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Parades of Peacocks, here on Indian River Drive with his harem of five Peahens, have halted St. Lucie and Martin county traffic for many years.

EXOTICS YOU MAY SEE

Exotic: "adj. 1. of foreign origin or character; not native; introduced from abroad, but not fully naturalized or acclimatized."

Certainly, Florida is the land of exotics: including introduced and undocumented human foreigners originating from exotic sounding places with names like "Pennsylvania," "Massachusetts" and "Minnesota;" and ominous reptiles: i.e., boa constrictors; and fearsome looking creatures, such as iguanas, which can now be found on lawns and at favorite birding locations like Wakodahatchee. And of course, birds.

Many bird species have been "introduced from abroad." But the key as to whether or not they become part of our North American avifauna depends upon whether or not they become "fully



Iguana

naturalized or acclimatized.” For example, when a bird such as a Bananaquit shows up in Hollywood, Florida, presumably from somewhere in the Caribbean, (their range includes Central, and parts of South America as well), it clearly is an exotic of foreign origin and so rare that it is clearly not naturalized or acclimatized. The same could be said of the Zenaida Dove. (Zenaida Doves were discussed in the previous column.) Birders love these unlikely and occasional exotics and collectively spend millions of dollars to add them to their life lists when they show up unexpectedly anywhere in North America.

The question for Ornithologists then is the following: At what point do foreign, non-native birds become naturalized and acclimatized to the point that they are added to the list of permanent, resident, card carrying, legal North American species? The American Birding Association has a list of eight criteria that must be met; but essentially, as you might expect, the species, in the wild, must have a viable, reproducing, self-sustaining population that has been established for at least 15 years. listing.aba.org/criteria-determining-establishment-exotics/

Believe it or not, there was a time when the lowly European Starling and House Sparrows were exotic species and Ornithologists (none were called Bird Watchers or Birders in those days, only Ornithologists) were very excited to find them. Some exotic species were deemed at one time to have been naturalized and acclimatized and added to the list of North American species, only to have been later de-listed when their numbers declined and they virtually disappeared from our countryside. I remember as a boy, just starting birding, seeing the Blue Gray Tanager in the early Peterson field guides as a species regularly found in Florida. Alas, that had already changed, and that lovely Tanager delisted before I ever made my first sojourn across the border into Florida, already as a young adult.

Another example of a bird that came and went from “exotic” to “resident” to “de-listed” was the Black Francolin, which could be found without too much difficulty at one time in Louisiana, but has now disappeared in the wild and on the North American countable list. How pleased we were to find it; and how disappointed we were to lose it from our life list when it was dropped from the ABA and AOU approved lists. The Budgerigar, an immigrant from Australia and a common cage bird, became established in the wild in the Tampa/St Petersburg area, but is now in great danger of also being de-listed as it is becoming very rare in the wild.

Early in my Boy Scout birding days, my Scout Leader/birder found a Turtle Dove in a back yard in our Pennsylvania home town. That was very exciting. Some years later in the early 1960’s a well-known Florida birder discovered and shared with me, and pointed out the differences, between both a Turtle Dove and a very rare and virtually unknown at that time, Eurasian Collared Dove, both in close proximity to each other, in a clump of trees at the Homestead Library in Florida. At that time there had been more sightings of the Turtle Dove than the Collared Dove in North America. Little did we know that the Eurasian Collared Dove would become a



Bananaquit



Eurasian Collared Dove



Purple Swamphen

common sighting in Florida and expand its range through more and more of the United States all the time, and the Turtle Dove become de-listed in the US and a threatened species in its native Great Britain and Europe.

In the past two years several species that have gone from "exotic" to "naturalized and acclimatized" are the Purple Swampphen, the Monk Parakeet, the Egyptian Goose, all easily found in Florida, and the Rosy-faced Lovebird, a species found nesting in Arizona.

And now, what species can we next expect to go from "exotic" to "naturalized and acclimatized?" How about the Peacock, a bird quite commonly found in the wild in many parks and public places throughout Florida, and a species that stops traffic on the Indian River Drive, where this Peacock escorts his harem of five Peahens? Another well-known Peacock in Fort Pierce frequently stops traffic on Orange Avenue just west of US Route 1 when he struts his stuff right on the road. There are many more exotic birds living in the wild in Florida, particularly parrot species and several macaws. Whether or not they will become "naturalized and acclimatized" remains to be seen. Meanwhile, they are tremendous fun to seek out and watch. Stay tuned.

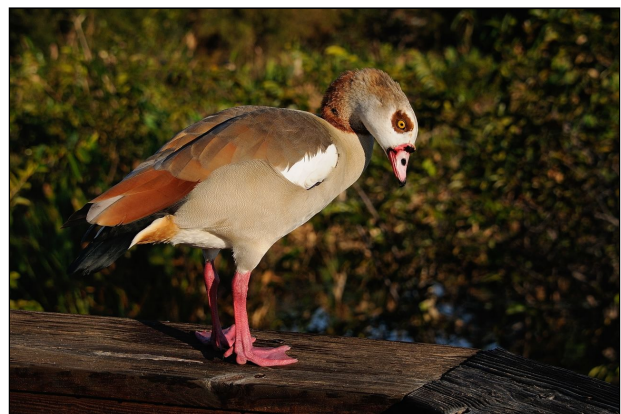
Then too, there are additional definitions for "exotic:" adj: 2. Strikingly unusual or strange in effect or appearance: an exotic hairstyle. 3. of a uniquely new or experimental nature: exotic weapons. and 4. Of, relating to, or involving stripteasing: the exotic clubs where strippers are featured. and 5. noun: an exotic dancer: a striptease dancer or belly dancer. I submit to you that there is not an exotic dancer, strip-tease or otherwise, that can compare to some of the exotic bird dancers.

Check out these dancers: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTR21os8gTA; and www.youtube.com/watch?v=eI_quJRRGxk. Unfortunately, none of these species are in North America.

For a complete list of all countable bird species and their relative rarity code numbers on the American Birding Association list, see: listing.aba.org/aba-checklist/. For Bill Pranty's interview in Birding magazine on exotics, see: www.aba.org/birding/v41n6p18.pdf. For more information on Great Britain's Turtle Doves, see: ecowatch.com/2013/12/13/pesticides-to-blame-for-declining-turtle-dove-population/.



Monk Parakeet



Egyptian Goose



Rose-faced Lovebird



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