

# ABA Checklist Committee Update:

## Adding “Hawaii-only”

**I**n November 2016, members of the ABA voted overwhelmingly to add the Hawaiian Islands to the ABA Area. Thus, species that occur in the Hawaiian Islands but not in the “Old ABA Area,” now referred to as the “Continental (Traditional) Area” for listing purposes, must be added to the primary *ABA Checklist*. As a member of the ABA Checklist Committee (ABA-CLC), I agreed to chair the committee during 2017 to integrate Hawaii-only species to the *Checklist*.

My job has greatly been assisted by the formation of the Hawaii Bird Records Committee (HBRC) in 2014, chaired by Eric VanderWerf, which had established an official Hawaiian Island Checklist by early 2017. I also thank the seven other current members of the ABA-CLC, Mary Gustafson, Tom Johnson, Andy Kratter, Aaron Lang, Mark Lockwood, Ron Pittaway, and David Sibley, for their excellent work and for bearing with me through this process.

The HBRC began its compilation of the Hawaiian Island Checklist (which includes Midway Atoll, not officially part of the state of Hawaii) by reviewing all species on the Primary Checklist at the B. P. Bishop Museum website “The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status” (Pyle and Pyle 2009, see [tinyurl.com/pylepyle](http://tinyurl.com/pylepyle)). In the absence of a Hawaiian bird records committee during the mid-to-late 2000s, my father and I served as a *de*

*facto* records committee, deciding to accept species to the Primary Checklist, or not, based on the documentation available. We used the standards of the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC), of which I had been a member, on and off, for 20 years.

Pyle and Pyle (2009) accepted 317 species to the Primary Checklist and relegated 44 species to a Hypothetical List, which included species with erroneous reports, non-native species (“exotics” in ABA parlance) with populations that they did not consider established, species that had questionable natural occurrence in Hawaii, and species that were reported but for which the documentation did not fully substantiate the identification.

Members of the HBRC reviewed the documentation for the 317 species on the Primary Checklist and some of the 44 species on the Hypothetical List and, at the request of any member, they separately reviewed documentation for acceptance or not to the HBRC Hawaiian Islands Checklist. In the absence of a request, the status listed in Pyle and Pyle (2009) remained unchanged. The HBRC review included nine species accepted by Pyle and Pyle (2009) that lacked evidence in the form of photograph or specimen (sight-only records), two exotic species to judge if they had met population establishment criteria (see p. 32), and records of 20 new species that had been documented between 2009 and 2016. Along with splits of several



# Species

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■ White-necked Petrel (front)  
and Black-winged Petrel (rear),  
off Kona, Hawaii Island, 24  
November 2014, two species  
recently added to the *ABA  
Checklist* based on records  
from Hawaii. Photo © Daniel L.  
Webster/Cascadia Research Collective



# Adding “Hawaii-only” Species



■ Kermadec Petrel, Kilauea Point, Kauai, 31 July 2014, recently added to the *ABA Checklist* based on records from Hawaii. Up to three individuals have been observed courting at this locality over the past seven years, suggesting that they may be breeding nearby. Photo © Eric VanderWerf

■ Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes, Princeville, Kauai, 1 July 2006. The ABA-CLC deliberated whether or not populations of this exotic species could be considered established in Hawaii based on *ABA Checklist* criteria and recently voted to add it to the *Checklist*.

Photo © Jim Denny



Hawaiian endemic species by the AOU since 2009, this review resulted in 338 species on the current Hawaiian Islands Checklist. (Our website on the birds of Hawaii, now Pyle and Pyle 2017, has been fully updated for records through 2016, including the incorporation of all HBRC decisions.) Of these 338 species, 111 are “Hawaii-only” species (that is, they were not on the *ABA Checklist* as of 2016).

The ABA-CLC could not review all 111 of these species individually, so I parceled them into batches of records with various levels of documentation and by whether or not they had been accepted to the AOU (now part of the American Ornithological Society; see p. 6) *Check-list* as of the 57th Supplement (AOU 2016).

