

Systematic notes on Asian birds. 7.

Black-naped oriole *Oriolus chinensis* Linnaeus, 1766: some old nomenclatural issues explained

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Any exploration of the development of our knowledge of the distribution and nomenclature of the black-naped oriole produces a bewildering complex of names. It is the more complex because the origin of the specimen named *Oriolus chinensis* Linnaeus, 1766, was disputed. When it was proposed that the origin might be the Philippines this at first seemed to affect the nomenclature in India but not China. A new name then introduced proved to be preoccupied by one that rested on a description that seemed too flawed to be applicable. When it was finally determined that the Chinese breeding population needed a new name, and that this was the form that reached eastern parts of India as a migrant, the name changes proposed met such resistance that for nearly 60 years the names in use, in one or more parts of the range of the species, awaited correction. Today, correctly, the name *chinensis* is applied as the trinomial of the resident Philippine population and the name *diffusus* Sharpe, 1877, to breeding Chinese birds which are migratory and just include easternmost India in their winter range.

Introduction

This series of systematic notes has the objective of creating a well-researched basis for future work on Asian ornithology and its focus is on taxonomy and nomenclature. These are the areas where the systematist plods along behind the enthusiasm of the fresh field work that glamorously breaks new ground. One of the reasons for believing such basic information to be needed is the fact that the vast majority of books on Asian birds have understandably dealt with single countries, even if, in the case of the Indian subcontinent, several countries now represent the one. Focussing on a single country has many benefits, not least that tasks become more manageable. As always with advantages come disadvantages. The principal disadvantage of such focussed work is the potential for missing the 'big picture'. Once errors creep into the literature they tend to get perpetuated and this process, as it affects particular problems, often allows external roots to infect the local work.

The black-naped oriole *Oriolus chinensis* Linnaeus, 1766, provides an interesting case history that makes this point. As one works one's way through the literature to develop a paper that deals with type specimens, one is occasionally confronted by cases that challenge one's persistence if they are to be understood. Frequently the results of much research, when successful, can be spelled out in a footnote of a few lines. More rarely, as in this paper, no such brevity is possible. Sometimes the puzzle remains unsolved and all work on it escapes mention. Papers explaining such a story require that the strands of history be pulled together and understood, which demands time and significant library resources. Often both are unavailable to workers in Asian countries. Having clear historical summaries of complex cases available

may save others from replicating the effort, or at least may shorten the time needed to do so by providing both a paper trail and carefully researched references.

The distribution of the species

As generally treated there are some 18 to 20 subspecies of the black-naped oriole (Greenway, 1962), depending first on one's views on whether it is or is not conspecific with the slender-billed oriole *Oriolus tenuirostris* Blyth, 1846, and second on whether or not the recognized subspecies have been overlumped or oversplit. Neither of the issues will be treated here as neither is relevant to this paper.

These subspecies, if you accept *O. tenuirostris* and *O. chinensis* as conspecific, range from the Himalayas east through China to extreme south-eastern Siberia south to the Lesser Sunda islands. The birds that breed in the northeast of this huge range are migratory and so to a lesser extent are those in the Himalayas. Most populations lying south of these are resident.

A history of the nomenclatural process for the species

Once the nominate form, as we call it today, had been named other forms were also named, some assigned in the context of a special genus *Broderipus* erected for this group but most employing the broader genus *Oriolus*. This began in an era where names were strictly binomial. We see geographical exploration marked by *O. maculatus* Vieillot, 1817 (Java), *acrorhynchus* Vigors, 1831 (Philippines), *tenuirostris* Blyth, 1846 (central India), *macrourus* Blyth, 1846 (the Nicobars), *broderipii* Bonaparte, 1852 (Sumbawa), *frontalis* Wallace, 1863 (the Sula Islands), *andamanensis* Beavan, 1867 (the Andamans), *formosus* Cabanis, 1872 (Sangihe Islands), *Broderipus celebensis* Walden, 1872 (Sulawesi), *O. suluensis* Sharpe, 1877 (the Sulu Islands), *Broderipus palawanensis* Tweeddale, 1878 (Palawan)¹, *O. insularis* Vorderman, 1893 (Kangean), *boneratensis* Meyer & Wilesworth, 1896 (Bonerate in the Flores Sea), *melanisticus* Meyer & Wilesworth, 1894 (the Talaut Islands), *mundus* Richmond, 1903 (Simalur).

