

Malurus callainus Gould and other names supposed to have been based on hybrids (Aves, Passeriformes)

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Through an apparent misinterpretation of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, Schodde & Mason (1998) mistakenly rejected several names, based on intraspecific intergrades and hybrids.

Schodde & Mason (1999) introduced a number of changes to nomenclature of Australian Passerine birds, among which was the rejection of several names that had been in use for many years. One of these names is *Malurus callainus* Gould, 1867, which has been in use since its introduction, originally as a binomial, later as a subspecies in the combination *M. splendens callainus*. As the reason for rejecting this name, and substituting the name next in seniority, *M. s. musgravi* Mathews, 1922, Schodde & Mason (1999: 94) stated that: "Regrettably, the type of the name *Malurus callainus* Gould ... is intergradient between that form and *melanotus* Gould. Accordingly, it is treated here as unidentifiable."

The authors of the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (Higgins et al., 2001: 309) did not accept the proposed change, commenting that "DAB [Directory of Australian birds] have used the name *musgravi* Mathews, 1921 [sic: 1922], instead of *callainus* as they claim the type specimen was collected from a zone of intergradation with *melanotus*. For the sake of simplicity, we have continued to use the familiar and widely published name *callainus*."

Although in their introduction, Schodde & Mason (1999: 10) mention the Code current at the time of publication of their work (ICZN, 1985), the rejection of *callainus* was apparently their own choice: it is not supported by the Code. The Code (Art. 17) states that "The availability of the name is not affected even if ... it is found that the original description relates ... to an animal or animals later to be found a hybrid." Only interspecific hybrids, which one might call freak hybrids ("hybrids as such" of the Code) are invalid [Art. 23 (h)]. In case this might seem somewhat ambiguous, or giving leeway for subjective interpretations, I further refer to the Glossary, where a hybrid in the meaning of the Code is defined as: "The progeny of two individuals belonging to different species. The progeny of two individuals belonging to different subspecies of the same species are not hybrids". In the new edition of the Code, this is covered by Art. 17.2 (ICZN, 1999). According to the Code, therefore, the name *callainus* is valid, although the type or types may have shown some influence of *melanotus*. Higgins et al. (2001) were perfectly right in retaining the name *callainus*, not only on pragmatic grounds, but fully supported by the Code.

As in their discussion of *M. callainus*, Schodde & Mason make no mention of the Code, it is not clear whether they deliberately ignored it or simply failed to read it (in

spite of the reference in their introduction). It is perhaps well to point out that although the Code is a lawbook without sanctions, it has a high moral standing among systematic zoologists. Schodde & Mason should not be followed in their disregard of the Code.

Schodde & Mason's work contains several more examples of similar erroneous applications of the hybrid concept. In some instances they created new names to replace familiar ones, with the same argument of the latter being based on hybrids. They replaced *Artamus cinereus hypoleucus* Sharpe, 1890 (= *A. c. albiventris* Gould, 1847) by *A. c. dealbatus* subsp. nov., *Coracina papuensis stalkerii* Mathews, 1912, by *C. p. artamoides* subsp. nov., and *Zosterops lateralis halmaturina* A.G. Campbell, 1906, by *Z. l. pinarochrous* subsp. nov. Slightly different is the case of *Manorina melanocephala* in northern Queensland, where Schodde & Mason have chosen to describe two, intergrading, new subspecies, *M. m. titaniota* subsp. nov. and *M. m. lepidota* subsp. nov., suppressing *M. m. crassirostris* (Mathews, 1912), which they say is from the zone of intergradation. The nomenclaturally correct procedure would have been to assign *crassirostris* to the subspecies to which is closer, either *titaniota* or *lepidota* being its synonym. Thus, four of the five "new subspecies" listed here are invalid for nomenclatural reasons. I may have overlooked other examples. These names will further burden the already overburdened synonymy of Australian birds.

That Schodde & Mason's view of hybrids is not only contrary to the Code, but is also untenable, is dictated by common sense, when one considers the fact that, in the ultimate analysis, every individual of a sexually-reproducing species could be called a hybrid.

It will be clear that this note is not concerned with the results of Schodde & Mason's studies, but only with fundamental errors in their nomenclature.

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