

A Proposal for Renaming Bill Types of Bewick's Swans

Richard Littauer

Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* have patterns of yellow areas on their bills, which can be used to signal sexual fitness (Ciach et al. 2018) and to identify individual birds (Scott 1978). These patterns were first described by Scott (1966), in a paper which names many ways of cataloguing bill-patterning, and again in Scott (1981), where she described three main patterns. Her type definitions have continued to be cited for both Bewick's Swans (Scott 1981; Evans and Sladen 1980; Voous 2000; Ciach et al. 2018), Whistling Swans (Scott 1981), and for Whooper Swans (Brazil 1981; Ohtonen 1988). One of the definitions used referred to bills that are predominantly black, which are named 'darky' bills (pl. 'darkies'). The schema for naming this type involves the diminutive form: for instance, 'shieldy', 'nobbly', and so on, as well as other terms such as 'pennyface' and 'yellow neb'.

Regardless of intent, using the diminutive form on the adjective 'dark' forms 'darky', which is known to be offensive to some underrepresented communities (Henderson 2003). Following other movements to decolonialize and reject antiquated and offensive terms, such as the 'Bird Names for Birds' movement (<https://birdnamesforbirds.wordpress.com>), I suggest that we rename the term for dark-billed birds to simply 'dark-billed' (pl. 'dark-billeds'), which is not stigmatized.

Why this poster?

Future research can cite it, so we don't have to keep using a racist word.

Sources

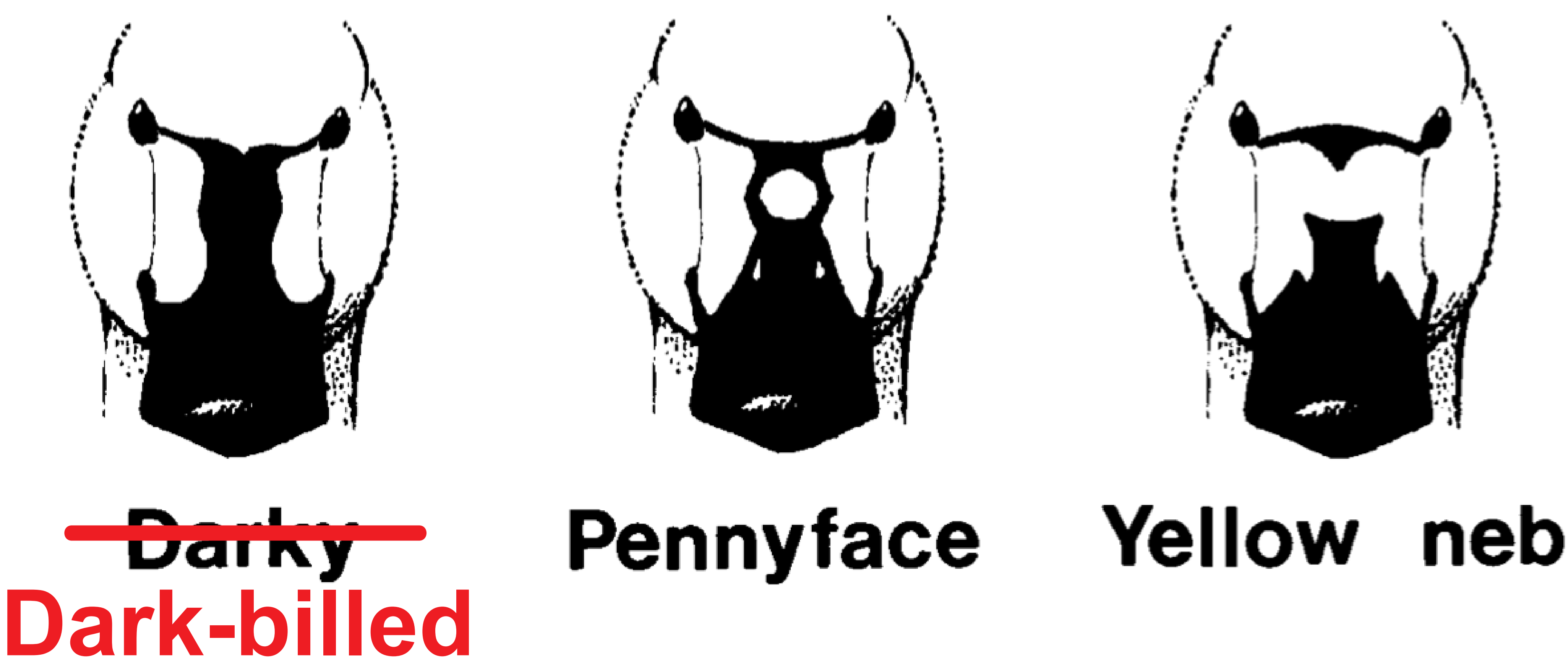
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BEWICK'S SWAN



WHISTLING SWAN



Fig. 1. Types of bill patterns among Bewick's and Whistling swans. (Further variations in the line where the bill and feathering meet and in the sides of the pattern among Bewick's Swans are also shown.)