

The correct spelling, date and citation for the Chestnut-backed Owlet of Sri Lanka

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Introduction

The Chestnut-backed Owlet, endemic to Sri Lanka, is listed by Ripley (1961: 194; 1982: 183) as *Glaucidium radiatum castanonotum* (Blyth) with a citation given as *Athene castanonota* Blyth, 1852, Cat. Bds. Mus. Asiat. Soc. 39. Peters (1940: 133) treated it as *Glaucidium cuculoides castanonotum* with an identical citation except that he gave the date as "1849 (1852)" and also referred to its earlier introduction by Blyth (1846), which will be discussed below. Baker (1927: 447) treated it as a full species but spelled the name, cited from the same page as *castanotum* and offered a date of 'Dec. 1852' for publication. Baker (1930: 389) used the spelling *castanonotum* (without explaining the changed spelling leading everyone no doubt to presume that this was a deliberate correction).

Recently, Dickinson (2003, 2004) also used the spelling *castanonotum* and the date 1852, as have other authors (with 1849 or 1852). Since the spelling, date and publication cited are all incorrect there is clearly a story to tell.

The 'supposed' original publication

The "Catalogue of the birds in the museum [of the] Asiatic Society" (hereafter the 'Catalogue') is where the name has universally been supposed to first appear.

Peters (op. cit.) was quite correct that Blyth's first report on this bird appeared in 1846 in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and that he there, on page 280, employed the name *Athene castanopterus* for an owl from Ceylon. Blyth here described two owls; an owl from the Malabar Coast and Travancore he named *Athene malabarica*; of the other, from Ceylon, he wrote, "Which appears to be the true *Strix castanoptera* of Horsfield". So believing the two to belong to the genus *Athene* he used the name *Athene castanopterus* (Horsfield, 1821) and provided his own description.

It has generally been considered that Blyth later realised that the Ceylon bird differed and thus gave it a new name on p. 39 in his Catalogue. The name there is *castanotus* not *castanonotus*. No description is given but there is an explicit reference to his description of this species on page 280 of the *Journal* in 1846. This is thus a *nomen novum* (new name) in the sense of being a replacement name. Because there is no description the availability of the name is dependant on this 'indication' (see ICZN, 1999;

Glossary p. 107¹). Blyth (1846) did provide a description and it is not that given by Horsfield for the Javan bird. Thus the indication is valid and this act or renaming would be valid as such if it were in fact the first such renaming.

Blyth's "Catalogue"

One of us (ECD) has assessed the evidence relating to the appropriate publication date for Blyth's Catalogue (Dickinson, 2004) and explained that the title page is dated 1849 as well as the circumstances which lead him to the conclusion that the Society did not publish the Catalogue until September 1852 or later (and December 1852 as postulated by Baker may not be far out)². The arguments need not be repeated in detail and the article concerned can be made available to those wishing to read it³. Here (op. cit. p. 180) ECD noted, "originally spelled *castanotum*" [sic, error for *castanotus*]!

What is particularly relevant to this discussion is the long period of time during which one authority or another continued to date Blyth's Catalogue from 1849. Had the renaming discussed above been published in a catalogue that appeared in 1849 it would have been the first such act and it would have been valid there. Instead any publication that appeared before the Catalogue would have priority and, because the 1849 date was in use for so long, no one considered that the name might have been used elsewhere between 1846 and 1852.

The real first publication

While Dickinson (2004) sought to provide all the corrections necessary due to the need to use 1852 for Blyth's 'Catalogue' he did not discover this problem, which was instead raised by CJ. He found that Blyth (1850) had included the name on p. 511 in volume 19 of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Here one finds '*Ath. castanotus* Blyth, Museum Catalogue' and no description is given but there is the same reference to Blyth (1846).

Consequently the correct source reference for the name *Glaucidium castanotum* (Blyth) is *J. Asiatic Soc. Bengal* 19: 511 and the correct date is 1850.

That the name was so often spelled *castanonotus* may be due to the use of that spelling in the influential *Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum* by Sharpe (1875: 215) where the original, cited from page 39 of the 'Catalogue' is said to have been *Athene castanonota*. Several other later works are listed by Sharpe in each case the spelling given includes the letters 'nono'.

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1 "Indication, *n.* A reference to previously published information, or a published act, which in the absence of a definition or description allows a name proposed before 1931, and that otherwise satisfies the relevant provisions of Articles 10 and 11, to be available [Art. 12.2]. See also Article 13.6.1."

2 The recommendation that it be dated 1852 brings with it the presumption that that means December 31, 1852, unless it can be proved to have appeared earlier (see ICZN, 1999: Art. 21.3.2).

3 It may be downloaded from the website of the National Museum of Natural History of the Netherlands, Leiden www.repositorio.naturalis.nl or obtained from its author Edward@asiaorn.org

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Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (Charadriidae): first record for Bhutan

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On 8th September 2007, at 1530 hrs, we observed a Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* on the Punakhatshangchu River, opposite to Khuruthang town, Punakha, Bhutan (27°33'10.35"N 89°52'33.58"E; 1522 m.).

The first bird seen was solitary, and paused on a boulder on the edge of exposed rocky sand bar at a distance of approximately 200 m from the bank of the river. The weather conditions were sunny and calm. We observed the bird with a 20x Kowa spotting scope and 10x Bausch & Lomb binoculars. After observing the individual loafing on the rocky sand bar for approximately 30 min., the bird flew west across the river towards Khuruthang town and appeared to land in the vicinity of the soccer playing field. After birdwatching for a few hours more on the north bank, we drove to the grass-covered soccer field (27°33'11.17"N 89°52'22.51"E), where we thought the bird had landed, and were surprised to find two Pacific Golden Plover actively feeding by probing in the ground on and at the edge of the soccer field. We observed them and photographed one individual on the ground at a distance of 70 m at dusk 1800–1830 hrs.

We identified all individuals as Pacific Golden Plover from the distinctive dark and white pattern of the head and the golden yellow scaling on the back. Birds observed were in adult breeding plumage. The face, breast and belly were black and fore neck mottled black in contrast to the distinct white band stretching from the supercilium along the flank and vent. In flight, the under wing was dusky grey. The species, in this range, which the Pacific Golden Plover could be confused with is the Grey Plover *P. squatarola*, but the upperparts of the Grey Plover are silver-grey

and the underwing is white with black axillaries (Hayman *et al.* 1986; Robson 2000).

This Pacific Golden Plover has not previously been recorded in Bhutan (Inskipp *et al.* 1999; Spierenburg 2005), although it is not unexpected that it could occur as a passage migrant in Bhutan, while moving from its Arctic breeding grounds, across Tibet, to the Indian Subcontinent—where it is a widespread winter visitor (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Pacific Golden Plover winter in coastal areas but are also found inland on short grasslands and often on playing fields (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Southward migrating birds depart from the Siberian tundra in late August and early September, moving at night in large flocks (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). It is noteworthy that in the days preceding our observation of the species in Bhutan, the area had experienced continuous, heavy rainfall, which may have forced migrating birds to stop en route to their wintering grounds.

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