

The authors regret that, without our knowledge, the manuscript was substantially altered by the editor subsequent to our final revision of it, with the result that several important points were omitted and could not be restored, inasmuch as we were not sent proofs.

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).

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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.

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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 However, the fossil record shows (Steadman, 1985, and unpublished work) that *P. tabuensis* was sympatric with flightless forms of *Porzana* (similar to *P. atra* of Henderson Island) that were probably widespread in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.