

A DISCUSSION OF CHANGES ARISING FROM THE FORTY-FIFTH SUPPLEMENT TO THE AOU CHECK-LIST

S. S. Mitra

Biology Department, College of Staten Island
2800 Victory Blvd., Staten Island, NY 10314
mitra@mail.csi.cuny.edu

Supplements to the American Ornithologists' Union's *Check-List of North American Birds* are now published annually, and the 45th Supplement appeared in *The Auk*: 121: 985-995. The present note provides some discussion and explanation of changes relevant to the NYS Checklist.

Many decisions involved minor alterations of scientific names for the sake of gender agreement between genus and species, two of which affect birds on the NYS Checklist: Spotted Sandpiper (formerly *Actitis macularia*) now should be spelled *macularius*; and Worm-eating Warbler (formerly *Helmitheros vermivorus*) now should be spelled *vermivorum*.

A genuinely significant change is the AOU's decision to split the white-cheeked geese, formerly united under Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), into two species: one retaining the former collective name, and the other to be called Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*). Using the standard subspecies taxonomy of Delacour's (1954) *Waterfowl of the World* (London: Country Life), Canada Goose now includes only the following, generally large-bodied, geographical races: *canadensis*, *interior*, *maxima*, *moftitti*, *parvipes*, *fulva*, and *occidentalis*. Cackling Goose includes the smaller subspecies, *hutchinsii*, *asiatica*, *leucopareia*, *taverneri*, and *minima*. Finally, the sequence of species in the genus *Branta* should be changed to: Brant (*B. bernicla*), Barnacle Goose (*B. leucopsis*), Cackling Goose, and then Canada Goose.

The vast majority of white-cheeked geese occurring in NYS are large birds that remain attributable to Canada Goose. This includes our feral resident population (of poorly documented subspecific origin), and wild passage migrants and winter visitors breeding at higher latitudes in Canada and Greenland (*canadensis* and *interior*). Even so, Cackling Geese of the subspecies *hutchinsii* ("Richardson's Goose") have been occurring with increasing frequency in NYS, to the extent that flocks are now regular in western NY and singles/pairs are annual on LI. The NYSARC, regarding this form as a somewhat rare and difficult to identify subspecies, has reviewed and accepted numerous reports of *hutchinsii* in recent years. The elevation of Cackling Goose to species rank will require a decision concerning whether or not to add it to the formal Review List.