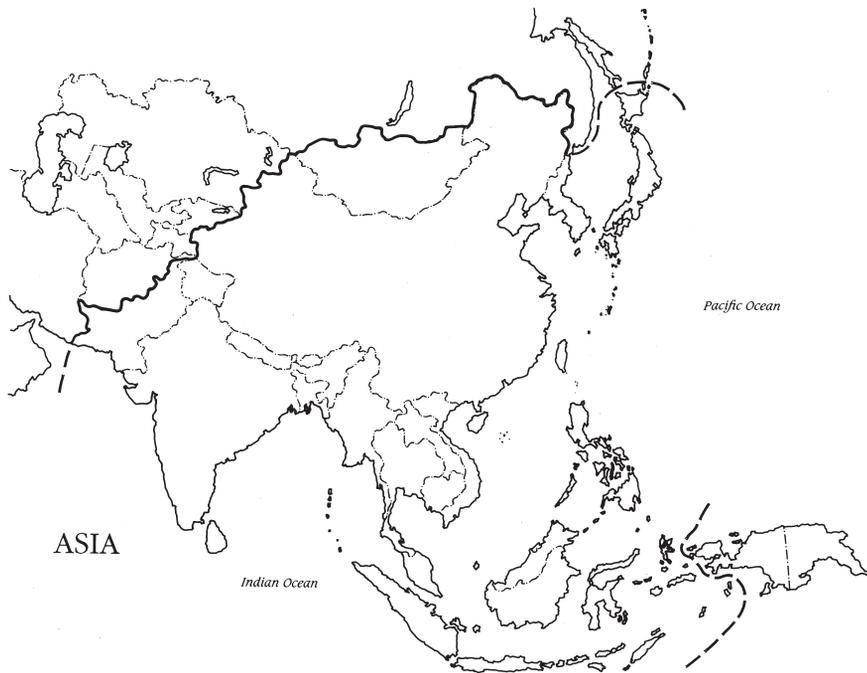


Introduction to Systematic notes on Asian birds

This series, Systematic notes on Asian birds, has been inspired by the series by Charles Vaurie in American Museum Novitates (1953-64) dealing with Palearctic birds. The series presented here is preparatory to a 'synopsis' of Asian birds, just as Vaurie's was preparatory to Birds of the Palearctic Fauna (Vaurie, 1959-1965). The series will be made up of complete issues of Zoologische Verhandlungen, Leiden.

Our geographical scope, 'Asia', may be defined as the area Pakistan and Afghanistan in the west, China (including Tibet) and Korea to the north, Japan in the east and Sri Lanka, and Indonesia to the south. Our eastern limit in Indonesia is Lydekker's Line as depicted by Simpson (1977). This is what Mayr (1944) called the "limit of Australo-Papuan Mainland Fauna". Thus we exclude Irian Jaya and associated islands on the Sahul Shelf.



Our 'Synopsis', as presently planned, will list species and recognized subspecies, with all the synonyms known to us, giving full citations. These will, wherever possible, be verified to the works cited and a particular effort is being made to achieve completeness, especially where the old synonyms were not in Peters' Check-list, and also where that excellent work stated "reference not verified". Following each citation details will be provided of the holotype, lectotype or an accessible syntype, wherever this is known. Each recognized subspecies will be followed by a distribution statement. This degree of completeness will allow future workers to access a single source for potentially available names. It is also hoped to provide, at the species level, a brief key to the recognized subspecies. This 'Synopsis' will probably appear in two or three volumes, the non-passeriformes appearing last. With this in place the ground will have been prepared for a 'Handbook of the birds of Asia'. At the same time the

appearance of the Synopsis will we hope stimulate others to offer corrections and additions, which will be able to be included in the Handbook.

Like Vaurie's series of Systematic Notes our's begins with the passerines, following the 'Wetmore order' (Wetmore, 1960) with minor adaptations, much as has been done in most other works on the different parts of Asia in the last few decades (e.g. Ripley, 1961; Deignan, 1963; Gore & Won, 1971; King & Dickinson, 1975; Medway & Wells, 1976; Smythies, 1981; Ripley, 1982; White & Bruce, 1986; Cheng, 1987; van Marle & Voous, 1988; Brazil, 1991; Dickinson et al., 1991; Roberts, 1991, 1992; and Andrew, 1992).

However, unlike Vaurie's series, and because we recognize the complete coverage of Asian birds is large and complex, we hope to invite authors, who are specialists in particular groups, to contribute to these Systematic notes on Asian birds. We have felt it best, however, to publish a first issue so that those we invite will perceive how their work may fit the series.

