



Forum

Towards redressing inaccurate, offensive and inappropriate common bird names

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English common names are widely used in ornithological research, birding, media and by the general public and, unlike other taxa, often receive considerably greater use than scientific names. Across the world, many of these names were coined from 18th and 19th century European perspectives and are symbolic of a time when this was the only worldview considered in science. Here, we highlight formal efforts by ornithological societies around the world to change common names of birds to better reflect the diverse perspectives of scientists in the 21st century. We focus on particular case studies from regions with a history of colonialism, including South Africa and North America, as well as the successful implementation of Indigenous bird names in New Zealand. In addition to detailing independent and repeated efforts by different ornithological communities to address culturally inappropriate English common names, we discuss dissent and debate in North America regarding these changes. The continued use of problematic common names must change if we wish to create a more diverse and inclusive discipline.

Keywords: diversity, English names, inclusion, nomenclature, taxonomy.

English ‘common names’ are how many birders, naturalists, scientists and the public refer to and familiarize themselves with bird species. Birds are present in our daily lives, are charismatic and colourful, and often have significant cultural connections and therefore have warranted names in the vernacular across many languages. This is particularly true for local species’ names in local

languages, including English (Kitson 1997). Although often associated with non-scientific sources, scientific ornithology also makes extensive use of common names. At professional meetings and in journals, researchers routinely refer to species by their common names, and the convention is typically that authors refer to species with a common and scientific name when first mentioned, and by common name only thereafter (e.g. Wilson Ornithological Society 2017). Across the world, English common names for ornithological research (and by proxy for birding) are standardized by regional societies, including BirdLife chapters such as BirdLife Sweden and BirdLife South Africa, and the North American Classification Committee (NACC) and the South American Classification Committee (SACC) in the Americas (Chesser *et al.* 2018a, Remsen *et al.* 2018). These committees designate the common names that are to be used in scientific publications or as part of checklists, and provide a consistent way for people across to refer to certain species (e.g. Chesser *et al.* 2018a, Remsen *et al.* 2018).

An important feature of common names in comparison with scientific names is the way in which they are regulated. Scientific names, regulated by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN), are subject to rigid rules, including the necessity of binomial nomenclature (or trinomial for subspecies), a lack of redundancy for every genus within each kingdom, and the critical rule of prioritizing the oldest correctly published name that applies (Ride *et al.* 2012).

However, common names do not have such a structure. There is no binomial format, as is evident from the varying length of the common names Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) and Lord Howe Island Vinous-tinted Blackbird (*Turdus poliocephalus vinitinctus*). There are redundancies in common names that were acceptable in the past that ornithologists have slowly and unevenly resolved, including Black Vulture (both *Coragyps atratus* and *Aegyptius monachus*) and Mountain Robin (both *Turdus plebejus* and *Petroica bivittata*). Common names also do not follow the rule of accepting the older or previous names for a bird, with many early names falling by the wayside (e.g. Chatterer, a former name for Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*, or Bastard Baltimore, an early name for Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius*) (Holt 2014). Additionally, older names in Indigenous languages seldom receive priority over newer names in English (Gillman & Wright 2020).

Unlike scientific names, common names are also not universally agreed upon. The International Ornithological Community (NB: this should not be confused with the International Ornithological Congress or the International Ornithologists’ Union) currently maintains the IOC World Bird List (referred to hereafter as IOCWBL), which suggests a list of English names to be used worldwide for all birds (Gill *et al.* 2018). However,

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this list is just that, a series of suggestions, and has no global authority over other lists. For example, there are several cases where the NACC names species differently, for example naming *Alle alle* the Dovekie, whereas the IOCWBL suggests Little Auk, the common name used in Europe (Chesser *et al.* 2018a, Gill *et al.* 2018). Such discrepancies in scientific names would not be permissible under the ICZN Code, but there is no unified authority over common names. The NACC may choose to differ with another authority to uphold its suggested common names.

