

Systematic notes on Asian birds. 67.
Taxonomic identity and lectotype designation of
***Sitta velata* Temminck, 1821**

C. Quaisser & R.W.R.J. Dekker

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Christiane Quaisser, Strasse des Friedens 12, 01738 Klingenberg, Germany. (e-mail: c.quaisser@planet-interkom.de).

René W.R.J. Dekker, National Museum of Natural History Naturalis, P.O. Box 9517, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands (e-mail: dekker@naturalis.nl).

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The composite nature of the type series of *Sitta velata* Temminck, 1821 requires the selection of a lectotype, which will contribute to taxonomic stability. An appropriate specimen (NMW 6379) in Vienna is duly designated.

Introduction

When Mees (1986: 137) applied the name *Sitta velata* Temminck, 1821, to the Javan population of the south-east Asian nuthatch group *Sitta frontalis* he revived a name that was deeply hidden in synonymy. Since the taxonomy of this group is still only provisionally resolved (see Dickinson, 2006, this issue), the importance of clarifying the identity of *Sitta velata* was recognised as a priority. Once fixed on a particular population the name can thereafter be applied in a precise way. During our studies on type specimens in the Leiden collection it turned out that the type series of *Sitta velata* is composite. Furthermore, the specimen illustrated in the Planches Coloriées (Temminck & Laugier, 1820-1839) and the syntype in the Leiden collection did not match the taxon as one would expect from the localities given in the description and on the label. We were therefore faced with the need to establish definitively which population should be named *Sitta velata* Temminck, 1821.

Original description

The name *Sitta velata* Temminck was published in 1821 on the wrapper of livraison 12 of the Planches Coloriées, in reference to plate 72, where figure 3 depicted a specimen of this. The text to this plate followed two years later, in 1823 (Dickinson, 2001: 22)¹. The wrapper mentioned 'Sumatra' and 'Java' as the *terra typica* of the new species, while the text referred in more detail to males from Sumatra and specimens of both sexes from Java, which Temminck had seen or knew to be in collections in Leiden, London, Paris and Vienna. There Temminck also wrote that plate 72, fig. 3 depicted a male from Java.

¹ Since wrappers are accepted as an integral part of a publication, new names on them are considered to be available (based on: R. Petit & C. Thompson, in litt. to N. David, 07.vii.2006).

Type specimens

In the text, Temminck referred to four specimens or more: at least two males from Sumatra and a male and a female from Java. We have been able to trace only two of these specimens, one in Leiden and one in Vienna (A. Gamauf, in litt., 04.v.2006). The collections of the BMNH, Tring, the AMNH, New York (Rothschild collection), the MNHN, Paris, and the ANSP, Philadelphia, do not hold specimens which can be claimed to be types (R. Prys-Jones, in litt., 04.v.2006; M. LeCroy, in litt., 02.vi.2006; J.-F. Voisin, in litt., 06.vi.2006; N. Rice, in litt., 18.viii.2006)². Where the other type specimens, including the males from Sumatra, are or whether they survived at all remains unknown.

The two remaining syntypes are: 1) RMNH 89904, Ad. male, skin. Loc.: Java. Leg.:- and 2) NMW 6379, Ad. female, skin. Loc.: Java. Leg.:-. Received in exchange: Temminck, 1821.

Taxonomy

At least until the description of the Bornean population as *Dendrophila corallipes* Sharpe, 1888 (= *S. frontalis corallipes*), *Sitta velata* was seen as a synonym of *S. f. frontalis* Swainson, 1820 from "the Himalayas to Ceylon, throughout the Burmese countries, Java, Borneo, and the Philippines" (Gadow, 1883: 358). The distinctive character separating the Bornean population from Javan birds is the coloration of the legs, which are coral-reddish in *corallipes* (becoming pale yellowish in skins) and dark brown in *frontalis* (remaining of a dark coloration in skins). Identification of these two taxa based on coloration of the legs is confirmed by all corresponding skins in the collections of Leiden (pers. obs.) and New York (M. LeCroy, in litt., 06.v.2006).

The specimen illustrated in 1821 on plate 72, fig. 3, has pale yellowish legs and can therefore be identified as *S. f. corallipes* from Borneo. Syntype RMNH 89904 makes a perfect match and is believed to be the specimen depicted in this plate. In the light of the consistent difference with all other specimens from Java, the reference to Java on the label of this specimen is best regarded as an error for Borneo. Errors of this sort were frequent in the early years of natural history collecting (pers. obs.), and this had already been noticed by a former Leiden curator as indicated on another label on the Leiden type specimen. In contrast, the syntype in Vienna (NMW 6379) has dark brown legs and therefore represents the dark-legged Javan form, as is indicated on the original label.

Mees (1986: 137), while comparing specimens of *S. frontalis* from different islands, considered the Javan population as distinct as they "differ clearly in that the under parts are less brownish, more greyish lilac; the throats are more extensively white". Although Mees did not comment on Temminck's original description or the leg colour,

² The Rothschild collection of the AMNH holds a dark-legged specimen from Java (AMNH 684081) which appears to have been in the collection of the Comte de Riocour in 1829 (Riocour, 1829), and probably originated with Temminck (M. LeCroy, in litt., 06.v.2006). The specimen was not included in the catalogue prepared for the sale of the Riocour collection (Boucard, 1889). Since the historical background of this specimen can be proved neither by an original label nor by archival material (M. LeCroy, E. Dickinson, in litt., 03.vi.2006), it cannot safely be accepted as a type specimen of *Sitta velata*.

he revived the name *velata* as a separate subspecies and applied it to the dark-legged Javan birds. In doing so he implicitly restricted the type locality of *S. velata* to Java. We follow Mees's decision to recognize Javan birds, as does Dickinson (2006, this issue).

Consequently, the type series is composed of at least two taxa, *S. f. corallipes* and *S. f. velata*. Indeed it may have included a third. The population of Sumatra needs reassessment and type specimens from there might better fit with *S. f. saturator* Hartert, 1902, which Greenway (1967: 142) accepted for the populations of the Malayan Peninsula and North Sumatra.

Nomenclature

The composite nature of the type series of *Sitta velata* makes it necessary to designate a lectotype. In order to confirm current taxonomy and, for Bornean birds, maintain priority of the name *Dendrophila corallipes* Sharpe, 1888, and taking Mees's application of the name *velata* and his restriction of type locality into account, a (dark-legged) specimen from Java should be selected as lectotype. These conditions are only met by the type specimen in the Vienna collection. In accordance with Art. 74.7 of the International Code for Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN, 1999) we hereby designate as lectotype of *Sitta velata* Temminck, 1821: NMW 6379, Ad. female, skin. Loc.: Java. Leg.:-. Received in exchange: Temminck, 1821. And following Art. 75.1.3. (ICZN, 1999) the type specimen in Leiden consequently becomes a paralectotype: RMNH 89904, Ad. male, skin. Loc.: 'Java' [= Borneo]. Leg.:- [= *S. f. corallipes*].

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