

Comment on the proposed conservation of *Ammonites* (currently *Pachydiscus*) *neubergicus* Hauer, 1858 (Cephalopoda, Ammonoidea)
(Case 2460: see BZN 43: 277–278)

Gerhard Hahn

Fachbereich Geowissenschaften, Universitätsgebiet Lahnberge, 355 Marburg (Lahn), W. Germany

In this application Henderson & Kennedy seek the suppression of the specific name *chrishna* because (para. 2) 'our current research has shown that *neubergicus* is a junior subjective synonym of *Ammonites chrishna* Forbes, 1846'. They go on to say that *chrishna* has had some recent usage.

I understand (although the application does not say so) that *A. chrishna* is based on an extant single specimen from India; *A. Neubergicus* derives from W. Europe. The synonymy is a matter of subjective opinion only, and later authors (perhaps with more material) may wish to separate the species. I do not object to giving *neubergicus* precedence over *chrishna*, but in the present circumstances the suppression of the latter name is not justified.

Comments on the proposed suppression of *Rallus nigra* Miller, 1784 and *Columba R. Forsteri* Wagler, 1829 (Aves).
(Cases 2276 and 2277; see BZN 40: 249–251 and 42: 50–53).

(1) Storrs L. Olson

National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, U.S.A.

David W. Steadman

New York State Museum, 3140 Cultural Education Center, Albany, New York 12230, U.S.A.

1. In these very similar instances, Bruce, Holyoak & Thibault have proposed the suppression of early but recondite names for two species of Tahitian birds. In each case their arguments are based upon the assumption that the earlier names apply to species now occurring on Tahiti, rather than to extinct species or those now restricted to distant archipelagos. However, our recent paleontological and archeological studies have shown that pervasive man-caused extinctions have greatly altered the natural distributions of most species of birds in Polynesia in the past 200 years (Olson & James 1982; Steadman, 1985; Steadman & Olson, 1985), with the result that zoogeographical assumptions (e.g. about insular endemism) based on present or very recent distributions are often erroneous.

2. In applying to suppress the name *Rallus nigra* Miller, 1784, based on a painting of a bird by Georg Forster made on Cook's second voyage, Bruce *et al.* (BZN 40: 249–251) followed Lysaght (1956) in assuming that this name must apply to the widespread species *Porzana tabuensis* because 'it is extremely improbable that *nigra* could apply to some form other than the nominate *tabuensis*'. However, the fossil record shows (Steadman, 1985, and unpublished work) that *P. tabuensis* was sympatric with flightless forms of *Porzana* (similar to *P. atra* of Henderson Island) that were probably widespread in Polynesia before human contact. Thus the name *Rallus nigra* may well pertain to an extinct form of *Porzana* rather than to *P. tabuensis*. In a similar instance *Rallus pacificus* Gmelin is also known only from a Forster painting and has been accepted (e.g. Ripley, 1977) as a valid name for an extinct species of Tahitian rail.

3. In the case of the pigeons now placed in the genus *Ducula*, Bruce *et al.* (BZN 42: 50–53) propose the suppression of *Columba R. Forsteri* Wagler, 1829, also based on a bird from Tahiti described by Forster, and to place on the Official Lists both *Carpophaga aurorae* Peale, 1848, the name of a species known historically from Tahiti and from Makatea in the Tuamotus, and *Serresius galeatus* Bonaparte, 1855, that of a very different species now confined to Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas. While we believe that the original description of *C. R. Forsteri* clearly fits *D. galeata* more closely than *D. aurorae* (Lysaght, 1957), fossil evidence shows that *galeata* and other very large forms of *Ducula* were widespread in the Pacific before being exterminated by man (Steadman & Olson, 1985, and unpublished work), so that the name *Columba R. Forsteri*, as with *Rallus nigra*, could apply to a separate but extinct taxon.

