

Emailed Responses to the Announcement "AOU and COS Agree to Pursue Merger" http://www.americanornithology.org/content/au-and-cos-agree-pursue-merger , compiled Nov. 2015	
Issues Addressed	Emailed Text
Appreciation	As a long-term member of both societies, I just want to let you know that I really respect the substance and inclusivity that comes through in your joint message below. I'm sure that you will get some heated responses, but I suspect that there is a far larger constituency of us who are thankful that highly competent people are evaluating these issues with such sensitivity and wisdom.
Awards, Meetings	Retaining all awards is a nice idea, but there needs to be some plan for managing the time the announcements take up during meetings. Might a booklet be printed with full citations for all awards that could be handed out with the program? At some point early in the meeting, all awardees could be called to the stage to be individually handed their awards and recognized publicly, but without any reading of citations (beyond something very brief, such as: Jane Doe, Brewster Award, for her work on XX). Whether this solution is pursued or not, I would suggest that the Merger Committee propose that all awards be retained but that this will likely entail streamlining of presentations at meetings.
Community, Merger Support, Appreciation	Thank you for working so hard on this proposal, it is certainly an exciting time in American Ornithology. I am largely in support of any decisions reached by the council; however, I have some (admittedly) abstract concerns. Both of these societies have had rich traditions that may be difficult to preserve. Naturally, the joint society will have new traditions that are equally valuable. Of potentially more importance, I feel that the sense of community is better in a smaller society. One major national ornithological group may be so large that many of its members are left in the fray. It will be important to find ways to avoid a class-divide between the members with deep pockets and high-profile papers and other members (not just students and young professionals). The social events have been an excellent way to pair young scientists with established scientists, and I wonder if similar events could be organized for more established professionals. The pre- and post-meeting workshops should be an important avenue for this, but my perception is that the connectivity between young and established professionals is growing while that among the established members isn't, at least as much (maybe this is only natural - after all young professionals are still meeting colleagues and established professionals have had these friends and colleagues for decades). Nonetheless, this might be of greater concern if the society were to merge into a larger one. An analogy would be when a small town with lots of local shops evolves into a larger one with mostly major conglomerates and franchises; in that process, something important is lost. Maybe there are strategies that can be put in place to maintain a strong sense of community? Thanks again for the time and effort put into this merger.
Financial	Finance. After merger, transfer of assets. When the merger discussions began at San Diego and at Vancouver, I always thought this would be the major organizational hurdle to merging ornithological societies with endowments. How to transfer bequests to endowments that were made with a specific goal. Will there be legal issues.
Financial	We ask that you fully consider costs that might accrue to North American Ornithology if the two largest societies now in existence merge into a single one. These include financial risks due to a less diverse investment and expenditure strategy. However, there are also substantial social costs to members that should be articulated and presented in an unbiased fashion. Some such costs include: 1) reduction of meeting locations in the less populated portions of the US; 2) reduction in ornithological leadership positions for young scientists to attain; and 3) narrowing of editorial philosophy that scientists will face when attempting to publish their works.
Financial	We ask that you determine how many current COS members are also AOU members and discuss how the dues structure of a merged society compares with a current model of single or dual individual society memberships. Are revenues gained or lost when current members of both COS and AOU pay for only dues for a single merged society?
History	How to retain history. Yes, use the Web site as the society's history file cabinet and publish as much as possible of our history on the Web site. A short text string about the merger should accompany all major publications and documents. Such as: "The American Ornithological Society was founded in 201X by a merger of the American Ornithologists' Union (founded 1883) and the Cooper Ornithological Society (founded 1893)."
History, Merger Support	Global and regional environments are rapidly changing, with major negative impacts on biodiversity, the integrity of ecosystems, and the availability of (and equitable access to) ecosystem goods and services. In parallel, our societies are rapidly evolving, with an erosion of the influence of evidence in policy- and decision-making, and an ever increasing "nature deficit". The nature, depth, pace and geographic scale of those changes are unprecedented and call for a critical review of, and adjustment to, the societal mechanisms in place to respond and adapt to changes. In that context, I welcome and endorse the proposal of an AOU/COS merger. A federated and strengthened professional scientific organisation will be better positioned to address the challenges of the future. I understand and respect the concern of some members that, with a merger, we risk losing some of the heritage specific to each society. I thus support both proposals to highlight the history and past contributions of each society on a renewed web site, and to amend the name of awards. I encourage you to also consider investing into printed material which would be well received by many heritage-philic members, including myself. This could include a coffee table-type history of the societies, or of North American ornithology with copious space given to the achievements of each society. In parallel there could be an annotated anthology of the most influential papers from each journal, or a compilation of award winning papers. The context I provide above also calls for, in my mind, further reflection on the program of work of a future, unified society. I will be happy to contribute to that discussion in due time.