Unlike scientific names, errors and problems that arise in common names can be solved in a potentially simpler way. In North America, for example, proposals for changes to common names are made in writing to the NACC, which publishes proposals in three to four volumes throughout the year, and changes to the Checklist of North and Middle American Birds are made annually in the July issue of *The Auk* following deliberation by the Committee (e.g. Chesser *et al.* 2018b). Proposals for South American common name changes are handled similarly by the SACC and proposals and decisions are available on the 'Classification of the Bird Species of South America' website (Remsen *et al.* 2018).

This ability of ornithological societies to have decision-making authority over the English names of birds provides a unique opportunity to change common names for the better. Biology, and all science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields in general harbour European biases, from major scientific breakthroughs through history credited to men of European descent, to racial, ethnic and sex biases observed in the population of today's researchers (Higgins, 2016). These biases are rooted throughout centuries of highlighting European scientific progression, permeate through to elementary school introductions to science, and represent a formidable and exhausting obstacle to overcome. To tackle such biases head-on would be impossible. As scientists today, we may attempt to right issues individually, with each task addressed symbolically representing the overarching concept of promoting diverse perspectives with input from all cultures. Inclusion in science is a positive step and is necessary for achieving the best possible research community (Swartz *et al.* 2019). Diverse perspectives from across cultures and groups bring different perspectives and approaches to scientific inquiry, resulting in new and different questions, methods and interpretations that would otherwise be missed (Freeman & Huang 2014, AlShebli *et al.* 2018). This is also true of common names and efforts to change them, and amplifying perspectives across cultures would strengthen this discussion.

Like many aspects of science, common names of birds across the world are often rooted in the European perspective, reflecting the perspective of European settlers coining bird names upon their expansion and claim

to territory. This perspective is entrenched in our common names; for example, some of the most prominent families of North American birds retain a European name despite being in the Americas. Vultures (Cathartidae), flycatchers (Tyrannidae), robins (Turdidae), redstarts and warblers (Parulidae, Peucedramidae), sparrows (Passerellidae), blackbirds and orioles (Icteridae), and *Passerina* buntings (Cardinalidae) are all named after a European counterpart, though they do not form phylogenetic clades with their corresponding European namesakes. Centuries after the coinage of these names and even after their relatively distant relationships were recognized, these inaccurate common names are still retained. The European viewpoint that established these common names should be subject to a broad discussion of realigning common names to reflect a true relationship. However, the names are not receiving proper scrutiny.

Some Indigenous language names are retained as common names. The Tupi, a nation formerly of over 1 million people in what is currently Amazonian and southeastern Brazil, were devastated by introduced disease and slavery by Portuguese settlers (Staden 2011). However, the names Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) and tanager (Thraupidae, Cardinalidae) are derived from the Tupi language (Gruson 1972). Only one bird in North America retains a standardized common name from presumably a North American Indigenous language, the Sora (*Porzana carolina*). However, the origin of that name was lost and it is not known from which Indigenous language it derives (Choate 1985). Additionally, many Indigenous names are used for species endemic to Aotearoa (New Zealand), including charismatic and endangered species such as the Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptilus*).

PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO CHANGE PROBLEMATIC BIRD NAMES

Sweden

The most comprehensive example of considering diversity and inclusion in the renaming of common bird names was a 2015 effort by BirdLife Sweden (formerly the Swedish Ornithological Society). Here, BirdLife Sweden expanded Swedish common names, which previously mainly covered the Western Palearctic, to all 10 709 bird species and at the same time reviewed established names. They noted 10 species with common names that may have had outdated or offensive terms (Barkham 2015). Names that were changed included four species using the Swedish word 'neger' (meaning 'negro') as an adjective (Barkham 2015). These were replaced with the word 'svart', meaning 'black.' The White-rumped Swift (*Apus caffer*) was formerly known

