service. Therefore, two vacancies for voting members needed to be filled beginning in 2025, and we have nominated and accepted Melissa Hafting and Mark Lockwood to become ABA-CLC members. The ABA-CLC thanks Andy and David for their eight years of excellent service and welcomes Melissa and Mark as new and returning ABA-CLC members, respectively.

For each species under consideration, each member votes to accept or not accept its addition to the *ABA Checklist* based on evidence from one or more records in the ABA Area (Pranty et al. 2008). A tally of 8-0 for acceptance automatically results in the species's addition to the *Checklist*,

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whereas a tally of 0–8 results in automatic non-acceptance. Intermediate vote tallies result in automatic recirculation if 6–2, 5–3, or 4–4 or recirculation at the request of any member if 7–1, 3–5, 2–6, or 1–7. Species can circulate for up to three rounds, at which point an 8–0 or 7–1 tally is needed for acceptance to the *Checklist*.

Records finalized by the ABA-CLC in 2024

In 2024, the ABA-CLC finalized voting on 15 species that would represent additions to the ABA Area. This likely represents a record number of considerations given an average of 5.3 decisions per annual cycle since 2017. Ten species were accepted and added to the *ABA Checklist*, whereas five species were not added to the *Checklist*. Accounts for these species are provided below.

In addition, and according to convention, all taxonomic and nomenclatural decisions of the American Ornithological Society (AOS) are automatically recognized by the ABA-CLC. This year, decisions by the AOS's North American Classification Committee (Chesser et al. 2024) resulted in the addition of three species due to splits: Scopoli's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) split from Cory's Shearwater (*C. borealis*), Cocos Booby (*Sula brewsteri*) split from Brown Booby (*S. leucogaster*), and Siberian Pipit (*Anthus japonicus*) split from American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*). And they resulted in the deletion of one species due to the lumping of Hoary and Common redpolls as Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*). The ABA-CLC is currently voting on whether to add Eastern Cattle-Egret (*Bulbucus cormandus*), due to its split from Western Cattle-Egret (*B. ibis, sensu stricto*) by the AOS and records of this species from Alaska and Midway Atoll. It is ABA-CLC policy to vote on newly split species with fewer than five prior records in the ABA Area. On the other hand, a straw vote among ABA-CLC members resulted in the retention of Medium Egret (*Ardea intermedia*) on the *ABA Checklist*, to the exclusion of Yellow-billed (*A. brachyrhyncha*) and Plumed (*A. plumifera*) egrets, based on assumptions of range and migratory status rather than identification, following AOS and Clements et al. (2024; hereafter, "Clements"). Nomenclatural revisions by the AOS have also resulted in 10 changes to English names, 14 changes to scientific names, and the re-arrangement of 31 species on the *ABA Checklist*. For more details on these and other 2024 decisions by the AOS, see Michael L. P. Retter's "Checklist Redux" at aba.org/aos-supplement-2024. The addition of 13 species and deletion of one species results in a total of 1,152 species on the primary *ABA Checklist*.

New Species Accepted to the ABA Checklist

Southern Lapwing ■ (*Vanellus chilensis*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024–02 (7–1, Feb 2024). The ABA-CLC ac-

cepted this species to the *ABA Checklist* on the first round based on records from Florida from 1959 to 2006, Maryland in 2006, and Michigan in 2022, and following acceptance by the Michigan Bird Records Committee in Jan 2024; see Pyle et al. (2022) and Pyle (2024) for photographs of the Michigan bird and more information on ABA-CLC deliberation. Identification was not an issue, and the one dissenting vote was due to concerns about possible human-assisted provenance of these records. Following the sequence of the AOS, Southern Lapwing is placed after Northern Lapwing (*V. vanellus*) in the *ABA Checklist*, and the ABA-CLC has assigned it ABA Code 5, although additional recent records in Texas and elsewhere may soon result in its being reassigned to Code 4.

Kentish Plover ■ (*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*)—ABA-CLC Record #2023–06 (6–2, 4–4, 8–0, Jan 2024). The ABA-CLC accepted this species to the *ABA Checklist* following three rounds of voting, based on an adult male in alternate plumage photographed on Shemya Island, Alaska, on 29 May 2023 and acceptance by the Alaska Bird Records Committee (AK-BRC) in Jul 2023. Concerns during the first two rounds revolved around eliminating the formerly conspecific Snowy Plover (*A. nivosus*), which was deemed less likely based on date and location of the record but not entirely eliminated based on plumage. For her second round voting, ABA-CLC member Mutchler analyzed over 6,800 images in Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library catalog taken in May and June, and summarized with illus-