With trinomials brought in to deal with differences that were increasingly perceived as small differences between closely related forms along came new names that associated forms with those most like them. So we see the names *meridionalis* Hartert, 1896 (Makassar) attached to *celebensis* and distinguishing birds in southern Sulawesi from northern ones; *sangirensis* Meyer & Wilesworth, 1898 (Great Sangi) attached to the form *formosus* described from another island in the group; *oscillans* Hartert, 1903 (Tukang Besi) attached to *broderipii* of Sumbawa and the Lesser Sundas rather than to *celebensis* of nearby Sulawesi; *richmondi* Oberholser, 1912 (North Pagi Island) and *lampochrysaeus* Oberholser, 1917 (Solombo Besar Island in the Java Sea) and *eustictus* Oberholser, 1926 (a Nicobar synonym) all attached to *maculatus* of Java; and *ochroxanthus* Oberholser, 1925 (Korea) attached to the Chinese 'species'.

By about 1925 these clusters of group names became increasingly perceived as

¹ Tweeddale's original name is that used here; the citation given in Peters Check-list (Greenway in Mayr & Greenway, 1962), where it appears to have been named *Oriolus chinensis palawanensis*, is wrong.

one species *chinensis*, as is revealed by other names given *O. c. macassariensis* Hartert, 1925 (a new name for *meridionalis*), *O. c. sipora* and *O. c. siberu* Chasen & Kloss, 1926 (Sipora and Siberut Islands off western Sumatra), *O. c. yamamurae* Kuroda, 1927 (Basilan), *O. c. swinhoii* Momiyama & Isii (in Momiyama, Isii & Takizawa, 1928) (Taiwan), *O. c. edgari* Chasen, 1939 (Singapore), *O. c. stresemanni* Neumann, 1939 (Peleng Island near Sulawesi), *O. c. invisus* Riley, 1940 (Annam), *O. c. fugaensis* and *O. c. sorsogoenensis* Gilliard, 1949 (Philippines), *O. c. saani* Jany, 1955 (Majau I., Moluccas).

It is not the purpose of this paper to relate these changes in viewpoint to the evolution of taxonomic treatment, but these clear periods of different approach do stand out and do relate to such thought. Here however we are concerned with a separate phenomenon: the changes in the name applied to the Chinese population — because *ochroxanthus* Oberholser, 1925 (Korea), was attached to *Oriolus indicus* not to *Oriolus chinensis*.

What was the origin of the bird that Linnaeus described?

The origin has, of course, been discussed before (Stresemann, 1952) and the views expressed then on this case have been generally accepted. There were no doubt space limitations imposed or Stresemann would have explained in more detail. The debate that had arisen was by that time 75 years old and the passionate positions taken had led to the standard works on the birds of different parts of Asia employing different nomenclature.

Given that Linnaeus had named our bird *O. chinensis* one might imagine that its origin was beyond dispute. However, Linnaeus based his name on the work of Brisson (1760) who actually named two birds and both figure in the puzzle. Both were described in Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux* (1771-1786) but only one was depicted in the associated *Planches Enluminées*².

Staying with the 'Chinese' bird, for the moment, what is important is that Brisson called it 'Le Lorient de la Cochinchine', footnoting 'Le Coullavan' as its local name in Cochinchina. Buffon (1771-1786) used 'Le Coullavan' as his preferred name. He used the name 'Lorient de la Chine' for a quite different bird with a wholly black head. So Linnaeus used as the terra typica Buffon's China not Brisson's Cochinchina, to which the local name that Brisson used was supposed to apply. At the root of this, of course, was a degree of uncertainty over the real provenance and it was about this that Stresemann (1952) wrote.