as 'kafferseglare' in Swedish (Barkham 2015). The 'kaffer' syllables originate from a 'kaffir,' a derogatory slur used by white South Africans to refer to black South Africans (GCIS 2008, Barkham 2015). Additionally, BirdLife Sweden accepted the English name of the Hoatzin (*Opisthocomus hoazin*) as the common name in Swedish, erasing the offensive 'zigenarfågel' meaning 'gypsy bird' (Barkham 2015). Conversely, the former name for Hottentot Teal (*Spatula hottentota*), 'hottentotkricka', was replaced with 'sumpand', meaning marsh or swamp duck, with the English-derived name removed. Names involving the prefix 'lapp-', however, were retained as it was argued that this referred to the region of Lapland, rather than as the derogatory name for the Sámi people of Sápmi, northern Scandinavia and northwestern Russia.

South Africa

The concept of promoting Indigenous perspectives in common names in birds is not new and solutions exist from other areas of the world that experienced European colonization. In South Africa, common names have changed substantially over the past half century in attempts both to adhere to internationally recommended names and to remove names assigned by European settlers (Buchmann & Downs 2018). As a result of a dominant culture in the 20th century promoting apartheid, ornithologists assigned certain birds in South Africa names that are offensive to Indigenous cultures (Buchmann & Downs 2018). Following the end of apartheid and the establishment of the IOCWBL, the South African ornithological community decided to align with the IOCWBL both to remove names with apartheid connotations and to provide consistent nomenclature in a nation with many native languages (Buchmann & Downs 2018, Gill *et al.* 2018). Birds native to South Africa with ranges extending to other parts of the continent and the Old World were largely renamed to adhere to the IOCWBL (Buchmann & Downs 2018). However, the South African checklist committee renamed or upheld the names of many birds endemic to the area south of the Zambezi River (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe), often with local names. Some of these, such as the Bokmakierie (*Telophorus zeylonus*), still retain their European-based origin (Buchmann & Downs 2018).

Despite these initial efforts, ornithologists overlooked other problematic names in South Africa, including the Hottentot Teal and Hottentot Buttonquail (*Turnix hottentottus*). The word 'Hottentot' originates from the Dutch term *Hottentotten*, a label used to mock the language of the Indigenous Khoikhoi people of the Cape of Good Hope (Koopman 2021). European ridicule of the Khoikhoi began as early as 1595, when Dutch colonists

started what would become a centuries-long tradition of comparing the sounds of the Khoikhoi language to those of farm animals (Koopman 2021). Journals of European explorers describe the language as 'inarticulate', 'apish', 'beast-like' and 'unnatural' (Koopman 2021). This otherizing culminated in the use of a defined term for mockery, Hottentot, which was intended to be an onomatopoeia for the Khoikhoi language (Koopman 2021). Over centuries, Hottentot became broadly defined as a European term for the Khoikhoi people and generally a term describing a person of inferior intellect (Koopman 2021). In 2020, BirdLife South Africa submitted proposals to the IOCWBL to change the English name of the teal to the Blue-billed Teal, and the buttonquail to the Fynbos Buttonquail. In January 2021, the IOCWBL officially adopted the new names to their list, eliminating the use of Hottentot in English bird names (IOC 2021a). This change is in accordance with IOCWBL English Name Principle #6, that 'if a name was offensive to a substantial group of people, it would be changed' (IOC 2021b). However, local checklists not adhering to the IOCWBL may still retain the slur.

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

In Aotearoa, the official common names of many bird species are Indigenous Māori names. The use of these names acknowledges the significance of the species in Māori culture and helps establish them as iconic birds endemic to Aotearoa (although it does not recognize a multitude of Indigenous languages and cultures in Aotearoa). Although there are concerns with the pronunciation of Indigenous names by English speakers (NACC 2011a), Aotearoa represents an example of an Anglosphere country successfully implementing Indigenous common names for birds. The kiwi (*Apterygidae*), Kea (*Nestor notabilis*), Kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*), Kākāpō (*Strigops habroptilus*), Kōkako (*Callaeas wilsoni*), Takahē (*Porphyrio hochstetteri*), and the extinct moa (*Dinornithiformes*) and Huia (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) all retain their Māori names. Many globally threatened Aotearoa birds on the IUCN Red List are subject to extensive conservation efforts, particularly the Kākāpō, and it is likely that using the local Māori names has not hindered national conservation efforts (e.g. Clout *et al.* 2002, Lentini *et al.* 2018). These species are known by their Māori names throughout the English-speaking world, with Māori-derived common names used abroad (Gill *et al.* 2018, Collar *et al.* 2020, Scofield *et al.* 2020).