History, Merger Support	Regarding the proposed merger, let me just say that I think it's a very good idea. The role of professional organizations has changed considerably in the wake of on-line publishing, library subscriptions, etc. Much as some people may feel a twinge of nostalgia for the era of multiple "boutique" organizations, the reality is that we're in an era of fewer, larger, more professional ones. I think the merger proposal is a sensible response to these changes
Meetings, Merger Support	I've been a devoted member of the AOU for about 10 years, since I started graduate school. I'm now a postdoc, and will begin a faculty position in January. I fully support the merger between the AOU and COS. For me, this merger will result only in benefits, as you've described in a recent email. I've never fully appreciated the differences between the two organizations: at the joint meetings there is no distinction for most attendees. The former differences between the Auk and Condor seemed slight to me and their roles are more clear as complementary publications. I respectfully (and perhaps naively) add that the only potential losses apparent to someone like me are to COS members who enjoyed regional meetings and for members who enjoyed the social structures of the separate societies. I believe my views are shared by many of the younger existing and prospective members of the organizations.
Membership	I am now a Life Member for both AOU & COS. That means 2 life memberships. If I become a Life Member of the merged society what happens to the other Life Membership?
Membership	Membership - With someone managing the larger membership database full time, there is no reason why you can't make annual memberships expire on the last day of the month a year after they are purchased. I nearly swore off membership when I first joined because I joined in late October and had to renew just two months later.
Membership	COS Honorary Members: I'm not much familiar with criteria, but have the impression that service to COS is important. If so, are the named service awards (e.g. Jenkinson Award) in danger of becoming diluted in value once societies are merged?
Membership	We ask that you clearly articulate what your focus group believes to be the costs and benefits to COS members of a merger. What do current COS members gain by merging? What do current COS members lose? We would hope that the focus group would share a listing of these pros and cons with the COS membership and ask for their feedback.
Membership	We ask that you research how many current COS members will and will not join a merged society. How will this impact the finances of the new society?
Membership, Merger Support	I think it's a fine idea. My question: I'm a Life Member of COS. What (if anything) does this mean for my future relationship with the AOU? I'm not currently an AOU member. Am I grandfathered in as a member? And if so, as an annual member? Or as a Life Member? Please advise, and thanks!
Merger Dissent	I am opposed to the merger of these two organizations. I am a member of both, and life member of the AOU.
Merger Dissent	I am a Life member of both AOU and Cooper as well as an Elected Member and Fellow of the AOU. I am opposed to the apparent 'done deal' to merge the two organizations. The bad decisions of a number of years ago (raising dues for example) by Cooper were the result of a small group trying to control and or run roughshod over the membership, and the membership did not care enough to throw the rascals out. The result is that membership declined markedly and COS decreased to the third largest ornithological society in North America. Thus, Cooper got what it deserved and should have been allowed to disband. Instead, the 'bright lights' decided to form one colossal society to bail them out. But, most other societies were less than thrilled and declined. In retrospect, I should have never joined either Cooper or the AOU. Multiple approaches are usually more rewarding than one mega society. Variety always provides more and novel ideas.
Merger Support	As a 'sleepier' member of both, this sounds good and fiscally more sustainable in the current ice age of support for science. The devil is in the details particularly for finances, but this would be short term pain rather than avoiding the issue and slowly starving to death. Sorry to be so cheerful but this does give me optimism for the future.
Merger Support	I just wanted to drop a note to say that I am thrilled that the AOU/COS merger is moving forward — that is based on the recent actions at meeting in Norman. This is a long time overdue, and will do a great deal to enhance ornithological research/education/conservation in the 21st century. You have my absolute support on this and I'm willing to help out in any way that I can (AFTER my sabbatical!).
Merger Support	I fully support the merger and the proposed resolutions.
