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Taxonomic recommendations for British birds: Fifth report

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This paper is the fifth report of the Taxonomic Sub-Committee of the BOU Records Committee relating to the British List. Species-level decisions are based on criteria outlined by Helbig *et al.* (2002. *Ibis* **144**: 518–525). The fourth report of the Sub-Committee was published in *Ibis* **149**: 853–857.

Black-throated Loon *Gavia arctica*

The Palearctic Black-throated Loon *G. arctica* should be treated as a separate species from the Nearctic Pacific Loon *G. pacifica*, on the basis of diagnostic differences in plumage (colour of the anterior femoral tract and the bases of nape feathers), sympatry in eastern Siberia and Alaska, and a number of supporting average biometric and plumage differences (Solovyev 1992. *Bulleten Moskovskogo Obschestva Ispytatelei Prorody, Otdel Biologichesky* **97**: 18–28; Douglas & Sowl 1993. *Western Birds* **24**: 98–100). Wink *et al.* (2002. *Charadrius* **38**: 239–245) found no sequence differences between Black-throated and Pacific Loons, and low variation in general among the loons; however, Brown *et al.* (2008. *BMC Biology* **6**: 6) reported (unexpectedly) that *arctica* and *pacifica* are not sister taxa, based on phylogenetic analysis of 4594 bp of mtDNA. Claims of vocal differences between the taxa are suggestive, but require corroboration.

We propose to recognize:

- **Black-throated Loon** *Gavia arctica* (polytypic, with subspecies *arctica* and *viridigularis*)
- **Pacific Loon** *G. pacifica* (Lawrence) (monotypic)

Black-throated Loon (ssp. *arctica*) is currently in Category A of the British List. Several recent records of Pacific Loon are currently under consideration.

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Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Although most of the claimed morphological differences between Common Snipe and its American counterpart Wilson's Snipe *G. g. delicata* show considerable overlap, there is a suite of characters that differentiate them when considered together. These include apparently diagnostic differences in the shape, width and structure of the outer tail feathers, and significant population-level differences in the depth and pattern of the sub-terminal white tips to the secondaries, and the depth of black barring on the axillaries (Bahr 1907. *Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.* 12–35; Meinertzhagen 1924. *Br. Birds* **17**: 283–288; Reid 2008. *Br. Birds* **101**: 189–200). The winnowing display sounds of Common and Wilson's Snipe are distinct, presumably associated with the differences in outer tail feathers, and are likely to be a significant specific signal, as in other snipe taxa: hence the morphological and vocal/acoustic evidence indicates that *delicata* should be treated as a separate species (e.g. Thönen 1969. *Ornithol. Beob.* **66**: 6–13; Miller 1996. *Ecology and Evolution of Acoustic Communication in Birds*, Ithaca, NY; Miller 1996. *Condor* **98**: 418–422). Zink *et al.* (1995. *Condor* **97**: 639–649) found modest levels of molecular differentiation.

We propose to recognise:

- **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* (polytypic, including subspecies *gallinago* and *faeroeensis*)
- **Wilson's Snipe** *G. delicata* (monotypic)

Common Snipe (both sspp.) and Wilson's Snipe are currently in Category A of the British List. Several African and South American taxa have formerly been treated as conspecific with the above, but these are now generally treated as separate (e.g. del Hoyo *et al.* 1996. *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, vol. 3, Barcelona).

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

Spelling of name should be *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*; use of *erythrophthalmus* since first BOU Checklist in 1883 constitutes an unjustified emendation (N. David pers. comm.).

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Dickinson (2008. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* **128**: 141–142) notes that *golzii* Cabanis 1873 has priority over *hafizi* Severtsov and that the name *golzii* should be used for the easternmost population of the Common Nightingale. We accept this recommendation.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Two subspecies of *T. cyanurus* are recognized. Geographically widely separate, these differ diagnostically in size, plumage and vocalizations (Martens & Eck 1995. *Bonner Zool. Monogr.* **38**: 1–445), and ongoing research (P. Alström, L. Svensson pers. comm.) suggests these should be regarded as monotypic separate species.

- **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* (monotypic)
- **Himalayan Bluetail** *T. rufilatus* (monotypic, includes '*pallidior*')

Red-flanked Bluetail is in Category A of the British List.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

Dusky *eunomus* and Naumann's thrushes *naumanni* differ diagnosably in plumage (Clement 1999. *Limicola* **13**: 217–250; Clement *et al.* 2000. *Thrushes*, London) and structure (L. Svensson unpubl. data). Birds with intermediate phenotypes exist in museum collections, but are relatively infrequent (L. Svensson unpubl. data). Despite a reported overlap in the ranges of these taxa (e.g. Rogacheva 1992. *The Birds of Central Siberia*, Husum), the interactions between them are poorly described and apparent hybrids are much rarer than would be expected if they were merging extensively. The taxa should be treated as separate species:

- **Dusky Thrush** *Turdus eunomus* (monotypic)
- **Naumann's Thrush** *T. naumanni* (monotypic)

Both taxa are in Category A of the British List.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*

