

Systematic notes on Asian birds. 56. The authorship and date of *Turdus rubrocanus*

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Zool. Med. Leiden 80-5 (8), 21.xii.2006: 179-184.— ISSN 0024-0672.

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Key words: *Turdus rubrocanus*; synonym; *nomen nudum*; nomenclature; dates of publication; priority; Brian H. Hodgson; John E. Gray and George R. Gray.

This name from J.E. & G.R. Gray's 1847 *Catalogue* of B.H. Hodgson's materials from Nepal was not based on a description therein, although it is generally cited from there, and correctly so except for the date. It is valid from there only under the little-used Articles 11.6 and 50.7 of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (I.C.Z.N., 1999). These rules allow Hodgson's 1844 *nomen nudum* to be reintroduced together with an 'indication' although still without a description. In exploring the validity of the citation from 1847 we found that over time the rules of nomenclature have changed and that what should not have been acceptable in 1962 and 1964, is now acceptable. We also draw attention to a colour plate that seems likely to have been intended to support the description as new of this thrush, but had to be corrected when it was found that the bird had already been named. In the event this plate appeared about five months after the *Catalogue*.

Introduction

Among widely consulted works dealing with this species, authorship of *Turdus rubrocanus* (for Grey-headed Thrush) was assigned to "Hodgs." 1846, in Gray, Cat. Mamm. Birds Nepal Thibet' by Ripley (1961: 534; 1964: 200; 1982: 484). Most recently, in the *Handbook of Birds of the World*, Collar (1995) assigned the authorship to G.R. Gray, 1846. All these works cited the '*Catalogue of the specimens and drawings of Mammalia and Birds of Nepal and Thibet presented by B. H. Hodgson Esq., to the British Museum*' although, prior to Collar (1995), no initials were offered to clarify the authorship. Dickinson & Walters (2006, this issue) have argued that new names in this *Catalogue*¹ should be credited to J.E. & G.R. Gray² and have presented evidence of publication in January 1847. However, this case is not as simple as it appears and those checking the *Catalogue* for a description will find none.

¹ Their list of new names did not include *Turdus rubrocanus* because no description is present, and this paper was developed to explain the very different situation.

² One of our referees disagrees noting that J.E. Gray's Preface implies that G.R. Gray worked on the birds and did not work on the mammals. This appears to be correct, but we consider J.E. Gray to have been primarily responsible for the publication and thus implicitly partly responsible for the authorship of the bird names.

The present paper explains why the citation is correct despite the lack of description and notes the existence of a colour plate that could have appeared before the *Catalogue* and seems to have been intended to accompany a description of a novelty, and which would have provided a more transparent basis for the use of the name *rubrocanus*.

Early usage

Hodgson (1844: 83) introduced the *nomen nudum* *T[urdus] rubrocanus* with the notation "575". Gray & Gray (1847: 81) listed *Turdus castaneus* with a citation to *Merula castanea* Gould, '1835', and gave *Turdus rubrocanus* citing p. 82 [sic] from Hodgson (1844). They listed two specimens and two drawings and after the skins put "No. 575". Thus Hodgson's *nomen nudum* appeared in synonymy³ and was identified with the bird described by Gould, i.e., it took on an identity which it could not have as a *nomen nudum*.

The matter of whether a name in synonymy such as this can be employed as a valid name is discussed below.

Hodgson's *rubrocanus* continued to appear in the synonymy of *Turdus castaneus* for over 80 years, always without a formal description, until Baker (1930a: 115; b: 624) noted that the name *Merula castanea* Gould, 1836 was preoccupied in *Turdus* by *Turdus castaneus* P.L. Stadius Müller, 1776.⁴ Baker thus adopted *rubrocanus* and credited the name to Gray⁵, referring to p. 81 of Gray & Gray, where, this *nomen nudum* appears in synonymy. This ignored another, opposing view offered four years earlier regarding the availability of the name. A distinct eastern population of this species, from Sichuan, had been named *gouldi* by Verreaux (1870)⁶, and when Collin & Hartert (1927) noted the preoccupation of *castaneus* believing *rubrocanus* unavailable they had taken the name of the Sichuan population as the valid specific name and re-named Hodgson's western population *Turdus gouldi cinereiceps* (a name not listed in synonymy by Baker, 1930a, b).