CHANGES IN BRIEF

Species Added to the ABA Checklist Based on Distributional Records

- **Southern Lapwing** (*Vanellus chilensis*), ABA Code 5
- **Kentish Plover** (*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*), ABA Code 5
- **Gray Gull** (*Leucophaeus modestus*), ABA Code 5
- **Ainley's Storm-Petrel** (*Hydrobates cheimomnestes*), ABA Code 5
- **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*), ABA Code 5
- **Yellow-headed Caracara** (*Milvago chimachima*), ABA Code 5
- **Blue Rock-Thrush** (*Monticola solitarius*), ABA Code 5
- **Blue-black Grassquit** (*Volatinia jacarina*), ABA Code 5

Species Added to the ABA Checklist Based on Population Establishment

- **Lavender Waxbill** (*Glaucostrelda caerulescens*), ABA Code 2
- **European Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*), ABA Code 2

Species not Added to the ABA Checklist

- **Gundlach's Hawk** (*Astur gundlachi*)
- **Eurasian Goshawk** (*Astur gentilis*)
- **Cattle Tyrant** (*Machetornis rixosa*)
- **House Crow** (*Corvus splendens*)
- **Western House-Martin** (*Delichon urbicum*)



 **Figs. 1a & 1b** ■ Differences in head-plumage patterns in adult males of **Kentish Plover** (*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*, LEFT) and **Snowy Plover** (*A. nivosus*, RIGHT) in May and June. In bright male Snowy Plovers, the black loreal line is consistently weaker, usually broken, and never extends below the eye, in comparison to that of Kentish Plover, in which it often also extends below the eye. On the other hand, the black auricular patch is larger and more complete in Snowy Plover and, unlike in Kentish Plover, wraps around the back of the white supercilium and extends as a thin line to the nape in most individuals. The bird shown here was photographed on Shemya Island, Alaska, on 29 May 2023; it had a thick loreal line extending below the eye, a straighter and weaker auricular patch behind the eye, and lacked black extending below the nape—marks that convinced the ABA-CLC to add Kentish Plover to the ABA Checklist. Illustration based on analysis of >6,800 Macaulay Library images © Marky Mutchler. Photo © Zak Pohlen.



trations her conclusion that the Shemya bird best fit Kentish Plover (Figure 1). The ABA-CLC unanimously agreed with Mutchler's conclusions during the third round of voting. Following the sequence of Clements, Kentish Plover is placed after Snowy Plover in the ABA Checklist, and it is assigned ABA Code 5.

Gray Gull ■ (*Leucophaeus modestus*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-05 (8-0, Apr 2024). The ABA-CLC accepted Gray Gull to the ABA Checklist on the first round of voting, based on a record of a bird in Florida and Alabama from Jun 2023 through at least Sep 2024 (Figure 2), and following acceptance in 2024 by both the Florida Ornithological So-

ciety Records Committee and the Alabama Bird Records Committee. Details on this individual, and on a previous non-accepted record of this species in Louisiana in 1987, are presented by Pranty (2024). Following the sequence of the AOS, Gray Gull precedes Laughing Gull (*L. atricilla*) in the ABA Checklist, and it is assigned ABA Code 5.

Ainley's Storm-Petrel ■ (*Hydrobates cheimomnestes*)—ABA-CLC 2023-08 (8-0, Feb 2024). The California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) unanimously accepted this species for that state's checklist, in Dec 2023, based on one of at least 11 birds tracked with a geolocator from the breeding grounds on Guadalupe Island, Mexico, into California waters in Dec 2021 (Medrano et al. 2022, 2024; see also Benson et al. in press). At issue was whether a bird not directly observed should be accepted, and the CBRC, followed by the ABA-CLC and, later, the Hawaii Bird Records Committee based on similarly tracked birds to Hawaiian waters, had no concerns doing so, considering such documentation as



Fig. 2 ■ Gray Gull (*Leucophaeus modestus*). Walton Co, Florida. 26 Oct 2023. This bird was discovered in second alternate plumage on 5 Jun 2023 in Panama City, Bay Co, Florida and, presumably the same bird (of expected age and plumage sequences) was later seen in Walton Co, Florida, and Baldwin Co, Alabama (see Pranty 2024 for details). Based on this individual, the ABA-CLC accepted this species to the ABA Checklist by unanimous vote. Photo © Melissa James.

