EURING Species Code update – May 2024

Introduction

Changes in taxonomy in recent years have forced an update in EURING species codes. Many of the updates concern only the name. The code itself is left unchanged. Some changes are related to splits or merging of species. As a result, some birds will now have a code different from what they would have been given in the past.

EURING has agreed to follow the IOC taxonomy (Gill F, D Donsker & P Rasmussen (Eds). 2024) and will update nomenclature in line with further changes to it. The current release brings all non-passerine species up to date. We are now working on passerine species. We will try to follow the updates of the IOC regularly but cannot ensure to do so dynamically. Please, inform the EDB of any inconsistencies that you notice.

Some rules have been defined to keep the EURING species codes as close to the previous classification as possible thereby minimising changes:

- When a split is adopted by EURING, new codes are normally created for the split species and the past code is kept as an obsolete code which will serve to specify the identification at the time of the ringing or of the re-encounter. However, we decided in some cases to keep the past code when only the nominative subspecies is represented among the data present in EDB at the time of the adoption of the taxonomic change. This will help maintain the stability of the EURING species codes. For example, *Porphyrio porphyrio* will remain as 04 270 because the other species split from *Porphyrio porphyrio sensu lato* were absent from the EDB at the time of the adoption of the taxonomic change.

- In case of splits, codes of past subspecies might be recycled as species when the latest is monotypic. For example, 08 570 created for *Picus viridis sharpei* has been recycled for *Picus sharpei* in its current definition.

- Codes of some past subspecies (for example *Aquila rapax rapax* and *Aquila rapax nipalensis*) seem merely to have been created as groups of subspecies rather than in their *sensu stricto* meaning. When a split occurred for such cases, we decided to recycle the codes, having considered the origin of the data collected up to then.

- Some aggregates, such as *Porzana sp.,* have lost much of their relevance since this genus grouped species which are now recognized as only distantly related. We added a note recommending no further use of such codes any more. This will prevent the possible change of extent of the meaning of the codes over the time.

It is a testament to our predecessors, who formulated the early EURING code over half a century ago, that conventions developed then will cover these unforeseen, major changes in taxonomy.

Four principles apply.

1   The field **Species Codes as Mentioned** given by the scheme should not be altered. If there is some disagreement about the species then the agreed code should go into the **Species as Concluded** field.

2   Because some re-encounters cannot be identified to species level there are codes which allow identification to a broader level. Such codes should not be used for ringing data

(Metal Ring Information 4), since in all but a few exceptions, only birds identified should be ringed. Until recently all these ended in 9. Thus, an unidentified thrush would be recorded as 12 069, *Turdus sp.* Because of taxonomic changes broader codes do not necessarily end in 9. Note that codes of split former species should not be used for that purpose. For example, the code 05 920 *Larus argentatus sensu lato* should be only kept for data entered before the split has been adopted by EURING. For any unidentified large gull pertaining to this group, please use 05 929 *Larus argentatus/cachinnans/michahellis*.

3   Species codes should be based on examination of the bird in the field, not on the basis of geographical location. Thus, a Coal Tit, *Periparus ater* caught in the Irish Republic should be recorded as 14 610 rather than 14 613, *Periparus ater hibernicus* unless the particular characters separating that subspecies from any other had been observed.

4   The EURING Code Identifier is used to indicate which version of the code is used.

Schemes should not change any code in the field Species Code as Mentioned on existing data sets. In cases where a bird has been ringed as what is now one of the species aggregates (e.g. 05 920, *Larus argentatus sensu lato*) but encountered later and identified specifically by examination of the bird in the field (e.g. 05 926, *Larus michahellis*), then the second encounter record will have both species codes as 05 926 and the original ringing record can have the **Species as concluded** field amended to 05 926 but the **Species as Mentioned** remains as 05 920. This is exactly the same procedure as normally happens when there is a species identification conflict between two encounters of a bird.

The code 05 927 has a confusing history. It was created as *Larus argentatus cachinnans*, which corresponds to the current monotypic *Larus cachinnans*. However, the early split of *Larus argentatus* kept *Larus michahellis* and *Larus cachinnans* together under the species name of the latter. Many records of 05 927 may thus relate to *Larus michahellis* rather than *Larus cachinnans* in the current taxonomic definition.

It is important that the **EURING Code Identifier** is applied correctly. For ringing or encounter events where the bird is coded according to the current nomenclature the code should be 6.

Taxonomic changes will continue and some taxa (particularly some gulls and warblers) are likely to cause problems for coders. For this reason we are adding more notes of clarification in the species code file.

The whole purpose of ringing is to build a data set available for analysis. How can analysts know which of the currently recognized species was a bird coded as, say, 05 920 in the 1950s? Without time travel we just cannot know and it would be unhelpful to apply more precise codes that might often be incorrect. Analysts will have to make judgements based on times and encounter places in order to select data for robust analyses. Following these instructions on the coding scheme will give analysts as much information, and clarity of information, as is possible in the face of changing taxonomies and the complexities of the natural world.

Information in the species code table

The first on-line code table held four columns: **Code, Name, Date** and **Notes**. Because of the many changes in taxonomy it has been found useful to include more columns of information. These are **Status, EURING Code, Current name, Date Updated, Notes, Old Name** and **IOC code 14.1**.

