**AOS Classification Committee – North and Middle America**

**Proposal Set 2018-A**

**14 November 2017**

## Transfer Japanese Bush-Warbler from *Cettia* to *Horornis*

**Background:**

Bush-warblers and allies (a few of which are just called "warbler") are an Old World radiation of small, dull colored insectivores. Formerly they were included in a broad Sylviidae, which now has been dismembered. Currently bush-warblers are recognized as a separate family, Cettiidae, and until recently, bush-warblers were included in the genus *Cettia*.

Bush-warblers are not native to the Western Hemisphere, but one species, Japanese Bush-Warbler, is naturalized in the Hawaiian Islands, and so was added to the seventh edition of the AOU *Check-list* (AOU 1998). The current *Check-list* scientific name for Japanese Bush-Warbler is *Cettia diphone*.

**New information:**

The genus *Cettia* is not monophyletic. Alström et al. (2006) first detected this in a broad survey of Sylvioidea, in a phylogenetic study based on both mitochondrial and nuclear loci. This study included only two species of *Cettia*, but these were not sisters: *Cettia cetti* (Cetti's Warbler), the type species of *Cettia*, consistently clustered with *Tesia* and *Urosphena*, whereas *Cettia diphone* grouped with two other genera, *Tickellia* and *Orthotomus*. Similar results were obtained by Irestedt et al. (2011), who found that *Cettia cetti* grouped with *Tesia, Urosphena*, and, in a new twist, with *Hemitesia*, whereas *Cettia diphone* and a second species, *C. flavolivacea* (Aberrant Bush-Warbler), formed a clade with *Tickellia* and *Orthotomus*.

Alström et al. (2011) constructed a family wide phylogeny of Cettiidae (see tree below), based on analysis of DNA sequence data from a mitochondrial gene (cytochrome *b*) and three nuclear markers: ornithine decarboxylase (introns 6 and 7 and exons 7 and parts of exons 6 and 8); myoglobin intron 2; and glyceraldehyde-3-phosphodehydrogenase intron 1. The taxon sampling in Alström et al. (2011) is very good: they apparently included at least one sample of what were all of the then-recognized species of *Cettia,* many of which were represented by multiple individuals, usually from different subspecies. Alström et al. (2011) found that *Cettia* in fact was spread across not two, but three, clades. *Cettia cetti* groups with two other species of *Cettia* (*C. brunnifrons* and *C. major*) and *Oligura castaneocoronata* as sister to *Tesia*. *Cettia pallidiceps* (Pale-footed Bush-Warbler) is sister to *Urosphena*. All remaining species of *Cettia,* including *diphone*, constitute the third clade, with *Tickellia* and *Orthotomus* as successive sisters to these species of *Cettia*.

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**New taxonomy**

1. *Horornis*
2. *Tickellia*
3. *Phyllergates*
4. *Abroscopus*
5. *Cettia*
6. *Tesia*
7. *Urosphena*
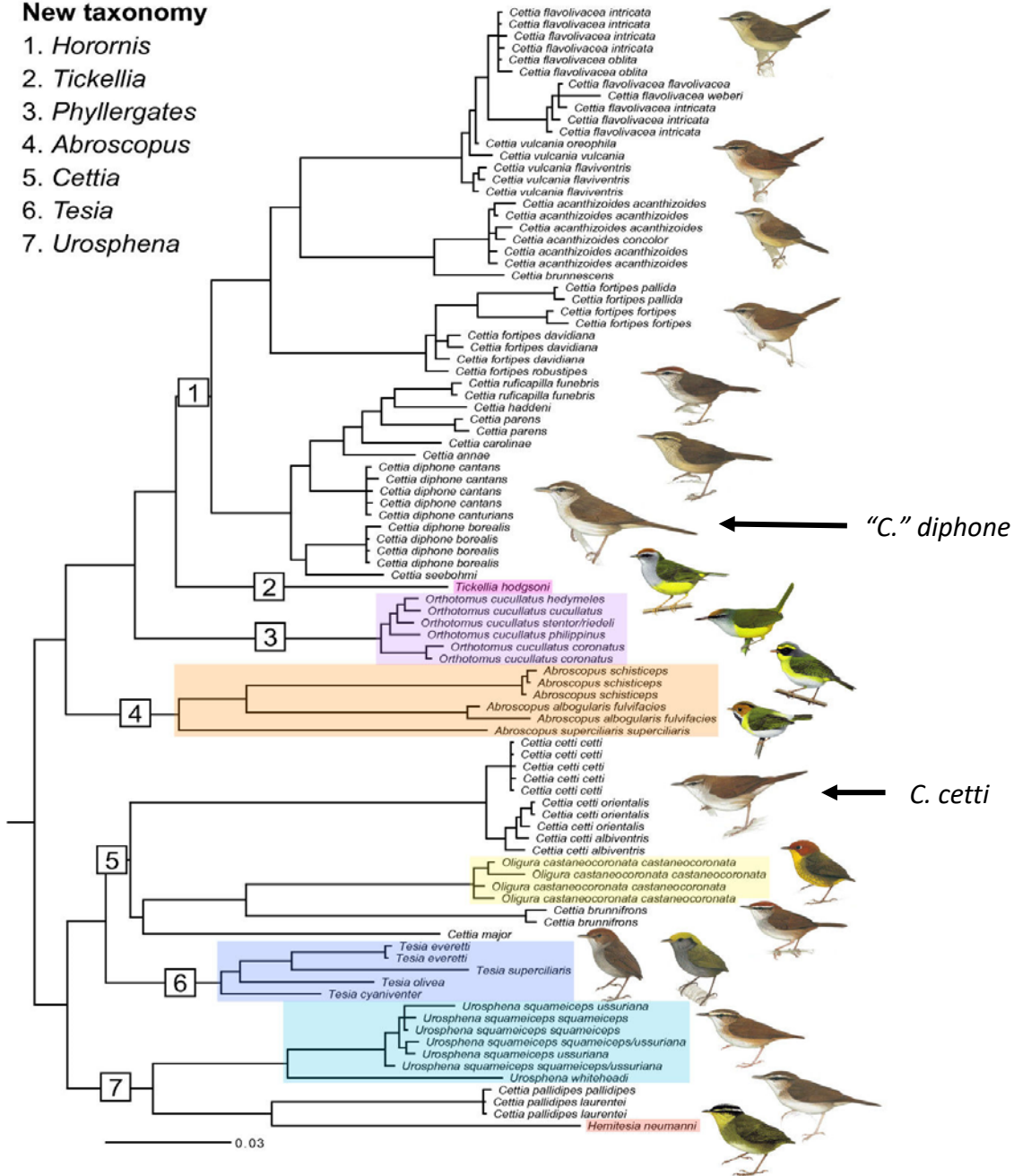
Alström et al. (2011) proposed resurrecting the name *Horornis* for the large clade of ex-*Cettia*. *Horornis* was proposed by Hodgson (1845: 31), based on *fortipes* and *flaviventris*. Seebohm (1881: 133) later restricted the type species to *fortipes* (Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler) (Watson et al. 1986, Dickinson and Christidis 2014); and this species was sampled by Alström et al. (2011), who found that it belongs to the same clade as *diphone*.

**Effect on NACC:**

This proposal would transfer *Cettia diphone* to *Horornis*. *Cettia* is feminine, but *Horornis* is masculine (Dickinson and Christidis 2014). The epithet *diphone* is invariant, however, so the new combination is *Horornis diphone* (Dickinson and Christidis 2014). The subspecies on Hawaii is *cantans* (Berger 1981). This name also is invariant (Dickinson and Christidis 2014).

**Recommendation:**

As the traditional genus *Cettia* clearly is not monophyletic, we recommend transferring *diphone* from *Cettia* to *Horornis*. This change already has been widely adopted (e.g., by Dickinson and Christidis 2014, Clements et al. 2016, del Hoyo and Collar 2016, Mlílkovský and Loskot 2016, and Gill and Donsker 2017).

