

Symposium 23 The biological species concept: application in pure and applied ornithology

Introduction

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Central to all biological endeavour, and especially to all comparative work whatever the field, is knowledge of the species taxa under study. Unfortunately, confusion continues to affect our understanding of what is meant by “species concept”, “species category”, species as phyletic lineages and species as real ecological units in nature, all of which are commonly embraced within a simple, non-discriminatory perception of the “species”. This symposium addresses these issues; and it does so from the viewpoint that difficulties in applying the conventional biological spe-

cies concept (BSC) are best resolved by resetting and augmenting that concept, not by discarding it in favor of novel alternatives with practical inadequacies of their own. One particular shortcoming of the BSC in conservation is its frequent down-grading of operational biodiversity units to subspecies or races. Towards resolving this problem, the symposium considers neutral ideas, such as the newly proposed “ultrataxon” concept, that can identify all conservation units necessary while remaining compatible with whatever species concept is used