

TAXONOMIC UPDATE

Species-level and other changes proposed for Asian birds, 2011

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As usual, it is important to stress that what is reported here is not necessarily the opinion of either the authors or the Oriental Bird Club.

New species

Puffinus bryani

Pyle *et al.* (2011) named Bryan's Shearwater based on a single specimen collected in February 1963 from a burrow on Midway Atoll in the north-central Pacific. This specimen was originally identified as a Little Shearwater *P. assimilis* but its biometrics revealed it to be smaller than any other known shearwater, and phylogenetic analyses indicated it is distinct, with a pair-wise sequence divergence of at least 3.8% from related taxa. Pyle *et al.* (2011) offered the following diagnosis:

Differs from all taxa of the traditional *puffinus* group (including the Pacific *opisthomelas*, *auricularis*, and *newelli*) by much smaller size and bluish leg color. From all subantarctic taxa of the *assimilis* group and *myrtae* by shorter tarsus and wing, especially for a male, proportionally longer tail, and darker undertail coverts and undersides of the primaries. From all Pacific taxa of the traditional *lherminieri* group (including *subalaris*, *polynesiae*, *dichrous*, *gunax*, and *bannermani*) by much smaller size and bluish leg color. From Atlantic *baroli* by shorter tarsus, darker undertail coverts, and dark undersides of the primaries. Closest in measurements and appearance to Atlantic *boydi* but tarsus, wing, and tail shorter, especially for a male. Genetically, *bryani* is not close to *boydi*, diverging in the sequence of cytochrome *b* 5.2% from it and to a similar degree from all members of the traditional *assimilis* group (except *myrtae*). Sequence divergence of >4.2% from all members of traditional *lherminieri* group and $\geq 3.8\%$ from the *puffinus* group (now including *myrtae*). These divergence values are greater than those for most other small black-and-white species of *Puffinus*.

The authors doubted that the species breeds where the type specimen was collected; they thought it must simply have been scouting the island. Japanese ornithologists were quick to pick this up. Otani (2011) pointed out that similar birds have

been collected on and photographed near the Bonin Islands, and suggested that the “‘Bonin Little Shearwater’ is in fact Bryan's Shearwater’. Then, in May this year, at a meeting of the Pacific Seabird Group in Hawaii, Horikoshi *et al.* (2012) confirmed that six specimens they had found on the Bonins, either as corpses or alive, since 1997 were indeed Bryan's Shearwaters. Three of the specimens were killed by Black Rats *Rattus rattus* on an islet off Chichijima Island, and the authors conclude that the new species must be very rare and threatened in the archipelago, where urgent measures are now needed to find its breeding sites and to eradicate rats.

‘White-spotted Hawk Owl’

Without seeking to provide a formal name for it, Madika *et al.* (2011) documented records of a *Ninox* owl found at 2,250 m on Gunung Rorekatimbu, on the north-east border of Lore Lindu National Park, in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Photographs taken in 1999 of one particular individual show a bird with heavy whitish spotting on the underside and broad white joined-up ‘eyebrows’, features absent in other owls of the island, including those in the genus *Ninox* to which the mystery owl appears to belong. Subsequent photographs taken in Lore Lindu show birds with rather weaker markings, but nonetheless seem to corroborate the existence of an undescribed taxon. Recordings of calls at Lore Lindu made by unseen owls believed to be Cinnabar Hawk Owl *Ninox ios* are very similar to recordings of the species in North Sulawesi, from where to date it is exclusively known with certainty. Moreover, in general appearance the Lore Lindu owl most closely resembles Cinnabar Hawk Owl. On this basis Madika *et al.* (2011) remained open to the possibility that the taxon in question is a new species or a new subspecies of Cinnabar Hawk Owl.