**Literature Cited:**

Alström, P., P. G. P. Ericson, U. Olsson, and P. Sundberg. 2006. Phylogeny and classification of the superfamily Sylvioidea. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 38: 381-397.

Alström, P., S. Höhna, M. Gelang, P.G.P. Ericson, and U. Olsson. 2011. Non-monophyly and intricate morphological evolution within the avian family Cettiidae revealed by multilocus analysis of a taxonomically densely sampled dataset. BMC Evolutionary Biology 11: 352.

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Hodgson, B. H. 1845. [abstract of a paper on Nepalese birds] Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London 13: 22-37.

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Mlílkovský, J., and V. M. Loskot. 2016. Type specimens and type localities of birds (Aves) collected during Friedrich Heinrich von Kittlitz's circumnavigation in 1826-1829. Part 1. Specimens in the collections of the Zoological Institute of the Russian

Academy of Sciences, St.-Petersburg, Russia. Journal of the National Museum (Prague), Natural History Series 185: 77-137.

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Watson, G.E., M.A. Traylor, Jr., and E. Mayr. 1986. Family Sylviidae, Old World warblers. Pages 3-294 in E. Mayr and G.W. Cottrell (editors), Check-list of birds of the world. Volume XI. Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**Submitted by:**  Tom Schulenberg, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Joseph Morlan

**Date of Proposal:** 28 March 2017

**Elevate *Automolus ochrolaemus exsertus* to species rank**

**Background:**

*Automolus ochrolaemus*, the Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, is found in humid lowland forests across a large swath of Central and South America. There is substantial plumage, vocal and genetic variation within its broad distribution (see Smith et al. 2014 for phylogeographic structure, and Remsen 2017 for descriptions of plumage and vocal variation). This proposal concerns two of the populations found within Central America: *exsertus*, which occurs on the Pacific slope of Costa Rica (and adjacent western Panama), and *hypophaeus*, which is found along the Caribbean slope of Central America. These two populations are geographically isolated and ~ 6% different in mtDNA (cyt b), suggesting they last shared a common ancestor around 3 million years ago. They differ in voice and are roughly similar in plumage (Remsen 2017).

**New information:**

Freeman and Montgomery (2017) conducted playback experiments on 15 territories of *exsertus* and 14 territories of *hypophaeus*. Each playback experiment measured whether populations discriminated against song from the other population; thus, these experiments simulated secondary contact between these two geographically isolated populations. Briefly, each experiment measured the behavioral response of a territorial bird to two treatments: 1) song from the local population (sympatric treatment) and 2) song from the allopatric population (allopatric treatment). All territorial birds responded to sympatric song by approaching the speaker (typically to within 5 m).

We defined song discrimination as instances in which the territory owner(s) ignored allopatric song, defined as a failure to approach within 15 m of the speaker in response to the allopatric treatment. We calculated song discrimination for each taxon pair as the percentage of territories that failed to approach the speaker in response to allopatric song. For example, a song discrimination score of 0.8 indicates that 80% of territorial birds (e.g. 8 out of 10) ignored allopatric song while simultaneously actively defending a territory. We assume that song discrimination is a proxy for premating reproductive isolation; that is, our experiments provide insight into whether these populations would recognize each other as conspecific and interbreed (or not) were they to come into contact with one another. It is unknown what degree of song discrimination is "enough" that song constitutes a strong enough premating barrier to reproduction that allopatric populations merit classification as distinct biological species. To provide a yardstick, we considered nine allopatric Neotropical taxon pairs that were recently split (or have pending proposals to the South American Classification Committee) in part based on differences in vocalizations. We found the average song discrimination in these nine taxon pairs to be ~ 0.6 (60% of territorial birds ignored allopatric song), and suggest that species limits deserve to be reconsidered when taxon pairs currently classified as subspecies have song discrimination scores above ~ 0.6.

We found that 13 out of 15 territorial birds from the Pacific slope of Costa Rica (*exsertus*) discriminated against song playback of Caribbean *hypophaeus* (discrimination = fail to approach within 15 m of the speaker). Results were similar in the opposite direction: 12 out of 14 territorial birds from the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica (*hypophaeus*) discriminated against song playback of Pacific *exsertus* (discrimination = fail to approach within 15 m of the speaker).

**Recommendation:**

Populations of Buff-throated Foliage-gleaners from the Pacific and Caribbean slopes of Costa Rica respond strongly to local song but essentially ignore song from their relatives across the mountains. This suggests that vocal differences constitute a strong premating barrier to reproduction between these taxa, and is consistent with the genetic data that indicates that, despite their close geographic proximity, these populations last shared a common ancestor ~ 3 million years ago. I therefore recommend treating *exsertus* and *hypophaeus* as distinct biological species. In practice, this means that I recommend treating *exsertus* as a distinct biological species from the entire rest of the Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner complex. There may be additional biological species lurking within this complex. For example, we documented strong song discrimination between *hypophaeus* and *pallidigularis* (found in eastern Panama and northwestern South America; these two taxa presumably interact in a contact zone in central Panama, and may prove to be distinct biological species. As for an English name for *exsertus*, Ridgway (1911) and Cory and Hellmayr (1927) called it "Chiriqui Automolus", which would translate to "Chiriqui Foliage-gleaner", which would seem to be a reasonable name.

**Literature Cited:**

Freeman, B. G., & Montgomery, G. A. 2017. Using song playback experiments to measure species recognition between geographically isolated populations: A comparison with acoustic trait analyses. *The Auk 134*(4), 857-870.

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**Submitted by:**

Benjamin Freeman, Biodiversity Research Centre, University of British Columbia

**Date of Proposal:** 19 October 2017

**Transfer *Geothlypis aequinoctialis chiriquensis* from Masked Yellowthroat *G. aequinoctialis* to Olive-crowned Yellowthroat *G. semiflava***

**Background:**

There is a population of *Geothlypis* yellowthroat found in a very small geographic distribution on the Pacific slope of southwestern Costa Rica and adjacent southwestern Panama. This population is called *chiriquensis* and is historically considered to be part of *Geothlypis aequinoctialis*, presumably because it is similar in plumage, with a gray forecrown. *Geothlypis aequinoctialis* is otherwise found only in South America, where it has several distinct populations that are themselves sometimes classified as distinct species. On the basis of its distinct song, morphology and plumage, as well as its disjunct geographic distribution, *chiriquensis* is sometimes classified as a species distinct from *Geothlypis aequinoctialis*. Escalante et al. (2009) included a sample of *chiriquensis* in their mtDNA-based genetic analysis of *Geothlypis* yellowthroats, and found it was nearly identical in mtDNA to a *G. semiflava* sample from the Caribbean lowlands of Central America (0.4% divergence), and very different from *G. aequinoctialis*. In turn, these two samples from Central America (*chiriquensis* and *semiflava*) were sister to a sample of *semiflava* from western Ecuador.

**New information:**

Freeman and Montgomery (2017) conducted playback experiments on 8 territories of *semiflava* on the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica. Each playback experiment measured whether populations discriminated against song from *chiriquensis*; thus, these experiments simulated secondary contact between these two geographically isolated populations. Briefly, each experiment measured the behavioral response of a territorial bird to two treatments: 1) song from the local population (sympatric treatment) and 2) song from the allopatric population (allopatric treatment). All territorial birds responded to sympatric song by approaching the speaker (typically to within 5 m). We found that seven of the eight *semiflava* territorial birds responded strongly to song playback of *chiriquensis*.

