

4- AND 6- LETTER CODES

Historically, birders have adopted a 4-letter code system that was originally developed for bird banders in the U.S. as a shorthand for noting the birds they handled. These codes were never designed to be used on a nationwide scale, and are very problematic to use, as they have over 100 collisions in which two birds would use the same 4 letters. We strongly advocate using 6-letter codes, which are clearer to read (unlike 4 letter codes they often are understandable even to the uninitiated), and have far fewer collisions (only 9!). Here is the system for creating 6-letter codes:

One-word Names: first 6 letters of the name (ex. Redhead = REDHEA; Osprey = OSPREY; Sora = SORA)

Two-word Names: first three letters of first word and first three letters of last word. Hyphenated words always treated as separate words (ex. Common Yellowthroat = COMYEL; Storm-petrel = STOPET; Painted Redstart = PAIRED)

Three-word Names: two letters from first word, one from second, three from third:

Blue-winged Warbler = BLWWAR; Wilson's Storm-petrel = WISPET; Dark-eyed Junco = DAEJUN)

Four-or-more-word Names: one letter from each first three words, then first three letters of last word (ex. Great black-backed Gull = GBBGUL; Black-throated Blue Warbler = BTBWAR; Yellow-crowned Night Heron = YCNHER)

Some similar-color names are abbreviated in fixed ways: green is GRN or GN; gray is GRY or GY; black is BLK or BK; blue is BLU or BU; and brown is BRN or BN (Brown-crested Flycatcher = BNCFLY; Black-throated Green Warbler = BTGNWA; Black-throated Gray Warbler = BTGYWA)

Note that four of the nine collisions in the 6-letter code scheme occur in the warbler group, specifically Blackpoll/Blackburnian (BLPOWA/BLBUWA), Black-throated Green/Black-throated Gray (BTGNWA/BTGYWA), Pallas' Warbler (an old world vagrant to Alaska)/Palm Warbler (PALLWA/PALMWA) and Golden-cheeked/Golden-crowned (GOCWAR/GOCRWA).

American Redstart	AMERED	AMRE	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>
Audubon's Warbler	AUDWAR	AUWA	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>
Bay-breasted Warbler	BABWAR	BBWA	<i>Setophaga castanea</i>
Black-and-white Warbler	BAWWAR	BAWW	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>
Blackburnian Warbler	BLBUWA	BLBW	<i>Setophaga fusca</i>
Blackpoll Warbler	BLPOWA	BLPW	<i>Setophaga striata</i>
Blue-winged Warbler	BLWWAR	BWWA	<i>Vermivora cyanoptera</i>
Black-throated Blue Warbler	BTBWAR	BTBW	<i>Setophaga caerulea</i>
Black-throated Green Warbler	BTGNWA	BTNW	<i>Setophaga virens</i>
Black-throated Gray Warbler	BTGYWA	BTYW	<i>Setophaga nigrescens</i>
Brewster's Warbler	BREWAR	BRWA	<i>Vermivora cyanoptera</i>
Cape May Warbler	CAMWAR	CMWA	<i>Setophaga tigrina</i>
Canada Warbler	CANWAR	CAWA	<i>Cardellina canadensis</i>
Cerulean Warbler	CERWAR	CERW	<i>Setophaga cerulea</i>
Chestnut-sided Warbler	CHSWAR	CSWA	<i>Setophaga pensylvanica</i>
Colima Warbler	COLWAR	COLW	<i>Oreothlypis crissalis</i>
Common Yellowthroat	COMYEL	COYE	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Connecticut Warbler	CONWAR	CONW	<i>Oporornis agilis</i>

Crescent-chested Warbler	CRCWAR	CCWA	<i>Oreothlypis superciliosa</i>
Fan-tailed Warbler	FATWAR	FTWA	<i>Euthlypis lachrymosa</i>
Golden-crowned Warbler	GOCRWA	GCRW	<i>Basileuterus culicivorus</i>
Golden-cheeked Warbler	GOCHWA	GCWA	<i>Setophaga chrysoparia</i>
Golden-winged Warbler	GOWWAR	GWWA	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>
Grace's Warbler	GRAWAR	GRWA	<i>Setophaga graciae</i>
Gray-crowned Yellowthroat	GRCYEL	GCYE	<i>Geothlypis poliocephala</i>
Hermit Warbler	HERWAR	HEWA	<i>Setophaga occidentalis</i>
Hooded Warbler	HOOWAR	HOWA	<i>Setophaga citrina</i>
Kentucky Warbler	KENWAR	KEWA	<i>Setophaga formosa</i>
Kirtland's Warbler	KIRWAR	KIWA	<i>Setophaga kirtlandii</i>
Lawrence's Warbler	LAWWAR	LAWA	<i>Vermivora cyanoptera</i>
Louisiana Waterthrush	LOUWAT	LOWA	<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>
Lucy's Warbler	LUCWAR	LUWA	<i>Oreothlypis luciae</i>
Macgillivray's Warbler	MACWAR	MGWA	<i>Geothlypis tolmiei</i>
Magnolia Warbler	MAGWAR	MAWA	<i>Setophaga magnolia</i>
Mangrove Warbler	MANWAR	MANW	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>
Mourning Warbler	MOUWAR	MOWA	<i>Geothlypis philadelphia</i>
Myrtle Warbler	MYRWAR	MYWA	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>
Nashville Warbler	NASWAR	NAWA	<i>Oreothlypis ruficapilla</i>
Northern Parula	NORPAR	NOPA	<i>Setophaga americana</i>
Northern Waterthrush	NORWAT	NOWA	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>
Olive Warbler	OLIWAR	OLWA	<i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i>
Orange-crowned Warbler	ORCWAR	OCWA	<i>Oreothlypis celata</i>
Ovenbird	OVENBI	OVEN	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>
Painted Redstart	PAIRED	PARE	<i>Myioborus pictus</i>
Palm Warbler	PALMWA	PAWA	<i>Setophaga palmarum</i>
Pine Warbler	PINWAR	PIWA	<i>Setophaga pinus</i>
Prairie Warbler	PRAWAR	PRAW	<i>Setophaga discolor</i>
Prothonotary Warbler	PROWAR	PROW	<i>Protonotaria citrea</i>
Red-faced Warbler	REFWAR	RFWA	<i>Cardellina rubrifrons</i>
Rufous-capped Warbler	RUCWAR	RCWA	<i>Basileuterus rufifrons</i>
Slate-throated Redstart	SLTRED	STRE	<i>Myioborus miniatus</i>
Swainson's Warbler	SWAWAR	SWWA	<i>Limnothlypis swainsonii</i>
Tennessee Warbler	TENWAR	TEWA	<i>Oreothlypis peregrina</i>
Townsend's Warbler	TOWWAR	TOWA	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i>
Tropical Parula	TROPAR	TRPA	<i>Setophaga pitaiayumi</i>
Virginia's Warbler	VIRWAR	VIWA	<i>Oreothlypis virginiae</i>
Wilson's Warbler	WILWAR	WIWA	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>
Worm-eating Warbler	WOEWAR	WEWA	<i>Helmitheros vermivorum</i>
Yellow-breasted Chat	YEBCHA	YBCH	<i>Icteria virens</i>
Yellow Warbler	YELWAR	YWAR	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>
Yellow-rumped Warbler	YERWAR	YRWA	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>