Merger Support	On the surface of it, this seems like a sensible thing to do. I support your efforts to investigate combining the two societies.
Merger Support	You have my support with the merger and I agree with the stated reasons. I think this is an exciting new chapter for the societies and for ornithology in the US.
Merger Support	merger sounds fine with me. go for it
Merger Support, Appreciation	You did a fine job describing the proposed merger, remaining issues and procedural expectations. I think it is an excellent idea and I do not find objection with anything you outlined. I have full confidence that you are on the right track and that all remaining issues can be satisfactorily addressed in your discussions ahead. As an AOU LEM, I would welcome COS members to the flock; other than that, I have nothing to add.
Merger Support, Appreciation	I was at the Houston meeting where we discussed a larger merger and strongly favored it. I still favor a merger of AOU-COS and will help as I can to facilitate constructive change to strengthen our organization(s). Thanks a ton for the work you've done, and sticking your neck out once again ;)
Merger Support, Appreciation	I fully support the merger and the thoughtful approach you are taking. You may remember that as AOU president I suggested that the societies consider merging, not just AOU and COS, but WOS and AFO as well. It seemed to me that the advent of electronic journals and communication over the internet would make this almost inevitable, but there was great resistance. I don't think I was prepared for the push-back and I certainly had not prepared answers to the many questions that arose. You are doing a splendid job of planning and advocating for the merger, above all you are patient and diplomatic. I wish you the best of luck as you move forward. You seem very well organized so I am not sure that luck will have much to do with it.
Merger Support, Appreciation	As a former president of AOU, I am thoroughly in favour of the merger and commend the careful way in which it seems to be proceeding. Good luck with the venture!
Mission	As an alternative to merging into a larger society with global focus, we suggest you pose to the membership the alternative of forming a smaller society with a clear focus on conservation of western American or western hemisphere avifaunas.
Mission, Structure	My only comment at this point in response to the proposed AOU and COS merger is this: Because AOU is the larger and more 'dominant' society, I am concerned that COS will be subsumed and that rather than being a fairly merged society, the COS will simply be swallowed up by the AOU. In a sense, this is already reflected by the response with regard to the new combined society's mission as noted below. I think a focus on the avifauna of North America should be retained - although The Auk, Ornithological Advances and The Condor: Ornithological Applications are international ornithological journals, the two societies are firmly rooted in the USA, and if the combined society, which will presumably aim to be the 'premier' USA ornithological society, is not a 'guardian' of research into and protection of North American birds, then who will be? So, that's my two cents' worth. In a nutshell, I think that if the two societies are to merge, then we just need to make sure that it is an even merger, and not just one society taking over the other.
Name	I am sure you have already discussed this, but I suggest American Ornithological Society... it takes 2 words from both the AOU and COS... Cheers, Kim
Name	AS AOU continues on its strategic path to make a significant difference for ornithology at this important period in history, the name "Union" is the perfect term to convey a united community, unification of priorities, unifying ornithologists across disciplines, etc. The process of merger in this case is unifying.
Name	Both societies have name recognition with their members and within the North American ornithological community in general. However, AOU has much broader brand recognition, mainly through the AOU Checklist. Banders, as well as the U.S. and Canadian banding offices, use 'AOU numbers' to designate species and forms, and I suspect the name would continue to be used even if AOU changed its name. When I was AOU President, I became aware of how many keen birders know about AOU, as they would ask me about Checklist Committee decisions (assuming I would know something about them!). Finally, also for its involvement in taxonomic and bird name issues, AOU is a recognized brand among ornithologists on other continents.
Name	Organizational Structure. Name of merged organization. Potential new names most likely are either American Ornithological Society (AOS) OR Ornithological Society of America (OSA). Either format has other major precedents. The former follows the style of Amer. Soc. Mammalogists, Amer. Soc. Naturalists, & Amer. Soc. Parasitologists, and the latter follows the style of Botanical Soc. Amer., Entomological Soc. Amer., & Ecological Soc. Amer. One emphasizes geography and one emphasizes the discipline. Both sound good to me.
Name, Merger Support	Oops, I just saw on facebook that today's the last day to reply about the merger. Of course I am all in favor of it, I think it's the only way to gain traction for the next generation. I won't take the time tonight for more details, but if you would welcome more thoughts over the days ahead, let me know. It would be nice to change it somewhat so that it doesn't appear that the AOU just subsumes the COS. American Ornithological Society? Course then it would all be very hard to track.....
