

**Systematic notes on Asian birds. 33.**  
**The type of *Cyornis unicolor harterti* Robinson & Kinnear, 1928,**  
**and associated nomenclatural issues**

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The complex history of the nomenclature of the Malayan and Greater Sundan population of *Cyornis unicolor* is discussed and corrections to type localities relating to two names are provided. The whereabouts of critical type material is revealed and a lectotype is designated. Information given by Watson et al. (1986) is thus amended.

### Introduction

Watson et al. (1986: 364) listed the name *Niltava unicolor harterti* and noted that this was a new name proposed by Robinson & Kinnear (1928) for *Cyornis unicolor infuscata* Hartert, 1902, nec *Muscicapa infuscata* Blyth, 1870. The footnote on that page provided additional background:

“The two specimens of *Muscicapa infuscata* Blyth (ex Müller MS), 1870, *Ibis*, p. 165, in the Rijksmuseum, Leiden, are females of *Rhinomyias pectoralis* Salvadori, 1868 (= *Rhinomyias umbratilis* Strickland, 1849), *vide* Finsch, 1901, *Notes Leyden Mus.*, 22, p. 202; a third specimen, in the British Museum (Natural History), presumably also part of Müller’s “type series”, proves to be *Rhinomyias olivacea* (Hume), 1877, *vide* Robinson & Kinnear, 1928, *Novit. Zool.*, 34, p. 256”.

This treatment is associated with the information that *Cyornis unicolor infuscata* Hartert, 1902, is from Java. We found it difficult to understand the chain of events lying behind the formal phrases used by Watson et al., and, looking forward to finding a type specimen, we decided to examine the issues ourselves.

### Blyth’s description and his types

It is clear that in Leiden Blyth (1870) examined male and female specimens - he did not state how many - of what he thought to be a single form of flycatcher from

Sumatra, Java and Borneo, and that these had been labelled, or were considered to be, *Cyornis cyanopolia* (Boie). The specimens now in Leiden with "*cyanopolia*" on the label are three "blue" ones and two "brown" specimens (See colour plate 4). The three blue ones were previously mounted and new labels show that they were previously labelled *Muscicapa cyanopolia* Boie, this name having apparently been written by Temminck. There is no mention of sex symbols having appeared at that time. Two of these have the subsequent combination *Cyornis cyanopolia* Boie Blyth on the front of the label or *Cyornis cyanopolia* Blyth on the back of the label. The former of these two is further annotated "nur ♂, der ♀ ist *Rhinomyias pectoralis* Salvad.", which must date from the work of Finsch (1901a) as also evidenced by the use of German for this annotation. The two brown specimens, also once mounted, had apparently been labelled by Temminck as *Muscicapa infuscata* Müll. and also then sexed as one male and one juv. female. Both these have the labels later annotated (in blacker ink and apparently in Finsch's hand, as judged from the text in German mentioned above) "*Cyornis cyanopolia* ♀ auct. Blyth (Ibis, 1870, p. 165)". The one sexed as male is also annotated "*Trichastoma umbratilis* [sic] Strickl., Contrib. Orn, 1849, p. 128, pl. 35 (auct. Stone, 1903)" and this too seems to be in Finsch's writing.

Blyth's first comment about these was that the males seemed to him to be no different from *Cyornis unicolor* Blyth, 1843, from the Sikkim Himalaya. Of the "female" he gave a description: "rufous-brown above, darker upon the crown, and brighter on the tail; lower parts pure white, except the sides of the breast, which are coloured like the back. Wing 3.125 in." He associated with this the name *Muscicapa infuscata* Müller. As mentioned above this name is on the labels of the two brown birds only. Since the name *infuscata* Müller had not been published, its use by Blyth together with a description made it available as a validly published binomen that might appear to relate to the Greater Sundas population of *Cyornis unicolor*.<sup>1</sup>

From the evidence available we have concluded that these specimens were still mounted at the time of Blyth's visit and the name *Cyornis cyanopolia* was placed on the labels of the "brown" birds after the appearance of the paper by Blyth (1870), almost certainly after dismounting and probably in 1901 by Finsch, with the latest annotation being made in 1903. Blyth was a careful and experienced worker and we suspect that the notations of sex on the mounts were added to the mounts not by Temminck but between Blyth's visit and the time of Finsch's comments.

