

## SHOULD SUBSPECIES BE GIVEN ENGLISH NAMES?

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In connection with the forthcoming edition of the *A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds* the question is being argued whether subspecies should be given English names, or whether such names should be restricted to the species unit.

The main argument *against* vernacular names for subspecies are: that most subspecies cannot be identified in the field by the amateurs for whom such names are intended; that their existence encourages in amateurs a pretense of such identification under the erroneous impression that it is "scientific" and in the desire to increase personal lists; that such names give a false impression that subspecies are definite units when they are usually arbitrary divisions of a gradually varying series of populations; that any amateur competent, and able under special circumstances to make a useful and accurate subspecific identification will be sufficiently informed to refer to the scientific name; and that the modern tendency in popular bird books, both here and abroad, is to disregard subspecies.

The main arguments *in favor* of English names for subspecies are: that some subspecies are so distinct that amateurs wish to have names for them; that confusion may result from the sudden abolition of all subspecific names, some of which have long been in the literature; that subspecies will be sufficiently de-emphasized and casual use of their names discouraged, provided subspecific vernaculars are formed by prefixing to the species name the current subspecific designation, or, if necessary, a new geographic prefix; and that the existence of subspecific names formed in this manner serves to educate the amateur in the important evolutionary fact of geographic variation.

Believing that the A. O. U. Check-List Committee should be interested in the views of amateurs on a matter chiefly concerning amateurs, the Linnaean Society of New York recently appointed a Committee to investigate and report on the question. The Chairman of this Committee is Eugene Eisenmann — recently President of this Federation.

The Committee urgently solicits the views of bird students throughout the State, as well as elsewhere, and requests that such views be transmitted to the Chairman at 110 West 86 Street, New York 24, N.-Y.

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