**Recommendation:**

Del Hoyo and Collar (2017) enumerated several characters, apart from genetics, that distinguish c*hiriquensis* from *aequinoctialis*, with which it has long been considered conspecific (i.e., smaller size; greater extent of black on forecrown; much longer song, starting uniquely with a subphrase repeated several times and continuing with a gradual acceleration; and unique long call (or alternative song), a long fast rattle initially descending in pitch). However, both genetics (mtDNA) and song (including perception of song) show that the biogeographically proximate Caribbean (*semiflava*) and Pacific (*chiriquensis*) populations in Central America are extremely similar; the conclusion is that the two should either be considered as conspecific or as very closely related

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allopatric sister species. My reading of the evidence suggests that *chiriquensis* ought to be considered conspecific with *semiflava*. This is because 1) populations of *Geothlypis semiflava* from the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica respond strongly to song from populations from the Pacific slope, suggesting a lack of song-based reproductive isolation, and 2) these two populations are nearly identical in mtDNA (Escalante et al. 2017), suggesting minimal genetic differentiation. These two taxa do differ somewhat in plumage; *chiriquensis* has a small gray crown above its' black mask while *semiflava* lives up to its English name of Olive-crowned Yellowthroat. It could be argued that the difference in head plumage is sufficiently important to reproductive isolation such that *chiriquensis* ought to be classified as a distinct species; the counter-argument that is more convincing to me is that plumage is commonly slightly different between allopatric populations of warblers, that plumage seems to evolve very rapidly in isolation in *Geothlypis* (Escalante et al. 2017), and that it is uncertain how informative minor differences in head coloration are to species limits in this group. In the absence of strong evidence that gray vs. olive crowns lead to strong reproductive isolation in this group, I think it best to consider these two taxa conspecific. Last, there is no reason why biological species must be monophyletic, but assigning species status to *chiriquensis* would render *semiflava* polyphyletic.

**Literature Cited:**

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Escalante, P., Márquez-Valdelamar, L., De La Torre, P., Laclette, J.P. and Klicka, J., 2009. Evolutionary history of a prominent North American warbler clade: The *Oporornis–Geothlypis* complex. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution*, *53*(3), 668-678.

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**Submitted by:**

Benjamin Freeman, Biodiversity Research Centre, University of British Columbia

**Date of Proposal:** 19 October 2017

**Lump Cherrie's Tanager *Ramphocelus costaricensis* with Passerini's Tanager *R. passerinii***

**Background:**

Cherrie's Tanager (*Ramphocelus costaricensis*) lives in humid lowland environments on the Pacific slope of Costa Rica and adjacent western Panama; it is closely related to Passerini's Tanager (*Ramphocelus passerinii*) from the Caribbean lowlands in Central America. The two taxa are geographically isolated. They are both found primarily in disturbed environments and undoubtedly have increased in abundance due to 20th century land-use changes. Male plumage is identical or nearly so; females differ somewhat, with *costaricensis* females dull orange on the chest and rump, compared to dull yellow for the same plumage patches in *passerinii* (Hilty 2017). Songs and vocalizations are also similar (Hilty 2017). Formerly lumped together, they were split into two species primarily on the basis of differences in mtDNA – they are around 1.8% different in mtDNA (Hackett 1996), suggesting they last shared a common ancestor roughly 0.9 million years ago.

**New information:**

Freeman and Montgomery (2017) conducted playback experiments on 11 territories of *passerinii* on the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica and 14 territories of *costaricensis* on the Pacific slope of Costa Rica. Each playback experiment measured whether populations discriminated against song of the other population; thus, these experiments simulated secondary contact between these two geographically isolated populations. Briefly, each experiment measured the behavioral response of a territorial bird to two treatments: 1) song from the local population (sympatric treatment) and 2) song from the allopatric population (allopatric treatment). All territorial birds responded to sympatric song by approaching the speaker (typically to within 5 m). We found that 9 of the 11 *passerinii* territorial birds responded strongly to song playback of *costaricensis*, while 12 of the 14 territorial *costaricensis* responded strongly to song playback of *passerinii*.

**Recommendation:**

My reading of the evidence suggests that *passerinii* should be considered conspecific with *costaricensis.*  This is because 1) populations from the Caribbean and Pacific slope of Costa Rica each respond strongly to song from populations from the other slope and 2) these two populations have limited divergence in plumage (males nearly identical, females noticeably different in color on two patches, and 3) genetic divergence in mtDNA is relatively low, and that some genetic divergence in mtDNA between isolated populations is both to be expected and tells us little about reproductive isolation. It could be argued that the differences in female plumage are sufficiently important to mate choice such that *passerinii* and *costaricensis* ought to be classified as a distinct species. However, the strong similarity in male plumage, song, and perception of song suggest

to me that reproductive isolation is likely to be weak or absent between these two closely related, geographically isolated populations.

**Literature Cited:**

Freeman, B. G., & Montgomery, G. A. 2017. Using song playback experiments to measure species recognition between geographically isolated populations: A comparison with acoustic trait analyses. *The Auk 134*(4), 857-870.
Hackett, S.J., 1996. Molecular phylogenetics and biogeography of tanagers in the genus Ramphocelus (Aves). *Molecular phylogenetics and evolution*, *5*(2), 368-382.
Hilty, S. (2017). Scarlet-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus passerinii*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. & de Juana, E. (eds.). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from http://www.hbw.com/node/61630 on 20 October 2017).

**Submitted by:**

Benjamin Freeman, Biodiversity Research Centre, University of British Columbia

**Date of Proposal:** 19 October 2017

**Change the English name of Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* back to Rock Dove**

**Background:**

The introduced species *Columba livia* was long known as the Rock Dove (e.g., AOU 1957, 1983, 1998).  However, the English name was changed to Rock Pigeon in Supplement 44 (AOU 2003) to conform to a change that had been adopted by the British Ornithologists' Union (1992).

**New Information:**

Principles of avian English nomenclature indicate that the name of a species should not be the same as the group name of other species.  In this case, species of the Australian genus *Petrophassa* go by the group name Rock Pigeon: White-quilled Rock-Pigeon *P. albipennis* and Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon *P. rufipennis*.  Therefore, Rock Pigeon by itself should not be used as a species name.  This was recognized by Dickinson and Remsen (2013), who reverted to the previous name Rock Dove.  This has been widely followed (e.g., by del Hoyo and Collar 2014 and Gill and Donsker 2017).

**Recommendation:**

I recommend that we re-adopt the name Rock Dove for *Columba livia*, in keeping with English nomenclatural conventions.

**Literature Cited:**

Banks, R. C., C. Cicero, J. L. Dunn, A. W. Kratter, P. C. Rasmussen, J. V. Remsen, Jr., J. D. Rising, and D. F. Stotz. 2003. Forty-fourth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds*.  Auk 120: 923-931.
British Ornithologists' Union. 1992. Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland. 6th ed. British Ornithologists' Union, Tring, Hertsfordshire, UK.


**Submitted by:**  Terry Chesser

**Date of Proposal:**  1 November 2017

**Treat the extralimital *Elaenia brachyptera* as a separate species from Lesser Elaenia *E. chiriquensis***

**Note:** This proposal is based on SACC proposal 686, which passed unanimously. The taxon proposed for elevation to species, *E. c. brachyptera*, does not occur in our area, so the only effects of this proposal would be to remove the distribution of *brachyptera* from our distributional statement for *E. chiriquensis* and to reflect the split in the notes for the species account of *E. chiriquensis*. A change in English name for *E. chiriquensis* is not recommended, due to the large disparity in size of geographic range between the widespread *E. chiriquensis* and the proposed species *E. brachyptera*, which is restricted to montane forests in southern Colombia and northern Ecuador.

**Background:**

The widespread species *Elaenia chiriquensis* has three recognized subspecies: nominate *chiriquensis* in southern Central America, *albivertex* in lowlands east of the Andes south to northern Argentina, and *brachyptera* in montane forests in southern Colombia and northern Ecuador (Dickinson & Christidis 2014). Ridgely and Greenfield (2001), based on Coopmans, indicated that the voice of *brachyptera* is very different from those of *chiriquensis* and *albivertex*, and suggested that it might represent a distinct species.

**New information:**

Rheindt et al. (2015) analyzed voice and a molecular dataset including mitochondrial NADH dehydrogenase (ND2) and nuclear B-fibrinogen intron 5 to examine the relationships of the three subspecies included within *Elaenia chiriquensis*, using *E. mesoleuca* as the outgroup (identified as sister to *chiriquensis* in Rheindt et al 2008). The molecular dataset shows the lowland *chiriquensis* and *albivertex* to be only weakly differentiated (0.8 to 1.2% different at ND2), whereas *brachyptera* was more strongly differentiated (3.7 to 4.3%).