Hawai'i and the Kiwikiu, or Maui Parrotbill

Within the jurisdiction of the NACC, many Hawaiian endemics retain Indigenous common names. Like New Zealand, this does not include all endemic species, but

does include a number of iconic birds. All native Hawaiian thrushes (i.e. Puaiohi *Myadestes palmeri* and Āmaui *Myadestes woahensis*), monarch flycatchers (i.e. Kaua'i 'elepaio *Chasiempis sclateri* and Oahu 'elepaio *Chasiempis ibidis*), and the majority of the Hawaiian fringillids (i.e. Akiapolaau *Hemignathus wilsoni*, Kaua'i akialoa *Akialoa stejnegeri* and Akikiki *Oreomystis bairdi*) use Hawaiian language names as their common names according to the NACC (Chesser *et al.* 2018a). Additionally, the endemic but extinct Hawaiian honeyeaters (Mohoidae) entirely retain Indigenous Hawaiian names, including the Kioea (*Chaetoptila angustipluma*) and the Oahu 'ō'ō (*Moho apicalis*). These Hawaiian common names are often of great cultural significance, and when native Hawaiian populations engage in conservation research for critically endangered species, publications resulting from these efforts can relate back to the local communities using the same species names (i.e. Tweed *et al.* 2003, Vanderwerf & Roberts 2008).

Despite the successful integration of many Indigenous Hawaiian common names into the largely English-speaking birding and ornithological communities, and the successful conservation efforts of many of these species, not all Hawaiian endemics have met with such success. The Maui Parrotbill (*Pseudonestor xanthophrys*) presents a unique story. Found only on the slopes of Haleakalā on Maui between 1200 and 2150 m, the Maui Parrotbill range is restricted to less than 50 km² (Warren *et al.* 2015). The Maui Parrotbill is not actually a species of parrotbill (Paradoxornithidae) but is instead a Hawaiian honeycreeper (Fringillidae), so in addition to not being an Indigenous name, the name is also inaccurate. Due to its restricted range, and the destruction of many parts of Indigenous Hawaiian culture and language due to colonization, the native Hawaiian name of the Maui Parrotbill has probably been lost (NACC 2011b). In 2010, the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project contacted the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee to derive a name for the bird (NACC 2011b). The Committee chose the common name Kiwikiu, with 'kiwi' meaning bent, for the bird's parrot-like bill, and 'kiu' having a double meaning, translating both to 'secretive' for the bird's habits, and to 'a cold wind' for the weather conditions on the slopes of Haleakalā (NACC 2011b). In this way, the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee was attempting to restore an Indigenous name for a bird probably lost due to colonization. Subsequently, local conservation efforts began using the name Kiwikiu to refer to the species, largely aligning the species with other Hawaiian honeycreepers that retain Indigenous common names. Publications in *EcoHealth* (Atkinson *et al.* 2013), *Conservation Genetics* (Mounce *et al.* 2015), *Journal of Ornithology* (Warren *et al.* 2015) and *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* (Mounce *et al.* 2018) have used the name Kiwikiu. However, when the NACC was petitioned to use Kiwikiu as the official common name for

the bird, the proposal was met with extreme aversion (NACC 2011a). The NACC responded, 'The last thing we need is yet another ridiculous Hawaiian language name', and that the name was 'contrived, unfamiliar, unpronounceable' (NACC 2011a). Although the proposal was backed by the ornithological and local communities and engagement with the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee, the NACC response was unsympathetic. In 2020, as part of an update to the English naming guidelines adhered to by the NACC, the Committee announced in Section D Article 2 that they intend to 'give precedence to an established English-derived name over a Hawaiian-language neologism' (NACC 2011a). This revision, years later, confirmed the decision to reject the Kiwikiu proposal.

