

Made in United States of America
 Reprinted from THE AUK
 Vol. 107, No. 2, April 1990
 Copyright © 1990 by The American Ornithologists' Union

the etymology of names of colors. Although decidedly idiosyncratic, it is of more than just local concern to ornithologists.

Those interested in birds of Oceania will want to consult this work because it covers Lord Howe Island, which is politically part of the Australian State of New South Wales. Norfolk Island is not included, however, because, although "Norfolk Islanders vote federally as part of NSW, they do not vote in state elections"—a bizarre rationalization. The authors might more candidly have said they didn't include Norfolk Island because they didn't want to. Political boundaries do not constrain the authors when they care to digress, as in their description of a new subspecies of Sarus Crane (a species that does not occur in New South Wales), which they have chosen to place in their account of what they call the Green-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus australis*).

The authors have delved into a lot of ancient and recondite sources, and they incorporate the results of a wealth of recent publications as well. An example is the useful summary of the so-called literature on the near-mythical Cox's Sandpiper (*Calidris parame-lanotis*). For now, any discussion of this "species" not based on specimens is less than worthless. There is a most dissatisfying propensity of the authors to cite newspaper articles, "pers. comm.," and the like, when something more substantial is called for. The nomenclature mostly reflects uncritical acceptance of all that is new as being good, although there is a very heavy bias towards generic splitting and elevating subspecies to the level of species. Numerous points of nomenclature and orthography are raised that deserve serious evaluation (e.g. Imber's subgenus *Proaestralata* [1985] being preoccupied by *Oestrelatella* Bianchi [1913]).

I was disappointed to find the same old apocryphal etymology of the color "isabella" or "isabelline," when such a standard reference as the "Oxford English Dictionary" has shown this to be a chronological impossibility, since Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe was described in 1600 as including "one rounde gowne of Isabella-colour satten," some five years before the archduchess Isabella is alleged to have shed her soiled underwear at the end of the siege of Ostend. Such pseudoerudition is unfortunately too characteristic of the work as a whole, so that this list is best used as a guide to further literature rather than as a definitive reference in itself.

McAllan and Bruce use this "working list" to introduce four new subspecies and one new subgenus of birds, in a less than rigorous manner. Inside the back cover of the book, the authors have placed a long "Important Notice" (dated 28 February 1989) in which publication delays are discussed and in which they accuse a well-known Australian ornithologist of having deliberately preempted their new subspecies' descriptions by rushing into print with them himself

The Birds of New South Wales: A Working List.— Ian A. W. McAllan and Murray D. Bruce. "1988" = 1989. Turramurra, New South Wales, Biocon Research Group. vii + 103 pp., 1 map. ISBN 0-958751609. Paper, no price indicated.—This seems to be essentially a privately produced publication, attractively printed in a large format, done "in association with the New South Wales Bird Atlases," whose objective is "to monitor the birds of New South Wales." This "working list" is intended to form "the species base upon which information is recorded and collated." In reality, however, it is a forum for the authors to express their opinions on all sorts of matters pertaining to scientific nomenclature, common names, bibliography, distribution, and history. It extends to such subjects as the origin of the surname Linnaeus and

in *Canberra Bird Notes*, "a local periodical . . . produced and instant printed in a type-written format, and arguably unsuitable for the publication of such taxonomic work." That their own list is hardly a proper vehicle for naming new taxa does not deter them, however.

The whole affair recalls the scandal surrounding the description of *Calidris paramelanotis* and the recent furor over certain systematic works in Australian herpetology (see 1987, *Bull. Zool. Nomencl.* 44: 116-121). Although McAllan and Bruce decry the spread of "the paranoia observed in some elements of the herpetological community" to ornithology, they seem equally paranoid themselves. In their discussion of *Cyanoramphus* (p. 45), where they erect a new subgenus for *C. cookii* (the only characters mentioned being "larger, darker green . . . with a different bill morphology"), they suggest that the "extinct southeast Polynesian forms may represent a third subgenus." Then, on an errata sheet dated 29 May 1989 (with reverse sequence of authorship), to correct "inadvertent omissions from the final proofing," they propose the name *Notopsittacus* as a new subgenus for these birds. Although they at least designate a type (*C. ulietensis*), absolutely no diagnosis or discussion of characters of this supposed taxon is provided. To make matters trebly horrific, *Notopsittacus* is preoccupied by *Notopsittacus* Roberts, 1922, proposed as a subgenus of the African parrot *Poicephalus*. This is not an elusive fact, either, as *Notopsittacus* Roberts is listed as a synonym of *Poicephalus* in Volume 3 of Peters' "Checklist of Birds of the World" and appears in the General Index of that work published in 1987 (sources certainly well-known to Bruce and McAllan). There is simply no excuse for such sloppiness, particularly by authors who have specialized in nomenclatural minutiae. *Notopsittacus* Bruce and McAllan, 1989, being a preoccupied name proposed with no diagnosis in an errata sheet, has my nomination as the worst "new" avian taxon published in the 20th century. It is a pity that it has so much close competition.

I am not sure just what is going on in systematic vertebrate zoology in Australia. Perhaps it is a case of too many amateurs trying to be professionals, and too many professionals acting like amateurs. Whatever it is, I wish it would stop, and that the parties involved would start to take the introduction of new taxa seriously and go about it in an acceptably scientific manner.—STORRS L. OLSON.