Analysis of vocal data found the vocalizations of *chiriquensis* and *albivertex* to be quite similar across the entire vocal repertoire.  The taxon *brachyptera*, however, was quite different in dawn song and in other calls.  Unfortunately the authors had only one recording of the dawn song of *brachyptera* for comparison to the other subspecies; however, they stated that other birds heard at the same time were very similar.  All three subspecies had a standard pattern of *Elaenia* dawn song, with a similar phrase (which varies little across the genus) and a more complex phrase.  The dawn song of *brachyptera* differs from those of the other two subspecies in the number of elements (having only two versus multiple elements) in the complex phrase, the quality and pitch of the first element in the complex phrase, and the quality of the second element.  This makes for a very different looking sonogram (see figures from Rheindt et al 2015 below).

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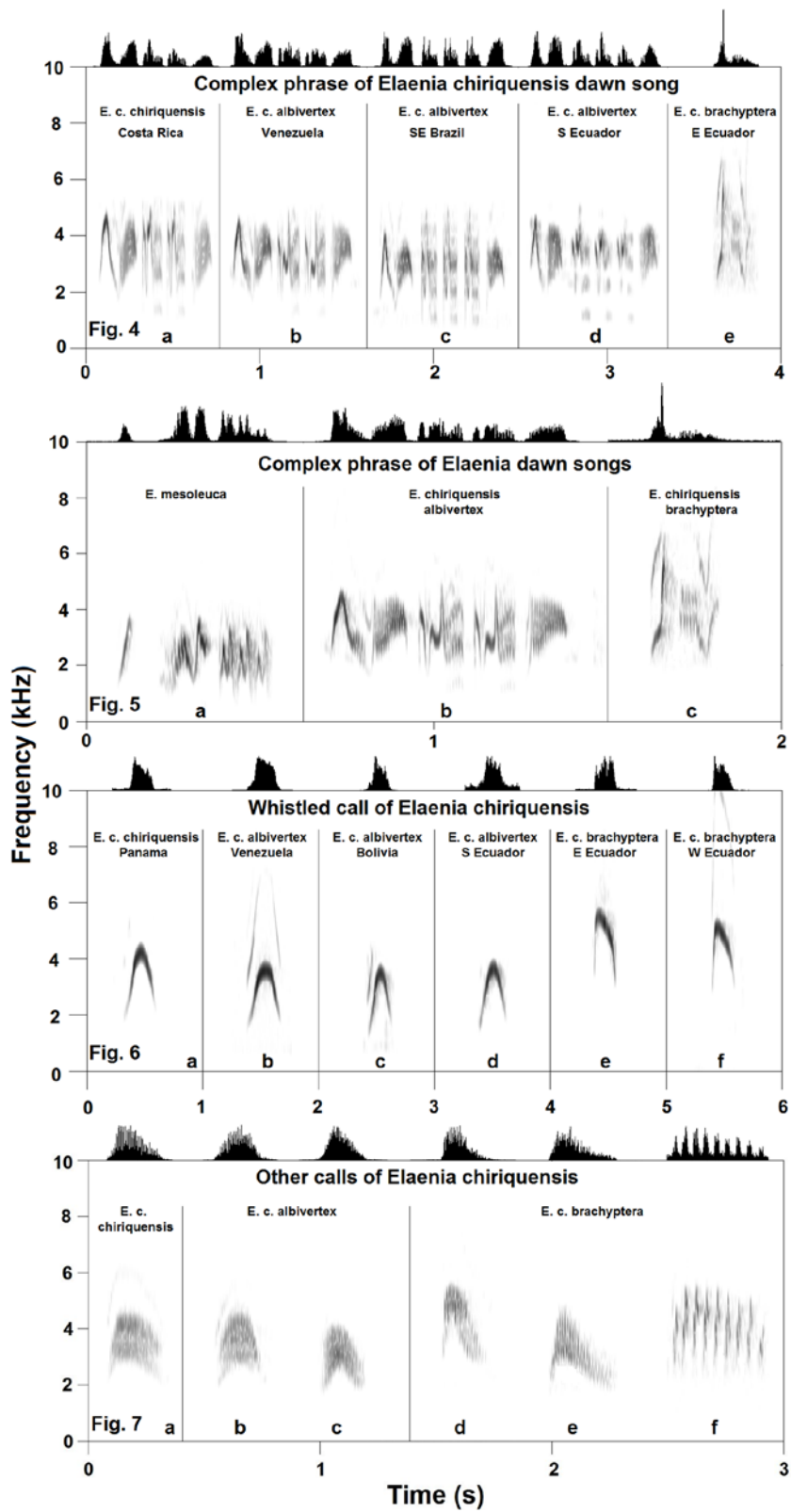
Figures 4-7 from Rheindt et al 2015.

The authors recognized two types of calls, whistled and burred calls, in both *chiriquensis* and *albivertex*. These calls are very similar in these two taxa. The authors recognized three call types in *brachyptera*: two apparently homologous to the whistled and burred calls of the other taxa, and a third call that they refer to as a rattle that appears to have no equivalent in either *chiriquensis* or *albivertex*. Both the whistled and burred calls in *brachyptera* are higher pitched, and the call shape on the sonogram is more asymmetrical. The rattle call is very different from anything given by the other taxa (and the authors state that they found nothing similar in the genus). The sample size for calls was much better than for songs, with recordings from at least 18 different individuals.

Based on both vocalizations and molecular data, Rheindt et al. (2015) have determined that montane populations of the *chiriquensis* group from the east slope of the Andes in Ecuador are *brachyptera*, not *albivertex* as sometimes assumed.

Rheindt et al. did not discuss morphological differences between *brachyptera* and other *chiriquensis* at all, stating that the 3 subspecies differ "in the hues of their body coloration" and that *brachyptera* is slightly smaller, citing Hosner 2004 (HBW). Although I recognize that plumage differences between different *Elaenia* are always slight, the lack of any useful morphological information is a shortcoming of this paper.

Note: I looked quickly at Field Museum specimens. We have nothing identified as *brachyptera*, but we have a series collected at El Tambo in Cauca between 1700 and 2400 m, which is on the Andean slopes on the west side, just north of the known range in Nariño of *brachyptera*. A quick look at these birds makes me wonder if they are *brachyptera*. They are dark-chested compared to a series of *albivertex* from Meta. The geography described in this paper would also suggest *brachyptera*, but a question for another day.

**Recommendation:**

I recommend a YES vote to split *Elaenia brachyptera* from *Elaenia chiriquensis* as suggested by Rheindt et al. (2015) based on its distinct voice, and supported by its genetic distance from the rest of *E. chiriquensis*. I would be happier with some morphological analysis, but it is not likely to be very informative anyway.

**English names:**

Rheindt et al. (2015) suggested an English name of Coopmans's Elaenia for *brachyptera* in recognition of Paul Coopmans' role in making people aware of the distinctiveness of this taxon. Ridgely and Greenfield (2001) suggested Nariño Elaenia for this species. However, given its expanded range to the eastern slope of the Andes, Nariño Elaenia is becoming a progressively less-appropriate name for *brachyptera*. I recommend the use of Coopmans's Elaenia, and further recommend no change to Lesser Elaenia for the widespread *Elaenia chiriquensis*, now excluding the narrowly distributed *brachyptera*.

**Literature Cited:**

Dickinson, E. C. (ed.). 2003. The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the World, Revised and enlarged 3rd Edition. Christopher Helm, London, 1040 pp.

Hosner, P.A. (2004) Genus *Elaenia*. In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Christie, D.A. (Eds.), pp. 267-274. Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 9. Cotingas to Pipits and Wagtails. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Rheindt, F. E., L. Christidis, and J. A. Norman. 2008. Habitat shifts in the evolutionary history of a Neotropical flycatcher lineage from forest and open landscapes. BMC Evolutionary Biology 8: 193 (18 pp.).

Rheindt, F. E., N. Krabbe, A. K. S. Wee, and L. Christidis. 2015. Cryptic speciation in the Lesser Elaenia *Elaenia chiriquensis* (Aves: Passeriformes: Tyrannidae). Zootaxa 4032: 251-263.