In August 2020, American Ornithological Society (AOS) members and the general public re-examined the comments made in response to the 2011 proposal, sparking widespread condemnation of their aggressive and seemingly condescending tone. In response, the AOS issued an apology for the offensive comments in the Kiwikiu name change proposal (AOS 2020a). In addition to apologizing 'for the offensive cultural insensitivity that was expressed', the AOS redacted select publicly available NACC commentary in response to the 2011 Kiwikiu proposal on the AOS website (AOS 2020a). Although the AOS did acknowledge the NACC use of inappropriate commentary, the AOS did not announce a change to the decision on the proposal or provide updated commentary.

North America: Oldsquaw to Long-tailed Duck

As discussed above, only one North American species possibly retains a common name from a nation Indigenous to the current USA and Canada, the Sora (*Porzana carolina*). However, it is important to note that promoting inclusion in common names does not require the use of Indigenous names. While renaming certain South African common names post-apartheid, it was important to authors to remove all offensive or inappropriate names (Buchmann & Downs 2018). In North America, the name Oldsquaw (formerly used for *Clangula hyemalis*) received scrutiny on these grounds.

After several failed petitions labelling the name as offensive to Indigenous Peoples, the NACC accepted a petition in 2000 that called the name offensive, but additionally pointed out that the name was incongruent with the rest of the English-speaking world, where the bird is named the Long-tailed Duck (Banks *et al.* 2000). The word 'squaw' is a derogatory, misogynistic and racist term, denoting the subordination of Indigenous North American women to European colonizers, used to describe an Indigenous woman who was 'in essence mindless, following the

requests of men' (Vowel 2016). Due to the male Long-tailed Duck's charismatic call, the duck was thought to sound like chatty or noisy people, and was formerly referred to as 'old injun' prior to being named Oldsquaw in North America (Gruson 1972, Choate 1985). In the 2000 proposal to change the name, authors argued that important breeding grounds for North American Long-tailed Duck populations in areas of Alaska would be aided by the cooperation of local Indigenous groups, and that the offensive term was hindering the ability to work with Indigenous Peoples (Banks *et al.* 2000).

However, the NACC rejected the proposal's validity based on these claims, and responded that political correctness was not acceptable grounds for a common name change (Banks *et al.* 2000). Instead, the Committee heard and accepted the portion of the proposal labelling the name Oldsquaw as inconsistent with the European English common name Long-tailed Duck, and officially changed the name on these grounds (Banks *et al.* 2000). Of course, many common names are inconsistent between North America and Europe (e.g. Common Murre or Guillemot *Uria aalge*, Red or Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Parasitic Jaeger or Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*) and have not been considered for a name change by the NACC. Although the NACC did not cite support for the Indigenous communities' involvement in Long-tailed Duck research and conservation, this undoubtedly influenced this change.

Importantly, in a 2020 revision of the Guidelines for English Bird Names followed by the NACC, in Section D Article 3, the Committee states that they 'acknowledge that there may be English names that cause sufficient offense to warrant change on that basis alone' (NACC 2020a). They state that the previous decision to specifically not change the English name to Long-tailed Duck due to the offensive nature of Oldsquaw would be formally revised, and that in the future, diversity and inclusion are acceptable reasons to consider a name change (NACC 2020a). However, the NACC does mention that it 'will consider the degree and scope of the offensiveness' so as to not necessarily accept such proposals (NACC 2020a).

