

# The correct type fixation for *Pitta* Vieillot, 1816

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ABSTRACT: The citations for the genus-group name *Pitta* Vieillot, 1816, in E. Mayr (1979) and Dickinson & Christidis, eds. (2014), are erroneous, as the former cited a nominal species not originally included, and the use of “Brève”, a vernacular name, cannot be construed as “monotypy” in the latter. It is shown that *Pitta* Vieillot, 1816 was established without included nominal species, but that Vieillot added these later, in the *Nouveau Dictionnaire d’Histoire Naturelle* (1816), thereby meeting the provisions of Article 67.2.2 (ICZN, 1999). It is also shown that Salvadori (1881) was the first to select a type (*Corvus brachyurus* Linnaeus, 1766) satisfying the provisions of Article 69.1.

KEYWORDS: *Pitta*, Vieillot, type species, *brachyurus*, *brachyura*, Salvadori, International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature, International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

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Vieillot’s *Analyse* (1816a) has always been accepted as a work that “applied the principles of binary nomenclature” of Article 25(b) of the *Règles* or Rules of Zoological Nomenclature (CIPNZ, 1905: 35), but like many early works in zoology it also contains several idiosyncratic features. The included species (singular or plural) in his new genera were more often than not the vernacular names given to them in Buffon’s nine volume *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux* (1770–83) or other non-binominal works. As defined by Article 25(a), and as qualified by Opinion 1 (ICZN, 1907), however, vernacular names could not be considered an “indication”. Vieillot’s generic names in the *Analyse* were all accompanied by a description hence supposedly validly introduced and not in need of an “indication”. However, wording of Opinion 1 also included:

“a definite citation or designation of a type species” for which in no case was the word “indication” to be construed as including “museum labels, museum specimens or vernacular names”.

That this was likely to cause problems for names introduced by early workers was soon recognized, and Opinion 67 (ICZN, 1916) placed 102 bird names on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology, where they remain. This list included fourteen from Vieillot (1816a), of which eleven were described as being by “Monotypy” where binominal names were substituted for the vernacular names used by Vieillot, and without the need of stating the source of information used to establish their identities. *Pitta* Vieillot, 1816a was not among them.

The “Esp.” [espèces] listed by Vieillot for *Pitta* (Vieillot, 1816a: 42) was “Brève, Buff.”. This term, “Les Breves”, had been used by Buffon (1775: 412) for birds he thought similar to blackbirds and thrushes but with shorter tails, stronger beaks, and longer legs. The four forms so listed by Buffon (1775: 413–414) carried the name *breve*, while those illustrated by Daubenton in the *planches enluminées* (Daubenton, 1765–80) were all termed *Merle* of one sort or another.

These “species” were identified by Elliot in the *Auk* (Elliot, 1893: 51), who attempted to restrict *Pitta* to those forms whose type was the first mentioned by Buffon, the “*breve des Philippines*”, pl. 89 “*Merle des Philippines*”, identified with *Turdus sordidus* Statius Müller, 1776, now *Pitta sordidus* (Statius Müller, 1776). Elliot’s short paper gave rise to a correspondence with Stejneger in the pages of the *Auk*, but this revolved around the identity of Daubenton’s figures and Buffon’s vernacular names.

The views expressed in Opinion 1 (ICZN, 1907) are, presumably, still valid, and Article 12.3 (ICZN, 1999: 17) lists vernacular names as excluded from being a ‘description, definition or indication’, but the link established by Opinion 1 to their exclusion from being *type* species is not explicitly repeated in Chapter 15, Types in the Genus Group (ICZN, 1999: 66).

If the Code is applied to *Pitta* Vieillot, 1816a, as a genus established before 1931 without included nominal species, which clearly it is, Article 67.2.2 (ICZN, 1999: 67) states that ‘the nominal species that were first subsequently and expressly included in it are deemed to be the only originally included nominal species.’ Furthermore, Article 69.1 (ICZN, 1999: 72) allows for the subsequent designation of one of the originally included nominal species as *type*.