We intend to publish under two common titles 'A preliminary review of' (see Systematic notes 2 and 4) and 'Types of the Family' (see Systematic notes 3 and 5) papers which review Asian avian families and which discuss the availability and whereabouts of types. In addition we intend to include significant reviews, such as that on *Bradypterus* (Systematic note 1) and shorter notes of taxonomic relevance, such as that on *Oriolus steerii* (Systematic note 6), or relating to nomenclature or historical nomenclatural problems, such as that on *Oriolus chinensis* (Systematic note 7). We hope to include two or more papers under each of the two common titles in each issue. In this first issue we have been joined by co-authors for the papers on types, and we can already announce that we will receive the great benefit of collaboration with future papers from co-authors in Italy, Japan and Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg). Indeed we wish to attract collaboration from all museums with Asian type material. In future issues we hope to have co-authors on some preliminary reviews as well. Some of these reviews may also be wholly by invited authors.

1. Preliminary reviews

The 'Preliminary reviews' are mainly based on literature research intended to establish the history of treatment of the taxa concerned, with specimen material consulted to assist in our understanding when necessary. It is not the purpose of these reviews to introduce wholly new treatments elevating forms to species or sinking races in synonymy. On the other hand, when this has been done, especially when it has been done more recently than in the relevant volume of Peters' Check-list of birds of the world, we will set out the alternative views and promote what we believe to be a moderately conservative view (occasionally we anticipate suggesting that two or more views may be of equal merit). We expect to hold to the Biological Species Concept.

The idea of reviewing competing views is based on the philosophy that in many cases these alternatives remain valid hypotheses. Views taken in these preliminary reviews will usually be followed in the planned 'Synopsis'. Where this is not the case our reasons, which will then be founded on primary publications, will be documented. Invited co-authors of preliminary reviews will be particularly encouraged to

develop more detailed studies, to follow up on problems that seem to merit attention, and will be assured of space in this series to expand such topics. Other authors, taking their lead from suggestions in these papers, are also most welcome to seek space in this series.

Types

We know from personal experience that the limited accessibility of Asian avian type material has inhibited some important studies. To encourage the study of Asian type material ornithologists need comprehensive synonymies and information on where types may be held. Although some major museums have now published, or at least begun to publish, type catalogues, many Asian species have name-bearing types in museums that have not yet published such catalogues. To create a thorough synonymy requires both Peters' Checklist of birds of the world and, for older synonyms, the Catalogue of birds in the British Museum. Both books are rare in Asia. It also requires inclusion of much relatively recent information needed to update Peters' Checklist. To add to these synonymies pointers to where to find types requires a broad plan of collaboration between museums and this we are developing.

In this series our papers will deal with one family at a time; timed to appear in the same issue of the Systematic notes as that in which each family is treated in a preliminary review. These papers will set out where types are to be found and, when this is not known or not clear, they will comment on the missing or lost types appealing for further information. The papers will not seek to include details of the types that have been located, except on rare occasions; we wish to encourage museums to publish their own type catalogues. As stated above, this information *will* be included in the Synopsis. Nor have all the types we list been re-examined; some are listed on the strength of information given in the original descriptions. Our papers will be structured to suggest the synonymy we believe correct, but we must stress that in many cases the accepted synonymies are intuitive rather than based on comparisons of types with adequate related materials of other taxa. Since types are almost never lent by the museums holding them comparisons have historically been difficult, and they remain so. We have not been able to take extra time to review this (except in a few stated cases where the published facts have been contradictory and the material has been accessible). In those cases where surprises are noticed they will be dealt with in footnotes, or in separate papers. The *Bradypterus* paper (Systematic note 1) was partly stimulated by the discovery that a valid taxon had been placed in the synonymy of a different species in the Catalogue of birds in the British Museum. A side product of Systematic note 1 was an application to the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature based on the discovery that the re-establishment, on grounds of priority, of another wrongly synonymized name in that genus might threaten the continued use of the established name of yet another species.

Other papers

We hope to publish taxonomic reviews of species, groups of species and whole genera, and we hope to have at least one major paper of this kind in each issue. We

anticipate that in the case of both species and genera there will be proposals to separate taxa that have been lumped. The examples in this issue show that the subject does not have to relate to the species covered in the preliminary reviews.

Recently there has been a trend to incorporate original 'taxonomic review' in popular monographs of the type that are usually considered 'secondary' references. This is not something we consider entirely helpful (the process should be arranged to require the pre-publication of original study). Such original contributions are lost in these works, if not pre-published, and are not visibly subjected to the editorial scrutiny one would expect them to incur in a primary journal. Some of these monographs do contain excellent work, others seem not to, and we hope that authors planning monographs on groups of Asian birds will seek to publish their original detailed taxonomic reviews in this series. We hope to encourage this by making space available in this series and, where possible, a fast track. In some such circumstances we would hope to include appropriate colour plates.

Papers that are based on fieldwork including studies of vocalizations, and tissue studies, will also be invited, especially in cases where such work may reveal solutions that have not been found from morphological evidence. If any reader wishes to be invited to contribute on a specialist topic on Asian birds please write to us.

We shall also warmly welcome responses to papers published in this series. Please make it clear if you do not intend them for publication. They should be submitted as either Letters to the editor or, if longer than a page, as a paper sending first outline drafts with requests for an invitation to publish in the Systematic notes. Contributions of information on types for which we list no data will normally be saved for occasional supplements to our lists.

E.C. Dickinson & R.W.R.J. Dekker
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