good as if not better than written and photographic evidence (for this cryptic species in particular; Figure 3). Following the sequence of the AOS, Ainley's Storm-Petrel is listed after Townsend's Storm-Petrel (*H. socorroensis*) in the ABA Checklist. The CLC has re-assigned this species to ABA Code 5, as only one of the 11 tracked birds has been accepted by the CBRC thus far, because no human has observed one in the ABA Area, and due to the difficulty of identifying this species in the field.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk ■ (*Accipiter nisus*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-11 (7-1, Aug 2024). The ABA-CLC considered a record from Adak Island, Alaska and voted in 2020 not to add it to the ABA Checklist after three rounds of voting (see Pyle et al. 2020 for details and a photograph of the bird). Both the Alaska Checklist Committee and the ABA-CLC were supportive of the identification but in each case the record fell short

of acceptance on split votes (4-2 and 6-2, respectively), despite positive comments on the identification by raptor experts worldwide. Following acceptance of the record on eBird-generated lists for the ABA Area (see Pyle 2024), the ABA-CLC reconsidered the record and accepted it to the ABA Checklist. The ABA-CLC member voting against acceptance desired to hold up the Alaska Checklist Committee's conservative approach to accepting records for that state's checklist. Following the sequence of Clements, Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Tachyspiza soloensis*) and Sharp-shinned Hawk (*A. striatus*) in the ABA Checklist, and it is assigned ABA Code 5.

Yellow-headed Caracara ■ (*Milvago chimachima*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-06



(8-0, Apr 2024). Following acceptance by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee for that state's checklist in Jan 2023, as based on a record of a bird in Dade Co first recorded as a juvenile in Oct 2022 (Figure 4), the ABA-CLC also voted to add this species to the ABA Checklist. Recent expansion of this species's range and increasing records in the Caribbean helped convince ABA-CLC members that this bird was more likely a natural vagrant than a ship-assisted or human-transported individual. Following the sequence of the AOS, Yellow-headed Caracara is listed after Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*) in the ABA Checklist, and it is assigned ABA Code 5.

Blue Rock-Thrush ■ (*Monticola solitarius*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-12 (8-0, Sep 2024). The ABA-CLC had previously considered a record of this species from

Fig. 3 ■ Ainley's Storm-Petrel (*Hydrobatas cheimomnestes*). Guadalupe I., Baja California. 16 Jan 2024. This species was split from Leach's Storm-Petrel (*H. leucorhous*) in 2016 based on differences in vocalizations, morphology, and breeding phenology (Ainley 1980, Chesser et al. 2016) and has since proven difficult to identify in the field (Howell et al. 2010, Sieburth et al. 2023). The ABA-CLC accepted it to the ABA Checklist based on geolocator-tracked birds from the breeding grounds on Guadalupe Island, Mexico. Photo © Eric Vanderwerf.



Fig. 4 ■ Yellow-headed Caracara (*Milvago chimachima*). Haulover Park, Miami-Dade Co, Florida. 27 Jan 2024. This bird arrived as a juvenile in Oct 2022, and has subsequently molted into definitive (adult) plumage; the age at arrival helped ABA-CLC members to consider this a natural vagrant rather than an escape from falconers. Another juvenile recorded in Harris Co, Texas, in Jun 2024 was likely also a natural vagrant, whereas an adult in Los Angeles, California, during May-Aug 2024 may have more likely been an escapee. Photo © Hal Snyder and Kristen Snyder.

Goldpan Provincial Park, British Columbia, in Jun 1997 (McDonald 1997), but did not add it to the *ABA Checklist* due to the lack of connecting records from the breeding grounds and possible questions regarding provenance (Robbins et al. 2003). The current ABA-CLC reconsidered this decision and added the species to the *Checklist* following the occurrence of two records in 2024, from near Canon Beach, Oregon on 21 Apr and from the Farallon Islands off San Francisco, on 25–26 Apr (Figure 5). These records were unanimously accepted by the Oregon

Bird Records committee (OBRC) and the California Bird Records Committee, respectively. Ship assistance was mentioned as an issue but the lack of evidence for this led to the unanimous acceptance by the ABA-CLC as well. Following the sequence of Clements, Blue Rock-Thrush is listed after Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush (*M. saxatilis*) in the *ABA Checklist*, and we include the alternate AOS nomenclature “Rock-thrush” in parentheses for both species (see below). The ABA-CLC has assigned this species ABA Code 5.

