

to full species status is based on recent biochemical studies and possible occurrence together without intergradation (Auk 1987).

\*Differences in plumage, song, and degree of sexual dimorphism, as well as assortative mating, indicate that the Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) is actually two species. Change your field guides to indicate that it exists as the Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*) in the eastern United States, and Spotted Towhee (*P. maculatus*) in the western United States. (Auk 1995).

Replace Brown Towhee (*P. fuscus*) with Canyon Towhee (*P. fuscus*) and California Towhee (*P. crissalis*). The Canyon Towhee is found from Arizona and New Mexico south, while the California Towhee is found in California. The splitting of Brown Towhee into two new species is based on differences in song, body measurements, and biochemistry (Auk 1989).

\*The Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) should be replaced by Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. caudacutus*) of the east coast from southern Maine to North Carolina, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*) of interior marshes of the northern states and Canada's east coast from Quebec to southern Maine. Peterson's eastern field guide and the National Geographic guide show these two species as races. They differ in morphology, vocalizations, and habitat preferences (Auk 1995).

The common names of Pallas' Reed-Bunting (*Emberiza pallasi*) and Common Reed-Bunting (*E. schoeniculus*) should be changed to Pallas' Bunting and

Reed Bunting, respectively (Auk 1995). The Reed Bunting is a Eurasian species sometimes seen in the Aleutians, while Pallas' Bunting is an Asian species encountered in northwestern Alaska as a vagrant (Scott 1983).

\*Split Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) into Baltimore Oriole (*I. galbula*) of the eastern United States and Bullock's Oriole (*I. bullockii*) of the west. These two species were merged in 1964 on the basis of interbreeding in the Great Plains. However, recent studies show that their hybridization zone is stable, and a number of differences (plumages, physiology, nest placement, molts, body size, and migration patterns) indicate that gene flow between these two species is restricted (Auk 1995). So once again we have a Baltimore Oriole!

Similarly, the Rosy Finches are again separated into Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*), Black Rosy-Finch (*L. atrata*), and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (*L. australis*), as they were before the 6th edition of the check-list (1983). It is now concluded that their merger at that time was based on insufficient evidence, since they are either geographically separated or show limited hybridization where they occur together (Auk 1993). The Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch is found in Alaska, the most western Canadian provinces, and northwestern U.S.; the Black Rosy-Finch in southwestern Montana, western Wyoming, central Idaho, and nearby sections of Nevada and Utah; and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch in the higher altitudes of southeastern Wyoming and Colorado through north central Mexico (Peterson 1990, Auk 1993).

## Final Words

Continuing high-tech research into the genetics of birds virtually guarantees more revisions in the taxonomic classification of many species. This means that the traveling birder needs to keep a daily record of all birds seen, even of common species already on their life lists. If not, birders can find themselves trying to remember if they saw a Rufous-sided Towhee on their 1987 trip out west. If they did, they can add a lifer, Spotted Towhee. If they didn't, or can't remember and didn't keep a trip list of birds they already "had", no lifer! Many of us may not record anything as common as Solitary Vireo seen during a western U.S. birding trip. But if Johnson (1985) is correct that this bird is actually several species, we'll be wishing we had.

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