Suggested splits in journals

Various Philippine taxa

In the pages of *Forktail*—hence no further detail here—Collar (2011a) made the case for giving specific recognition to ‘Philippine Collared Dove’ *Streptopelia (bitorquatus) dusumieri*, ‘Philippine Green Pigeon’ *Treron (pompadora) axillaris*, ‘Buru Green Pigeon’ *T. (p.) aromatica*, Luzon Racquet-tail *Prioniturus montanus*, Mindanao Racquet-tail



TINA MALLARI

Plate 1. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon (smyrnensis) gularis*, Philippines, 15 November 2008.



TIM LOSEBY

Plate 2. White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*, Bharatpur, India, February 1998.

Plate 3. Rufous-crowned Bee-eater *Merops (viridis) americanus*, Subic, Zimbales, Luzon, Philippines, 6 April 2012.



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P. waterstradti, Blue-winged Racquet-tail *P. verticalis*, Blue-headed Racquet-tail *P. platenae*, Yellow-breasted Racquet-tail *P. flavicans*, White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon (smyrnensis) gularis* (Plate 1), with White-breasted Kingfisher applying to *H. smyrnensis* (Plate 2), 'Northern Silvery Kingfisher' *Alcedo (argentata) flumenicola*, 'Rufous-crowned Bee-eater' *Merops (viridis) americanus* (Plate 3), 'Spot-throated Flameback' *Dinopium (javanense) everetti*, 'Luzon Flameback' *Chrysocolaptes (lucidus) haematribon*, 'Buff-spotted Flameback' *C. (l.) lucidus*, 'Yellow-faced Flameback' *C. (l.) xanthocephalus*, 'Red-headed Flameback' *C. (l.) erythrocephalus*, 'Javan Flameback' *C. (l.) strictus*, Greater Flameback *C. (l.) guttacrastatus*, 'Sri Lankan Flameback' (Crimson-backed Flameback) *C. (l.) stricklandi*, 'Southern Sooty Woodpecker' *Mulleripicus (funnebris) fuliginosus*, Visayan Wattled Broadbill *Eurylaimus (steerii) samarensis*, White-lored Oriole *Oriolus (steerii) albiloris*, Tablas Drongo *Dicrurus (hottentottus) menagei*, Grand or Long-billed Rhabdornis *Rhabdornis (inornatus) grandis*, 'Visayan Rhabdornis' *Rhabdornis (i.) rabori* and 'Visayan Shama' *Copsychus (luzoniensis) superciliaris* (names in inverted commas represent suggested names for the resulting species).

Ptilinopus epia* and *P. mangoliensis

Rheindt *et al.* (2011a) presented evidence of vocal divergence in the three morphologically rather indistinct forms of Maroon-chinned Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus subgularis*. The species *sensu lato* occurs on Sulawesi (form *epia*), the Banggai archipelago (including Peleng and Banggai) east of Sulawesi (nominotypical *subgularis*) and the Sula Islands still further east (form *mangoliensis*). They found that the geographically intermediate form *subgularis* is vocally most distinct, giving more and much faster, but shorter, 'whoops' per song than the others, which differ from each other diagnostically albeit less obviously.

Rheindt *et al.* (2011a) argued that glaciation events would have brought *mangoliensis* and *subgularis* into contact several times in the past three million years, and that their retention of vocal and plumage characters indicates absence of interbreeding. No such overlap is thought to have existed between *epia* and *subgularis*, but since the vocal differences between the two are as pronounced as those between *subgularis* and *mangoliensis* it is assumed that these taxa would also have failed to interbreed. Rheindt *et al.* (2011a) suggested 'Oberholser's Fruit Dove' as a name for *P. epia*, as it has already been used by Gibbs *et al.* (2001), 'Banggai Fruit Dove' for *P. subgularis* and 'Sula Fruit Dove' for *P. mangoliensis*.

Otus nigrorum* and *O. everetti

Miranda *et al.* (2011) used molecular and morphometric evidence to parse the differences between the three forms of Philippine Scops Owl *Otus megalotis*. They found that what they called 'Visayan Lowland Scops Owl' *O. nigrorum* is basal to this clade but that 'Mindanao Lowland Scops Owl' *O. everetti* also differed significantly from 'Luzon Lowland Scops Owl' *O. megalotis* both genetically and morphometrically. Of the three taxa, *megalotis* is the largest and *nigrorum* very obviously the smallest. In a brief review of plumage characters, Miranda *et al.* (2011) remarked:

The taxon *megalotis* has two characters the other two lacked; scapular stripes and tarsal feathers extending onto the upper part of the foot. A reddish-colored head characterizes *nigrorum* in contrast to *megalotis* and *everetti*.