Lavender Waxbill ■ (*Glaucostrelda caerulescens*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-09 (7-1, Jul 2024). This exotic species has a moderately small population residing along the west coast of Hawai’i Island that has been accepted as established by The Hawaii Bird records Committee, AOS, and Clements. In 2018 the CLC voted not to add the species to the *ABA Checklist* (by a 6-2 vote in favor) due in part to the lack of information on population status (Pyle et al. 2018; see also Pyle 2024, including a photograph). At the request of the Hawaii Bird Records Committee, the ABA-CLC re-evaluated this decision in 2024. A geospatial analysis using eBird data (VanderWerf and Downs, in review) was included in the proposal and indicated that populations were stable or increasing, enough to convince all but one ABA-CLC member that criteria for population establishment (see Pranty et al. 2008) had been met. Following the sequence of the AOS, Lavender Waxbill is listed after Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*) in the *ABA Checklist*, and it has been assigned ABA Code 2.

European Goldfinch ■ (*Carduelis carduelis*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-07 (8-0, Feb 2024). Following acceptance of this exotic species to state checklists by the Wisconsin and Illinois Bird Records Committees, the ABA-CLC added this species to the *ABA Checklist* by unanimous vote. Recent detailed analyses by Sell (2021) and Craves and Anich (2023), indicating

an established and increasing population of this species (Figure 6) in the Great Lakes region, assisted all three committees with their decisions. Following the sequence of the AOS (which lists it based on established populations in Bermuda), European Goldfinch precedes Eurasian Siskin (*Spinus spinus*) in the *ABA Checklist*, and it has been assigned ABA Code 2.

Blue-black Grassquit ■ (*Volatinia jacarina*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-04 (8-0, Apr 2024). The ABA-CLC followed the Arizona Bird Committee in unanimously accepting the record of a bird south of Pima in Graham Co, Arizona, on 15–17 Jul 2023 (Figure 7). A pattern of increasing summer records of this and other Mexi-

Fig. 5 ■ Blue Rock-thrush (*Monticola solitarius*). Southeast Farallon I., San Francisco Co, California. 26 Apr 2024. The ABA-CLC accepted this species to the *ABA Checklist* based on this bird, one photographed four days earlier in Oregon, and one in British Columbia in 1997. All three records pertain to adult males of the highly migratory northeastern Asian *M. s. philippensis*, the subspecies (if not the age and sex) which would be expected to occur as a vagrant to the ABA Area. It is debatable whether the Oregon and California records involved the same bird, a question that was not critical to the ABA-CLC vote. Photo © Jason Talbott.



can bird species in Sonora, just south of the ABA Area, was cited in support of the acceptance over concerns of an escaped transported cage bird. Following the sequence of the AOS, Blue-black Grassquit is listed after Saffron Finch (*Sicalis flaveola*) in the *ABA Checklist*, and it has been assigned ABA Code 5.

Species not Accepted to the *ABA Checklist*

Gundlach's Hawk ■ (*Astur gundlachi*)—ABA-CLC Record #2023-02 (7-1, Aug 2023; 5-3, Jan 2024; 5-3, Feb 2024). This resident Cuban species was considered for addition to the *ABA Checklist* based on a record of a dark *Astur* hawk sitting on a rooftop in Cape Coral, Lee Co, Florida, on 1 Jan 2023 (Figure 8). During first-round voting all but one ABA-CLC member sided with the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee in accepting this record, but the one dissenting member requested re-circulation to further consider the possibility of an anomalously dark Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperi*). Comments were solicited from Cuban Ornithologist Arturo Kirkconnell, who did not think it exhibited the plumage or behavior (sitting on a roof) of a Gundlach's Hawk. Further research by ABA-CLC members indicated that some Cooper's Hawks can be quite dark, matching or nearly matching the Florida bird in plumage, including one that may have been the same individual photographed in Cape Coral in Jun 2021. (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S90305443>). On these bases the ABA-CLC decided not to add the species to the *ABA Checklist*, by a split vote.

Eurasian Goshawk ■ (*Astur gentilis*)—ABA-CLC Record #2023-03 (4-4, Aug 2023; 2-6, Jan 2024; 5-3, Feb 2024). This species and American Goshawk (*A. atricapillus*) were split in 2023 (Chesser et al. 2023) by the AOS, which also listed three records of Eurasian Goshawk for North America: a specimen from Red Bay, Labrador, collected on 11 Nov 1925 (Van Tyne 1943) and two birds from Shemya Island, Alaska, one observed in foggy conditions on 25-27 May 2001 and one photographed at distance on an antenna



guy wire on 17 Sep 2001 (Schwitters 2015; note Chesser et al. 2023 has the dates and citations for these records switched).

