
Recent Changes in the "Official" Designations of Certain Trinidad Birds

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IN A recent publication (A.O.U. 1982) the American Ornithologists' Union, the most prestigious ornithological society in the Western Hemisphere, has announced the results of the deliberations of its Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of birds. In due course it will be publishing the 6th edition of the Check-list of North American birds; this new edition will for the first time include all authenticated species on the mainland south to Panama, as well as the West Indies south to Trinidad. Thus it will be possible to find in one work the names of all birds found in Trinidad and Tobago, updated in line with the most recent pronouncements on their taxonomy.

Meanwhile the present list includes many species known in our islands. Certain changes have been made official, both in the scientific designation and in the English name, and since other publications will in future be using these new names, it seems worthwhile to list here those changes that apply to birds on the Trinidad and Tobago list. I make no pretence of understanding the taxonomic reasons for these changes, but the members of the A.O.U. Committee comprise some of the most eminent and respected persons in America ornithology, so I have no reason to doubt their conclusions.

In my publication on local birds (ffrench 1973) some of the following name changes were already included under the heading of "Other names." Others are more recent.

THE CHANGES

- Tachybaptus dominicus* Least Grebe in place of *Podiceps dominicus*.
Phalacrocorax olivaceus Olivaceous Cormorant in place of Neotropical Cormorant.
Egretta caerulea Little Blue Heron in place of *Florida caerulea*.
Egretta tricolor Tricolored Heron in place of *Hydranassa tricolor*.
Egretta rufescens Reddish Egret in place of *Dichromanassa rufescens*

- Dendrocygna bicolor* Fulvous Whistling-Duck in place of Fulvous Tree-Duck.
D. autumnalis Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in place of Black-bellied Tree-duck.
Chen caerulescens Snow Goose in place of *Chen hyperborea*.
Rostrhamus sociabilis Snail Kite in place of Everglade Kite.
Gallinula chloropus Common Moorhen in place of Common Gallinule.
Pluvialis dominica Lesser Golden-Plover in place of American Golden Plover.
Charadrius wilsonia Wilson's Plover in place of Thick-billed Plover.
C. hiaticula Common Ringed Plover in place of Ringed Plover.
Calidris himantopus Stilt Sandpiper in place of *Micropalama himantopus*.
Limnodromus griseus Short-billed Dowitcher in place of Common Dowitcher.
Sterna nilotica Gull billed Tern in place of *Gelochelidon nilotica*.
Sterna caspia Caspian Tern in place of *Hydroprogne caspia*.
Nyctidromus albicollis Common Pauraque in place of Pauraque.
Tyrannus savana Fork-tailed Flycatcher in place of *Mascivora tyrannus*.

The other revisions apply to familial classification. Thus the old families of Icteridae (American Orioles), Parulidae (Wood Warblers), Coerebidae (Honeycreepers) and Traupidae (Tanagers) all disappear. All are now to be included in one family, the Emberizidae, which is hence to be sub-divided into the sub-families Parulinae, Coerebinae, Cardinalinae, Traupinae, Emberizinae, and Icterinae. This affects over 50 species of birds in Trinidad and Tobago.

It can be seen that in many cases the revised concepts tend to find closer relationships between species than had hitherto been seen. Thus many old genera have been discarded, since the fashion among modern taxonomists seems to be "lumping together," rather than "splitting."

REFERENCES

- FFRENCH, R.P. 1973. A Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago. Livingston Pub. Co. Pennsylvania. 470 pp.
A.O.U. 1982. Check-list of North American Birds. 5th edition. 34th supplement. Auk, 99, 3. supplement.