The first author to ‘subsequently and expressly’ include nominal species in *Pitta* was Vieillot himself, in volume 4 of the *Nouveau Dictionnaire d’Histoire Naturelle* (Vieillot, 1816b), where his articles are greatly expanded from the entries in the *Analyse*. On pp. 356–8 in the article “BRÈVE, *Pitta* Vieill[ot].”, the following nominal species are included:

LA BRÈVE AZURINE, *Pitta cyanura*, *Turdus cyanurus* “Lath.” = Boddaert, 1783

LA BRÈVE D’ANGOLE, *Pitta angolensis* Vieillot, 1816

LA BRÈVE DE BENGALE, *Corvus brachyurus* “Lath.” = Linnaeus, 1766

Also included, but only as Latham’s ‘varieties’, are:

LA BRÈVE DE CEYLAN, *Corvus brachyurus* var. Lath. [Latham’s var. γ]

LA BRÈVE DE LA CHINE, *Corvus brachyurus* var. Lath. [Latham’s var. η]

LA BRÈVE DE LA CÔTE DU MALABAR, *Corvus brachyurus* var. Lath. [Latham’s var. ζ]

LA BRÈVE DE MADAGASCAR, *Corvus brachyurus* var. Lath. [Latham’s var. δ]

LA BRÈVE DE MALACA, *Corvus brachyurus* var. Lath. [Latham’s var. ε]

LA BRÈVE DES PHILIPPINES, *Corvus brachyurus* var. Lath. [Latham’s var. β]

Latham’s ‘varieties’ (Latham, 1790: 166–167) have all been identified, but are not ‘nominal species’ here, and are not, therefore, eligible for selection as *type* species.

The citations in Baker<sup>1</sup> (1930: 295) and Vaurie (1959: 1) both attributed subsequent designation to G.R. Gray (1841: 35). Here, however, Gray did not recognize *Pitta* Vieillot as valid, relegating it to a synonym of *Brachyurus* Thunberg, which at the time he supposed had priority: “given in one of the numerous papers written for candidates for academical honours by Thunberg” but which has never been found, and gave the *type* as *B[rachyurus]. triostegus* (Sparrr[man].), the *type* of *Brachyurus* Thunberg, 1822, a junior homonym of *Brachyurus* Fischer-Waldheim, 1808 [Mammalia].

Ernst Mayr, in the *Check-list of Birds of the World. A continuation of the work of James L. Peters*. Vol. 8 (Mayr, 1979: 310), cited “*Corvus triostegus* Sparrrman” as the *type* by subsequent designation, on this occasion by G.R. Gray (1855: 43), where *Pitta* Vieillot, 1816a was recognized. Nevertheless, as *Turdus triostegus* Sparrrman, 1789 was not one of the three nominal species deemed to be originally included under Article 67.2.2, and as Gray did not include it

<sup>1</sup> Baker cited “(1842)”, the date of the separately published Appendix to G.R. Gray, 1841, but neither *Pitta* nor *Brachyurus* appear here (1842: 8).

in synonymy with one of those, see Article 69.2.2 (ICZN, 1999: 72), it cannot be the type species. Therefore, this citation is also invalid.

The citation in *The Howard & Moore complete checklist of the Birds of the World*. Fourth edition, Vol. 2 (Dickinson & Christidis, 2014: 1) was "... "Brève" Buffon; type by monotypy", thereby listing a vernacular name that could neither identify one species, nor be an indication, as excluded by Article 12.3 (ICZN, 1999: 17).

The first to clearly designate one of the originally included nominal species was Salvadori (1881) in the *Ornitologia della Papuasias e delle Molucche*, volume 2, Passeres, where on p. 377, the type (*Typus*) of '*Pitta* Vieillot, 1816, *Analyse*, p. 42', was stated to be *Corvus brachyurus*, Linn. This citation antedates that by P.L. Sclater (1888: 413) and is therefore the only valid one under Article 69.1 (ICZN, 1999: 72):

### ***Pitta***

*Pitta* Vieillot, 1816 gender feminine

*Analyse d'une nouvelle Ornithologie élémentaire*, p. 42.

Type by subsequent designation

Salvadori, 1881, *Orn. Pap. delle Mol.*, 2, p. 377.

*Corvus brachyurus*, Linn[aeus]. = *Corvus brachyurus*, Linnaeus, 1766

*Pitta brachyura* (Linnaeus, 1766)

Species added by Vieillot, 1816, *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle*, 4, pp. 356–8.

ZooBank LSID for *Pitta*: 931EB08E-B883-4647-BE4C-69A5C33D55E6

Comment: It should be noted that the usual date given for the publication of Vieillot's *Analyse* is that of the receipt by the *Bibliography de la France*, 14th April, 1816, as reported by Zimmer (1926: 655), while that of volume 4 of the *Nouvelle édition* of the *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle* is 14th December, 1816, as reported by Evenhuis (1997: 199), and that all of the *Nouvelle édition*, and therefore Vieillot's articles, appeared after the *Analyse*, meaning that the nominal species found therein can be cited as being originally included in Vieillot's new genera for the purposes of Article 67.2.2.

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