ABA-CLC member Sibley obtained photographs of the Labrador specimen and concluded its plumage better fit a variant American Goshawk (see Figure 9 for details). The sight record from Alaska is of a dark-plumaged bird (Gibson and Byrd 2007; D. Gibson in litt) and the ABA-CLC concluded there was not enough in the description to eliminate American Goshawk. The two submitted photographs from Shemya in September were taken at distance and show a worn white bird that was identified as the northeastern Asian subspecies of Eurasian Goshawk (*A. g. albidus*), of which 50% are reportedly white morph (Schwitters 2015). ABA-CLC members debated whether the photographed bird was a white morph northeastern Asian goshawk or a Gyrfalcon, since its worn plumage was not expected for a northern Asian subspecies goshawk in mid-September. The possibility of a leucistic American Goshawk was also raised, given that little information was available to the committee on the white morph of subspecies *albidus*. During second-round voting, ABA-CLC member DeCicco pointed out the similarity of the Alaska bird to a white-morph Eurasian Goshawk in an eBird checklist (ebird.org/checklist/S68877879), which prompted



Fig. 6 ■ European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*). Oak Creek, Milwaukee Co, Wisconsin. 9 Mar 2023. Populations of this exotic species are expanding in the Great Lakes region, prompting its addition to the *ABA Checklist* by the ABA-CLC in Feb 2024. Photo © Nicole Seward.

a third round to consider this possibility further. In the end, however, the ABA-CLC voted against adding Eurasian Goshawk to the *ABA Checklist*, given the appearance of the specimen from Labrador and poor quality of the photographs from Shemya Island.

Cattle Tyrant ■ (*Machetornis rixosa*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-10 (2-6, Aug 2024). A well-publicized and abundantly viewed and photographed Cattle Tyrant was present in Corpus Christi, Texas, 18 Sep 2023 to 4 May 2024 (Figure 10). The identification of this bird as belonging to the northern subspecies group of this species (*favigularis* or *obscuradorsalis*), was well established, but its proximity to the Port of Corpus Christi, which hosts frequent ship traffic from South America or the Panama Canal, gave rise to widespread concerns that it arrived by ship. The Texas Bird Records Committee did not accept this as a natural vagrant or add

it to their state checklist. Most ABA-CLC members were also not ready to accept it due to the lack of a pattern of vagrancy. Members of the ABA-CLC remain split about whether ship-assisted birds that were not restrained should automatically be accepted to the *ABA Checklist* (see Pyle 2024 for discussion of this). In this case, some members desired proof that it did arrive unfettered by ship to consider this possibility, and pointed to the lack of documentation on how it got to Texas as reason for non-acceptance. The Cattle Tyrant will remain in the *ABA Checklist's* Provisional List (see below) as a species of questionable natural occurrence.

House Crow ■ (*Corvus splendens*)—ABA-CLC Record #2024-08 (3-5, Jul 2024). The ABA-CLC considered this species for addition to the *ABA Checklist* following its acceptance by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee as a ship-assisted vagrant. Records in Florida include at least 12 birds, in groups of up to six, in the vicinity of Nokomis Beach, Sarasota and Manatee counties, in 2001 and 2022 (cf. Greenlaw et al. 2014; Figure 11). House

 **Fig. 7** ■ **Blue-black Grassquit** (*Volatinia jacarina*). Cluff Ranch, Graham Co, Arizona. 31 Jul 2023. This adult male represents the northernmost record of an emerging pattern in this Mexican species, which is expanding its breeding range in Sonora. The ABA-CLC accepted this “true tanager” species to the *ABA Checklist* by unanimous vote. Photo © Owen Sinkus.



Crows are widely known to travel aboard ships, especially those carrying tropical fruits, and have colonized numerous areas near ports around the world (Ryall 2016); other ABA Area sightings have occurred in California, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia. As with the Cattle Tyrant (see above), ABA-CLC members are not yet willing to accept records of landbirds otherwise unlikely to arrive to the ABA Area without ship assistance; however, three members voted to accept the record, and attitudes over this question by the ABA-CLC may evolve in the future (Pyle 2024). As with Cattle Tyrant, House Crow will remain on the *ABA Checklist's* Provisional List (see below) as a species with issues of provenance.

Western House-Martin ■ (*Delichon urbicum*)—ABA-CLC Record #2023-04 (5-3, Aug 2024; 5-23, Jan 2024; 4-4, Feb 2024). Following the split of this species from Siberian House-Martin (*Delichon lagopodum*), the AOS (Chesser et al. 2023) listed this species for North America based on documented records from the West Indies and one record from the ABA Area of a bird photographed in St. Pierre et Miquelon on 26 May 1989 (Etcheberry 1996; see also Howell et al. 2014). Given a pattern of numerous records of Siberian landbirds in eastern North America, the ABA-CLC was not swayed by the argument that the European species was the “expected” of the two, and instead debated its identification based on the photos in Etcheberry (1996); the originals of these photos could not be located by Pyle. The most promising feature leading members to support the record was a comparison of the width of the white rump to the length of the tail (minus elongated outer rectrices); these distances being approximately equal in Western House-Martin but with a white rump up to twice this tail-length distance in Siberian House-Martin (see Pyle et al. 2023). ABA-CLC members voting for the record cited this ratio, while those who did not were concerned about variation in all characters of the split house-martins, as detailed by Leader et al. (2021), and desired better photographs and documentation to add the species to the *ABA Checklist*.