The darkest taxon is *everetti*, which has dark brown underparts and is nearly black on the nape. In contrast, *nigrorum* is the lightest taxon with white-striated underparts and reddish nape. Intermediate is *megalotis* with ashy-brown underparts and brownish nape.

A red morph is also found in *megalotis*. Two of 21 (10%) specimens examined were red morph..., and three (14%) appeared to be intermediates...

Apus salimalii*, *A. leuconyx* and *A. cooki

Leader (2011) used mensural data and plumage differences to evaluate the degrees of distinctiveness shown by taxa in the Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* complex, resulting in its separation into four species as follows:

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus pacificus*, breeding from Siberia east to Kamchatka and northern Japan, south to northern China, with a single subspecies, *kurodae*, breeding across eastern China, southern Japan and Taiwan, both with a broad white rump-patch, pale patch confined to the throat, and dark brown body and underwing-coverts;

Salim Ali's Swift *A. salimalii* (referred to in the paper, in error, as *salimali*), breeding above 3,400 m on the eastern Tibetan Plateau and adjacent western Sichuan, China, with the same wing length but longer tail than *pacificus*, a much narrower throat-patch than all other taxa, narrow rump-patch and mid-brown crown and nape;

Blyth's Swift *A. leuconyx*, breeding from 1,300 to 3,800 m in Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and north-east India, the smallest form, similar to *salimalii* except for its broad, off-white throat-patch with dark shaft-streaks and an ill-defined lower border extending onto an upper breast which is paler brown than in other taxa;

Cook's Swift *A. cooki*, restricted to lowland Myanmar, northern Thailand, Vietnam and Guangxi province, China, with a narrow rump-patch with conspicuous dark shaft-streaks broadening to form broad, club-shaped dark marks, all-black upperparts (with green iridescence), underparts and underwing-coverts, off-white throat-patch with well-defined black shaft streaks (more pronounced than in other taxa).

***Pomatorhinus* scimitar babblers**

The scimitar babblers of the genera *Pomatorhinus* are in a state of taxonomic flux at present. That this has occurred is not surprising given the small morphological and plumage differences that exist between different forms/races/subspecies that have been described over the last 150 years or more. Dickinson (2003) recognised eight species, Collar & Robson (2007) 14, but, apart from the latter splitting *P. musicus* from *P. ruficollis*, both accepted four species with almost the same number of subspecies, although there are a few variations in the forms/races/subspecies they recognise; putting the Dickinson number first: Large Scimitar Babbler *P. hypoleucos* (5, 5), White-browed Scimitar Babbler *P. schisticeps* (13, 12), Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *P. ruficollis* (14, 13), and Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler *P. ferruginosus* (8, 7). Reddy & Moyle (2011) subjected 41 taxa from the four forms above to molecular evaluation and morphological scrutiny and reassembled them into 27 phylogenetic species. (In the following list, taxa in brackets after 'with' are regarded as undiagnosable and are not considered subspecies but synonyms of the phylogenetic species with which they are associated. However they did not examine the taxon *laurentei*, which is known only from the type locality, and based on the original description it differs from *P. reconditus* only in having a dusky pink bill. The colour of the bill appears to be a very variable character in this complex, and locality information indicates that *laurentei* overlaps in range with the form *reconditus*. Therefore, Reddy & Moyle tentatively lump the two taxa as *P. reconditus* until further sampling is feasible.)

