**BirdLife’s taxonomic approach**

BirdLife International maintains its own taxonomic checklist of the world's bird species because: (1) there are so many different global, regional, national, site and family taxonomic checklists, and (2) the current major phase of taxonomic revision requires BirdLife to track and evaluate new arrangements as they are proposed; thus there is an urgent and sustained need to resolve the taxonomic rank of many taxa. In undertaking this work, BirdLife seeks to set a globally consistent taxonomic standard relevant to establishing conservation priorities through, for example, identifying globally threatened bird species, Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs) and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (**IBAs**).  
  
BirdLife uses its taxonomic checklist as the basis for much of its global, regional and national priority-setting work. However, some BirdLife Partners may also use other regional / national checklists and taxonomic sources that are particularly relevant in their context.  
  
The BirdLife Checklist includes information on the scientific and common names used by BirdLife, the Authority (for the original description of the taxon), BirdLife’s taxonomic treatment (recognised, not recognised or under review), the latest [IUCN Red List category](http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/spcredcat) (e.g. Extinct, Vulnerable, Least Concern), where relevant, a taxonomic note, and a record ID number unique to the taxonomic entity. The BirdLife Checklist is a work in progress. Further updates and releases are planned on an annual basis. We hope we have provided adequate details here of the underlying decisions that shape the taxonomic checklist; further comments are invited at any time (contact [science@birdlife.org](mailto:science@birdlife.org)) but it may not be possible to respond to individual queries.  
  
The BirdLife Taxonomic Working Group (BTWG) sets the standards by which BirdLife takes and implements decisions on bird taxonomy and nomenclature. It aims to ensure that BirdLife's Checklist of the world's bird species evolves in a structured, documented, transparent and defensible way. The BTWG now uses a set of criteria by which species rank can be consistently assessed where this is necessary (e.g. for newly described or split species published subsequent to the main sources). These criteria ([Tobias et al. 2010](http://www.zoo.ox.ac.uk/egi/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Tobiasetal_Ibis2010.pdf)) involve weighting morphological and acoustic differences as compared with the nearest believed relative, and are particularly intended to help make decisions involving allopatric taxa (as opposed to those in sympatric, parapatric or hybrid zones situations where the situation is generally clearer).

**Archive of earlier versions of the BirdLife Taxonomic Checklist**

* [Version 0.0 (2007)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_0.zip)
* [Version 1.0 (2008)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_1.zip)
* [Version 2.0 (2009)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_2.zip)
* [Version 3.0 (2010)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_3.zip)
* [Version 4.0 (2011)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_4.zip)
* [Version 5.0 (June 2012)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_50.zip)
* [Version 5.1 (October 2012)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_51.zip)
* [Version 6 (November 2013)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_6.zip)
* [Version 6.1 (February 2014)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_61.zip)
* [Version 7 (July 2014)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_70.zip)
* [Version 8 (October 2015)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_80.zip)
* [Version 9 (December 2016)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_90.zip)
* [Version 9.1 (June 2017)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_91.zip)
* [HBW-BirdLife Version 2.0 (December 2017)](http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/HBW-BirdLife_Checklist_Version_2.zip) – current version

**The BirdLife Taxonomic Checklist has now undergone a transitional phase.**

For all bird species, we have now applied quantitative criteria for species delimitation, using the scoring system to evaluate differences in morphology, vocalizations, ecology and geographical relationships published in [Tobias et al. (2010)](http://www.zoo.ox.ac.uk/egi/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Tobiasetal_Ibis2010.pdf) , in conjunction with the [HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World](http://www.lynxeds.com/product/hbw-and-birdlife-international-illustrated-checklist-birds-world), published by Lynx Edicions in association with BirdLife. Common (English) names, species sequence and higher level taxonomy (order, family and genus arrangement) all now follow the Illustrated Checklist Vol. 1 for non-passerines and Checklist Vol. 2 for passerines. del Hoyo and Collar (2014) therefore becomes the standard source for BirdLife’s non-passerine taxonomy, and del Hoyo and Collar (2016) the standard source for BirdLife’s passerine taxonomy.

**Future updates and taxonomic revisions**

Following the publication of the HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World Volumes 1 and 2, HBW and BirdLife have now set up a process whereby anyone can contribute information or informed opinion on the taxonomic status of the non-passerine forms itemized and the evidence presented, as part of an ongoing process of update and review.

We envisage two main types of comment: proposals to consider splitting or lumping of taxa which were not scored against the Tobias criteria in the Illustrated Checklist, and, for those species which were scored in the Checklist (whether this resulted in a split, a lump, or no change), proposing new information which may lead to revisions of these scores. Video and audio recordings, records of presence in key areas, and descriptions of key features, behaviour and ecology, are among the variety of ways fieldworkers, ornithologists and birdwatchers can supply new evidence to help resolve ongoing taxonomic challenges and uncertainties

To contribute information to aid in future taxonomic revisions, please go to **the relevant species or family page on the** [**HBW Alive website**](http://www.hbw.com) and add your comment in the ‘Public comments’ section, leaving your full name and a contact email address.  All comments will be taken into consideration, but please note that it will not be possible for BirdLife or Lynx to give online feedback to comments received or to provide individual responses to all contributors. We will now feed through taxonomic revisions on an annual basis from **2017 onwards** based on the input received. Where taxonomic changes are to be adopted, note that there will necessarily be some lag time before revised taxa can be assessed against the Red List Criteria and published on the BirdLife and IUCN Red List websites and in future updates to HBW Alive.