The first batch (Batch A) contained 105 (of these 111) species which had specimen documentation from Hawaii, were accepted by the HBRC, and were also accepted by the AOU to their *Check-list*. (Although the ABA-CLC is not bound to follow bird records committee decisions, the committee generally endorses them and at least weighs local decisions heavily.) ABA-CLC members were asked to review the documentation in Pyle and Pyle (2009) for these 105 species and, at any member's request, the record would be pulled from Batch A for individual review. ABA-CLC members requested 7





■ Chinese Sparrowhawk, B. P. Bishop Museum specimen 178451, found dead on Kure Atoll, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, 27 September 1991. This is the only record of this species in the *ABA Checklist* area, now including the Hawaiian Islands. Photo © Peter Pyle

species be pulled (see far right column), resulting in 98 Hawaii-only species that were accepted to the *ABA Checklist* in March 2017. These 98 species included 61 endemic Hawaii species (e.g., Hawaiian Duck, Hawaiian Hawk, O'ahu 'Elepaio, 'Iiwi); 6 indigenous breeding species (e.g., White Tern, Little Tern, Bonin Petrel, Christmas Shearwater); 25 exotic species (e.g., Kalij Pheasant, Zebra Dove, Mariana Swiftlet, Red-crested Cardinal); and 6 migrants and vagrants (e.g., Bryan's Shearwater, Kermadec Petrel, Black-winged Petrel, Chinese Sparrowhawk).

Of the original 111 species, this left 13 that were reviewed separately. Three of these were species that have been accepted by the HBRC and the AOU, based on records in Hawaii, that included photographic but not specimen evidence: Great Crested Tern, White-necked Petrel, and Black Kite. All three of these species were accepted to the *ABA Checklist* in mid-2017. Two additional species, Nazca Booby and Tahiti Petrel, had been accepted to the Hawaiian Islands Checklist by the HBRC, and by

the AOU based on records outside of but not within the Hawaiian Islands jurisdiction. Both were accepted by the ABA-CLC to the *ABA Checklist* (in mid-2017). This left only one non-exotic species, Herald Petrel, which was pulled from Batch A because an ABA-CLC member wanted to ensure that the single specimen collected in Hawaii was correctly identified—especially to the exclusion of the recently split Trindade Petrel. This record was also recently accepted to the *ABA Checklist* in July 2017.

It is interesting to note that four of the newly accepted species to the *ABA Checklist* also now have records from the Continental Area: Nazca Booby (from California in 2013–2016), Jouanin's Petrel (California in 2015 and 2016), Juan Fernandez Petrel (Arizona in 2016), and Black Kite (Alaska in 2017). Even though their acceptance onto the *ABA Checklist* resulted from Hawaiian records, ABA members may now count these on state and Continental ABA Area lists, as long as they adhere to the rules of ABA's Recording Standards and Ethics Committee (RSEC: [listing.aba.org/rsec](http://listing.aba.org/rsec)).

As we anticipated, the most difficult Hawaii-only species for the ABA-CLC to review were certain exotic species, specifically, whether the populations of these species in Hawaii are currently, or ever were, established according to ABA acceptance criteria. Such account for the remaining seven species that were or are being reviewed independently by the ABA-CLC at the request of one or more members: Japanese Quail, Indian Peafowl, Red-masked Parakeet, Mitred Parakeet, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, Lavender Waxbill, and Orange-cheeked Waxbill. All seven of these species have been accepted to the Hawaiian Islands Checklist by the HBRC, and six have been accepted by the AOU based on populations in Hawaii (all but Red-masked Parakeet, which has not been considered yet by the AOU). I put these seven species into a second batch (Batch B). The first round of voting, completed in July 2017, resulted in the acceptance of Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush to the *ABA Checklist*, the non-acceptance of Mitred Parakeet, and split votes requiring further consideration of



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■ Black Kite being mobbed by White Terns, Midway Atoll, 22 February 1998. Both species have now been added to the *ABA Checklist* based on occurrence in the Hawaiian Islands, and Black Kite has now also been recorded in Alaska. Photo © Peter Pyle

the remaining five species.

An overall problem is that acceptance criteria for population establishment differs among the HBRC, AOU, and ABA-CLC, while various state and provincial bird records committees are all over the place, in terms of both acceptance criteria and the motivation to even deal with exotic species. The HBRC adopted the criteria of Pyle and Pyle (2009), which used to reflect those of the ABA (my father formerly overseeing the rules for both checklists): “To be judged viable, a population must: (i) have bred in the Hawaiian Islands for fifteen (15) consecutive years, (ii) be increasing or stable in number after an initial period of increase, and (iii) be judged to have occupied sufficient suitable habitat that it seems likely to persist for the foreseeable future.” The AOU uses essentially the same criteria except that they are even more lenient, requiring only 10 consec-



■ Nazca Booby, Moku Manu Islet off Oahu, 28 February 2006. This bird may have been paired with a Masked Booby. Although added to the *ABA Checklist* based on four records from Hawaii in 2006–2015, this species has also been recorded several times in California since 2012. Photo © Eric VanderWerf



utive years of breeding and population stability or increase (AOU 1998: xiii).