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*

A consistent theme influencing the common names of North and South American birds is ignorance of the bird or of the Americas in general. The Inca Dove is arguably the most ignorantly named bird in North America. First described by René Lesson in 1847, the Inca Dove ranges from the southwestern USA to Costa Rica, and in no way overlaps with the former area of the Incan empire (NACC 2011c). It is probable (not entirely provable, but no alternative explanation exists) that Lesson, ignorant of the geographical location of Indigenous Nations,

selected the Incan empire for the name, thinking that Incas lived in Central America (Choate 1985). A proposal to the NACC in 2011 explained the inaccuracy of the name, claiming that to Latin Americans it perpetuates the ignorance of the North American ornithology community (NACC 2011c). The Committee rejected this proposal and upheld the name Inca Dove. In their decision-making, NACC members cited the congruence of the English name with Lesson's specific epithet, as well as the Committee's general adherence to upholding English name stability (NACC 2011d).

McCown's Longspur *Rhynchophanes mccownii*

Important to promoting inclusion in ornithology is removing common names that are deemed to be offensive (Buchmann & Downs 2018). McCown's Longspur represents an offensive extant common name in North America and is consistent with patronyms being a source of offense in South African common names (Buchmann & Downs 2018). In 1851, John P. McCown, an amateur ornithologist and specimen collector, fired at a flock of Horned Larks and shot what would become the type specimen of McCown's Longspur, described by George N. Lawrence (McCown 1853, Choate 1985). Aside from the general notion of naming a species after the first European to collect a specimen when undoubtedly Indigenous Peoples encountered the species for millennia, John McCown specifically was a confederate general during the Civil War and by 1862 the lead commander of the Confederate Army of the West, Mississippi and Tennessee, leading men into battle for the preservation of slavery (Polston 2017). McCown also led missions persecuting Indigenous tribes along the Canadian border from 1840 to 1841, and served in campaigns against the Seminoles in Florida from 1856 to 1857 (Polston 2017). His name attached to the bird conjures thoughts of racism and violence. Although birders visiting the prairies of western North America may not concern themselves with the details of McCown's history, it is conceivable that any researcher interested in studying McCown's Longspur would become aware of the origin of the species' name. Additionally, cooperation with Indigenous Peoples to aid in conservation, as described above, is not made easier when a bird is named after someone who persecuted tribes along the Canadian border, in close proximity to the Longspur's habitat. In being tied to the life of McCown, the name perpetuates a mindset of white supremacy, and sets precedence for what as birders and ornithologists are willing to tolerate as a community. Here, we advocate that the promotion of slavery and attempted displacement of Indigenous tribes are grounds to remove someone from a common name. Additionally, the act of removing McCown's

name shows that diversity and inclusion are a priority to the leaders and influencers in the birding and ornithology communities. A name change for McCown's Longspur was suggested as part of the NACC 2019 proposal set but was not initially adopted by the Committee (NACC 2019a, 2019b).

In response to the proposal, the NACC changed its Guidelines for English Bird Names to include a set of criteria necessary for an honorific title to be removed from an English bird name. The NACC described that changing an honorific bird name would require 'unusual circumstances' but noted that 'affiliation with a now-discredited historic movement or group is likely not sufficient' (NACC 2020b). Among the criteria mentioned for an eligible proposal included ties to 'reprehensible events' and the degree to which these events were 'associated with the individual's ornithological career' (NACC 2020a; Section D Article 1.1). John McCown, however, does not seem to fit these requirements. His ornithological contributions pre-date his enrollment in the Confederacy and so do not meet the standards of Section D Article 1.1. Additionally, Section D Article 1.2 states that the NACC would be more receptive to proposals highlighting eponyms that 'are purely honorific in that they refer to an individual with no close association to their namesake species or ornithology in general', whereas the NACC would favour honorifics that 'refer to the individual who first discovered or collected that species' (NACC 2020a). McCown did collect the first specimen known to Western ornithologists and therefore also does not meet the standards of Section D Article 1.2.