Pomatorhinus hypoleucos group:

1. *Pomatorhinus hypoleucos*
2. *Pomatorhinus tickelli* (with *wrayi*)
3. *Pomatorhinus brevirostris* (with *laotianus*)
4. *Pomatorhinus hainanus*

Pomatorhinus schisticeps group:

5. *Pomatorhinus leucogaster*
6. *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* (with *cryptanthus*)
7. *Pomatorhinus mearsi*
8. *Pomatorhinus nuchalis*
9. *Pomatorhinus fastidiosus*
10. *Pomatorhinus klossi*

with the next three found to belong to the *ruficollis* group:

11. *Pomatorhinus olivaceus* (with *difficilis* and *ripponi*)

12. *Pomatorhinus humilis*

13. *Pomatorhinus annamensis*

Pomatorhinus ruficollis group:

14. *Pomatorhinus ruficollis* (with *godwini*)

15. *Pomatorhinus bakeri*

16. *Pomatorhinus similis* (with *bhamoensis* and *albipectus*)

17. *Pomatorhinus saturatus* (with *beaulieui*)

18. *Pomatorhinus reconditus* (with *eidos*, *intermedius* and *laurentei*)

19. *Pomatorhinus stridulus* (with *styani*)

20. *Pomatorhinus musicus*

21. *Pomatorhinus nigrostellatus*

Pomatorhinus ferruginosus group:

22. *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus*

23. *Pomatorhinus albogularis*

24. *Pomatorhinus orientalis*

25. *Pomatorhinus dickinsoni*

26. *Pomatorhinus formosus* (with *phayrei*)

27. *Pomatorhinus stanfordi* (with *namdapha*)

Independently, Song *et al.* (2011) examined the relationships among 10 of the 11 subspecies of Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *P. ruficollis*

Plate 4. Scarlet-faced Liocichla *Liocichla (phoenicea) ripponi*, Doi Lang, Chang Mai, 21 April 2012.





DING LEI

Plate 6. Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus vinaceus*, Mt Meili, Yunnan, China, 28 June 2009.

Plate 7. Vinaceous Rosefinch *Carpodacus vinaceus formosanus*, Yushan NP, Taiwan, 18 April 2011.



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strongly differentiated genetically and possesses a white rather than cinnamon belly, with a ‘boldly marked chest’ (‘Visayan Fantail’).

Black-and-cinnamon Fantail, like Blue Fantail, divides into two distinct clades. The form *nigrocinnamomea*, with a white breast-crescent, occupies four mountain systems in southern Mindanao, while *hutchinsonii*, lacking (or only vaguely showing) the breast-crescent and with a deeper cinnamon breast and belly, is restricted to at least seven ranges in the north and east of the island. However, the genetic structure is shallow, the sampling limited and the possibility of clinality not ruled out, so no split is (yet) proposed.

Pied Fantails in the Philippines show deep genetic differences from their closest geographical counterparts in Borneo, are much larger in size, and possess an ashy-grey (not sooty-grey) back, white (not buff-washed white) throat and breast, and a narrower black breast-band, on which basis they are split as Philippine Pied Fantail *R. nigritorquis* (Plate 5).

Carpodacus formosanus

On a cursory examination, Collar (2004) thought that the highly disjunct Taiwan population of the Vinaceous Rosefinch *C. vinaceus* (Plate 6) of central and south-west China and the Himalayas might not even merit being separated taxonomically as *formosanus*. With far closer examination of the evidence Wu *et al.* (2011) suggest it deserves species rank.

Their mtDNA tree shows that these two taxa form two exclusively monophyletic clades, and their nuclear evidence also tends to support this. Moreover, quantitative comparisons of morphometric traits and spectrometric analysis of male plumage colouration showed that *formosanus* is slightly larger generally, rather longer-winged and distinctly longer-tailed, as well as the male being brighter and redder (Plate 7). The authors invoke the phylogenetic and evolutionary species concepts to assert its taxonomic status.

Suggested splits in books

Handbook of the birds of the world

The penultimate volume (16) in this series (del Hoyo *et al.* 2011) includes four families and covers 45 regional species in two of these families. Most are buntings and New World sparrows Emberizidae, with two vagrant species of New World blackbirds Icteridae. The taxonomy employed is conservative, with only two species-level differences from the OBC checklist (Inskipp *et al.* 1996).