Finsch (1901a) giving *Muscicapa infuscata* Müll. as a synonym with a cross reference to Blyth (1870), reported that both the representative specimens in Leiden, proved to be examples of *Rhinomyias pectoralis*<sup>2</sup> and treated them under that heading. Later the same year Finsch (1901b) reverted to his flycatcher material and, maintaining this opinion, made comments about "*Rhinomyias olivacea*" which revealed that his specimens could not be of that taxon and further below we discuss this issue which is nearly, but not quite, separate.

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of preference we retain the genus *Cyornis* rather than follow Vaurie (1953) and Watson et al. (1986) in lumping this genus with *Niltava*.

<sup>2</sup> This name derives from *Alcippe pectoralis* Salvadori, 1868.

The following year Stone (1902)<sup>3</sup> reported that the type of *Trichastoma umbratile* Strickland, 1849, represented the same taxon as, and antedated, *Alcippe pectoralis* Salvadori, 1868, one of the two species for which Sharpe (1879) had established the genus *Rhinomyias*. The specific name therefore had to become *Rhinomyias umbratilis* and, as we have seen, this annotation was added to the label.

A third specimen (BMNH 1878.11.12.29) thought to have been in front of Blyth turned up in the BMNH, London (Robinson & Kinnear, 1928). This had been received from Leiden in exchange in 1877. It was collected by Hörner in west Sumatra and was said by Robinson & Kinnear to be labelled *Muscicapa infuscata*. In fact the label says *Muscicapa fuscata* not *infuscata*<sup>4</sup>. It is marked as a male. Robinson & Kinnear determined that this was a specimen of “a form of *Cyornis olivacea* Hume”.

On searching the Leiden collection RWRJD found two specimens labelled *Muscicapa fuscata* that, probably on dismounting, had been given labels identifying them as *Rhinomyias baliensis* Hartert, 1896, and they were listed under this name by Finsch (1901a). Although Finsch mentioned the name *brunneicauda* (Vord.) in this account of *baliensis*, he did so in connection with specimens from Billiton. The deletion of *baliensis* Hartert, apparent on the labels of the Sumatran birds, and the simultaneous addition of the name *brunneicauda* (Vord.), seems to have followed very quickly and to explain the treatment in Finsch (1901b: 41) where *baliensis* is treated as a junior synonym of *brunneicauda* (Vord.). These are now considered to be *Rhinomyias olivacea*. That Finsch did not recognise them as *olivacea* is due to his erroneous identification of two Himalayan specimens with that name (p. 42) (see below)<sup>5</sup>. RWRJD also found the two types of *infuscata* Blyth, duly labelled *Muscicapa infuscata* Müller, and confirmed these to be *R. umbratilis*. We conclude therefore that contrary to the suggestion of Robinson & Kinnear (1928) Blyth had but two types of Müller’s name, both brown, one male and one female. Both the Leiden specimens of *Muscicapa infuscata* Müller are from Sumatra (See colour plate 5).

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<sup>3</sup> Very possibly delayed until 1903. <sup>4</sup> So far as we can determine the name *Muscicapa fuscata* Müller is only a MS name.

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<sup>5</sup> Robinson & Kloss (1918), discussing Sumatran *Rhinomyias olivacea*, used the name *Hyloterpe brunneicauda* Salvadori, 1879, and remarked that the specimens “agree sufficiently well with Salvadori’s diagnosis of his *Hyloterpe brunneicauda*”. Watson et al. (1986) wrote that *brunneicauda* Vorderman, 1891, which that author attributed to Salvadori (1879) must be attributed to Vorderman because Salvadori’s name related to a whistler. This appears to be incorrect as the type of *Hyloterpe brunneicauda* Salvadori is listed by Arbocco et al. (1978) as being identifiable as *Alcippe brunneicauda*. This is consistent with the treatment of the name by Deignan (1964) and with a suggestion by Chasen (1935: 178). Vorderman’s *brunneicauda* is based on types in Leiden and these are considered to represent *Rhinomyias olivacea*. Watson et al. (1986), following Vaurie (1952), considered the species *olivacea* to be monotypic, except for an insular race off northern Borneo. It may be so, but Robinson & Kloss (1918), comparing with mainland SE Asian birds, reported that “Sumatran specimens differ ... in being slightly smaller, in having the cineraceous colour of the cap more clearly defined from the rest of the upper surface, which is decidedly less bright in tint, especially on the upper tail coverts and tail; the fuscous pectoral band is less buffy in tint, and the edges of the primaries are less ferruginous.”