Name, Merger Support	The reasons for the merger seem sound to me. However, change in a world that is currently a whirlwind of change thoroughly unnerves people, particularly those of us that are bit long of tooth. In particular, name changes, while in reality of minor significance, typically generate strong emotional responses that increase resistance to proposals that would otherwise sail through rather unopposed. I am not sure what, if anything, can be done to maintain the current naming systems. However, efforts to do so may decrease resistance to the progress the officers of the societies are trying to achieve. If the current names are replaced, something that infers increased status while having a familiar ring might help - Union of Western Hemisphere Ornithologists???? Ornithologists' Union of the Americas???? Something along these lines might also be in line with the proposed focus ("We propose that the merged organization have as its focus the global avifauna and ornithologists primarily of the Western Hemisphere."). Anyhow, those are about the only thoughts I've got. My guess is that your group has already thought of this, but sometimes it's helpful to know that at least some members' thoughts are in line with those of the leadership.
Name, Merger Support	I am a current member of both American Ornithologists' Union and the Cooper Ornithological Society at the student level (I'm working toward my master's degree). The reason I am a member of both is that I misunderstood the purpose of each group as the field of ornithology has so many separate organizations with slightly different mission statements. For this reason, I fully support a merger and encourage the name of the newly formed group to reflect the broadest possible interpretation of the name (much like AOU now) so that it can be prepared for keeping that new name in possible future mergers with other organizations and can be set up from the beginning as a group with a "big tent" philosophy (while acknowledging its roots separately).
Name, Merger Support	I am writing in support of the initiative to merge the AOU and COS. In my opinion the new society should retain the name the AOU. I have a great deal of respect for the COS and I served on the COS student board as a graduate student, but the AOU as a brand and organization is irreplaceable. It would be a severe blow to ornithology to lose the AOU.
Name, Merger Support	I feel merging is what is best for ornithology, especially in the Western Hemisphere. After being on the Board of COS for a few years, I think we need it to keep a society with a vested interest in ornithology alive. There are lots of societies in today's world and I don't see that changing. The one thing I would like to see is a new name for the society. I think may help in the perception that AOU is not over taking COS (even if that might be the case!).
Process	The experienced, senior society members are planning a society for the future that will be inherited by today's students / early professionals, some to become future leaders. Can we / should we include some formal student / early professional input at this initial planning stage.
Process	My initial reaction is if you want a truly objective response why not include a table of "Advantages of Remaining Separate Societies" along side of the table of "Advantages of Merging Societies." Otherwise I interpret this as a done deal.
Process, Name	The only issue that causes me concern is the prospect of a new name, but the reason is not so much what the name would be as it is that action will be taken without any information on what members want. Because we don't know, we keep pussy-footing around something that may not even be an issue.
Publications	I'm not involved with the societies other than reading the journals. I'm only the tiniest amount sentimental about the Cooper Society's and Condor's history. More important, I like the applications of the focus of the journal now. I hope that doesn't become diminished.
Publications	As an alternative to jointly publishing The Condor with The Auk, we suggest you conduct a financial assessment of the costs of publishing The Condor in open access format funded solely by COS.
Publications, Merger Support	For what it's worth, this ornithologist would welcome such a change. I think we need a single, large, comprehensive top-shelf ornithology journal rather than continuing the separate publication of multiple, thin issues of Auk and Condor. The former has several advantages, not the least of which is that the resultant journal would have a much greater impact factor and be more widely read and cited. Continuing to publish tiny journals with separate, and sometime subjective, focuses I think diminishes all of us.
Structure	If we retain EM & Fellow categories (which I support, but see below) I would also support maintaining the same criteria that AOU has now for Council and officer candidates.
Structure	AOU EM & Fellow categories: I'm interested in pursuing the idea of defining some minimum criteria for eligibility, then letting people nominate themselves for consideration by the committee. Criteria might be a minimum number of publications (e.g. x peer-reviewed publications for EM, or x+Y for Fellow), or equivalent significant contribution to the science of ornithology (through teaching, conservation, etc.).
Structure	I have no problem with Fellows being removed as the group that votes on By-Laws, but Council/Board should have to approve potential changes before they are submitted to a larger body for a vote.