One of these affects the House Bunting *Emberiza striolata*, where Jaramillo *et al.* (2011) split the north-west African populations as House Bunting

E. sahari, leaving the populations from north-east Africa to India as Striolated Bunting *E. striolata*.

The other species, Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*, is an extreme vagrant to Japan and Russia, which Jaramillo *et al.* (2011) split into four species, of which the one recorded in the region is Sooty Fox Sparrow *P. unalaschcensis*.

Reed and bush warblers

This book, by Kennerley & Pearson (2010), was not included in last year’s summary (Inskipp *et al.* 2011) because it contained no novel species-level changes. However, it contains valuable supporting information for the following splits: Baikal Bush Warbler *Bradypterus (thoracicus) davidi*, Javan Bush Warbler *B. (seebohmi) montis*, Timor Bush Warbler *B. (seebohmi) timorensis*, Manchurian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (agricola) tangorum*, Large-billed Reed Warbler *A. (?) orinus*, Sykes’s Warbler *Iduna (caligata) rama*, Hume’s Bush Warbler *Cettia (acanthizoides) brunnescens*, and Manchurian Warbler *C. (diphone) canturians*, as well as erecting three monospecific genera: *Bradypterus palliseri* in *Elaphrornis*, *Tesia castaneocoronata* in *Oligura* (but see below) and *Acrocephalus aedon* in *Phragamaticola*.

The true shrikes

Panov (2011) has produced detailed accounts, including taxonomic discussions for the true shrikes Laniidae of the world. Differences from the OBC checklist (Inskipp *et al.* 1996) include splitting Giant Shrike *Lanius giganteus* from Chinese Grey Shrike *L. sphenocercus* and Turkestan Shrike *L. phoenicuroides* (Plate 8) from Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* (Plate 9). However, he maintains the two-way split of Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor* and Southern Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis*, despite recent suggestions that this is not supportable.

Reinforced lumps

Casmerodius albus modestus

Inskipp *et al.* (1996) retained this species, Great Egret, in *Casmerodius*, but it is commonly treated in *Egretta* or *Ardea*, with consequent changed gender agreements. Drawing on the early study by Sheldon (1987), several recent treatments of this species (Christidis & Boles 2008, Gill & Donsker 2010) have broken it down so that *modestus* (India to Japan and Australia) becomes a separate species. However, both Collar & Pilgrim (2007) and Pratt (2011) have pointed out that Sheldon (1987) merely compared *modestus* with the American form *egretta*, not with Eurasian *albus* or African *melanorhynchus*. Pratt (2011) demonstrated that on present evidence there are:

only two reasonable taxonomic options with regard to the Great Egret complex: either retain



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Plate 8. Turkestan Shrike *Lanius (isabellinus) phoenicuroides*, Bangalore, Karnataka, India, 30 January 2009.

a single Great Egret species pending definitive and complete genetic and behavioral studies of all forms; or recognize Great Egret (*A. alba*), including subspecies *modesta* and *melanorhyncha*, and American Egret (*A. egretta*) based on Sheldon (1987) and demonstrated potential isolating mechanisms of differing high breeding colors, color ontogeny, and lack of the Aerial Stretch display.

Chrysococcyx minutillus 'russatus'

Joseph *et al.* (2011) investigated relationships among Australian populations of Little Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx minutillus*, based on a molecular study. They concluded by questioning the merit of recognising the subspecies *russatus* (which occurs in Wallacea) as a valid taxon, but acknowledged that analyses of New Guinean populations were necessary before a decision could be made.

