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Birds and the People They Were Named For

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Birds and the People They Were Named For

This year the theme for our color photo section was birds named for people. For the purposes of our selections, we looked only at the common names of birds, although some species also reflect the names of people in their scientific names. Many species are named for people, but photos of the ones listed here are on the first six pages of this year's color section.

Baird's Sandpiper, Baird's Sparrow Spencer Fullerton Baird (1823-1887) was the first curator and later secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and was instrumental in expanding the Institution's natural history collections. John James Audubon named the sandpiper for him, and Elliott Coues named the sparrow for him. [also Baird's Flycatcher and Baird's Trogon]

Baltimore Oriole George Calvert (c.1580-1632), the first Baron Baltimore, achieved power in the court of James I of England, and was rewarded with the right to found a colony in the New World. The bird was called the 'Baltimore-Bird' in a 1731 publication by Mark Catesby because it resembled the black and yellow colors of the Baltimore family coat-of-arms.

Brewer's Sparrow Boston-born Thomas Mayo Brewer (1814-1880) was a publisher, physician, ornithologist and oologist. In his later years, he participated in a bitter dispute which came to be known as 'The Sparrow War'. The House Sparrow, which had recently been introduced in North America, was spreading far faster than anticipated. Brewer championed the species, but Elliott Coues and other ornithologists feared it might someday become a pest. [also Brewer's Blackbird]

Bullock's Oriole William Bullock (1775-1840) was a London-born traveler, naturalist and entrepreneur. While visiting a mine near Mexico City, he collected a number of specimens of birds unknown to science, which were later described by William Swainson, who named the oriole in his honor.

Cassin's Finch, Cassin's Kingbird John Cassin (1813-1869) curator of ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia described 193 species of birds and accompanied expeditions to Peru and Japan. [also Cassin's Auklet, Vireo, and Sparrow]

Clark's Grebe John Henry Clark (1830?-1885) American astronomer, surveyor, and naturalist who was involved in surveying the boundary line for the Gadsden Treaty of 1853. Clark's Grebe was split from Western Grebe in 1985.

Clark's Nutcracker Captain William Clark (1770-1838). He discovered the nutcracker near Kamiah, Idaho, while leading, with fellow US Army Captain Meriwether Lewis, the famous expedition which crossed the country in 1804-1806.

Cooper's Hawk William C. Cooper (1798-1864) was an American zoologist and one of the founders of the New York Lyceum of Natural History. He was known for his generosity in permitting others to use his specimens. The hawk was named in his honor by fellow ornithologist Charles L. Bonaparte.

Forster's Tern Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) was born in Germany and was a minister, teacher, translator and naturalist. He published *A Catalogue of the Animals of North America* in 1771 and was the naturalist with Captain Cook on his voyage around the world in 1772. The tern was named in his honor by ornithologist Thomas Nuttall.

Franklin's Gull Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) was a British Royal Navy explorer who attempted to reach the North Pole and locate the Northwest Passage. The first specimen of the gull named for him was collected on his 1823 expedition. He died on his fourth Arctic expedition.

Harris's Sparrow Edward Harris (1799-1863) was a farmer, horse breeder and amateur ornithologist who was a patron and supporter of John James Audubon. He traveled with Audubon to the Florida Keys and up the Missouri River. [also Harris's Hawk]

Henslow's Sparrow John Stevens Henslow (1796-1861) was an English clergyman, botanist, geologist and mineralogist at Cambridge University who taught and mentored Charles Darwin.

LeConte's Sparrow John LeConte (1818-1891) was a native of Georgia who was a naturalist and professor of physics and chemistry at what became the University of Georgia. He operated an explosives factory in South Carolina during the Civil war and eventually became president of the University of California at Berkeley.

Lincoln's Sparrow Thomas Lincoln (1812-1883) was born in Maine and became acquainted with John James Audubon when Audubon visited his family in 1832. He accompanied Audubon on his trip to the Labrador Coast, where the sparrow was first collected.

Nelson's Sparrow Edward William Nelson (1855-1934) was an American naturalist and prolific author. Over 100 plants and animals were named in his honor. He spent years in Alaska as a meteorological observer, helped negotiate a migratory bird treaty, was a research associate at the Smithsonian Institution, and was president of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1908-1909.

Ross's Goose Bernard Rogan Ross (1827-1874) was a chief trader of the Hudson Bay Company and contributed specimens to the British Museum and the Smithsonian Institution. American ornithologist John Cassin named the "Little Snow Goose" after him. [Ross's Gull was named after Sir James Clark Ross.]

Sabine's Gull Sir Edward Sabine (1788-1883) was an astronomer, physicist, and Anglo-Irish general who served in the War of 1812. Members of the Arctic expedition he was on as an astronomer discovered a boldly-patterned gull on the west coast of Greenland. Joseph Sabine, naturalist and brother of Sir Edward, later described the gull and named it for his brother.

Sprague's Pipit Isaac Sprague (1811-1895) was a prolific botanical illustrator from Massachusetts who accompanied John James Audubon on his Missouri River trip. The pipit was discovered on that trip and named in honor of Sprague.

Steller's Jay Georg Wilhelm Steller (1709-1746) was born in Germany where he studied medicine and botany. He served as an army physician in Russia, where he met the explorer Vitus Bering and was invited to accompany him on an expedition to determine whether the coasts of Siberia and Alaska were contiguous. The jay was discovered on this expedition in 1841. [also Steller's Eider]

Swainson's Hawk, Swainson's Thrush William John Swainson (1789-1855) was a widely traveled English naturalist and prolific author of natural history books who also studied mollusks, fish, insects and other animals. He emigrated to New Zealand and eventually died there. [also Swainson's warbler]

Townsend's Solitaire John Kirk Townsend. (1809-1851) was best known for his journey across the Rocky Mountains, on which he described new species and sent other undescribed specimens to Audubon. [also Townsend's Warbler]

Wilson's Phalarope, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Warbler Alexander Wilson (1766-1813) was born in Scotland and came to America as a young man. He was a poet, a schoolteacher, and a surveyor. Despite the fact that he had no training in science or art, he wrote and illustrated the 9-volume *American Ornithology* and is sometimes referred to as the "Father of American Ornithology". [also Wilson's Storm-Petrel]

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