

Correspondence

Procellaria gavia

To the Editor,

Sir,

Mr. A. F. Basset Hull (*The Emu*, p. 192) avoids discussing the issues raised in my review but takes refuge in a quibble—and an unfortunately chosen one. He states: "In reviewing my birds long after the 'bloom' had faded, I admitted that there were intermediate shades from blue to brown—never black," and he proceeds to re-assert that his birds could not possibly be reconciled with the "blue-black" of Forster's description of *Procellaria gavia*. Here is where he has failed to continue his collaboration with Mr. Mathews. If Mr. Hull will look up Mathews' *Birds of Australia*, vol. VII, p. 421, he will find these selfsame specimens described as *sooty-black*! See also Mathews and Iredale's *Manual*, p. 25. So a bird which started off as "dark slaty blue" and "accompanied by a rich bloom" when Hull examined it, altered to "sooty black" when Mathews finally studied it in England. We now have the diverting situation of Mr. Hull admitting that our Fluttering Shearwater has a blue component in its colour range but never a black one, whilst Mr. Mathews admits the black but will not concede there is any blue. So for opposite and conflicting reasons they are in accord that the colour of this species "agrees in no way" with Forster's description. After they have sorted themselves out of the tangle I hope they will be prepared to fall in line with other working Australian and New Zealand ornithologists and be satisfied that Forster's *gavia* can be no other than our Fluttering Shearwater. There is now a growing belief, too, first suggested by Hartert, that this shearwater is not an Australian breeder but that "it is highly probable that the birds appearing off our coast are migrants from New Zealand" (K. A. Hindwood, *Proc. Roy. Zool. Soc. N.S.W.*, 1942, p. 20).

Yours, etc.,

Sydney,

D. L. SERVENTY.

January 18, 1943.

Turdus volitans AND THE LAMBERT DRAWINGS

To the Editor,

Sir,

In reply to Mr. Mathews (*The Emu*, XLII, p. 191), may I inquire in which particular respect are Major Whittell and myself confused over the Lambert and Watling Drawings? Our references to those plates were intended to emphasize the point that Mr. Mathews' perplexing and varied interpretations of them indicated a confusion of mind on his part

which shook our confidence in his judgment on the *Turdus volitans* case and his attitude to the problem. In addition to the instances quoted in my letter on page 125, Mr. K. A. Hindwood has given me a further example in a letter from Mathews dated June 2, 1932. This was in reply to a letter from Hindwood seeking elucidation of the puzzling *Ibis* article I quoted in my last letter. Mathews wrote: "About twenty years ago I made a special trip to the Earl of Derby's place to see the 'Lambert' Drawings. Some of these are the types of Latham. Last year we borrowed the Lambert drawings and compared them with the 'Watling' set. I am now quite sure that most of those latter are the types, and only a few of the Lambert ones become types. It is quite easy to distinguish which is which, when working on them. The Lambert drawings are not a duplicate in the real sense of the word, they differ in too many drawings." Mr. Mathews has not inspected the Lambert drawings since 1931 yet he is now satisfied that the two sets are 'identical' and that Lambert's only includes Latham's types. It would be interesting to have the evidence which caused such a radical change in his views since 1932.

Now for *Turdus volitans*. Mr. Mathews has presented no reasoned case for his interpretation justifying the upsetting of Gould and others' acceptance of the obvious. However, a final definition of the position is evidently necessary. I have already elaborated on the objections to transferring the name *volitans* from the synonymy of the Restless Flycatcher, *Seisura inquieta*, and using it for *Rhipidura leucophrys*, with which arguments Mr. Mathews has for the most part avoided joining direct issue. In my letter on page 60 I raised the point that if Latham's *volitans* were based on composite material it should be regarded as indeterminate. That principle, though it has been followed by Mathews and some other ornithologists, is really at variance with the International Rules. Opinion 88 expressly states that "the name of a species is not disqualified merely because the author included in his conception bodily parts of more than one species." The first revisor is at liberty to fix on one of the components as the holotype of the species. The earlier authors used *Turdus volitans* for the Restless Flycatcher, Gray continued its use for the Restless Flycatcher genus, *Seisura*, and in the present correspondence (*The Emu*, vol. XLII, pp. 59 and 124, and this letter) I have, for the first time I believe, critically discussed the position in the light of all the available facts.

Since there is no denying that the description and the drawing under discussion do not tally, though the complete description is identifiable, I reserve the name *Turdus volitans* Latham for the species covered by Latham's descriptions

(namely *Index Orn. Sup.*, 1801, p. XLI, and *Gen. Syn. Sup.* II, 1801, from line 21, p. 183 to line 8, p. 184)—a course implicit in the action of Gould and others—and with them include this name in the synonymy of *Seisura inquieta* (Latham). This is entirely in conformity with the R.A.O.U. *Checklist*, 2nd edn.

The recently-published drawing, which has so bewitched the formalists, should be taken to a distant crossroads and interred there, unnamed, with an oaken stake driven firmly through the area covering the heart!

Yours, etc.,

Sydney,

February 9, 1943.

D. L. SERVENTY.

AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

We have received a notice that the Sixtieth Annual Meeting of the American Ornithologists Union was held at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, October 12-16, 1942, with an attendance of 192. Twenty-seven scientific papers were read—many illustrated by colour slides or films. The three days of programme sessions included a like number of evening entertainments, Open House at the Academy of Sciences, the Annual Dinner and a Symposium on the Cape May area. Wednesday was spent on a conducted tour of the collections of living vertebrates at the Philadelphia Zoo. On Friday ornithologists in attendance took a field trip to favourable localities along the New Jersey coast, around the Cape May Sanctuary.

Officers elected for the new year were as follows: President—James L. Peters, New York City; Vice-Presidents—George Willett, Los Angeles, California, and Hoyes Lloyd, Ottawa, Canada; Secretary—Lawrence E. Hicks, Columbus, Ohio; Treasurer—J. Fletcher Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Editor—John T. Zimmer, New York City; New members of the Council—Arthur A. Allen, Ithaca, New York; Rudolphe M. de Schauensee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Robert C. Murphy, New York City; Rudyerd Boulton, Washington, D.C.

The Brewster Medal Award was made to Margaret M. Nice of Chicago, Illinois, for her publication 'Life History of the Song Sparrow.' Three Fellows were elected—Clarence Cottam, Chicago, Illinois; Rudolphe M. de Schauensee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Harrison F. Lewis, Ottawa, Canada.

The 1943 meeting, if conditions permit, will be held in New York City in October.

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