

Resolution for a Moratorium on Changing Nonharmful Eponymous English Bird Names
4 April 2024

To: Colleen Handel, President, The American Ornithological Society (AOS)

Re: Concerning the 1 Nov. 2023 announcement and majority opinion by the AOS English Bird Names Committee (EBNC) that all eponymous English bird names in the Western Hemisphere be replaced.

From: Steven R. Beissinger, Peter P. Marra, James V. Remsen

This resolution requests reconsideration of the minority view of the EBNC report that states: *“The minority view is that potentially offensive names should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and that only those names which cause offense for reasons other than simply having been named after a person should be changed.”* Our reasons for requesting reconsideration include:

1. The 2800+ members of the AOS were not given a formal opportunity to provide input into this decision, in contrast to the broad engagement with AOS members on controversial decisions over the past decade, such as merging its predecessor societies (AOU and COS) and changing the names of its journals.
2. The debate over English bird names has become a highly divisive and publicized issue in the ornithological and birding communities (c.f. this [petition](#) and the comments from the general public).
3. The AOS should stand for tolerance and equity, but also for inclusivity in welcoming a diversity of opinions on such a subjective issue as eponymous bird names, which comprise less than 5% of our English bird names. An inclusive viewpoint would recognize that many people like inoffensive eponyms that honor deserving individuals, or prefer to avoid the disruption caused by numerous name changes.
4. The North American and South American Classification Committees, which have been in charge of designating English bird names for over a century, voted 20-1 to enact a case-by-case approach to name changes rather than a total removal of eponyms.
5. The AOS is an evidence-based scientific society with the capacity and resources to make case-by-case, transparent determinations about which individuals deserve to be honored with bird names, to consult experts from relevant fields, and to survey its members on their opinions about changing English bird names.

Therefore, we the undersigned ask the AOS leadership to proceed with a pilot project to replace obviously harmful names, but defer on replacing all eponymous names until a more inclusive approach is undertaken to inform the decision to remove all eponymous names, which would include:

- (a) thorough and open discussion among the AOS membership of this matter,
- (b) input from the general public and other North American and international ornithological societies is received, and
- (c) a formal poll of the membership is held to inform a decision of this magnitude.

[Continued on next page with a list of the 231 Fellows who have signed]

Signed by 231 AOS Fellows as of 4 April 2024:

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