

This past September, we mailed all ABA members a proxy ballot, asking which, if any, areas they favored adding to the ABA Area. This is what it said:

*The ABA compiles lists from all over the globe. The **ABA Area** is considered the Association's flagship or core region; its boundaries determine the scope of the ABA Checklist.*

The ABA Area is defined in the ABA's bylaws and thus can be altered only by a vote of the membership. It currently includes the 49 Continental United States, Canada, the French islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon, and adjacent waters to a distance of 200 miles from land or half the distance to a neighboring country, whichever is less.

*Understanding that this is a **non-binding** referendum, please indicate your preferences regarding **adding** each of the following to the ABA Area.*

We asked for opinions about Hawaii, Greenland, Bermuda, and The Bahamas. Members could also offer general comments as well as comments about other areas they would like to see added.

We received and tabulated 1,779 responses from active members. Here is a summary of the results:

- The addition of the U.S. state of Hawaii was favored by 53% of respondents and opposed by 36%. Seven percent said they were neutral or needed more information. Four percent did not express any opinion about adding Hawaii.
- The addition of The Bahamas was favored by 29% and opposed by 44%. Twenty percent were neutral or need-

ed more information. Seven percent registered no vote.

- The addition of Bermuda was favored by 28% and opposed by 46%. Nineteen percent were neutral or needed more information. Seven percent registered no vote.
- The addition of Greenland was favored by 25% and opposed by 48%. Twenty percent were neutral or needed more information. Seven percent registered no vote.

In a nutshell, a clear majority of respondents favored the addition of Hawaii, but most opposed adding The Bahamas, Bermuda, or Greenland. Results for Hawaii were strongest, with only 11% of respondents saying they were neutral or needed more information, or expressing no opinion. By contrast, the other three regions had 26% or 27% of respondents in the neutral or no vote columns.

As for any other areas members wanted to add, we got responses that were quite literally all over the map. The most frequent answer, given by about 8%, was, "NO," or some variant thereof. The second-most frequent was Mexico, cited by about 6%.

General comments were diverse and hard to quantify. But a couple of themes emerged. Among those who favored the addition of Hawaii, many cited its status as a full-fledged U.S. state and the potential benefits of bringing more attention to the Aloha State's endemic and imperiled avifauna.

Although a minority, many members conveyed an aversion to change of any sort and a strong preference for maintaining traditional boundaries.

Also frequently expressed was a desire to keep an "ABA Classic" area if the principal area is expanded.

To all who responded to this referendum, thank you. Although a binding vote to change the ABA's bylaws and expand the ABA Area wouldn't necessarily generate exactly the same responses, you've given a very helpful snapshot of your feelings and opinions about how you'd like to see the ABA evolve.

For me, the most important takeaway message is that ABA members once again have signaled a willingness to adapt and to change. Yes, we're an organization and a community with a lot of traditions that we hold dear, which is part of what gives us strength. But we're also dynamic, and open to new vistas and approaches. I think that's great news, for birders, for birds, and for birding.

Good Birding!



—Jeffrey A. Gordon

President, American Birding Association
jgordon@aba.org



P.S. The conversation is not over! Our next step is to respond to your opinions, as expressed in the referendum, and translate them into plans of action. As ever, I welcome your input. You can always email me directly. Even better, come on over to The ABA Blog and join the conversation there. Also, an online version of the results have been posted to the ABA website. Get access to these online items here: aba.org/birding