

## Lectotypification of *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin, 1789

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The note by McAllan and Christidis (1998) regarding the scientific name for the Australian bird now known as the Hooded Plover reflects a lack of understanding of the rules and procedures of zoological nomenclature. The case involves two competing names *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin, 1789, versus *Charadrius cucullatus* Vieillot, 1818. McAllan and Christidis (1998: 60) proposed to resolve what they perceived to be "potential confusion" concerning these names by designating a neotype for the former.

A neotype, however, is only to be selected in the course of revisory work, and then only under exceptional circumstances involving closely similar species for which one or both holotypes may be missing, neither of which circumstances apply in this instance. Furthermore, a neotype is not to be designated as an end in itself, so that the action of McAllan and Christidis, whose note has no other purpose, is automatically invalidated by provisions of Article 75 (b & c) of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (I. C. Z. N. 1985—hereafter "the Code").

The name *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin (1789: 687), was based entirely on "Lath. syn. III., 1, p. 212, n. 19" which refers to volume 3, Part 1, of John Latham's *General Synopsis of Birds* (Latham 1785). Here Latham described what he called the "Red-necked Plover", this being the source of Gmelin's name *rubricollis*, neither name being at all

appropriate for the Australian Hooded Plover, which has *no* red in the plumage. No one in the history of the nomenclatural discussions of this species seems to have remarked on this rather obvious fact. Appropriateness has no bearing on the validity of a name but it should be taken into account when there are other valid grounds for dispensing with a misnomer. Latham stated that his Red-necked Plover "Inhabits the South Seas. Found in Adventure Bay, Van Diemen's Land [Tasmania]".

Mathews (1913: 130) found Latham's description to be 'inapplicable to every Australian species, and no previous worker had been able to fix it on any extra-limital form'. Latham made no reference to any specimens or illustrations, so on internal evidence his species would have to be regarded as a *nomen dubium* that is not available for any known species. However, the Code suggests that "if an author, in establishing a nominal species-group taxon, does not explicitly state what specimens constitute the type series, evidence in addition to published evidence may be taken into account" (recommendation 72B). As this is only in the form of a recommendation, some workers may still consider any name based solely on Latham's description to be indeterminable.

Mathews (1913) went on to build a strong circumstantial case, though it is still only that, for Latham's description being a composite based upon two water-colour drawings made by William Ellis on Cook's Third Voyage, these being in the collections of the British Natural History Museum and having previously been discussed by Sharpe (1906: 205) and subsequently by Lysaght (1959), who used the same system for numbering them. The first of these, plate 63, was identified by both Sharpe and Lysaght with the species now known as the Red-necked or Northern Phalarope, *Lobipes lobatus*, based on *Tringa lobata* Linnaeus (1758), Ellis's original specimen having been taken "between Asia and America". The second drawing, plate 67, was identified by Sharpe with "*Aegialitis cucullatus* (Vieill.)", based on a specimen from "Adventure Bay". Lysaght (1959: 333) listed this under *Charadrius rubricollis*, following the terminology of Peters (1934), and likewise considered that the species depicted is clearly the Australian bird now known as the Hooded Plover or Hooded Dotterel.

Contrary to McAllan and Christidis, Mathews (1913) gave no reason for his not using *rubricollis* for the species in question, although inappropriateness may have been more of a factor than their surmise that it was because the name was based on two different species. If Mathews' conclusions are accepted as correct, then the name *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin, 1789, is a composite, a circumstance that arose many times in the compilations of Linnaeus and Gmelin and that in no way invalidates the proposed name. The disposition of a composite species is resolved by application of Article 74 of the Code: "If a type series contains more than one specimen and a holotype has not been designated, any author may designate one of the syntypes as the lectotype, by the use of that term or an equivalent expression (e.g., 'the type')". No action that constitutes lectotypification of *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin occurs in any of the literature bearing on this case as cited by McAllan and Christidis (1998), however.

The syntypes of this name are the specimens depicted in Ellis plates 63 and 67. The fact that these specimens no longer exist is immaterial, *contra* McAllan and Christidis (1998) who mistakenly cite Article 72c (v) in this connection. That article, however, applies only when an illustration is designated as a holotype but the actual specimen upon which it is based still exists. In the present case, the appropriate rule is Article 74c: "designation of an illustration or description of a syntype as a lectotype is to be treated as designation of the specimen illustrated or described; the fact that the specimen cannot be traced does not of itself invalidate the designation." Thus, the paintings themselves in effect become the types and McAllan and Christidis (1998:60) are quite wrong in stating that "no lectotype can be made."

McAllan and Christidis (1998:59) misleadingly considered that Oberholser (1919) "resurrected" *rubricollis* but that he invoked an incorrect argument, stating that because "the name *rubicollis* [sic] refers to more than one taxon it would appear to be a case of instant homonymy and is thus not valid." However, homonymy involves two names with the same spelling being applied independently to different species, which is not a factor here.

Oberholser's (1919) actions were extremely muddled to say the least. He cited Mathews (1913) as showing that *Charadrius rubricollis* was based on drawings of two different species, although he committed a rather serious lapsus in stating that one of these was *Steganopus tricolor*, which is a very different species of phalarope, when he meant *Lobipes* (or *Phalaropus*) *lobatus*. He went on to conclude as follows: "The name, therefore, *should* apply [my emphasis] to the species to which the greater or most pertinent part of the description refers, which in this case is, of course, *Charadrius cucullatus*. If, however, we take the view that it is erroneously described, neither current usage nor the commonly accepted codes of nomenclature allow its rejection because of indefinite or even erroneous characters, if the description can be positively determined as pertaining to a certain species. Thus, in any case, we should call the species ordinarily known as *Charadrius cucullatus* Vieillot by the name *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin."

It is difficult to know what, if anything, can be made of the second sentence of this quotation. The description does not apply to "a certain species" it applies to *two* certain species, and nothing in Oberholser's note refers to a "type" or anything that could be construed as a type in such a manner as to meet modern requirements for lectotypification, even though Oberholser's publication has been the only justification cited by previous authors for using the name *rubricollis* Gmelin.

The name *Charadrius rubricollis* may yet be regarded as being of dubious application if determined solely on the internal evidence of Latham's original description. Latham's name Red-necked Plover, as well as Gmelin's Latin derivative of it, *rubricollis*, is clearly indicative of what Latham considered the most salient feature of his species and this feature does not occur in the Australian Hooded Plover. Furthermore, the perfectly descriptive name *cucullatus* Vieillot was well established in the literature of the Hooded Plover prior to 1919 and was used in numerous publications subsequent to that date. For these reasons, and

in order to remove any further contention regarding the name, I designate the signed drawing by William Ellis listed as number 63 by Sharpe (1906: 205) and by Lysaght (1959: 332), depicting a phalarope and having the associated information "W. Ellis ad vivum delint: et pinxit: 1778. Between Asia and America.", as the lectotype of *Charadrius rubricollis* Gmelin, 1789, which then becomes a junior subjective synonym of *Tringa lobata* Linnaeus, 1758. Consequently, the Australian Hooded Plover should henceforth take the name *Charadrius cucullatus* Vieillot, 1818.

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