The treatment of a *nomen nudum* that appears in synonymy

An absolute *nomen nudum* has no standing. However, if reintroduced it may be able to meet conditions of availability. Thus the use of *Turdus rubrocanus* by Gray & Gray (1847) has to be considered on its own merits.

Vaurie (1959: 404) accepted the name *Turdus rubrocanus* and justified its use in a footnote saying "Replaces *Turdus castaneus* (Gould), 1835, preoccupied by *Turdus castaneus* Müller, 1776, because *T. rubrocanus* Gray 'has been brought into use .. and is generally accepted' (Copenhagen Decision 115 (2))". The full text of that Decision (see Hemming, 1953: 63) recommended that the new provisions to be incorporated in the

³ Numerous, indeed perhaps all, the *nomina nuda* of Hodgson (1844) appeared in the 1847 Catalogue.

⁴ Now *Philepitta castanea* (P.L. Stadius Müller, 1776) from Madagascar (see Amadon, 1979).

⁵ With no initials given.

⁶ The title page for the volume is dated 1870 and in his 1871 paper Verreaux cited these names from 1870, so that Ripley (1964: 200) seems to have erred in citing 1871.

Règles⁷, following the rejection in Copenhagen of a 1948 decision to repeal Opinion 4, should state “Where, prior to the introduction of the new provisions, a name (whether generic or specific) published in a synonymy (whether generic or specific) has been brought into general use, it shall be deemed to be available if it is generally accepted”. However, this Copenhagen Decision did not make it into the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, 1958 (I.C.Z.N., 1961; the 1958 Code)⁸ and although Vaurie (1959) had good grounds to follow it this was no longer solid ground after the Code replaced the old Règles. Melville (1995: 56) explained that two resolutions were adopted by the Copenhagen Congress which advised that the Decisions should be taken as guidance, but that these were intended to deal with the “interim before the new Code could be adopted and published”.

The Introduction to the 1958 Code (I.C.Z.N., 1961) included a brief history of the Règles (rules) that existed before its adoption, and indicated that although widely consulted such rules were not wholly accepted. The 1958 Code (I.C.Z.N., 1961) stated in Art. 10 (d) “A name first published as a synonym is not made available”, however in Art. 16 (b) (ii) it stated that “citation of a name in synonymy” did not constitute an indication⁹. Since, for a name to be available, the Code required there be a “description, definition or indication” these Articles held shut the door that Copenhagen Decision 115 (2) had been intended to open, and which would have allowed *Turdus rubrocanus* to be considered available.

Ripley (1961, 1964) does not seem to have been clear on this and may have relied on Vaurie’s treatment. By the time the 3rd Edition of the Code appeared (I.C.Z.N., 1985) Art. 11 (d) had been modified and a new Art. 11 (e) inserted¹⁰ which read “a name first published as a junior synonym is not thereby made available unless prior to 1961 it has been treated as the name of a taxon or treated as a senior homonym ...” and the text of Art. 16 (b) of the 1958 Code was removed. Thus a greatly expanded Art. 12, taken in conjunction with Art. 11 (e), permitted the presence of an indication to validate a pre-1931 name in synonymy that had not been previously described or depicted.

In its current, 4th edition, The Code (I.C.Z.N., 1999) has similar wording in Art. 11.6 to that in 11 (e) of the previous edition, and in Art. 12.2. to that in 12 (b) of the 3rd edition.

It would be interesting to know whether the treatment of this name in volume X of Peters’s Check-list led to any discussion between Ripley and Mayr or Paynter, the two editors, for Ripley (1964: 200), after the opening trinomial, gave the author as Hodgson.

⁷ The Règles, adopted in 1905 and broadly but not universally accepted, underwent a series of modifications over the years, being replaced by the 1958 Code. That the ‘Règles’ should become the Code was evidently not envisaged during the Copenhagen Colloquium (see Hemming, 1953: 132).