In June 2020, after protests and unrest swept through many countries following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, and ongoing systemic racism particularly in the USA but found in many other countries, the NACC announced that it would reconsider its decision to reject the McCown's Longspur name change by 'preparing a new, more complete proposal to change the name of McCown's Longspur, one framed against the backdrop of current events' and consider the impact of the name 'within the context of a broader cultural landscape' (NACC 2020b).

In August 2020, the AOS released a statement giving additional details about what would constitute a successful proposal based on diversity and inclusion (AOS 2020b). The AOS acknowledged that 'present day societal standards ... have changed from what they were when the NACC considered the original McCown's Longspur proposal in 2018' (AOS 2020b). Components necessary for future proposals to be successful included that they 'provide a comprehensive view of the pros and cons of a name change' and that 'any dialogue that addresses only a single component trivializes the overall complexity in ways that can create an exclusionary outcome for any constituency whose perspectives are deemed irrelevant' (AOS 2020b). The NACC announced that in contrast to the 2018 McCown's

Longspur proposal, it would instead 'consider a more balanced proposal' and that this proposal could act as a template for future proposals (AOS 2020b). It was unclear from this statement whether the original 2018 proposal failed due to societal standards at the time or that the proposal's content was deemed to be trivial.

The AOS followed up this statement by issuing a 'Council Resolution on English Bird Names' that requires dialogue between the NACC and the AOS Diversity and Inclusion Committee for proposals that seek to promote inclusion, as well as the future establishment of an Advisory Group on English Bird Names to assist the NACC on inclusion issues (AOS 2020c). The NACC then released a second McCown's Longspur proposal, providing greater detail on John P. McCown's ornithological contributions and lifelong military career (NACC 2020c). The NACC immediately accepted the proposed new name for the bird, the Thick-billed Longspur, highlighting a field mark in all plumages that can distinguish the species from other longspurs (NACC 2020c). In January 2021, the name change was officially adopted through an addendum to the Sixty-first Supplement to the American Ornithological Society's Checklist of North American Birds (Chesser *et al.* 2021). In February 2021, the NACC disclosed that, in preparation for procedural changes to the proposal review process, it had suspended the review of English name proposals (R. Driver pers. comm.).

CONCLUSIONS

The background of science and our culture at large perpetuates stereotypes stemming from European bias and the under-representation of people of colour, particularly Indigenous cultures. Promoting diversity and inclusion gives voices to different perspectives that are required for diverse solutions to research questions. As a result, scientists are considering the removal of offensive names from societies, awards and journal titles (Cahan 2020). Common bird names, so critical to outreach and often functioning as an interface with the public, have a history rooted in the perspective of 18th and 19th century Europe and can feature offensive or ignorant names, or names not appreciative of all perspectives.

What, then, is the solution? Ultimately, we do not wish to be prescriptive because we recognize the many complex relationships between professional ornithological bodies, the birding community and Indigenous or other marginalized cultures. There is no all-encompassing solution to these issues, and indeed none covers all cases of European bias in ornithology, but we believe the discussion should follow some broad principles. First, bodies deciding on English common names must accept that the use of some common names is damaging, racist or bigoted, even if they do not find it personally inappropriate. Secondly, they should engage

with the group(s) affected with a common goal of rectifying the harm and working towards a mutually agreed solution. Thirdly, the governance of these groups and guidelines for name changes must address inaccurate, offensive and inappropriate names explicitly. And finally, the membership of these groups must be more diverse and representative of the communities they serve. We hope this will encourage the discussion of changing these names, and that ornithologists and birders can acknowledge the issues surrounding the everyday use of these names.

We thank Chris Balakrishnan, Steph Borrelle, Martin Stervander and Kenn Kaufmann for their thoughts on this commentary, which was also improved by comments from two anonymous reviewers and Dominic McCafferty. Responsibility for the content and any errors remains our own.

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Received 24 January 2021;

Revision 13 May 2021;

revision accepted 7 June 2021.

Associate Editor: Dominic McCafferty