Alca antiqua (Marsh, 1870), an invalid combination for a fossil auk (Alcidae)

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The most abundant fossil bird in the early Pliocene deposits of the Yorktown Formation in North Carolina is an auk originally described by Marsh (1870) as Catarrctes antiquus. Catarrctes is a variant spelling of a generic name that was synonymised with Uria Brisson (1760), which is now used for the living murres. Olson & Rasmussen (2001: 273) recognised that the affinities of the fossil auk lay with those of the genus Alca Linnaeus (1758), so they created the new combination Alca antiqua (Marsh, 1870). This, however, is a secondary homonym preoccupied by Alca antiqua Gmelin (1789), the basionym for the extant Ancient Murrelet Synthliboramphus antiquus, and therefore is unavailable for the fossil species. The next available name is Australa grandis Brodkorb (1955). Olson & Rasmussen (2001) synonymised Australa Brodkorb (1955) with Alca Linnaeus (1758). Therefore, the fossil species should now be known as:

Alca grandis (Brodkorb, 1955), new combination

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References:


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