Parus ater melanolophus

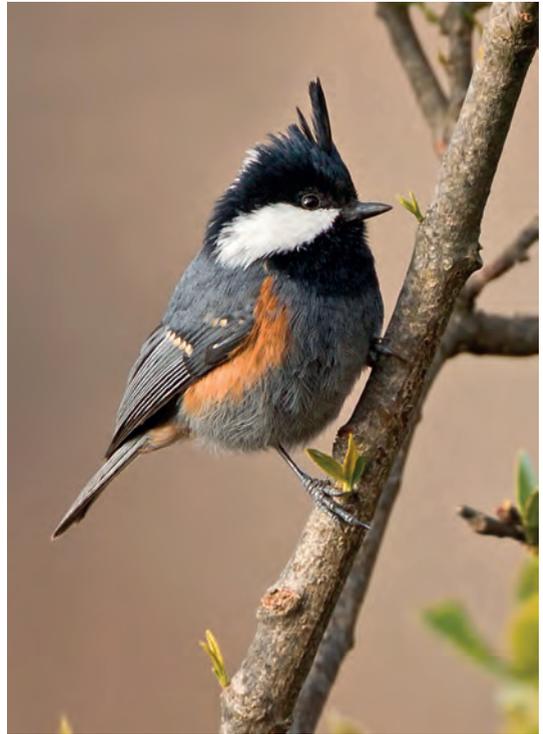
Spot-winged Tit *Parus melanolophus* (Plate 10) has long been treated as a species distinct from Coal Tit *P. ater*, although work in recent years has tended to indicate that the two are conspecific (see Pilgrim *et al.* 2009). Tietze *et al.* (2011) reinforced this view during experimental playback of Himalayan and



NITIN SRINIVASAMURTHY

Plate 9. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Nandi Hills, Karnataka, India, 7 February 2009.

Plate 10. Spot-winged Tit *Parus melanolophus*, Pangot, Uttaranchal, India, 2 December 2007.



SATIE SHARMA

Chinese Coal Tit taxa and *P. melanolophus* to central European male Coal Tits, writing:

Again we encourage avian taxonomists to finally accept the conspecificity of *melanolophus* as discussed in Päckert and Martens (2008). The only plausible alternative would be to set seven coal tit species alongside. But we cannot for any pair of these eight monophyletic units separate their territorial songs despite taking into account a large number of sonographic parameters, nor do they seem to be reproductively isolated.

Reconfigurations

Generic limits in *Gallicolumba*

Jönsson *et al.* (2011) reinstated the genus *Alopecoenas* for a suite of Pacific ground doves currently treated in *Gallicolumba*, finding in the process that Wetar Ground Dove *G. hoedtii* also belongs in *Alopecoenas*.

Mimizuku = *Otus*

Miranda *et al.* (2011) found that *Mimizuku* sits within the broad *Otus* clade, and therefore *Mimizuku* moves into the synonymy of *Otus*.

Generic limits in the Locustellidae

Alström *et al.* (2011b), defining the Locustellidae (formerly Megaluridae) as containing the genera *Megalurus*, *Bradypterus*, *Locustella* and *Dromaeocercus* with the addition of *Cincloramphus* and *Schoenicola*, subjected members of these genera to molecular analysis and discovered that the Asian species of *Bradypterus* and Marsh Grassbird *M. pryeri* belong in *Locustella*. Decisions on the composition of *Megalurus* are pending.

Generic limits in the Cettiidae

Alström *et al.* (2011c) inferred the relationships of species in this recently proposed family (Alström *et al.* 2006) using molecular analysis. They recommended that the genus *Cettia* be restricted to Grey-sided Bush Warbler *C. brunneifrons*, Cetti's

Warbler *C. cetti* and Chestnut-crowned Bush Warbler *C. major*, and that Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia* (*Oligura*; but see above) *castaneocoronata* be transferred to that genus (Plate 11).

Most of the remaining species of *Cettia* were split off in the genus *Horornis*, the regional species of which are Yellow-bellied Bush Warbler *H. acanthizoides*, Hume's Bush Warbler *H. brunnescens*, Tanimbar Bush Warbler *H. carolinae*, Oriental Bush Warbler *H. diphone* (including *canturians*), Aberrant Bush Warbler *H. flavolivaceus* (including subspecies *intricata* and *oblita*, in agreement with Kennerley & Pearson [2010] but *contra* Olsson *et al.* [2006]), Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler *H. fortipes* (which it was thought might better be treated as three different species, but more research was required), Philippine Bush Warbler *H. seebohmi* and Sunda Bush Warbler *H. vulcanius*.