Ridgely, R. S., and P. J. Greenfield. 2001. The birds of Ecuador. Vol. I. Status, distribution, and taxonomy. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.

**Submitted by:** Douglas Stotz

**Date of Proposal:** 3 November 2017

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**Appendix: Comments from SACC on Proposal 686**

Comments from Areta: YES. I agree with Doug in that a more thorough discussion of plumage features would have been desirable, at least to substantiate the cryptic speciation proposition, which might stem from appreciable differences or from luck in assigning a name to an indistinguishable taxon. Although a single (diagnostic) dawn song of *brachyptera* was available, other vocalizations also differ between *chiriquensis/albivertex* and *brachyptera*. Spectrograms should have made reference to the localities, dates and sources of recordings to foster our understanding of what is being shown, and more details on the sources of vocalizations from other species in the Appendix would also have been more than welcome, especially given that ID errors are frequent in the genus. Despite these shortcomings, the essential information to consider both taxa as separate biological species is present in the paper.

Comments from Stiles: YES, albeit a bit hesitantly. For one thing, *albivertex* also occurs rather widely on the western slope of the Eastern Andes in Colombia, and in our large series here a number of specimens are notably dark-chested (young birds? plumage wear?). The difference in measurements given by Meyer de Schauensee indicates considerable overlap between *brachyptera* and *albivertex*, also seen in a group of 5 specimens from the Popayán area (including "Munchique-El Tambo", presumably *brachyptera*) and *albivertex* from further north, and we have a recent specimen from Tumaco that I would definitely place with *albivertex,* thus making "Nariño Elaenia" less appropriate, so Coopmans's Elaenia seems a better name.

Comments from Jaramillo: YES. Vocal and molecular data come to the same conclusion, that *brachyptera* deserves species rank. I think that Coopman's Elaenia is an appropriate name.

Comments from Zimmer: YES.  The vocal and molecular data sets are congruent. This is a group in which plumage characters are notoriously subtle and evolutionarily conservative, so the lack of analysis by Rheindt et al (2015), although disappointing, was, as Doug notes, unlikely to be particularly informative.  "Coopman's Elaenia" sounds good as an English name.

Comments from Remsen: YES. The differences in song are consistent with song differences in many other related tyrannids ranked as species.  This evidence would be sufficient, in my opinion, regardless of degree of genetic differentiation in a few neutral loci that are basically irrelevant to the biology of these taxa unless they are shown to be parapatric.

Comments from Robbins: YES, to recognizing *Elaenia brachyptera* as a species despite the shortcomings of the Rheindt et al. (2015) paper as underscored by both Stotz and Areta.

Comments from Pacheco: YES.  Vocal and molecular data support the separation from *E. chiriquensis.*

## Treat the extralimital *Henicorhina anachoreta* as a separate species from Gray-breasted Wood-Wren *H. leucophrys*

**Note:** This proposal is based on SACC Proposal 700, which passed unanimously. The taxon proposed for elevation to species, *H. l. anachoreta*, does not occur in our area, so the main effect of this proposal would be to change the notes in our account to reflect the split (the distributional statement might also be altered slightly). A change in English name for *H. leucophrys* is not recommended, due to the large disparity in size of geographic range between the widespread *H. leucophrys* and the proposed species *H. anachoreta*, which is restricted to the Santa Marta region of northern Colombia.

**Background:**

Recent studies based on genetic, morphological, and behavioral data suggest that the two wren taxa in the genus *Henicorhina* (Troglodytidae) that replace each other along elevational gradients in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, northern Colombia, are reproductively isolated populations (Caro et al. 2013, see also Burbidge et al. 2015). However, the evidence has not yet resulted in taxonomic changes recognizing their status as distinct species.

**New information:**

In a recently published note (Cadena et al. 2015), we summarized existing data and proposed to recognize the population inhabiting higher elevations as a different species (*H. anachoreta*) from the population occurring at lower elevations (*H. leucophrys bangsi*).The note is open access and available here:

http://asociacioncolombianadeornitologia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/10-MS1411.pdf

**Recommendation:**

Based on the analyses in Caro et al. (2013) and the data summarized by Cadena et al. (2016), I recommend voting YES to treating *H. anachoreta* as a species distinct from *H. leucophrys.*

**Literature Cited:**

Burbridge, T., T. Parson, P. C. Caycedo-Rosales, C. D. Cadena & H. Slabbekoorn. 2015. Playbacks revisited: Asymmetry in behavioural response across an acoustic boundary between two parapatric bird species. Behaviour 152: 1933-1951.
Cadena, C. D., L. M. Caro, P. C. Caycedo, A. M. Cuervo, R. C. K. Bowie & H. Slabbekoorn. 2015. *Henicorhina anachoreta* (Troglodytidae), another endemic bird

species for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. Ornitología Colombiana 15.

Caro, L. M., P. C. Caycedo-Rosales, R. C. K. Bowie, H. Slabbekoorn & C. D. Cadena. 2013. Ecological speciation along an elevational gradient in a tropical passerine bird? Journal of Evolutionary Biology 26: 357-374.

**Submitted by:** C. Daniel Cadena

**Date of Proposal:** 3 November 2017

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**Appendix: Comments from SACC on Proposal 700**

Comments from Remsen: YES. Parapatry without gene flow is as good as it gets for species rank.

Comments from Stiles: YES. The strong evidence for parapatry without interbreeding justifies species rank for *anachoreta.*

Comments from Areta: YES. Results of playback experiments and vocal differentiation, lack of gene flow in parapatry, morphological distinctions, phylogenetic data, and analysis of type material all support recognition of *anachoreta* as a separate species. The reasons behind the paraphyly of *Henicorhina leucophrys* are quite interesting. I do not fear recognizing non-monophyletic species, and I agree in that both faulty taxonomy and the speciation process in this group underlie the observed phylogenetic patterns.

Comments from Pacheco: YES. The convincing evidence of parapatry without reporting of crossbreeding justifies the proposal.

Comments from Claramunt: YES. The concurrent break in morphology and multiple independent genetic markers strongly suggests that these two parapatric populations are two separate lineages. Intrinsic reproductive isolation is also inferred by the lack of intergrades or hybrids in the contact zone. Vocal data are more ambiguous; vocal variation looks like an altitudinal cline, and playback experiments revealed that birds do respond to alien songs. But little is known about the significance of these responses. Males may be responding to alien songs because they may be defending territories from any *Henicorhina* around to defend resources, regardless of species identity. This, in turn, may promote vocal convergence rather than divergence, as in the case of *Hypocnemis peruviana* and *H. subflava*, described by Tobias & Seddon (2009, Evolution 63: 3168-3189). But whatever happens with the acoustic behavior here does not affect the fact that all other evidence indicate that there are two lineages that are differentiated genetically and phenotypically and are reproductively isolated. Finally, that *H. leucophrys* become paraphyletic after separation of *H. anachoreta* is problematic in principle, because they cannot be considered two separate lineages if they are not reciprocally monophyletic. However, I concur with Daniel in that this change is among

the first steps towards a revision of the *leucophrys* complex and may have to accept some transitional taxonomies that include non-monophyletic taxa.

Comments from Jaramillo: YES. Everything lines up, parapatry, phylogenetic data etc. Observers in the field have been noting that there is a different bird up top and down below in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta for some time, so it is great to solidify that indeed there are two species, and that they appear not to be each other's closest relatives. I think we are just hitting the tip of the iceberg with wrens, they will be the new tapaculos with many cryptic species to come, but unlike tapaculos the vocal data is much more complicated and difficult to decipher.

## Split extralimital *Mitrephanes olivaceus* from Tufted Flycatcher *M. phaeocercus*, and extralimital *Fluvicola albiventer* from Pied Water-Tyrant *F. pica*

**Background:**

Our notes on *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* and *Fluvicola pica* from the 7th edition of the checklist (AOU 1998) are as follows:

*Mitrephanes* – Many authors, including Wetmore (1972), Sibley and Monroe (1990), and Ridgely and Tudor (1994), treat the two groups as separate species: *M. olivaceus* Berlepsch and Stolzmann, 1894 [Olive Tufted-Flycatcher] and *M. phaeocercus* (Sclater, 1859) [Common Tufted-Flycatcher].

