

A new genus for the Kerguelen Petrel

by Storrs L. Olson

Received 10 February 1999

The Kerguelen Petrel (*Pterodroma brevirostris* auct.) is an inhabitant of stormy southern seas, breeding at the islands of Kerguelen, Crozet, Marion, Tristan da Cunha, and Gough. Like the bird itself, its specific and generic nomenclature has been through some rough weather. The Kerguelen Petrel was long placed among the gadfly petrels of the genus *Pterodroma* (formerly *Aestrelata* or *Oestrelata*). Imber (1985) used characters of the upper intestine, supplemented with data from Mallophaga and behavioural traits, to show that the Kerguelen Petrel was not closely related to *Pterodroma*. He resurrected Mathews' (1942) name *Lugensa* for it and placed it among the fulmarine petrels, a treatment that has had influential followers (e.g. Sibley & Monroe 1990).

Imber's observations were preceded by those of Harper (1973) who noted major differences between skulls of the Kerguelen Petrel and *Pterodroma mollis*, which, along with *P. inexpectata* and *P. ultima*, had been thought to be a close ally (Jouanin & Mougin, 1979). My own examination of skeletons of the Kerguelen Petrel showed this species to be very different from all available taxa of *Pterodroma*, and more similar to fulmarines in certain characters, such as in the configuration of the distal end of the humerus. On the basis of mitochondrial DNA sequences, Nunn (1994) reported the Kerguelen Petrel to be a fulmarine and not part of the genus *Pterodroma*. He referred it to the genus *Lugensa*. In a subsequent phylogeny based on the same kinds of data (Nunn & Stanley 1998), *Lugensa* was still separated from *Pterodroma* but was placed nearer the shearwaters (*Puffinus* and *Calonectris*). In any case, the consensus is that the Kerguelen Petrel is a distinct generic entity that is not particularly closely related to *Pterodroma*.

The specific name used for the Kerguelen Petrel was long the subject of contention, particularly as concerns the epithet *Procellaria lugens* attributed to Kuhl (1820). The issue is complex and the details unimportant to the basic theme of this note and so are best summarized. Kuhl (1820: 144) made reference to a specimen from the Atlantic Ocean once in the possession of J. R. Forster, to another specimen of a smallish petrel in his possession since lost, and to what he referred to as *Procellaria lugens* Banks (and on page 145 as *Proc. lugens* Forst.) based on two drawings by Sidney Parkinson from James Cook's first expedition. All of these he listed erroneously under the name "*Proc. grisea* L.", which we now know to refer to the Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* (Gmelin). Thus, although the name *P. lugens* first saw publication in Kuhl, it was simply proposed as a synonym.

Bourne & Elliott (1965) determined that the Parkinson drawings were of the species now known as *Pterodroma inexpectata* Forster (1844). They also considered that Kuhl's description of the specimen now lost could not be identified, from which they concluded that the name *lugens* should "perhaps best be written off as indeterminable". Since then it has been consigned to oblivion. I cannot see in any

case that the name *lugens* can be attached to the specimen that Kuhl was attempting to describe. Thus *P. lugens* must either be regarded as a synonym of *Procellaria grisea* Gmelin or as an earlier name for *P. inexpectata* Forster (1844). Regardless, the name *lugens*, expunged by Bourne & Elliot (1965), cannot pertain to the Kerguelen Petrel. This conclusion has major consequences for the generic name *Lugensa*.

The entire text for Mathews' (1942) new subgenus *Lugensa* is as follows:

The Short-billed Petrel, formerly called Pterodroma brevirostris, now known as P. lugens of Kuhl 1820, has the bill very much compressed on the sides. That character is shared by no other species of Pterodromine Petrel and it can be made a diagnostic character for a new subgenus Lugensa and be known as Pterodroma (Lugensa) lugens (Kuhl 1820). As far as Mathews was concerned, there was only a single species in his new subgenus, that being *Procellaria lugens* Kuhl (1820), which must, therefore, be the type of the genus. It is quite irrelevant that Mathews "also mentioned the alternative name *P. brevirostris*" (Imber 1985: 215), because he regarded that name to be a junior synonym of *lugens*. Shortly thereafter, Mathews came to regard *P. brevirostris* as an earlier name for the Mascarene species *P. aterrima* Bonaparte and affirmed that his *Lugensa* had as "orthotype *Procelaria* [sic] *lugens* Kuhl 1820" (Mathews & Hallstrom 1943: 8).