The first hint of any problem, and that both China and Cochinchina were wrong, came from India but was misinterpreted through lack of Chinese material. Comparing specimens from Manila, *O. acrorhynchus* of Vigors, 1831, with Indian birds, Jerdon (1845) concluded that the Philippine specimens matched the original description of *O. chinensis* and the figure [No. 570] in the *Planches Enluminées* on which the pre-Linnaean name *cochinchinensis* was based. On this basis he argued that Vigors had proba-

² These are associated with E.L. Daubenton; they were engraved under his supervision by Martinet, and appeared — first, apparently, with captions but no text and in parts between 1765 and 1780 (Stresemann, 1952) and then — as part of the later large paper issue of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle des Oiseaux* (1771-1786), this work having first appeared without these in 1770-1783 (BMNH, 1903).

bly been misled into giving the Philippine form a name through comparing it with the Indian bird, for Vigors considered that to be the true *O. chinensis*.

Jerdon postulated three species: *chinensis* in China, Cochinchina and Manila; *hippocrepis* Wagler, 1827, in Java, Sumatra and Malaya; and *indicus* in peninsular India (although the name *sinensis* was used on the drawing he provided of this, suggesting a preliminary conclusion as to identity that Jerdon did not explicitly admit), and wrote: "I am compelled to conclude that our peninsular species is distinct from both these, and that moreover *acrorhynchus* refers to the true *chinensis*, and *coronatus* to Wagler's *hippocrepis*. I have therefore given it the appellation of *Indicus*, partly because I consider that the *O. Indicus* of Brisson and others may possibly refer to this though faultily described."

Jerdon (1845) was undoubtedly aware that Blyth (1842) treated birds from India as *chinensis* Gmelin, 1788. Blyth had reported it as "not common in India, but much more frequent in the countries to the eastward". Jerdon contented himself with saying of *indicus*: "Mr. Blyth has not I believe obtained it from northern India", and it is unclear from Jerdon's text if he thought that *chinensis* occurred in India. Perhaps he did not know for Blyth (1846) later explains.

Jerdon placed '*cochinsinensis*' [sic], ascribed to Brisson (1760), whose work largely employed French names and is considered to be "pre-Linnean", and *O. acrorhynchus* in the synonymy of *O. chinensis*; and *O. coronatus* Swainson, 1838, in the synonymy of *O. hippocrepis* Wagler, 1827. Wagler's name has since been placed in the synonymy of nominate *O. chinensis* (Meinertzhagen, 1923), although this requires future review as Jerdon's reasoning seems sound. There is agreement however that *coronatus* from Java belongs in the synonymy of *maculatus* from Java (but I have not been able to check and it is possible that no type of either name has been compared with Javan birds).

It is important to realise that Jerdon evidently did not compare Chinese material directly with Lord Arthur Hay's specimens from the Philippines or he would have found that Chinese material was not the same and thus could not be *chinensis*.

Soon it is made clear (Blyth, 1846) that *chinensis* "is not an Indian bird" and that the bird called *indicus* "about Calcutta .. is very rare; but in the countries eastward of the Bay it is generally common, as in the island of Ramree (Arracan), in the Tenasserim provinces, and Malay peninsula. The society also possess [sic] it from China". Blyth however continued to consider the terra typica of *chinensis* to be 'China and Manilla'. There is no mention of seasonality of occurrence to suggest that birds are migrants to any part of this range. This seems to have been noted first in northern Tenasserim by Helfer MS in Horsfield & Moore (1854). It probably added a layer of confusion when, at the same time, it was suggested that Sumatran birds were also *indicus* (Horsfield & Moore, 1854). Present knowledge suggests that Sumatran birds are resident and match Javan resident birds, and although the occurrence of northern migrants in Sumatra has been hypothesized they are not certainly known (van Marle & Voous, 1988).

But if Jerdon's views prevailed in India and were adopted in Gray's (1869) 'Handlist' they were not accepted by workers in China or on Philippine birds.

In China the two principal workers of the period either took the name *chinensis* from Linnaeus, 1766, (Swinhoe, 1863) or Gmelin, 1788, (Swinhoe, 1871) and did not

extend its range to the Philippines, or employed the name *Oriolus cochinchinensis* Brisson, 1760, and affirmed that it was a summer resident leaving in September for southern China, Cochinchina, eastern India, Burma and even Ceylon, but with no mention of the Philippines (David & Oustalet, 1877).