4. We should like to correct two bibliographic errors introduced by Bruce *et al.* Gray (1859) did not consider *C. R. Forsteri* to be a senior synonym of *Serresius galeatus* but listed both as separate species. Salvadori (1893) did not consider *C. R. Forsteri* to be a senior synonym of *Carpophaga aurorae*, but discussed it in a footnote under the heading '*Carpophaga ?forsteri*', stating that 'I should have thought the two the same species if it were not for the under-tail coverts being *ferruginous*, as mentioned by Forster.'

5. We are very strongly opposed to the suppression of the names *Rallus nigra* Miller, 1784 and *Columba R. Forsteri* (or *reinholdforsteri*) Wagler, 1829, and consider that both should remain available pending further paleontological and archeological investigation of Tahitian material and its correlation with Forster's descriptions and illustrations. Even if at present they are regarded as *nomina dubia* they should not be suppressed, in accordance with usual nomenclatural practices.

Additional References

- Olson, S. L. & James, H. F. 1982. Prodrum of the fossil avifauna of the Hawaiian Islands. *Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology*, **365**: 1–59.
- Steadman, D. W. 1985. Fossil birds from Mangaia, southern Cook Islands. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, **105**(2): 58–66.
- Steadman, D. W. & Olson, S. L. 1985. Bird remains from an archaeological site on Henderson Island, South Pacific: man-caused extinctions on an 'uninhabited' island. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, **82**: 6191–6195.

(2) Murray D. Bruce

8 Spurwood Road, Turramurra, N.S.W. 2074. Australia,

D. T. Holyoak

College of St. Paul & St. Mary, The Park, Cheltenham, Glos., GL50 2RH, England

J.-C. Thibault

Parc Natural Régional de Corse, Rue Général Fiorella, B.P. No. 417, 20184 Ajaccio Cédex Corse, France

1. In the above comment Olson & Steadman object to our proposals for suppression of *Rallus nigra* Miller and *Columba R. Forsteri* Wagler, because in their view both names may represent extinct species rather than being senior synonyms of living species. It is not surprising that the first studies of avian palaeontology from Polynesia have revealed the occurrence there of extinct taxa. However, species-level taxonomy in many avian genera relies heavily on interpretation of plumage coloration and of vocalisations (cf. discussion of Polynesian *Ducula* by Holyoak & Thibault, (1984, pp. 119–122)) not available from fossils.

2. There are no detailed published accounts of avian fossil remains from Tahiti (although J. Pichon (unpublished) is studying material from the Papenoo Valley), and because of the high incidence of insular endemism in the surviving Polynesian landbirds the fossils from other islands are of uncertain relevance to interpretation of the Tahitian avifauna. We therefore question Olson & Steadman's arguments about relationships and species-limits in Polynesian *Porzana* and *Ducula* as a whole, as well as their applicability to Tahitian forms.

3. We continue to hold the opinion that the names *Rallus nigra* and *Columba R. Forsteri* are unlikely to represent extinct species from Tahiti, and in any case we argue that both names were accompanied by such poor descriptions that indisputable proof of what species were involved is unlikely ever to be obtained. It is thus only by suppression of these names that stability and universality of usage will be maintained.

4. Besides achieving those vital aims, another advantage of suppressing these names is that new palaeontological findings (such as those promised for the future by Olson & Steadman) will lead to adequate description of new taxa and the provision of proper type material. We regard this as preferable to the controversial association of species based on osteological material with names based on very incomplete and unverifiable early descriptions, and we therefore wish our application to proceed.

Reference

- Holyoak, D. T. & Thibault J.-C. 1984. Contribution à l'étude des oiseaux de Polynésie orientale. *Mémoires, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Nouvelle Série, Série A (Zoologie)* **127**: 1–209.



Olson, Storrs L. et al. 1987. "Comments on the proposed suppression of *Rallus nigra* Miller, 1784 and *Columba R. Forsteri* Wagler, 1829 (Aves)." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 44, 126–128. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.289>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/44485>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.289>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/289>

Holding Institution

Natural History Museum Library, London

Sponsored by

Natural History Museum Library, London

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.