It can only follow that if the specific name *lugens* Kuhl cannot be identified with the Kerguelen Petrel, as concluded by Bourne & Elliott (1965), then the generic name *Lugensa* automatically follows it onto the rubbish heap of nomenclature. The only alternative would be to attach the name *lugens* to the species now known as *Pterodroma inexpectata*, in which case *Lugensa* would become a synonym of *Pterodroma*. Because either action leaves the Kerguelen Petrel without a generic name, I propose the following.

***Aphrodroma*, new genus**

Type-species. *Oestrelata kidderi* Coues (1875a,b). The holotype of this species (USNM 68970) is an undisputed example of Kerguelen Petrel, an adult male taken on 22 Oct 1874 on Kerguelen Island by J. H. Kidder (Deignan 1961: 12). The selection of *O. kidderi* as the type species of *Aphrodroma* insures that the generic name will always attach to the organism intended to be distinguished. The putative holotype of *Procellaria brevirostris* Lesson (1831) is a "battered" (Bourne 1957: 185, footnote) specimen in the Paris Museum collected by Delalande in 1820, supposedly at the Cape of Good Hope (Mathews & Hallstrom 1943). Brooke (1981) found "no reason to doubt the provenance of the type specimen", although the species is only a rare vagrant in South African waters (Maclean 1985). Doubts have been expressed both that this is the type of Lesson's name (there being discrepancies between it and Lesson's description—see Elliott 1957: 565) and that the specimen is correctly identified as a Kerguelen Petrel. Current usage follows the assessments of Bourne & Elliott (1965), aided by C. Jouanin (in Elliott 1957, and Bourne & Elliott 1965), that this is Lesson's type and that it is a Kerguelen Petrel. If so, then the species may now

be known as *Aphrodroma brevirostris* (Lesson). Should the identity of the Paris specimen, or its status as a type, be revised, the genus would remain the same and the Kerguelen Petrel would then be known as *Aphrodroma kidderi* (Coues).

Etymology. Gr. *aphros*, foam, froth, and *dromos*, running, from the habitat of the species in stormy seas. The name is feminine in gender.

Diagnosis. See the diagnosis of Imber (1985: 215) for his *Lugensa*, to which may be added the cranial characters mentioned by Harper (1973).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to W. R. P. Bourne for calling certain references to my attention and for reviewing the manuscript. I also thank Richard C. Banks for his comments.

References:

- Brooke, R. K. 1981. The type-locality of *Pterodroma brevirostris* (Lesson). *Ardea* 69: 143.
- Bourne, W. R. P. 1957. Additional notes on the birds of the Cape Verde Islands, with particular reference to *Bulweria mollis* and *Fregata magnificens*. *Ibis* 99: 182–190.
- Bourne, W. R. P. & Elliott, H. F. I. 1965. The correct scientific name for the Kerguelen Petrel. *Ibis* 107: 548–550.
- Coues, E. 1875a. [Description of *Oestrelata kidderi*, 19 Aug 1875]. *Forest and Stream* 5: 20 [not seen].
- Coues, E. 1875b. [Description of *Oestrelata kidderi*, 7 Dec 1875] Pages 28–29 in J. H. Kidder. Contributions to the natural history of Kerguelen Island, made in connection with the Americans Transit-of-Venus Expedition, 1874–75. *Bulletin of the United States National Museum* 2: 28.
- Deignan, H. G. 1961. Type specimens of birds in the United States National Museum. *Bulletin of the United States National Museum* 221.
- Elliott, H. F. I. 1957. A contribution to the ornithology of the Tristan da Cunha group. *Ibis* 99: 545–586.
- Forster, J. R. 1844. *Descriptiones Animalium*. Officina Academica, Berlin.
- Harper, P. C. 1973. The field identification and supplementary notes on the Soft-plumaged Petrel (*Pterodroma mollis* Gould, 1844). *Notornis* 20: 193–201.
- Imber, M. J. 1985. Origins, phylogeny and taxonomy of the gadfly petrels *Pterodroma* spp. *Ibis* 127: 197–229.
- Jouanin, C. & Mouglin, J.-L. 1979. Order procellariiformes. Pages 48–121 in E. Mayr and G. W. Cottrell, eds. *Check-list of birds of the world*. Vol. 1, 2nd ed. Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Kuhl, H. 1820. *Beitrges zur Zoologie und vergleichenden Anatomie*. Hermannschen Buchhandlung, Frankfurt am Main.
- Lesson, R. P. 1831. *Traité d'Ornithologie*. F. G. Levrault, Paris.
- Maclean, G. L. 1985. *Roberts' birds of Southern Africa*. Trustees of the John Voelker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.
- Mathews, G. M. 1942. New genus. *Emu* 41: 305.
- Mathews, G. M. & Halstrom, E. J. L. 1943. *Notes on the Order Procellariiformes*. Verity Hewitt Bookshop, Canberra.
- Nunn, G. B. 1994 [Abstract] A mitochondrial DNA phylogeny petrels Procellariiformes. *Journal für Ornithologie* 135, Sonderheft: 34.
- Nunn, G. B. & Stanley, S. E. 1998. Body size effects and rates of cytochrome *b* evolution in tube-nosed seabirds. *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 15: 1360–1371.
- Sibley, C. G. & Monroe, Jr. B. L. 1990. *Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world*. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven.