*Fluvicola* – The two groups, *F. pica* and the South American *F. albiventer* (Spix, 1825) [Black-backed Water-Tyrant] were treated as separate species by Sibley and Monroe (1990) and Ridgely and Tudor (1994).

**New Information:**

SACC has treated these as separate species from its inception in 2000, based on information in Webster (1968) for *Mitrephanes* and Ridgely and Tudor (1994) for *Fluvicola*. Almost all other references also treat them as specifically distinct.

**Recommendation:**

I recommend that we split these species. Neither of the newly split species occurs in our area, so no new species will be added to the Checklist. However, splitting these species will result in changes to the distributional statements and notes for both *M. phaeocercus* and *F. pica*.

**English Names:**

SACC used the names from AOU (1998) for *F. pica* [Pied Water-Tyrant] and *F. albiventer* [Black-backed Water-Tyrant], but coined new names for *M. phaeocercus* [Tufted Flycatcher rather than Common Tufted-Flycatcher] and *M. olivaceus* [Olive Flycatcher rather than Olive Tufted-Flycatcher]. The obvious advantage of the SACC names is that they are less wordy, but they also don't indicate the sister relationship of the two *Mitrephanes* species, as using the group name "Tufted-Flycatcher" did, and the name "Olive Flycatcher" is about as non-specific as you can get. Clements and HBW have adopted the SACC names, whereas IOC and Howard & Moore use names that both retain "Tufted": Northern Tufted Flycatcher and Olive Tufted Flycatcher for IOC, and Tufted Flycatcher and Olive-Tufted Flycatcher for Howard & Moore. Ridgely and Tudor (1994) used the same names as the AOU (1998), but Ridgely and Greenfield (2001) switched to Northern Tufted Flycatcher for *M. phaeocercus*. If all this is confusing, the table below may be helpful:

|  | *Mitrephanes phaeocercus* | *Mitrephanes olivaceus* |
|---|---|---|
| AOU 1998, Ridgely & Tudor 1994 | Common Tufted-Flycatcher | Olive Tufted-Flycatcher |
| SACC, Clements, HBW | Tufted Flycatcher | Olive Flycatcher |
| Ridgely & Greenfield 2001 | Northern Tufted-Flycatcher | Olive Tufted-Flycatcher |
| IOC | Northern Tufted Flycatcher | Olive Tufted Flycatcher |
| Howard & Moore | Tufted Flycatcher | Olive-Tufted Flycatcher |

Personally, I prefer names that retain "Tufted-Flycatcher" and indicate relationships. Whether the stability of names already in use by SACC (although not universally accepted) outweighs this, or whether the names with "tufted" are too long or otherwise unsatisfactory, I leave to the committee's judgment.

Please vote separately on (a) splitting *M. phaeocercus*, (b) splitting *F. pica*, and (c) English names.

**Literature Cited:**

American Ornithologists' Union. 1998. Check-list of North American birds, 7th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Ridgely, R. S., and P. J. Greenfield. 2001. The birds of Ecuador. Vol. I. Status, distribution, and taxonomy. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.

Ridgely, R. S., and G. Tudor. 1994. The birds of South America, Vol. 2. Univ. Texas Press, Austin.

Sibley, C. G., and B. L. Monroe, Jr. 1990. Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven.

Webster, J. D. 1968. A revision of the tufted flycatchers of the genus *Mitrephanes*. Auk 85: 287-303.

Wetmore, A. The birds of the Republic of Panamá, Part 3. Smithsonian Misc. Collect., vol. 150.

**Submitted by:** Terry Chesser

**Date of Proposal:** 3 November 2017

**Split *Luscinia* to recognize *Larvivora*, *Calliope*, and *Cyanecula***

**Effect on NACC:**

If fully approved, this proposal would transfer two Checklist species from *Luscinia* to *Larvivora*, one species from *Luscinia* to *Calliope*, and one species from *Luscinia* to *Cyanecula*. *Luscinia* would be removed from the Checklist.

**Background:**

The genus *Luscinia* is a phenotypically diverse assemblage of nightingales, 'robins', and 'chats' that have been taxonomically problematic for over 100 years (Seebohm 1881). Various taxonomic authorities have debated whether certain species within *Luscinia* should be included in other recognized genera, including *Erithacus* (Sibley and Monroe 1990, Dickinson 2003, Clements et al. 2017; see section 4.7 of the discussion in Sangster et al. 2010 for a more complete description of how taxonomic authorities vary). Recent molecular phylogenetic studies have provided new insights regarding phylogenetic relationships among Old World flycatchers, revealing that many genera are not monophyletic. Given this new information, it seems prudent to revisit generic limits within Muscicapidae and consider revising genus-level classifications to better reflect evolutionary relationships.

**New information:**

A series of recent molecular phylogenetic studies have greatly improved our understanding of phylogenetic relationships among species and genera within Muscicapidae. In particular, an intensive effort by Sangster et al. (2010) revealed extensive paraphyly and polyphyly among many genera in Muscicapidae. Sangster et al. (2010) sequenced the mitochondrial gene cytochrome b and exonic and intronic regions of nuclear ornithine decarboxylase, myoglobin intron 2, and lactate dehydrogenase intron 3. The authors generated concatenated alignments and inferred phylogenies using MrBayes and RAxML.

Sangster et al. (2010) found that members of the genus *Luscinia* did not form a monophyletic group. Rather, they separated into a polyphyletic assemblage of four clades, three of which are pertinent to the NACC (see Fig. 1 below):

(1) The type species of *Luscinia* is *L. megarhynchos*, which belongs to the clade (D3b)
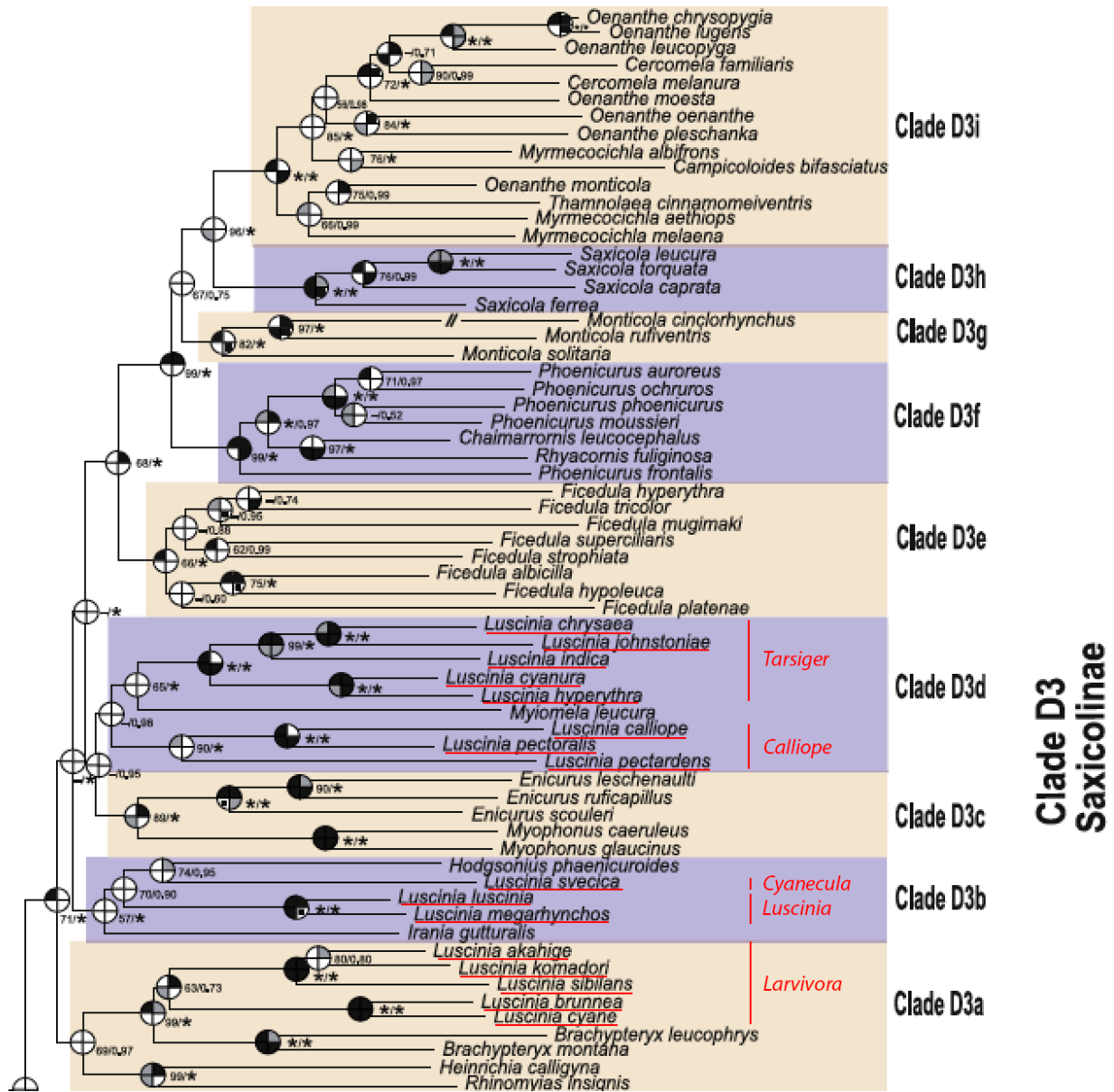
23