### The occurrence of *Cyornis unicolor* in the Malay Peninsula

Hartert (1902) with a single male *Cyornis unicolor* collected in September 1901 by Waterstradt on Gunung Tahan, peninsular Malaysia applied the name *Cyornis unicolor infusata* (Blyth) to it. Hartert's material, in Tring, lacked Sumatran birds, but showed that Malay Peninsula birds matched birds from Java and Borneo and not those from India.

Hartert considered that Blyth has not provided a valid description for Boie's name *Cyornis cyanopolia*, which thus remained a manuscript name, and he employed the name *infusata* Blyth making clear that he considered that Blyth (1870) had provided this name with a satisfactory description. Blyth had said that the "blue" males he examined in Leiden did not differ from Indian birds<sup>6</sup>; by contrast Hartert (op. cit.) found that his *infusata* could be distinguished from nominate *unicolor* of north India by its smaller size and by its duller, more greyish, under wing-coverts.

Hartert made no direct reference to the Leiden specimens. He said "there are no authentic specimens from Sumatra in collections", and this was no doubt based on Finsch (1901b: 50) who listed specimens of *Cyornis unicolor* from Java and Borneo, but not Sumatra. Hartert therefore restricted the type locality to Java. He did not designate a type specimen, but his description of the Malayan bird, given above, compared material from Gunung Tahan (Malay Peninsula), Java and Borneo with material from India. It may reasonably be presumed that he used specimens in the Rothschild collection for his comparison.

Hartert's words imply that he used Blyth's name with deliberation, believing it was properly founded. It is curious that he seems to have been aware of Finsch (1901b: 50), but not of the remarks in Finsch (1901a and 1901b: 40). Whether he was or not Hartert seems to have put aside the question about where Blyth's types might have got to, and simply re-described the bird and added a designation of a type locality that did not accord with the origin of the types that Blyth had considered. Perhaps in view of the ambiguity of Blyth's text, where he wrote of material from Borneo, Java and Sumatra but did not say whether he had females from all three islands, Hartert thought that somewhere there was typical material from Java that related to Blyth's name.

### Subsequent revision

The conclusion that no type specimen of *infusata* Blyth showed the characters of the Sunda race of *Cyornis unicolor* meant, in the eyes of Robinson & Kinnear (1928), that the adoption of the name *infusata* by Hartert (1902) had to be set aside. They considered *infusata* Hartert to be preoccupied by *infusata* Blyth and that a new name was required. We consider their view to be wholly consistent with the present Code (ICZN, 1999); Hartert's name is a separate, validly introduced name but it is preoccupied by *infusata* Blyth.

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<sup>6</sup> But Leiden has no specimens of the nominate form of *Cyornis unicolor* and almost certainly had none when Blyth visited. Blyth may have taken specimens over to compare, but this seems unlikely.

In providing a new name Robinson & Kinnear (1928) again designated no type. At this point it is necessary to recall that Hartert (1902) provided a new description as well as a new type locality (which was accepted by Robinson & Kinnear). While the correction of a type locality does not require the designation of a lectotype, the designation of a lectotype does impose the collecting locality of the lectotype as the type locality.

Given the complex story reported above, it seems essential to designate a lectotype for Robinson & Kinnear's name (especially as it could even be construed to have been a Javan specimen in Leiden). Or rather, as their name was proposed as a *nomen novum*, to propose a lectotype for *Cyornis unicolor infusata* Hartert.

In deciding on this we have considered the case for Java and the alternative case for Gunong Tahan. It is clear that Hartert considered his specimens from the two places to represent one form.

There is little doubt in our view that his description will have been based on the adult male collected in September 1901 at 1500 ft. on Gunung Tahan by John Waterstradt. This is now AMNH 605491 and we designate it the lectotype of both *Cyornis unicolor infusata* Hartert, 1902, nec *Muscicapa infusata* Blyth, 1870, and *Cyornis unicolor harterti* Robinson & Kinnear, 1928. Such Javan specimens as were before Hartert may be regarded as paralectotypes. Only the fact that there is an incontrovertibly identifiable specimen from Gunong Tahan causes us to select this. The effect is to restrict the type locality to the Malay Peninsula both for *infusata* Hartert, and for *harterti* Robinson & Kinnear. We believe this preserves stability and causes no problems.

Watson et al. (1986: 364) were accurate except for their footnote; we now know that the third specimen in London, now in Tring, was unrelated, representing the MS name *fuscata* Müller not *infusata* Müller.

