

# The correct authorship of the family-group name *Nesocitini* (Picidae)

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ABSTRACT: Phylogenetic analysis supports the placement of *Nesocitites* as the sister-group of all extant woodpeckers (Picidae), except *Jynx*, *Sasia*, *Verreauxia*, and *Picumnus*. Bock (1994) listed ‘Nesocitinae’ Wolters, 1976, as an available family-group name. We show that the latter name did not meet the requirements of the ICZN Code (1999) and is therefore unavailable. However, Short (1974) used the name *Nesocitini* and described differences with other woodpeckers and should, therefore, be regarded as the author of the family-group name.

KEYWORDS: nomenclatural availability, phylogeny, Picidae, Picinae, *Nesocitini*, Short, Wolters, International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

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*Nesocitites* Hargitt, 1890, has long been considered part of a taxonomic group that also includes the genera *Sasia* Hodgson, 1837; *Verreauxia* Hartlaub, 1857; and *Picumnus* Temminck, 1825 (including *Vivia* Hodgson, 1837). Until recently, these have been grouped in the subfamily Picumminae G.R. Gray, 1840 (e.g., Peters, 1948; Winkler *et al.*, 1995; Dickinson, 2003). More recently, *Nesocitites* was removed from this subfamily and placed either in a separate tribe ‘Nesocitini’ within Picinae Leach, 1819 (Winkler & Christie, 2002; Dickinson & Rensen, 2013; Winkler *et al.*, 2014) or in its own subfamily, ‘Nesocitinae’ (Wolters, 1976; Benz *et al.*, 2006; Gaudin, 2023).

Molecular phylogenetic studies support the closer relationship of *Nesocitites* to Picinae than to the other piculets, and place *Nesocitites* sister to all extant woodpeckers, except *Jynx* Linnaeus, 1758, *Sasia*, *Verreauxia*, and *Picumnus* (Benz *et al.*, 2006; Fuchs *et al.*, 2007; Dufort, 2016). In Benz *et al.* (2006) and Dufort (2016), the latter relationship was strongly supported. In another study, *Nesocitites* was sister to *Hemicircus* Swainson, 1837 (with very poor support) and together these were sister to all extant woodpeckers, except *Jynx*, *Sasia*, *Verreauxia*, and *Picumnus* (with strong support; Shakya *et al.*, 2017). Thus, a case can be made to recognise a subfamily or tribe for *Nesocitites*. However, the family-group name of this taxon is problematic.

To be available, every new name published after 1930 must be accompanied by a description or definition that states in words characters that are purported to differentiate the taxon (Article 13.1.1; ICZN, 1999), or be accompanied by a bibliographic reference to such a published statement (Article 13.1.2), or be proposed expressly as a new replacement name (*nomen novum*) for an available name (Article 13.1.3).

Bock (1994: 146) listed ‘Nesocitinae’ Wolters, 1976, as an available family-group name. However, Wolters (1976: 156) did not provide a description or definition of ‘Nesocitinae’, and the section of his work in which the name occurred lacked a reference to such a work. Thus, Wolters’ name does not meet the criteria of Articles 13.1.1 or 13.1.2 (ICZN, 1999). As a result, the name ‘Nesocitinae’ Wolters, 1976 is a *nomen nudum*, and is unavailable. However, Short

(1974: 11) used the name *Nesocitini* and described differences with other woodpeckers. Short (1974) did not explicitly state that *Nesocitini* was a new taxon name, but this became a requirement only after 1999 (ICZN, 1999: Article 16.1). The combination of the name and description satisfies the criteria for making a family-group name available before the year 2000 (ICZN, 1999: Article 13.1 and Article 13.2). Thus, the correct family-group name of the Antillean Piculet is:

**Nesocitini** Short, 1974: 11.

Diagnosis: Relatively large ‘piculet’ (total length 140–160 mm) with long, slightly curved and pointed bill. Differs from other Picinae by a combination of (i) failure of the nasal gland to enter the orbit (Goodge, 1972), (ii) small size; (iii) short tail; (iv) yellow crown without spots; (v) male with red patch on central crown surrounded by yellow; (vi) unmarked olive-green upperparts; (vii) dark-streaked, pale underparts, and (viii) tail rather long and soft, without white longitudinal stripes (Short, 1982; Winkler *et al.*, 1995).

Type genus: *Nesocitites* Hargitt, 1890.

Contents: one extant species, *Nesocitites micromegas* (Sundevall, 1866).

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