⁸ See Bock (1994: 71) and Melville (1995: 62-67) for comments on the extent to which the 1958 Code diverged from the wishes of those who had developed the consensus behind the Copenhagen Decisions.

⁹ The 1958 Code (I.C.Z.N., 1961: 150) defined an ‘indication’ as “Published information that [1] in the absence of a definition or description allows a name proposed before 1931 to be considered available”; essentially this means that it links the name to something that is identifiable.

¹⁰ A referee (MDB) advises us that Art. 11 (e) in the 3rd. Edition of the Code was already inserted, as Art. 11 (c), in the 2nd Edition in 1964 (which we have not seen).

The first point of discussion should have been the use of Hodgson here since in the second citation below that, after Gould's preoccupied name, Ripley gave it as "Hodgs.," in Gray, 1846, and in certain similar cases in this volume (e.g., *Saxicola insignis* on p. 105 and *Saxicola ferrea* on p. 115) Ripley gave Gray¹¹ as the author. This was presumably just a *lapsus*; 'Gray' was probably intended to appear after the opening trinomial. However, the second point of discussion, if it was actually realised at the time, should have been the absence of any description of *Turdus rubrocanus* where the name was cited and the fact that the recently issued Code (I.C.Z.N., 1961) did not consider an indication sufficient to validate a name in synonymy. No doubt Mayr, a leading proponent of stability in nomenclature (Melville, 1995: 65), and surely in favour of Copenhagen Decision 115, would have held to that decision and said that the Decision was in the process of being implemented¹².

The first description or depiction

It would seem that this taxon could easily have been properly described and depicted in *The Genera of Birds* by Gray (1844-49) using this name. The part dealing with the genus *Turdus* is dated June 1847 (five months after the *Catalogue*) and was no doubt drafted well before June. Under this generic name Gray listed 104 species accompanied by citations of their first use. The species Gray asked Mitchell to illustrate to represent the genus was this one, and this strongly suggests that Gray then thought it new, and that he would be listing it as *Turdus rubrocanus*. In the event it was recognised in time that this name was a synonym and it duly appeared here, as in Gray & Gray (1847), as *Turdus castaneus* Gould, and we believe that the caption for Pl. LVI was corrected. Had this part of Gray's *The Genera of Birds* appeared before the *Catalogue* there need have been no search for a description as linkage to the plate would have sufficed. Instead the validating indication is to its identity with *castaneus* Gould.

Conclusion

Collar (2005) was thus correct to cite the *Catalogue* as the source of this name, but we recommend that authorship be credited to both authors (although they included no description for it) and that it be dated 1847 (Jan.). One question should perhaps be addressed when revision of the Code is next considered. How are names validated under these Articles to be cited? It seems insufficient to cite the name to a place where there is only a *nomen nudum* and a supporting indication, and yet there are many older names which depend upon this and pose similar problems¹³. Thought may also need to

¹¹ Not identified to G.R. or J.E., although G.R. may have been intended.

¹² As apparently it was, in the 1964 Code, which may even have appeared before volume X of Peters's Check-list. In fact the speedy appearance of the 2nd Edition was no doubt due to concerns about the extent to which the Copenhagen Decisions had been set aside.

¹³ This is not an argument against the validity of indications, just a reminder that a valid name in zoology must be attached in some way to the 'treasure' of a clear identification through description or depiction (especially if there is no voucher specimen). The citation is intended, like an audit trail, to lead to the treasure.

be directed to type material in cases like this. In this case the skins listed in Gray & Gray (1847) were considered to be the types by Warren & Harrison (1971: 472) although they could not find the two specimens so listed. But surely, due to the indication, the type of *Merula castanea* Gould must serve as the type for Hodgson's name?

Acknowledgements

We thank Alison Harding at the Natural History Museum, Tring, for help with the relevant original literature, Carol Inskipp for providing details of her examination of Hodgson's drawings and Murray Bruce for some preliminary discussion and his thorough and detailed comments when refereeing this paper, which led to a substantial revision of our draft.

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¹⁴ These dates refer to the work as a whole. As explained, Pl. LVI belongs to a part dated January 1847.

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Final revised draft: 24.viii.2006.

Accepted: 27.viii.2006

Edited: D.R. Wells