

# Stability for English Bird Names Asks the American Ornithological Society to Reverse the Decision to Change Bird Names

*The destabilization of 150 English bird names is unprecedented.*

FORT COLLINS, CO, UNITED STATES, March 1, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, [Stability for English Bird Names](#) (SFEBN) announced a petition with 5,788 signatures has been submitted to the American Ornithological Society asking the AOS to reverse their decision to remove all eponymous bird names.

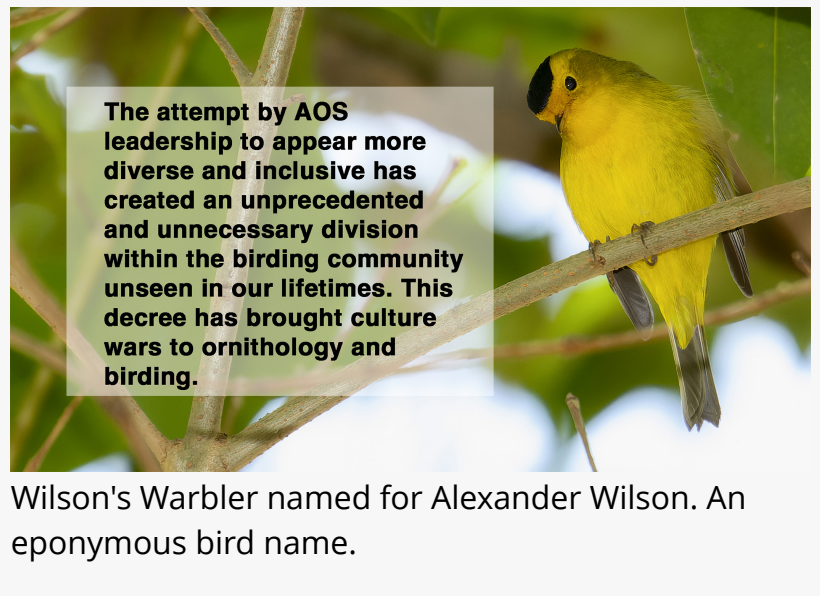
The AOS states their decision was based on “an effort to address past wrongs and engage far more people in the enjoyment, protection, and study of birds.”

However, one of the guiding principles of the AOS is to maintain a list that “fosters stability for the sake of effective communication,” yet membership and the public have never been polled regarding a decision that will impact the entire world-wide birding community. Most importantly, The International Ornithological Union, which monitors taxonomic changes and maintains a global list of standard bird names will not follow suit and remove all eponyms.

For these reasons, this petition asks the AOS to resume their own case-by-case method of review to remove offensive or exclusionary bird names.

SFEBN believes there are many reasons to keep most eponyms including:

- Eponymous bird names are tied to a rich and varied ornithological history. Those in North America honor many of the founders of ornithology in our hemisphere, including the American Ornithological Society itself. The total removal of eponymous names dishonors these people, most of whom have no dark sides to their pasts and are thus inadvertently disgraced by guilt-by-association.



- Many species slated to be renamed are of rare to accidental occurrence in the U.S. Of the 150+ species slated to have their names changed, only about 89 breed in the United States or Canada, and many of those are neotropical migrants that spend 8-9 months of the year on wintering grounds in other countries. The remaining 60 or so are birds that are mainly found in other countries and occur in the U.S. or Canada as rarities or are species found exclusively in countries in Latin America or the Caribbean. The English names of these species are being changed without consultation of ornithological bodies in other countries.
- Financial impacts have not been fully explored. Just in the U.S. alone many federal, state, and local agencies will be affected by this decision in having to change documents and signage at taxpayer expense to update the names of 80+ species.

“We strongly support diversity and inclusion in the sciences and there are many actions the AOS could take to achieve these goals. The time, energy, and funds spent debating this issue and implementing these changes would be better spent on more concrete ways to increase diversity and protecting birds and their habitats” said the founder of the petition Rachel Kolokoff Hopper.

Van Remsen, Curator Emeritus at the Museum of Natural Science, Louisiana State University, adds “this is not about whether you personally like or dislike eponyms but rather about tolerance of and respect for opposing views. Rather than have their opinions dismissed, those that value eponyms, or simply object to a major destabilization of names, many used for more than a century, would like to see the AOS go back to their own case-by-case review of eponymous names.”

The petition signed by people from every state in the U.S., including DC, also includes representatives from 59 countries outside the United States. More than 25,000 papers that have been published in scientific journals can be attributed to some of the many distinguished signatories of this petition including ornithologists, academics, AOS members, and scientists from all areas of expertise.

[See the original petition.](#)

#### More About Stability for English Bird Names

Stability for English Bird Names is a grassroots organization created in response to the AOS decision to change all eponymous bird names. Its mission is to increase public awareness about the impacts of this change and to solicit public opinion for the AOS to consider.

[Learn more at Stability for English Bird Names.](#)

Contact us at: [info@birdnamesforstability.org](mailto:info@birdnamesforstability.org)

Rachel Kolokoff Hopper  
Stability for English Bird Names  
info@birdnamesforstability.org

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