

Systematic notes on Asian birds. 39.
The correct name for the Mangrove Whistler
Pachycephala cinerea (Blyth)

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The correct scientific name for the Mangrove Whistler is *Pachycephala cinerea* (Blyth, 1847) and not *Pachycephala grisola* (Blyth, 1843). The proposal for change by Mukherjee (1970) was based on a purported type specimen of the latter, which cannot qualify as a type.

Introduction

In the late 20th century the scientific name in prevailing usage for the Mangrove Whistler, the single species of whistler of south-east Asia, changed from *Pachycephala cinerea* to *P. grisola*, following Mukherjee (1970). *Pachycephala cinerea* (Blyth, 1847) was used by Smythies (1953), Ripley (1961), Deignan (1963), Mayr (1967), King & Dickinson (1975) and Medway & Wells (1976), but Ripley (1982), Dickinson et al. (1991), Lekagul & Round (1991), Kennedy et al. (2000) and Robson (2000) used *Pachycephala grisola* (Blyth, 1843). The objective of this paper is to re-examine the basis and correctness of this change.

Treatment in Peters's Check-list, Vol. 12 (1967)

Mayr (1967: 8, 12) included two footnotes relating to the above-mentioned taxon, but both of these contain errors. The footnote on p. 8 reads as follows: "*Muscitrea* Blyth, 1847, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, 16, p. 121, is unidentifiable because the type species, *Tephrodornis grisola* Blyth, is unidentifiable. - E.M." The footnote on p. 12 reads: "*Tephrodornis grisola* Blyth 1843, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, 16, p. 121 - Calcutta, is unidentifiable. - E.M." In the first footnote the year is cited as 1847, and in the second as 1843; the former could be a typesetter's error. However, the correct citation for the specific name is actually "*Tephrodornis grisola*, Blyth, 1843, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, 12, p. 180". The 1847, vol. 16, p. 121, reference is to Blyth's erection of the genus *Muscitrea*.

However, *Tephrodornis grisola* is not the type of *Muscitrea*. When Blyth proposed the genus it contained only one species, *Muscitrea cinerea* Blyth, 1847, based on a specimen from the island of Ramree, Arracan, obtained by Capt. Abbott. Therefore this species is the type by monotypy, and it comes with a description that (inclusive of the content of the generic description) fits the Mangrove Whistler well. *Muscitrea* is therefore a validly proposed and available generic name with a satisfactory type species. This had already been recognised by Gray (1855: 53). Mayr must have been misled by Gadow (1883: 183,

220), who listed *grisola* as the type of *Muscitrea*, and used the name *grisola* for the species which was widely called *Pachycephala cinerea* by numerous authors (see Introduction) both before Mayr (1967), and for some ten years afterwards. No doubt Gadow believed the two related to the same taxon, and *grisola* is certainly the prior name. This does not necessarily mean, however, that *grisola* and *cinerea* are identical.

The introduction of the name *grisola* Blyth, 1843

Mukherjee (1970) discussed this species and recommended the use of the name *grisola* in the combination *Pachycephala grisola* as the valid name for the Mangrove Whistler. He considered that a female specimen which he identified as the type of *Tephrodornis grisola* in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India, collected at the Botanical Gardens, Sibpur, near Calcutta, was identical with the bird subsequently known as *P. cinerea*.

Evaluation and conclusion

Blyth (1843: 180) gave the name *grisola* to a specimen which he had previously described (Blyth 1842: 799) as a variety of *Tephrodornis superciliosus* with no white line above the eye or white on the outer tail feathers. *T. superciliosus* is, however, a synonym of *T. pondicerianus* (Gmelin, 1789), a fact not made clear by Mukherjee (1970).

However, I very much doubt the type status of the specimen considered to be such by Mukherjee (1970), which must be the one listed by Blyth (1852: 153, sp. no. 886) as a female from the Calcutta Botanic Garden. The date of collection of this Calcutta specimen is given as 1843 (Blyth, 1852) so, assuming the date is correct, this specimen cannot be the one described in 1843 as a variety of *T. superciliosus* because when Blyth set up the name *T. grisola* he indicated that it was a name for the bird he had described in 1842. Blyth (1852) did not list the type of *T. grisola*, which strongly suggests that it was lost or missing by 1852. Thus, unless there was a mistake in the date of the specimen cited by Mukherjee, it cannot be a type and therefore is not relevant in assessing the basis of the name *grisola*, even though it may have been correctly identified as the species later called *Muscitrea cinerea*.

Furthermore, the identity of *grisola* seems to have been a matter of confusion among early writers. Jerdon (1862: 411) called it *Tephrodornis grisola* and placed it with the Laniidae. Gadow (1883), who called it *Pachycephala grisola*, also placed this genus in the Laniidae. Oates (1890: 30-31) and Baker (1924: 483-484; 1930: 190) called it *Muscitrea grisola* and placed it with the Muscipidae. In the apparent absence of the type it seems impossible to identify *T. grisola*. In view of this confusion, I consider the name *grisola* to be of too uncertain a provenance and identity to be used for any species of *Pachycephala*, or indeed for any species of bird. *Contra* Mukherjee, therefore, I believe that the correct name for the Mangrove Whistler is *Pachycephala cinerea* (Blyth) not *Pachycephala grisola* (Blyth).

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¹ There are two sets of pages numbered 177-182, the second time given in the volume with asterisks to distinguish them.

² Title page dated 1849, but not issued then.