 **Fig. 8** ■ The identity of this bird as either a Gundlach's Hawk (*Astur gundlachi*) or a dark-plumaged Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperii*) was debated; the ABA-CLC decided against adding this species to the *ABA Checklist* by a split vote after three rounds. It was photographed on a rooftop in Cape Coral, Lee Co, Florida on 1 Jan 2023. Photo © Zoe McClinton.

ABA Ease-of-Detection Codes

The ABA-CLC has developed a coding system to reflect the abundance and ease of detecting each species in the ABA Area (Pranty et al. 2008; and see aba.org/aba-checklist/). The Codes range from 1 (most common and easily detected) to 5 (five or fewer records from the ABA Area) and 6 (presumed extinct or extirpated in the wild). These codes are used in algorithms by eBird to assign their rare bird alerts. As mentioned above, the species added to the *ABA Checklist* in 2024 received ABA Code 5, except for the two exotic species that received ABA Code 2. For the three species added to the *ABA Checklist* via splits, Scopoli's Shearwater and Cocos Booby were assigned ABA Code 2 and Siberian Pipit ABA Code 3. Potential changes to codes are evaluated by the ABA-CLC periodically, primarily at the request of ABA members. Most changes are from Code 5 to Code 4 due to the accumulation of more than five records in the ABA Area. Seventeen additional code changes affected in 2024 are listed in ABA-CLC updates in March (aba.org/aba-clc-report-03-2024/) and July (aba.org/aba-checklist-committee-report-july-2024/).

Four-letter Alpha Codes

Alpha codes are abbreviations of English ("common") names used by ornithologists and birders as shorthand, allowing quicker data recording and entry than full species names. Four-letter alpha codes are also now an option offered by Cornell Lab of Ornithology for eBird data entry and in searching for Macaulay Library images and Birds of the World accounts. The codes employed by both the *ABA Checklist* and Cornell follow those maintained by the Institute for Bird Populations (see Pyle and DeSante 2003 and tinyurl.com/IBP-codes), which use the nomenclature of the AOS and are updated for species additions or name changes following release of each *AOS Check-list* supplement (e.g., Chesser et al. 2024). Codes for newly added species or new codes due to changes to English names by the AOS in 2024 are as follows: Siberian Sand-Plover (*Anarhynchus mongolus*, SISP), Southern Lapwing (SOLA), Kentish Plover (KEPL), Gray Gull (GRGU), Ainley's Storm-Petrel (AISP), Scopoli's Shearwater (SCSH), Sargasso Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*, SASH), Cocos Booby (COBO), Medium Egret (MEEG), Western Cattle-Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*, WECE), Eurasian Sparrowhawk (ESPA), American Barn Owl (*Tyto furcata*, ABOW), Barred Owl (*Strix varia*, BAOW), Yellow-headed Caracara (YHCA), Northern House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*, NHWR), Blue Rock-Thrush (BLRT), Lavender Waxbill (LAVW), Siberian Pipit (SIPI), Redpoll (REDP), European Goldfinch (EGOL), and Blue-black Grassquit (BBGA). Most of these follow the "first-order" codes of Pyle and DeSante (2003) but secondary codes were needed for Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Lavender Waxbill, European Goldfinch, and Blue-black Grassquit due to conflicts with those of other species on the *AOS Checklist*. On the other hand, the first-order code for Barred Owl is now listed due to the change in the name of Barn Owl to American Barn Owl. See tinyurl.com/IBP-codes for more information.