Structure	I am excited by the new organization being the organization of the Western Hemisphere. From my perspective as a "northerner", I think that over time this will make a big difference in how north relates to south. I have a concern that seems analogous to the loss of biodiversity: that by having two independent organizations, somehow the infrastructure of "American" (north/south) ornithology is safer, financially, intellectually, and focus-wise, than if the infrastructure primarily depends on one organization. I think that intellectual independence is even more important as we try to engage more in public arenas. I think of the recent purchase of Nat Geo by 21st Century Fox. I'm not judging the effect of that purchase yet, but if my trust in Nat Geo starts to decline based on their product, I'll be concerned that there isn't an obvious competitor. I would think similarly about this situation—if the merged organization takes turns I find problematic from the perspective of scholarship (what to fund, what to publish, what to feature at meetings, what to weigh-in on and what to say in the public arena), I'll be concerned that there isn't a continental/hemispheric competitor with an independent voice. I do understand the strength that comes from one big platform for scholarship and outreach, but I'm not sure that the benefit of one big voice outweighs the benefit of two smaller, often aligned voices that maintain some independence from each other. If others have a similar concern, perhaps the governing structure of the organization could be designed to emphasize intellectual independence among the leadership over time.
Structure	I also fully support the continuation of most of the existing committee work without clear overlaps because it will help to maintain and merge the previous missions of the two organizations. However, this will create a much larger organization of volunteer committees and it will be absolutely essential to designate funds for a paid executive director and a staff of at least one person as a membership services/database coordinator. Having designated full time staff will allow the unified board to focus on strategic goals, committees to focus on decision making, and the staff to focus on the details of the transition. It allows the staff and the organization to dedicate the amount of time necessary to run the organization smoothly and for the organization to get more done. Full disclosure: I worked as a membership services coordinator for a nonprofit professional organization for a year and a half. My job was largely secretarial, but critical to achieving our mission. Structure/size - It would be my hope that the goal would not be to create a new organization of roughly the same size as AOU or COS but rather a larger organization that brings in the strengths of each (where staff and strategic planning come in).
Structure, History, Merger Support	I am in favor of exploring the merger of AOU and COS. While I think it is important to preserve the history of each, I am most excited about having one membership instead of two. Also, if you look at the overlap in membership of the two societies I believe a majority belong to both. I do not think a reduction in elected positions is a problem. As with the prior discussion of a Society for Ornithology, the devil would be in the merger details, but I think it is a good idea.
Structure, Merger Support	I highly welcome the idea of a merger between AOU and COS! In addition to the 4 reasons outlined in your mail about why a merger might make sense, I'd like to add this thought: the merged new society/organization would be clearly recognized as THE scientific ornithological society in the US. The organization could speak with one voice about important issues (e.g. taxonomy, scientific disputes, conservation issues, etc.) and could serve as a clear contact for questions from outside the ornithological community. It may also facilitate gaining new members. One thing about the organizational structure: where would the registered office / the domicile of the new organization be? It might not be an issue in the US (and/or you have probably talked about it already), but at least here in Switzerland, this is kind of important, when it comes to being or not a non-profit organization has to pay taxes. In my opinion, ornithological societies should use their money to reach the societies' goals, not to pay taxes. Good luck for this exciting endeavour!
Structure, Merger Support	Things that excite me about the merger: One home organization for ornithology, BNA access for all, and fewer dues to keep track of. Things to keep: Staff, the AOU voice of the profession, and the COS focus on mentorship of young professionals. Concerns: Meetings - There is no reason why regional meetings can't happen just as or more often after the merger. Other professional organizations do it, there's no reason we can't do more of it (http://www.natctr.org/meetings/regional-meetings.html).
Structure, Process	As a member of AOU, I just received an email regarding the possible merger. In that email, I read about the requirement in AOU that the fellows vote on such a major proposal. That seems like a very old fashioned structure. It seems to me that one change needed would be a more direct influence from members, more similar to what the current COS bylaws seems to say. For me personally, the likelihood of getting access to the Condor is exciting. But I would also like to give a word of warning: 10 years ago, my workplace was bought by a larger corporation (and the Condor structure, where COS is merged into AOU sounds a bit similar). Today, 10 years later, there is still significant differences in culture between the parts. I would propose that this culture of the memberships be looked at very seriously before final decisions are made.