We have seen that Philippine birds had been named *O. acrorhynchus* in 1831. The use of this name is defended (Walden & Layard, 1872) in the context of a collection from Negros, the authors reasserting that Poivre's specimen was brought to Réaumur by Poivre from Indochina. They wrote that Brisson's description, which they repeated, did not fit the Philippine bird as this lacked a yellow wing-spot. The name is retained later for birds from Cebu, Guimaras, Luzon and Negros (Walden, 1875) and, as collections from Everett flowed back to Lord Walden it was consistently defended even as he took on his late father's title (Tweeddale, 1878), although by then he was losing the argument.

This spirited and renewed defence was prompted by the appearance of the relevant volume of the Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum (Sharpe, 1877), for the author of the new volume endorses the idea that Linnaeus's name must be accredited to the Philippine population (which no one seems ever to have suggested was anything other than resident).

Sharpe was clearly aware that the views of Walden (1872) were incompatible with those of Jerdon (1845). Jerdon imagined that the population of China and the Philippines was one, Walden knew that it was not and believed there was incontrovertible evidence that the Philippine form could not be called *chinensis*.

Work on the Catalogue provided the occasion for both these sets of views to be challenged, and in a footnote to page 197 Sharpe saw "the name *chinensis* being undoubtedly referable to the Oriole of the Philippines". He then provided a new name (*diffusus*) for the Chinese breeding bird (reaching India as a migrant), and for the first time, treated *chinensis*, on p. 203, as solely from the Philippines and by implication resident there (Sharpe, 1877). That the name is not apt is not relevant, such are the rules of nomenclature.

This resistance continued; in his description of Philippine birds, under the name *O. acrorhynchus*, McGregor (1910) noted that the tertials were tipped with yellow and that the secondary coverts were bright yellow, thus affirming the yellow alar speculum, but these details appeared in the description in the Catalogue. Sharpe accepted them and they were not in dispute. The dispute was more fundamental; did the Brissonian plate and description apply, warts and all, to the Philippine bird or did it better apply to any other race. Certainly Tweeddale never offered an alternative other than the birds of China and Cochinchina; nor did he state clearly that he had himself examined these.

No review of the genus in the first half of this century would have been complete without a re-examination of this and so Meinertzhagen (1923), who corrected the type locality of *chinensis* to Manila, wrote: "Brisson's description fits neither *indicus* nor *acrorhynchus*, but agrees more closely with the latter, especially in regard to the wings. In the plate the yellow of the head extends to above the centre of the eye, and is therefore intermediate between the pattern of *indicus* and *acrorhynchus*."

This leads to the question of why Meinertzhagen should use the name *O. indicus* Jerdon rather than *O. diffusus* Sharpe for the Chinese bird? Clearly Sharpe had reject-

ed *O. indicus* but Meinertzhagen did not. It is this that brings us back to the fact that Brisson (1760) named two birds: his second was 'Le Lorient des Indes' (1760, p. 328, not figured) but neither Linnaeus (1766) nor Gmelin (1788) provided a Latin binomial for this.

The works of Brisson (1760) and of Buffon (1771-1786)

The trail begins with Brisson's two birds in 'Ornithologia, 2': his first appears on p. 326, no. 59, pl. 33, f. 1, under the name 'Le Lorient de la Cochinchine' (footnoted is the name Coulavan) and Brisson wrote that birds from Cochinchina were brought to M. de Réaumur by M. Poivre; this French name was changed by Brisson (1760) to 'Le Lorient de la Chine' and this is brought into use as a Latin binomial by Linnaeus, 1766; this author giving the terra typica as 'China'. Brisson's second bird appears on p. 328, unfigured, under the name 'Le Lorient des Indes'; this Brisson stated was based on 'Aldrov.' [= Aldrovandi], *Avi.*, tom I, p. 862 ('in qua hujus icon non fatis accurata'); and on 'Jonst.' [= Jonston] 'Avi.', p. 80'. These works appeared respectively in 1599 and about 1650.