Discrepancies between eBird/Clements and the AOS

Pyle et al. (2022) discussed how the *ABA Checklist* deals with discrepancies in common and scientific names between those

of the *AOS Check-list* and those of the Clements checklist, the latter of which are followed by eBird. In the *ABA Checklist*, we list the nomenclature used by Clements followed by that of the AOS in parentheses; for example, "Purple (Gray-headed) Swampphen" and "*Porphyrio (poliocephalus) porphyrio*". Pyle (2024) lists 33 such discrepancies: 13 species with differing English names, 12 species with differing scientific names, and four species that differ in both English and scientific name. Nomenclatural changes made in 2024 by the AOS and Clements resulted in the alignment of 15 codes, five in English names (for example, removal of the hyphen in the two species of night herons) and 13 in scientific names (for example moving seven species of plover to genus *Anarhynchus* from *Charadrius*), and it resulted in the addition of nine discrepancies (for example, moving Brown Jay from *Psilorhinus* to *Cyanocorax*). In addition, a unique case involves the split of Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) by Clements but not the AOS, and the identification of ABA records of this complex by Clements as Antipodean Albatross (*D. antipodensis*), an identification not accepted by the ABA-CLC (ABA-CLC 2023–08, 2–6, Feb 2024; see Pyle 2024 for details). Unless and until the AOS decides on this split and nomenclature, the taxon for the two records in the ABA Area will be listed in the *ABA Checklist* as "Wandering Albatross (sp.)" and "*Diomedea exulans* (sp.)." And, finally, in 2024, Clements' four-way split of Herring Gull (see p. 46) will greatly complicate matters. The ABA-CLC has added Vega Gull (*Larus vegae*) to the *ABA Checklist* and will be voting on the addition of European Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*)—a more difficult task given ID challenges. In this

respect, the ABA-CLC has aligned the *ABA Checklist* with eBird/Clements.

ABA Provisional Lists

In 2024 the ABA-CLC added two "Provisional Lists" to the bottom of the *ABA Checklist*, one for exotic species that have not become established or considered



Fig. 9 ■ This specimen (University of Michigan Museum of Zoology UMMZ 62390), collected at Red Bay, Labrador was thought to be a Eurasian Goshawk (*Astur gentilis*) by Ernst Mayr, based on white margins to the upperwing lesser coverts and relatively heavy shaft streaks on the underparts (Van Tyne 1943). However, a comparison of this specimen's plumage with those in photographs at the Macaulay Library indicate that the indistinct and blotchy dark bars to the underparts and broad dark shaft streaks are, in fact, a better fit for an adult female American Goshawk (*A. atricapillus*). On this basis, the ABA-CLC did not accept the identification of this bird as of Eurasian Goshawk. Genetic analysis may be needed to settle this identification once and for all. Photo © Brett Benz.





X **Fig. 10** ■ **Cattle Tyrant** (*Machetornis rixosa*), Corpus Christi, Nueces Co, Texas. 16 Nov 2023. The yellow throat of this bird indicates an individual of the non-migratory northern subspecies group of Cattle Tyrant (*M. r. favicularis* or *obscuradorsalis*), and it was undergoing its second prebasic molt when first detected in Sep 2023. The ABA-CLC followed the Texas Ornithological Committee in considering this, at best, a ship-assisted occurrence that does not meet the philosophical standards for acceptance by several ABA-CLC members. Photo © *Lizabeth Southworth*.

for addition yet but could become established in the future, and one for records of questionable provenance (including ship-assisted birds) that the ABA-CLC has not accepted or voted on yet. In all cases, these species are listed by eBird as either Provisional (see tinyurl.com/yvd5n4hb) or are accepted on their primary list; the ABA-CLC has added these Provisional Lists to the *ABA Checklist* for the listing purposes of ABA members (see Pyle 2024 for details). Changes in 2024 to the first list of exotic species includes elevation of Lavender Waxbill to the main list (see above) and the addition of Great Tit (Figure 12) due to a prior omission. No changes were made to the species of questionable provenance in the second Provisional List; the inclusion of Cattle Tyrant and House Crow remaining unchanged, as noted above. Not included in Provisional Lists are species that have not been accepted by the ABA-CLC on grounds of questionable identification, for example, Gundlach's Hawk,

Eurasian Goshawk, and Western House-Martin, covered in this report.

Anticipated/Possible Future Votes and Other Decisions

The ABA-CLC is currently considering adding to following to the main list of the *ABA Checklist*: Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) based on records from Florida; Baillon's Crake (*Zapornia pusilla*), Great (Eurasian) Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), Oriental Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*), Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), and Great Tit (see Figure 12) based on records from Alaska; and (as mentioned above) Eastern Cattle-Egret based on records from Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands. As per ABA-CLC protocol, opinions of local committees will be carefully considered.

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X **Fig. 11** ■ **House Crow** (*Corvus splendens*). Nokomis Beach, Sarasota Co, Florida. 9 Jun 2018. Multiple individuals of this species have occurred in Florida, presumably riding unfettered on ships bearing tropical fruits, as they are known to do elsewhere in the world (Greenlaw et al. 2014, Ryall 2016). Members of the ABA-CLC are currently split on whether ship-assisted birds should be added to the *ABA Checklist* (see Pyle 2024). In this case, not enough "accept" votes were cast to add it, but in the future, the approach of the ABA-CLC on this question may evolve. Photo © *Melissa James*.





