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

Crescent-chested Warbler Fan-tailed Warbler Fan-tailed Warbler Golden-crowned Warbler Golden-cheeked Warbler Golden-cheeked Warbler Golden-cheeked Warbler Golden-winged Warbler Golden-winged Warbler Grace's Warbler Grace's Warbler Gray-crowned Yellowthroat Hermit Warbler HERWAR HOWA Kentucky Warbler Kentucky Warbler Lawrence's Warbler Louisiana Waterthrush Lucy's Warbler Magnolia Warbler Magnolia Warbler Magnowarbler Magnowarbler Magwarbler Mouwarbler Maswar Northern Parula Northern Parula Northern Waterthrush Norwar N
Golden-crowned Warbler Golden-cheeked Warbler Golden-cheeked Warbler Golden-winged Warbler Golden-winged Warbler Golden-winged Warbler Grace's Warbler Grace's Warbler Grace's Warbler Gray-crowned Yellowthroat Hermit Warbler HERWAR HEWAR HEWA Setophaga gracieae Gray-crowned Yellowthroat Hermit Warbler HHERWAR HEWA Setophaga citrina KENUAR KEWA Setophaga citrina Lucy's Warbler LAWWAR LAWA Vermivora cyanoptera Louisiana Waterthrush LOUWAT LOWA Parkesia motacilla Lucy's Warbler LUCWAR LUWA Oreothlypis luciae Macgillivray's Warbler MACWAR MGWA MGWA MANW Setophaga magnolia Mangrove Warbler MAGWAR MANW Dendroica petechia Mourning Warbler MANWAR MANW Dendroica petechia Mourning Warbler MYRWAR MYWA Setophaga coronata Nashville Warbler NASWAR NAWA Oreothlypis ruficapilla Northern Parula NORPAR NOPA Setophaga americana Northern Waterthrush NORPAR NOPA Setophaga americana Northern Waterthrush NORWAT NOWA Parkesia noveboracensis Olive Warbler OLIWAR OLWA OLWA Peucedramus taeniatus Orange-crowned Warbler ORCWAR OCWA Oreothlypis celata Ovenbird OVENBI OVEN Seiurus aurocapilla Painted Redstart PAIRED PARE Myioborus pictus PAIRED PARE PAIRED PARE Myioborus pictus PAIRED PARE Myioborus pictus PAIRED PARE PAIRED PARE Myioborus pictus PAIRED PARE Myioborus pictus PAIRED PARE PAIRED PARE Myioborus pictus PAIRED P
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Slate-throated Redstart SLTRED STRE Mylohorus miniatus
State-till Oated Redstart SETRED STRE Mylobolus Illilliotus
Swainson's Warbler SWAWAR SWWA Limnothlypis swainsonii
Tennessee Warbler TENWAR TEWA Oreothlypis peregrina
Townsend's Warbler TOWWAR TOWA Setophaga townsendi
Tropical Parula TROPAR TRPA Setophaga pitiayumi
Virginia's Warbler VIRWAR VIWA Oreothlypis viginiae
Wilson's Warbler WILWAR WIWA Cardellina pusilla
Worm-eating Warbler WOEWAR WEWA Helmitheros vermivorum
Yellow-breasted Chat YEBCHA YBCH Icteria virens
Yellow Warbler YELWAR YWAR Setophaga petechia
Yellow-rumped Warbler YERWAR YRWA Setophaga coronata