**Figure 1: Multilocus phylogeny from Sangster et al. (2010). Red underlined text indicates the polyphyletic grouping of taxa that are currently recognized in the genus *Luscinia*. Vertical red lines and adjacent text indicate proposed genera that reflect monophyletic groupings.**

that includes *L. luscinia* and NACC species *L. svecica*. This clade also includes *Irania gutturalis* and *Hodgsonius phaenicuroides*, which was sister to *L. svecica*. Support values within the clade were weak to moderate, except for the node uniting *L. megarhynchos* and *L. luscinia* (100% bootstrap, 1.0 posterior probability). Sangster et al. (2010) restricted *Luscinia* to the three species previously placed in this genus together with the former *H. phaenicuroides*, leaving *I. gutturalis* (sister to these four species) in *Irania*. This was followed by Dickinson and Christidis (2014), Clements et al. (2017), and Gill and Donsker (2017), but del Hoyo and Collar (2016) restricted *Luscinia*

to *L. megarhynchos* and *L. luscinia*, left *H. phaenicuroides* in *Hodgsonius*, and transferred *L. svecica* to *Cyanecula* Brehm, 1828, based on "unique morphological characters". We don't know whether this refers to something other than plumage, but the plumages of the species of *Luscinia* (the nightingales) under this generic scheme are extremely similar and very different from those of *C. svecica* (Bluethroat) and *H. phaenicuroides* (White-bellied Redstart), which differ considerably from each other.

(2) *Larvivora* Hodgson, 1837 – *L. brunnea*, *L. akahige*, *L. komadori* and NACC species *L. cyane* and *L. sibilans* formed a subclade within clade D3a with rather poor support (63 bootstrap, 0.73 posterior probability). This subclade was recovered with strong support for the lactate dehydrogenase gene tree, but received only weak or moderate support for the other gene trees. The authors did not include *L. ruficeps* in their study, but tentatively suggested placing it in *Larvivora* based on similarity to *L. brunnea* and *L. cyane* in song and behavior. A later study confirmed that *L. ruficeps* does belong to a clade that contains *L. brunnea, L. cyane, L. sibilans, L. akahige* and *L. komadori* (Zhao et al. 2017). Sangster et al. (2010) suggested that *Larvivora* Hodgson, 1837 be resurrected for these taxa, and this has been widely accepted (e.g., Dickinson and Christidis 2014, del Hoyo and Collar 2016, Gill and Donsker 2017). An alternative suggestion was to place *L. brunnea* and *L. cyane* in *Larvivora* and resurrect *Icoturus* Stejneger, 1886, for *L. sibilans*, *L. komadori*, and *L. akahige*; support values for both of these clades are much higher (100 BS/1.0 PP) than for the single clade of *Larvivora*, but this alternative appears not to have been implemented by any global reference.

(3) *Calliope* Gould, 1836 – *Luscinia pectoralis*, *L. pectardens*, and NACC species *L. calliope* formed a clade with strong support (90% BS, 1.0 PP). Sangster et al. (2010) were unable to sample the very rare *L. obscura*, but concluded that it likely belonged to this group based on plumage similarity to *L. pectardens* (Goodwin and Vaurie, 1956; Ripley 1958; del Hoyo 2005). Alström et al. (2013) later sequenced cyt b of *L. obscura* and confirmed that is sister to *L. pectardens*. Use of *Calliope* for these species has been generally accepted (e.g., Dickinson and Christidis 2014, del Hoyo and Collar 2016, Gill and Donsker 2017).

(4) *Tarsiger* Hodgson, 1845 – The fourth clade consisted of five species, only one of which (*T. cyanurus*) has been recorded from the NACC area; this clade received strong support (100 BS, 1.0 PP) and has been widely accepted.

**Recommendation:**

*Larvivora sensu lato* and *Calliope* are recognized widely by taxonomic references (Sangster et al. 2011 in addition to those cited above) and, despite the poor support for

*Larvivora sensu lato*, their adoption seems an easy call. Therefore, we recommend transferring *L. sibilans* and *L. cyane* to *Larvivora* and *L. calliope* to *Calliope*. This leaves *L. svecica*, the options for which are: (1) to retain it in *Luscinia* (and by implication advocate the transfer of *H. phaenicuroides* to *Luscinia*), or (2) to transfer it to *Cyanecula*. Given the differences in plumage, the relatively long branch lengths, and the less than stellar support indices in this clade, we slightly favor transferring *L. svecica* to *Cyanecula*, following del Hoyo and Collar (2016), while recognizing that a case can be made for retaining it in *Luscinia*, especially considering that *Luscinia* was formerly much more heterogeneous.

Please vote separately on recognizing: (a) *Larvivora*, (b) *Calliope*, and (c) *Cyanecula*.

**Literature Cited:**

Alström, P., Song, G., Zhang, R., Gao, X., Holt, P. I., Olsson, U., and Lei, F. 2013. Taxonomic status of blackthroat *Calliope obscura* and firethroat *C. pectardens*. Forktail 29: 94–99.

del Hoyo, J., and N. Collar. 2016. HBW passerine volume

del Hoyo, J., Elliot, A., Christie, D.A. (Eds.), 2005. Handbook of the Birds of the World. Cuckoo-shrikes to Thrushes, vol. 10. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Clements, J. F., T. S. Schulenberg, M. J. Iliff, D. Roberson, T. A. Fredericks, B. L. Sullivan, and C. L. Wood. 2017. The eBird/Clements checklist of birds of the world: v2016. Downloaded from http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/

Dickinson, E.C., 2003. The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World, third ed. Christopher Helm, London.

Dickinson, E. C., and L. Christidis. 2014. Howard & Moore passerine volume

Gill, F. B., and D. Donsker. 2017. IOC world bird list

Goodwin, D., Vaurie, C., 1956. Are *Luscinia pectardens* (David & Oustalet) and *Luscinia obscura* (Berezowsky & Bianchi) colour phases of a single species? Bull. Brit. Ornithol. Club 76: 141–143.

Ripley, S.D., 1958. A note on the Firethroat and the Blackthroated Robin. Postilla 37, 1–17.

Sangster, G., P. Alström, E. Forsmark, and U. Olsson. 2010. Multi-locus phylogenetic analysis of Old World chats and flycatchers reveals extensive paraphyly at family, subfamily and genus level (Aves: Muscicapidae). Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 57: 380-392.