Fig. 12 ■ Great Tit (*Parus major*).

Kohler Andrea Stare Park,

Sheboygan Co, Wisconsin. 6 Oct 2019.

This species occurs on the ABA Checklist's Provisional List of yet-to-be-established, exotic species due to increasing populations in the Great Lakes region. It will also be considered for the primary list based on a record of a vagrant on Little Diomed Island, Alaska, on 2 Sep 1988. Photo © Lorri Howski.

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- 1 • Nova Scotia's third Limpkin lingered at the Crosby's Garden Centre, Bristol, Queens Co 16-18 Oct. 16 Oct 2023. *Photo © Mark Dennis.*
- 2 • An American Golden-Plover at the Huichica Unit of Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area 22-27 Sep was a first for Napa Co, California. 26 Sep 2023. *Photo © Mark Stephenson.*
- 3 • This Ancient Murrelet at Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro, Los Angeles Co on 19 Jan 2024 was one of at least 35 known along the coast of Southern California during winter 2023-24. *Photo © Caleb Peterson.*
- 4 • This Ferruginous Hawk passed straight through downtown Chicago, Cook Co, Illinois 6-7 Oct 2023 before touching down in Jasper Co, Indiana (shown here) on 9 Nov 2023. *Photo © Terry Wiesemann.*
- 5 • This Broad-billed Hummingbird at Mulegé was one of 14 seen in Baja California Sur from Oct 2023- Mar 2024, leading some to suggest that this might be the next mainland Mexican species to colonize the southern Baja California Peninsula. 10 Jan 2024. *Photo © Ryan P. O'Donnell.*



1 • This light-morph Wedge-tailed Shearwater 5 mi. (8 km) west of Mission Bay in San Diego, San Diego Co was the 15th documented in California. 26 Aug 2023. *Photo © Mark Wilson.*

2 • 'I'iwi, the iconic scarlet honeycreeper, was once distributed across most of the Main Hawaiian Islands. Photographed here 1 Dec 2023 at Maui's Hosmer Grove, it can still be readily found on the two highest islands (Maui and Hawai'i); however, the species is all but extirpated from Kaua'i, with an estimated 161 individuals battling to survive amid introduced malaria-carrying mosquitoes. *Photo © Sze On Ng.*

3 • Connecticut's third Hermit Warbler, a first-winter female, was found by Daniel Errichetti on (shown here) 30 Jan 2024 at Knox Preserve, Stonington, New London Co. It was present through 12 Feb 2024. *Photo © David Mathieu.*

4 • A remarkable first for Tennessee, this Ancient Murrelet was found actively feeding on fish at Chickamauga Dam in Chattanooga, Hamilton Co. It remained for six days, to the delight of dozens of regional birders and local news crews. 27 Nov 2023. *Photo © Kirk Huffstater.*

5 • Massachusetts's first Siberian Sand-Plover was at South Cape Beach SP, Mashpee, Barnstable Co 14-22 Aug. 15 Aug 2023. *Photo © Ian Davies.*



1 • This Laysan Albatross 14 mi. (22 km) west-southwest of Point Loma, San Diego Co was closer to the Southern California coast than normal since most remain over deeper waters west of the Channel Islands. 25 Feb 2024. *Photo © Dan Jehl.*

2 • Saskatchewan's third Pygmy Nuthatch was a reliable visitor to a feeder in Regina from 7 Nov 2023–10 Jan 2024. It provided many birders with a life bird. 12 Nov 2023. *Photo © Annie McLeod.*

3 • Prior to Oct 2023, there were four records of Townsend's Warbler in Tennessee and none had been photographed. The state's fifth, however, was nicely photographed on Lookout Mountain in Hamilton Co 12 Oct 2023. *Photo © Chris Sloan.*

4 • Completely unexpected in a non-irruption winter, this "Common" Redpoll near Harper Canyon, photographed on the last day of its 13–15 Jan 2024 stay, provided a first Monterey Co, California record. *Photo © Mark Chappell.*

5 • The highlight of a 17 Jan 2024 pelagic trip out of Ensenada, Baja California came upon the return to port. This Marbled Murrelet in the harbor remained there through 20 Jan and was seen by many local observers at this convenient location. The only previous Mexican records are of pairs seen just outside the harbor mouth 9–11 Jan 1994 and at Puerto Nuevo 1 Mar 2008. 20 Jan 2024. *Photo © Laura Ibarra.*