It appeared to Sharpe (1877) that Brisson's 'Lorient des Indes', based in part at least on a plate that Brisson considered unsatisfactory, was indeterminable, and that Jerdon's linkage of the name to Brisson associated his own use of the name with this indeterminable bird³. For that reason the name was rejected and a new one proposed. "This oriole is the bird generally called *O. indicus* by authors; but Brisson's description is totally inadmissible, unless, indeed, a Golden Oriole with blue in its coloration remains to be discovered, which is hardly likely. The Chinese bird (*O. chinensis* auct.) is not separable from the Indian; and the name *chinensis* being undoubtedly referable to the Oriole of the Philippines, I have proposed the name of *diffusus* for the Indian birds, as it is the most widely spread of all the black-naped species" (Sharpe, 1877).

The engraver employed by Brisson was also used, with greater effect, by Daubenton and Buffon and the same underlying material from Réaumur is said to have been available (Stresemann, 1952). In Buffon's *Planches Enluminées* plates with widely separated numbers were brought together under a binding plan for ten volumes. Volume 3 of the large paper edition, for which the cover page is dated 1774, includes the orioles at its very end. The relevant text pages are pp. 280-281 and the accompanying plates are 79 (of 'Le Lorient de la Chine' which is of a black-headed oriole) and 570 of 'Le Coulavan' (sometimes rendered as Couliavan, the Cochinchinese local name footnoted by Brisson, p. 326). On page 281 there is text, but no accompanying illustration, about 'Le Lorient des Indes' which is cross referenced to Brisson and to Aldrovandi.

The date of July 1773 sometimes appears in citations. This may relate to the prior appearance of plate 570 (perhaps when put out by Daubenton).

Because neither Linnaeus nor Gmelin introduced a Latin name for the 'Lorient des

³ It was suggested that poor Brisson's name based on Aldrovandi may not have been unidentifiable but just badly translated from Latin into French (Whistler & Kinnear, 1933), but no nomenclatural change was suggested. The supposed origin of Poivre's specimens may have offered some lingering support for any remaining doubters but eventually this was reviewed carefully as part of a general study of Poivre's collections and what was known of his collecting history and Manila was sustained as the type locality (Stresemann, 1952).

Indes' it was suggested that *O. diffusus* Sharpe was a synonym of *O. indicus* Jerdon, with the argument that Jerdon introduced the name for the first time and did so with a wholly identifiable description (Hartert, 1910). It was this view that was followed by Meinertzhagen (1923) and, initially, in the 2nd Edition of the Fauna of British India (Baker, 1926). But this was soon corrected, and it was noted that *Oriolus indicus* Jerdon is preoccupied "by *Oriolus indicus* Daudin, 1802, [in] 'Hist. Nat., Buffon', ex Didot Quad., 14, p. 237", and the name *diffusus* Sharpe was reinstated for Chinese breeders reaching India (Baker, 1930a, b). This posthumous edition of Buffon, who lived from 1707 to 1788, has not been inspected personally; it was published in the midst of the French Revolution, edited by Didot, and comprised 24 volumes on 'Matières générales', 14 on 'Quadrupèdes' and 18 on birds as well as subsequent volumes on oviparous quadrupeds and snakes, on fish and on cetaceans. The volumes on birds, by F.M. Daudin, are supposed to have appeared in 1799. That this name is cited with reference to 1802 may be an error or may indicate that this Latin name (and indeed perhaps all the Latin names) appeared in volume 14 of 'Quadrupèdes', which is attributed to that year and which contained a table — just possibly by Lacépède to whom the whole work was dedicated — setting out the divisions of the mammals and the birds and their distribution (BMNH, 1903). Neither volume has been available for my inspection.

In the supplement or *Ergänzungsband* to *Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna* (Hartert & Steinbacher, 1932-1938) Meinertzhagen's treatment was accepted together with Baker's view that Daudin had applied a Latin binomen *indicus* and that that name was now unavailable because of the indeterminate name of the bird described. This set the seal on a treatment that was to be adopted by virtually all subsequent authors; the name *diffusus* is now uniformly applied to a form that is only a migrant, leaving breeding grounds throughout China and flying to SE Asia, and reaching India, and even Ceylon, in smaller numbers.

This explains why the name *chinensis* is applied as the trinomial of the resident Philippine population and the name *diffusus* to breeding Chinese birds which are migratory and just include easternmost India in their winter range.

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