Prior to publication of the previous *ABA Checklist*, the ABA decided to add more criteria to presume a population was established (Pranty et al. 2008: 11-16), thereby making acceptance to the *ABA Checklist* more stringent. This change was based, in part, on previously accepted exotic species that had since become extirpated in the ABA Area (such as Black Francolin, Crested Myna, and Blue-gray Tanager) and the desire not to add and then remove such species in the future. However, even with the more-stringent criteria, at least one species, Budgerigar, took the same journey on and then off the *ABA Checklist*. These species are now listed in an Appendix to the *ABA Checklist* (Pranty et al. 2008:183-184).

The result of this is that there may be exotic species that are accepted to the HBRC or AOS checklists that are not or may not be accepted to the *ABA Checklist*. Even before our Hawaii-only review, there were a couple of species like this: Rose-ringed Parakeet, accepted by the AOS based on populations in southern Florida, and Mitred Parakeet, accepted by the AOS based on populations in California, that were not on the *ABA Checklist* (see Pranty and Garrett 2011 for a full discussion of these and other borderline cases). Rose-ringed Parakeet was one of the 98 species now accepted to the *ABA Checklist* by the ABA-CLC based on populations in Hawaii, whereas Mitred Parakeet was recently rejected based solely on populations in Hawaii.

Are Rose-ringed Parakeet populations in southern Florida and California's Central Valley established and/or countable? The ABA-CLC does not take a position on this. According to the ABA-RSEC's rules, any individual of a species is countable across the entirety of the ABA Area, as long as it has been accepted to the *ABA Checklist* and the observer believes it originated from an established population. (For more on this topic, see Nick Block's article in the 2016 issue of *Birder's Guide to Listing & Taxonomy*.) So what about the Mitred

Parakeet population in California, accepted as established by the AOS? The ABA-CLC may or may not take up this question but would prefer the CBRC to first consider the species as established there before doing so.

One final bit of business for the Ha-

waii-only review will be to decide if any Hawaii-only species should be added to the ABA appendix of exotic species that were established at one time but have since become extirpated. The HBRC accepts two such species to the Hawaiian Islands Checklist: Varied Tit and Pale-



■ Rose-ringed Parakeets, Foster Gardens, Oahu, 24 January 2008. Although this species has been accepted to the American Ornithological Society's (AOS, formerly AOU) Check-list based on populations in Florida, it has only recently been added to the *ABA Checklist* based on established populations in Hawaii. Photo © Jack Jeffrey



# Adding “Hawaii-only” Species



■ Black-rumped Waxbills, Big Island Country Club near Puuanahulu, Hawaii Island, 13 December 2007. Both this species and Red-cheeked Cordonbleu were observed in low numbers on Hawaii between the 1970s and late 2000s, when each apparently became extirpated. The Hawaii Bird Records Committee recently voted to remove both species from the Hawaiian Islands Checklist as never having been adequately established, although both species remain listed on the AOS (formerly AOU) Check-list. Photo © Reginald David

headed Rosella. Three other species in this category were recently removed by the HBRC: Gray-sided Laughingthrush (the reported Hawaii population is now considered split, as Buffy Laughingthrush), Black-rumped Waxbill, and Red-cheeked Cordonbleu. This, even though all three were accepted by Pyle and Pyle (2009) and the last two accepted by the AOU (1998).

This last task is of lesser importance than accepting Hawaii-only species to the *ABA Checklist*, and while we hope to have the Hawaii-only additions completed by the fall of 2017, the listing of these two species in the *ABA Checklist* appendix may take longer, if we decide to deal with them at all. We may decide to restrict this appendix to species that have been on the *ABA Checklist* at some time.

Finally, lest we forget, the ABA-CLC is considering records outside of Hawaii.

Of these, Cuban Vireo (Florida) was accepted to the *ABA Checklist* in February 2017. Two other species, Common Shelduck (Newfoundland) and Amethyst-throated Hummingbird (Québec and Texas), are in circulation, and two more species, Pied Wheatear (Alaska) and House Swift (British Columbia), are on our radar. We will also be adjusting the checklist according to the recently released AOS (2017) 58th supplement, including the removal of Thayer's Gull and the addition of Cassiar Crossbill, as all AOS Check-list changes on taxonomy and nomenclature are automatically adopted by the ABA-CLC. 🌐

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