

June 23, 2016

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Dear COS Members,

We write to you with an update on the potential merger between the Cooper Ornithological Society (COS) and American Ornithologists' Union (AOU). The Plan of Merger for the Cooper Ornithological Society and American Ornithologists' Union to form the American Ornithological Society (AOS) has been approved by the COS Board of Directors and Officers and the AOU Council and Officers. COS members will soon receive a ballot to approve or disapprove the Plan of Merger via email or postal mail. It is important that you vote on this plan; we need a high percentage of members to vote in order to have a valid result. This is an opportunity to build on the strengths of these two societies to better support our members, our science and the birds we study.

The Plan of Merger is available here (<http://americanornithology.org/content/aou-and-cos-merger-status>).

The results of the membership survey conducted in May indicated strong support for the proposed merger among COS members. Among the 363 members who responded to the survey, 302 or 83% supported continued planning for a merger. The Officers and Board Members of the COS are sincere about listening to our membership and faithfully representing them as society leaders. Thus, we continued to work with the leadership of the AOU on a merger plan that builds on the best aspects of the COS and AOU and that creates a society with opportunities neither society could provide on their own.

Since 2012 the COS and AOU have been engaged in joint ventures: a common publication office for *The Condor* and *The Auk*, joint annual meetings and a joint website. Our joint ventures have been wildly successful. *The Condor* remains a highly regarded journal that is rising in impact factor. We can now support our authors by publicizing their science through press releases and social media. Our joint annual meetings have had higher attendance than the combined numbers from either society's meeting when they were held separately. The annual meetings are lively interchanges of science with plenty of opportunities for networking and career development. Future meetings in western North America are scheduled for Tucson (2018) and Anchorage (2019). Finally, our website is now timely and much easier to access than before.

Our journal, *The Condor*, is one of the most important responsibilities of our society. Contrary to what many scientists believe, electronic publications are more expensive to produce than print publications of the past. Page composition, tagging for web searches, site hosting, electronic submission services and copy editing all cost money. In addition, the features our authors want such as fast decision times, quick online publication and promotion of their work through press releases and social media require well qualified staff in our publications office. COS has struggled to provide adequate financial resources for *The Condor*. The journal currently requires almost all of the society's annual budget leaving few funds to expand or improve the journal. This merger would provide a stable financial future for *The Condor* and a goal of the AOU's upcoming capital campaign is to raise funds to make the journals open access. Open access has been a long time goal of the COS leadership but we have not had the financial resources to make this goal a reality.

What about the practical issues of dues, memberships, awards and publications? Approximately 90% of COS members are also members of the AOU. These members will see their dues decrease. All COS members would become members of the AOS. COS members in the early stages of their career would be eligible for the Early Career membership rate. Life and Honorary Members of the COS would become Life Members of the AOS and there would be additional recognition of COS Honorary Members. Awards would continue to be made under their current names. Members would have access to both *The Condor* and *The Auk* and the society would continue to publish *Studies in Avian Biology*. Student travel and research awards would continue and the society would continue to support the Ornithological Council.

The Plan of Merger is a legal document that has to meet the requirements for non-profits incorporated in Washington, DC (AOU) and California (COS). One society has to be identified as the dissolving entity (COS) with the other as the surviving entity (AOU). The surviving entity's governing board and Bylaws apply to the merged society immediately after the merger. There will be a transition team of COS officers and Board Members who will work with the leadership of the AOS during the transition period to revise Bylaws and ensure that the essence of the COS becomes part of the AOS. We encourage COS members to stand for election in the AOS, join committees and be involved in the transition process.

Dissolving the COS and merging with the AOU has been a difficult decision for the COS Officers and Board Members. For many in the COS leadership and COS membership, this society has been their scientific home. The COS supported their development as scientists and many of us have made life-long friends through this society. Each member of the COS leadership has thought carefully about the pros and cons of merging with the AOU and has listened to input from our members. We believe that merging with the AOU to form the AOS is an opportunity to improve access to *The Condor*, provide better

career support for our members, strengthen our discipline and protect the birds that we study. We ask that you join us in voting for the plan of merger to create a new ornithological society for the 21st century- the American Ornithological Society.

Sincerely,



Martin G. Raphael
President, Cooper Ornithological Society
On behalf of the Officers and Board of Directors

Anna Chalfoun, President-elect
Abby Powell, Secretary
Barbara Kus, Treasurer

Board of Directors
Alice Boyle, Jill Deppe, Matt Johnson, Jeffrey Kelly, Kevin McGraw, Jennifer Owen,
John Rotenberry, Morgan Tingley, Blair Wolf

INFORMATION ON VOTING

The Plan of Merger is available here (<http://americanornithology.org/content/aou-and-cos-merger-status>).

The electronic ballot will be available in early July, 2016. You will receive an email notification of the opportunity to vote electronically on this important issue. If you prefer to vote by paper ballot, please contact (by July 11):

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All ballots must be post-marked or cast in the electronic balloting system by Tuesday 2 August, 2016.