Address: S. L. Olson, Department of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. 20560, USA.

© British Ornithologists' Club 2000

Yellow-throated Oriole, *Icterus xantholaemus* Gil 1918, a non-valid species

by Josefina Barreiro & Jaime Pérez del Val

Received 25 February 1999

While updating the bird collection of the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales (MNCN) in Madrid, Spain, the type specimen of the Yellow-throated Oriole *Icterus xantholaemus* was examined. This species, described by Gil Lletget (1918), was only known from this specimen (Peters 1968, Sibley & Monroe 1990) and special care was taken to check the capture data and to compare the specimen with allied species, since its status remained doubtful.

Peters (1968) and Howard & Moore (1991) accepted the Yellow-throated Oriole but Peters doubted its validity because only the type specimen had been found. Similarly, Sibley & Monroe (1990) did not check the specimen but speculated that it "may be an immature of *I. mesomelas* or possibly a hybrid of unknown parentage".

The type specimen (MNCN 8002) clearly shows the distinctive features of the male of Saffron-cowled Blackbird *Xanthopsar flavus*: head, lesser wing-coverts, rump band, flanks and underparts golden yellow; tibial feathers, lores, nape and rest of upperparts black (see Ridgely & Tudor 1989). The measurements taken (bill 21, wing 104, tail 79, tarsus 25.5 mm) also fall within those reported from eight males of *X. flavus* kept at the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural of Montevideo (bill 20.1–26, $x=22$, wing 102.5–112.3, $x=106.7$, tail 71.9–83.6, $x=78.9$, tarsus 24.6–26.7, $x=25.6$ mm) (Cuello *in litt.* 1998).

Astonishingly, the specimen from which Gil Lletget described the Yellow-throated Oriole was collected in Ecuador, more than 3,000 km northwest of the known range of the Saffron-cowled Blackbird (south Paraguay, south Brazil, Uruguay and the northeast of Argentina). However the specimen has two old labels. On one of them appears in print: "*América. Ecuador. Colección de Manuel Villavicencio. No.*" with the number "3" written in ink. From this information, Gil Lletget (1918) noted Ecuador as terra typica and Manuel Villavicencio as collector. The other label is hand written: "*Sur de Brasil*". This latter is exactly like those used by the naturalist Manuel Jiménez de la Espada, a member of the *Expedición al Pacífico 1862–1865* (Puig-Samper 1988) who reports the purchase in Quito of a bird collection from Mr Villavicencio (*Catálogo de la aves recogidas por Don Marcos Jiménez de la Espada de Noviembre 1864 a Octubre 1865*. Unpublished hand written catalogue. Archives of the MNCN of Madrid). Villavicencio's collection was accompanied by a numbered list, which is missing. Jiménez de la Espada might have written *Sur de Brasil* as the



Olson, Storrs L. 2000. "A new genus for the Kerguelen Petrel." *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 120, 59–62.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/123705>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/50731>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

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

Rights Holder: British Ornithologists' Club

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

Rights: <https://www.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>.