Red-throated *ruficollis* and Black-throated *atrogularis* Thrushes are diagnosably distinct in plumage (Clement 1999. *Limicola* **13**: 217–250; Clement *et al.* 2000. *Thrushes*, London). Significant differences in their songs have been indicated (Arkhipov *et al.* 2003. *Br. Birds* **96**: 79–83) although sample sizes are small. The zone of contact for these two taxa is extensive, yet successful hybridization or mixed pairing has not been confirmed. Occasional individuals with hybrid appearance occur in the zone of contact (summarized by Clement *et al.* 2000), but it has not been shown that these are true hybrids. That strong diagnosability is maintained in spite of syntopic breeding and clear opportunity for gene flow suggests that effective reproductive isolation exists between these taxa, and supports them being treated as independent evolutionary lineages. We propose to recognize them as separate species:

- **Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis* (monotypic)
- **Red-throated Thrush** *T. ruficollis* (monotypic)

Both taxa are in Category A of the British List.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

The allopatric Green Warbler *P. t. nitidus* and Greenish Warbler *trochiloides* were treated as a separate species by Voous (1977. *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*, London), although more recently were considered to be conspecific (Sangster *et al.* 2002. *Ibis* **144**: 707–710). There are differences in mtDNA between *nitidus* and *P. t. viridanus*, although rather few individuals have been analysed (Helbig *et al.* 1995. *J. Avian Biol.* **26**: 139–153; Irwin *et al.* 2001. *Nature* **409**: 333–337). Plumage characters have now been confirmed as diagnostic in that supercilium, face, throat and upper breast are more vividly yellow than in any Greenish Warbler. Songs also generally distinct (Albrecht 1984. *Sandgrouse* **6**: 69–75; L. Svensson unpubl. data), that of Green having a dry trilling element in nearly all phrases, not heard from *viridanus*. Apart from differences in mtDNA sequences, morphology and vocalization there are a number of supporting average biometric and plumage differences that confirm the overall level of difference between *nitidus* and other Greenish Warblers is similar to or greater than that between other closely related *Phylloscopus* species. We recommend that *nitidus* be treated as a monotypic species:

- **Green Warbler** *Phylloscopus nitidus* (monotypic)

- **Greenish Warbler** *P. trochiloides* (polytypic, with subspecies *trochiloides*, *ludlowi*, *obscuratus*, *plumbeitarsus* and *viridanus*)

Green Warbler and Greenish Warblers of sspp. *viridanus* and *plumbeitarsus* are in Category A of the British List.

Generic limits and sequence of starlings

Phylogenetic analyses of mitochondrial and nuclear DNA sequences (Lovette & Rubenstein 2007. *Mol. Phylogen. Evol.* **44**: 1031–1056; Lovette *et al.* 2008. *Mol. Phylogen. Evol.* **47**: 251–260; Zuccon *et al.* 2008. *Zool. Scr.* **37**: in press) have clarified the evolutionary relationships among the starlings. These studies indicate that Rosy Starling and Daurian Starling are more closely related to the mynas than to Common *Sturnus vulgaris* and Spotless Starlings *S. unicolor*. We adopt the generic revision proposed by Lovette *et al.* (2008) and Zuccon *et al.* (2008). Rosy Starling (currently *Sturnus roseus*) becomes *Pastor roseus*, and Daurian Starling (currently *Sturnus sturninus*) becomes *Agropsar sturninus*. The European species of starlings should be listed in the following sequence:

- **Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor*
- **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*
- **Rosy Starling** *Pastor roseus*
- **Daurian Starling** *Agropsar sturninus*

Common and Rosy Starling are in Category A and Daurian Starling is in Category D of the British List.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Treat as polytypic. Enzyme data (Johnson *et al.* 1988. *Condor* **90**: 428–445) indicate North American *olivaceus* to be conspecific with South American *chivi* taxa, and these are currently treated as two subspecies groups (Cimprich *et al.* 2000. *Birds of North America*, No. 527). One North American subspecies (*olivaceus*) and up to nine South American subspecies are currently recognized (Dickinson 2003. *The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the world*, London). Records of birds in Britain have not been assigned to any subspecies but most likely refer to *olivaceus*.

Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella*

Male plumages of Citril Finch and Corsican Finch differ in the colour and pattern of the upperparts (Cramp & Perrins 1994. *Birds of the Western Palearctic* vol. 8, Oxford; Förschler & Siebenrock 2007. *Bonn. Zool. Beitr.* **55**: 159–162). Citril and Corsican Finches also differ in contact calls and perch song, whereas geographical variation in Citril Finch calls is clinal (Chappuis 1976. *Alauda* **44**: 475–495; Cramp & Perrins 1994; Förschler & Kalko 2007. *J. Biogeogr.* **34**: 1591–1600). Mitochondrial DNA sequences of Citril Finch differ from those of Corsican Finches by 2.7–2.8% (Pasquet & Thibault 1997. *Ibis* **139**: 679–684; Zamora *et al.* 2006. *Ardeola* **53**: 1–17). Differences in morphology, vocalizations and mitochondrial DNA sequences are concordant and indicate that Citril Finch and Corsican Finch are best treated as separate species (Sangster 2000. *Ibis* **142**: 487–490).

Phylogenetic study of molecular sequence data supports inclusion of Citril Finch in the genus *Carduelis* as the sister taxon of *Carduelis carduelis* (Zamora *et al.* 2006; Arnaiz-Villena *et al.* 2007. *Acta Zool. Sin.* **53**: 826–834; Arnaiz-Villena *et al.* 2008. *The Open Ornithology Journal* **1**: 1–7). We propose to treat the species as follows:

- **Citril Finch** *Carduelis citrinella* (monotypic)
- **Corsican Finch** *Carduelis corsicana* (monotypic)

A recent record of Citril Finch is currently under consideration for admission to the British List.

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