The Pale-footed Bush Warbler *C. pallidipes* was found to be close to the three species of stubtails *Urosphena* and was transferred there.

The Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cucullatus* turned out to be unrelated to other tailorbirds *Orthotomus* and was separated in the genus *Phyllergates*.

In another paper, Alström *et al.* (2011d) found that *Scotocerca inquietata* was sister to the species in Cettiidae and recommended transfer from the Cisticolidae.

Muscicapella hodgsoni = *Ficedula hodgsoni*

Ficedula hodgsoni = *F. sordida*

The Pygmy Blue Flycatcher *Muscicapella hodgsoni* was described in 1854, the Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsoni* in 1871. Therefore when it was discovered that *Muscicapella* sits within the *Ficedula* clade (Outlaw & Voelker 2006) Pygmy Blue Flycatcher's priority on the name *hodgsoni* meant that it becomes *Ficedula hodgsoni*, thereby requiring a new specific name to be found for Slaty-backed Flycatcher, which Zuccon (2011) determined to be *F. sordida*.

Plate 11. Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India, 18 December 2010.



Ambiguities

Charadrius dealbatus

Rheindt *et al.* (2011b) determined that the recently rediscovered White-faced Plover *Charadrius dealbatus* is genetically indistinguishable from Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*, despite being clearly different in morphology. They do not, however, take the step of proposing to lump *dealbatus* back with *alexandrinus*, instead speculating that ‘diagnostic phenotypic characters may be encoded by few genes that are difficult to detect’ or that ‘gene expression differences may be crucial in producing different phenotypes whereas neutral differentiation may be lagging behind’.

Paradoxornis webbianus and *P. alphonsianus*

The (re)separation of Vinous-throated Parrotbill *P. webbianus* and Ashy-throated Parrotbill *P. alphonsianus* as species by Penhallurick & Robson (2009) was not noted in the survey of proposed changes for 2009 (Inskipp *et al.* 2010) because the two forms were already recognised on the OBC checklist (Inskipp *et al.* 1996). However, a molecular study by Yeung *et al.* (2011) found that their ‘phylogenetic relationship... is far more complicated than previously considered’, the mtDNA tree showing that ‘neither... is exclusively monophyletic’. Incomplete lineage sorting and/or introgression were offered as possible explanations for the *impasse*; no firm decision either way was taken.

Remiz again

Bot *et al.* (2011) returned to the issue of the number of species in the genus *Remiz*. They concluded that at least three should be recognised: White-crowned Penduline Tit *R. coronatus* differs clearly from Chinese Penduline Tit *R. consobrinus* in morphology, localisations and breeding system, and both species also differ from Eurasian Penduline Tit *R. pendulinus* and Black-headed Penduline Tit *R. macronyx* in morphology, size, breeding habitat (less dependent on reedbeds) and mating system. ‘Our genetic data confirm that Eurasian, White-crowned and Chinese are different species (van Dijk, Székely, Irestedt & Ericson unpubl. data).’ However, Bot *et al.* (2011) were not in possession of sufficient evidence to pronounce on the status of Eurasian and Black-headed Penduline Tits, which hybridise around the Caspian Sea.

Pyrrhula erythaca and *P. erythrocephala*

A phylogeny of *Pyrrhula* by Töpfer *et al.* (2011) found incomplete lineage sorting between the morphologically distinctive Grey-headed Bullfinch *P. erythaca* and Red-headed Bullfinch *P. erythrocephala*. This was not regarded as fatal to their status as separate species, but the interpretation

of the evidence is that the two taxa share a much closer relationship than previously thought, and are the product of a very recent speciation event.

Name changes

Passer rutilans

Mlíkovský (2011) suggested that the correct name for the Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans* should be *P. cinnamomeus* because the latter name (Gould 1836) was apparently published eight months earlier than the former (Temminck 1836).

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