Status can be one of the following codes:

sp   species
ssp   subspecies
h   hybrid
f   feral
a   aggregate of species or subspecies
o   obsolete code

In general, data for any taxon with the status code o should **not** be submitted to the EDB, and new ringing data (Metal Ring Information 4) collected under the latest EURING Code Identifier as ringing data should not be submitted with the code a.

The information in the Notes and Old Names columns relate names which coders have been familiar with to the current name and also indicate potential problems where taxa have been lumped or split.

The original EURING code gave species in taxonomic order. With ever changing taxonomy this is no longer possible. However, it is useful to be able to group and select species records taxonomically. The IOC world species list, which is updated twice each year, does give a taxonomic ordering. Unlike the original EURING species code, this ordering code will change with each update. In the IOC list it is the **name** that identifies the taxon (although these names may change according to taxonomists decisions). In EURING code it is the **code** which identifies the taxon and this will not change. This means that schemes must not change the species codes in any existing records.

The **IOC code 14.1** is given to indicate the current taxonomic order. The File 'Comparison of IOC 14.1 with other world lists (XLSX, 6.0 Mb)' (https://www.worldbirdnames.org/IOC_14.1_vs_other_lists.xlsx) is used for this revision. This reference file will change with each update of the IOC taxonomy.

Some names are followed by the words *sensu lato* (this means 'in its widest sense'). This is used for various species which have been split. For example, 05 920 now is *Larus argentatus sensu lato* rather than *Larus argentatus*. Here it means any gull which in former days would have been called *Larus argentatus* (*L. cachinnans, L. michahellis, L. argentatus* and related species). In this particular case all codes beginning 0592 have been used so the current species *Larus argentatus* according to the IOC taxonomy will have a new code, 36 380, in agreement with EURING decision to abandon the function of the code as systematic order. Note however that the codes of subspecies *Larus argentatus argentatus* and *L. argentatus argenteus* did not change because their definition as a subspecies remains unchanged in the latest taxonomy.

Finding EURING species codes

It can sometimes be difficult to find a species code – particularly when the latest taxonomy has changed the genus name, or the species name, or both. Open the file in a Spreadsheet and search for your species in the Find window. (Note that some names have changed their Latin endings. If you search for *pacificus*, for example, you will not find the code if the name has changed to *pacifica*. In such cases just search for pacific.) If there is no match among the current names, the old names might help you to find your species. In case you still not succeed to find the taxa you need, look in the Google spreadsheet of IOC: https://www.worldbirdnames.org/new/bow/. You can here also search through the English vernacular name and eventually find the current scientific name under which you should find your species in the EURING codes. Please, contact EDB if the taxon is missing.

What ever else you do, **do not invent your own codes**.

Main changes affecting EURING schemes' species

A number of species undergone taxonomic changes and are likely to cause coding confusion. The table below lists these in alphabetic order of species name and gives the notes which are included in the species code file. The species excluded as stated in the notes have either received a new code or their past subspecies code has been retained as appropriate.

EURING	Species	Old name	Notes
04 780	Anarhynchus mongolus	Charadrius mongolus	Excludes Anarhynchus atrifrons
01 575	Anser fabalis		Excludes Anser serrirostris
02 950	Aquila heliaca	Aquila heliaca	Excludes Aquila adalberti
02 941	Aquila rapax	Aquila rapax rapax	Excludes Aquila nipalensis
01 660	Branta canadensis	Branta canadensis	Excludes Branta hutchinsii
00 363	Calonectris diomedea		Excludes Calonectris borealis
04 440	Chlamydotis undulata	Chlamydotis undulata	Excludes Chlamydotis macqueenii
00 201	Diomedea exulans		Excludes Diomedea dabbenena
00 582	Hydrobates castro		Excludes Hydrobates monteiroi
36 380	Larus argentatus		Excludes Larus cachinnans; L. michahellis; L. smithsonianus; L. armenicus; L. vegae ; L. fuscus heuglini
05 927	Larus cachinnans	Larus argentatus cachinnans	Excludes Larus michahellis
08 391	Merops superciliosus	Merops superciliosus superciliosus	Excludes Merops persicus
02 380	Milvus migrans	Milvus migrans	Excludes Milvus aegyptius
01 471	Phoenicopterus ruber	Phoenicopterus ruber ruber	Excludes Phoenicopterus roseus
08 561	Picus viridis	Picus viridis viridis	Excludes Picus sharpei; P. vaillantii
04 841	Pluvialis dominica	Pluvialis dominica dominica	Excludes Pluvialis fulva
00 264	Pterodroma feae		Excludes Pterodroma deserta; P. madeira
00 481	Puffinus assimilis	Puffinus assimilis assimilis	Excludes Puffinus baroli, P. boydi; P. bannermani
00 461	Puffinus puffinus	Puffinus puffinus puffinus	Includes P. p. canariensis. Excludes P. yelkouan; P. mauretanicus
05 690	Stercorarius skua	Stercorarius skua	Excludes Stercorarius maccormicki; S. antarcticus; S.chilensis.

Reference: Gill F, D Donsker & P Rasmussen (Eds). 2024. IOC World Bird List (v14.1). doi : 10.14344/IOC.ML.14.1.

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