

PROPOSAL 104

5 AAC 92.990. Definitions.

Modify the definition of “deleterious exotic wildlife” with several housekeeping changes as follows:

(52) “deleterious exotic wildlife” means any starling (*Sturnus spp.*), [ENGLISH] house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), or raccoon (*Procyon lotor*); any [NORWAY] brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), [ROCKDOVE] rock pigeon (*Columba livia*), or [BELGIAN HARE] European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) that is unconfined or unrestrained; and any feral ferret (*Mustela putorius furo*) or feral swine (*Sus scrofa*);

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The definition of “deleterious exotic wildlife” uses several archaic names that should be replaced by more common names. In some instances the archaic version limits the Board of Game’s intent and renders regulations that rely on the definition less understandable and enforceable.

The house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) was once better known in North America as the English sparrow. However, the same species was known in central Asia and India as the Indian sparrow. The American Ornithologists’ Union (whose comprehensive checklist serve as the accepted authority for scientific nomenclature and English names of birds in the Americas) adopted the new common name in 1957.¹

Norway rat is another name for the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). Like the “English” sparrow, deleterious exotic species were often named for their presumed country of origin. Thus, the English named the brown rat the “Norway” rat. However, “Norway” rats are now believed to have originated in central Asia and possibly China.² Unlike birds, there is no single authority on common names for mammals. The Museum of Texas Tech University, which publishes a checklist of North American mammals similar to that compiled by the American Ornithologists’ Union, calls it the Norway or brown rat.³ The American Society of Mammologists (perhaps more comparable to the American Ornithologists’ Union) calls it the brown rat.⁴ The International Union for Conservation of Nature calls it the brown rat.⁵

The rock dove (*Columba livia*) is commonly known simply as a pigeon, but there are many pigeon species worldwide. The American Ornithologists’ Union renamed the rock dove the rock pigeon in 2003.⁶

The Belgian hare is a domesticated breed of the European rabbit that has been selectively bred to resemble a European hare.⁷ This has been a misnomer in the list of deleterious exotic wildlife from the day it was adopted by the board. No introduced species of hare are found in Alaska. All of the deleterious exotic lagomorphs in Alaska are European rabbits. Some of the rabbits released into the wild may have been Belgian hares but that is only one of many breeds of European rabbit. Most of the feral rabbits in Alaska – on Middleton Island and in several urban areas including Anchorage – do not resemble Belgian hares. Thus, using the term Belgian hare instead of European rabbit misinterprets the original intent of the board and makes enforcement impossible.

Finally, because common names differ and can be easily changed, it is advisable to use scientific nomenclature in regulations such as this to minimize ambiguity and confusion.

¹ Avibase. 2019. House or Italian sparrow. <https://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/species.jsp?lang=EN&avibaseid=6D3BD126D55F8B69&sec=taxonable&version=aou>

² Wikipedia. 2019. Brown rat. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_rat#cite_note-8

³ R.D. Bradley, L.K. Ammerman, R.J. Baker, L.C. Bradley, J.A. Cook, R.C. Dowler, C. Jones, D.J. Schmidly, F.B. Stangl, Jr., R.A. Van Den Bussche, and B. Würsig. 2014. Revised checklist of North American mammals north of Mexico, 2014. Occasional Paper No. 327. Natural Science Research Laboratory, Texas Tech University, Lubbock. <https://archive.org/details/revisedchecklis327brad/mode/2up>

⁴ American Society of Mammologists. 2019. Mammal species list search. <https://www.mammalogy.org/mammals-list>

⁵ International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). 2019. Brown rat: *Rattus norvegicus*. <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/19353/22441833#taxonomy>

⁶ Banks, R.C., C. Cicero, J.L. Dunn, A.W. Kratter, P.C. Rasmussen, J.V. Remsen, Jr., J.D. Rising, and D.F. Stotz. 2003. Forty-fourth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds*. The Auk 120:923-931. https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/content/part/AOU/AOU_checklist_suppl_44.pdf

⁷ Wikipedia. 2019. Belgian hare. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgian_Hare

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