Sangster, G., Collinson, J. M., Crochet, P.-A., Knox, A. G., Parkin, D. T., Svensson, L., & Votier, S. C. 2011. Taxonomic recommendations for British birds: Seventh report. Ibis 153: 883–892.

Sibley, C.G., Monroe, B.L., 1990. Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World. Yale

University Press, New Haven.

Seebohm, H., 1881. Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum, vol. 5. British Museum (National History), London.

Zhao, M., Alström, P., Hu, R., Zhao, C., Hao, Y., Lei, F., & Qu, Y. 2017. Phylogenetic relationships, song and distribution of the endangered Rufous-headed Robin *Larvivora ruficeps*. Ibis 159: 204–216.

**Submitted by:** Nicholas A. Mason, Cornell University, and Terry Chesser

**Date of proposal:** 8 November 2017

## Transfer Lesser Whitethroat from *Sylvia* to *Curruca*

**Effect on NACC:**

If approved, this proposal would transfer the Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* from *Sylvia* to *Curruca*.

**Background:**

Old World warblers in the genus *Sylvia* comprise a lineage of some 25 species of small, insectivorous songbirds distributed from central Eurasia to southern Africa. The genus *Sylvia*, as currently defined, is quite variable in terms of phenotype and natural history and includes species previously placed in *Parisoma, Pseudalcippe*, and *Horizhorinus* (Voelker and Light 2011). Two species occur as accidentals in our area, *S. atricapilla* and *S. curruca*.

**New information:** Voelker and Light (2011) sequenced the mitochondrial genes cytochrome b and ND2 for all currently recognized species in the genus *Sylvia*, and used MrBayes and RAxML to generate Bayesian and maximum likelihood phylogenies, respectively (see Fig. 1 below). They recovered a deep split between a clade containing four species (*Sylvia dohrni*, *S. abyssinicus*, *S. borin*, and *S. atricapilla*) and the remaining taxa in the genus, including *S. curruca* (clades 2 and 3 in Fig. 1). This deep molecular split, which Voelker and Light (2011) estimated to be 20 million years old, prompted Dickinson and Christidis (2014) to resurrect the genus *Curruca* Bechstein, 1802, for the taxa in clades 2 and 3 (the type species of *Sylvia* being *atricapilla*). However, Dickinson and Christidis (2014) did not provide any rationale for this action beyond the depth of the phylogenetic split, and this change has not been adopted by other global taxonomic references (del Hoyo and Collar 2016, Clements et al. 2017, Gill and Donsker 2017).

**Recommendation:** Dickinson and Christidis (2014) didn't provide much context for their split of *Sylvia*, making it difficult to evaluate the transfer of most species, including *S. curruca* from our area, to *Curruca*. For example, they didn't provide comparative data on depth of splits between other genera within the Sylviidae or related families, nor did they offer any morphological or behavioral context for the split. Although the lumping of several previously recognized genera into *Sylvia* indicates some phenotypic heterogeneity within the genus, and although the phylogenetic split within *Sylvia* might be as deep as other currently recognized genus-level splits, without further context we

can't recommend voting for this proposal. The fact that other global references, which presumably have far more interest in this issue than we have, have not accepted this split also makes us reluctant to recommend it.
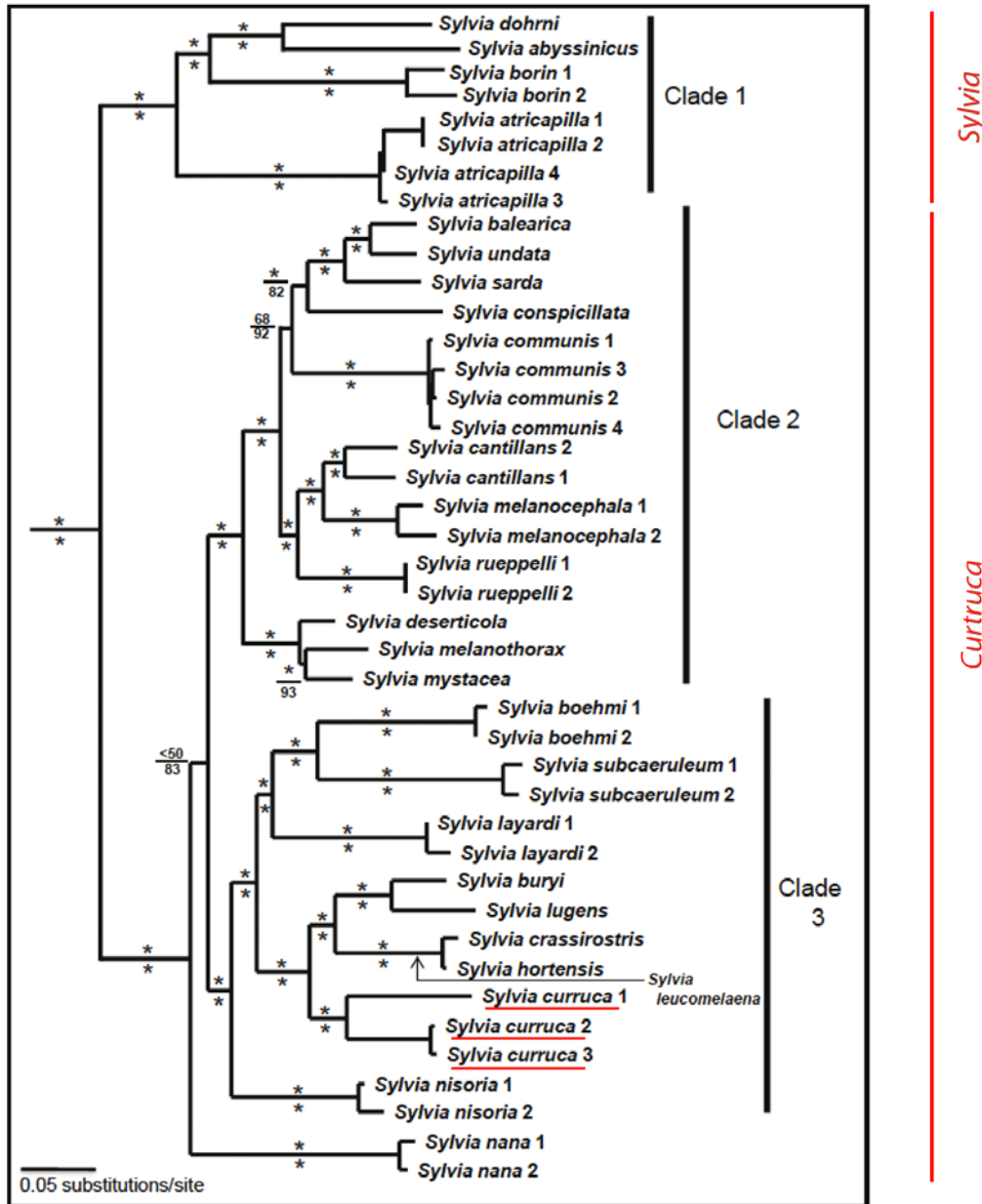


**Figure 2: Phylogeny from Voelker and Light (2011) based on mtDNA. Samples that correspond to taxa pertinent to the NACC are underlined in red, and the generic treatment applied by Dickinson and Christidis (2014) is shown in vertical red lines and corresponding text to the right of the phylogeny.**

## Literature Cited:

Clements, J. F., T. S. Schulenberg, M. J. Iliff, D. Roberson, T. A. Fredericks, B. L. Sullivan, and C. L. Wood. 2017. The eBird/Clements checklist of birds of the world:

v2016.

del Hoyo and Collar. 2016. HBW non-passerine volume

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Gill, F. B., and D. Donsker. 2017. IOC world bird list

Voelker, G., & Light, J. E. 2011. Palaeoclimatic events, dispersal and migratory losses along the Afro-European axis as drivers of biogeographic distribution in Sylvia warblers. *BMC Evolutionary Biology* 11: 163. http://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2148-11-163

**Submitted by:** Nicholas A. Mason, Cornell University, and Terry Chesser

**Date of proposal:** 09 November 2017