### Hartert's treatment of the names employed by Blyth (1870)

Blyth (1870) used the heading *Cyornis cyanopolia* Boie and then in conjunction with his description of the brown females referred to these as *Muscicapa infusata* Müller. Hartert considered the name *cyanopolia* Blyth ex Boie to have lacked a description and he employed the name *infusata* "Müller" Blyth, to which name he considered the description given by Blyth to have validated this name. The species *Cyornis unicolor* has blue males. It appears that Hartert thought that Blyth in examining the blue males had failed to notice the differences between the Leiden material and Indian nominate *unicolor* which is likely as the latter was unrepresented in Leiden. His reason for eschewing the name *cyanopolia* was that he considered it a *nomen nudum*.

In deciding which name to use it might be supposed that one could apply Art. 24.2 of the Code (ICZN, 1999). This provides for a First Reviser to have the authority to decide between two names that appear to have been proposed simultaneously but which cannot have the priority assigned between them by means of the rule for automatic determination (Art. 24.1). A strict interpretation of Art. 24.2 would require that it be beyond question that the original author proposed two names. It is far from clear that Blyth did propose two. Were that to be argued then his only description of *cyanopolia* was to the effect that it was indistinguishable from *unicolor*. It is easy to conclude, despite the opposite conclusion of Hartert, that Blyth proposed to introduce

*cyanopolia* Boie and referred to the name *infuscata* Müller purely as an aside to help identify his types. Such an approach would require the types, both blue male and brown “female” (the latter being, in truth, a male and a female), and in fact representative of two distinct species, to be seen as the name-bearing types of *cyanopolia*.

This might theoretically validate the name *cyanopolia*, except that the only description given would be of the “female” which is in fact not a *Cyornis*. This approach would require a reconsideration of the situation of Hartert’s name *infuscata* and of the substitute name later provided for that. Is one to argue that because Blyth’s description attaches to *cyanopolia* it does not attach to *infuscata* Blyth? If so then Blyth did not introduce the name *infuscata*. And if that is so then Hartert’s use of it is not preoccupied and the name *harterti* proposed by Robinson & Kinnear (1928) is unnecessary as Hartert’s name was not preoccupied. If *cyanopolia* were to be validated it would be essential to designate a lectotype; since this line of argument depends upon the name having been given a description by Blyth one would be obliged to argue that the lectotype of *cyanopolia* Blyth must be one of the birds he described. This would transfer the name *cyanopolia* from the limbo of non-recognition to the synonymy of *Rhinomyias umbratilis*. The same logic would require that the name *infuscata* Blyth be removed from that same synonymy.

Hartert’s use of *infuscata*, in the context of it not being preoccupied, would then require the same process of consideration as we have undertaken here to determine the type material relevant to it. The conclusion would be the same, except that a lectotype would be designated for *infuscata* Hartert as a valid name and for *harterti* Robinson & Kinnear as a junior synonym, which would remain in synonymy.

This would cause unnecessary instability. A more lenient, and not unreasonable interpretation of Art. 24.2, that favours stability, would allow that Hartert as First Reviser had validly selected the name that indisputably attached to the description. We support the view that Hartert did not need to make a choice. He was entitled to see *cyanopolia* as a MS name without a description. In effect he exercised a judgement that if doubted would have been validated by his position as First Reviser. The name *cyanopolia* Boie therefore remains without a description and it can, as such, have no name-bearing types.

### What was *Rhinomyias olivacea* of Finsch (1901)?

The specimens that Finsch (1901b) believed to be *olivacea* were said to be from Nepal and to be from Hodgson. Since *R. olivacea* does not occur in Nepal we have located and re-examined them. They prove to be examples of what Watson et al. (1986) called *Niltava poliogenys* (Brooks, 1879). This is known from Nepal, and Baker (1930a: 137-138; 1930b: 631) associated *olivacea* and *poliogenys* in a single species!

Vaurie (1952) reported that Finsch, in this publication, transferred the species *olivacea* Hume, 1877, from the genus *Siphia*, where it had been placed by Sharpe (1879), to the genus *Rhinomyias* established by Sharpe (1879). Finsch does seem to have proposed the transfer, but he seems to have done so on the basis of specimens of an entirely different species. However, as at this time he placed his true specimens of *olivacea* under the name of *Rhinomyias brunneicauda* (Vord.), his actions still had the effect that Vaurie described.

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<sup>7</sup> This is page 126 with a suffix "-27"; we are not entirely clear how Jardine used the suffix . Stone (1902) erred in giving p. 128, pl. 31.

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