

alluded to, p. 466 (1885), I substituted *Mellopitta* for *Melanipitta*, preoccupied, being careful not to deviate too far from the original name, in order to minimize the change. Slater, three years later (Cat. Bds. Br. Mus., XIV, p. 449) adds his *Coracopitta* to the list of synonyms. I at once called the attention of ornithologists to this fact (Auk, 1889, p. 79) and Count Salvadori did the same in the Ibis (1890, p. 124), but apparently to no purpose, for in 1892 Mr. Sharpe (Cat. Bds. Br. Mus., XVII, p. 7, foot-note) proposed the amended name of *Coracocichla* alleging *Coracopitta* to be preoccupied, because Bonaparte, in 1854, ought to have written *Coracopitta* for *Corapitta*! Surely this 'shower' of names could easily have been avoided, while I will assert that the changes which I undertook in the 'Standard Natural History' were unavoidable and necessary under the A. O. U. Code of Nomenclature. A further study of that volume might prevent other unnecessary changes in the future. Thus one may find *Atrichornis* substituted for *Atrichia*, preoccupied, though still employed in 1890 in the thirteenth volume of the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum'; also the name *Alopochen* for *Chenalopex*, preoccupied (not in Waterhouse's Index Gen. Av.), but these are by no means the only ones.



VIEILLOT'S 'ANALYSE' AND BUFFON'S 'BRÈVE.'

BY D. G. ELLIOT.

By the courtesy of Dr. Stejneger I am placed in possession of proofs of his article on the genus *Pitta*, published in this number of 'The Auk,' and am therefore enabled to discuss some points in his paper, without being obliged to wait three months for the opportunity to state my views in this journal.

With the greater portion of Dr. Stejneger's paper I am in complete accord, and as regards the proper names to be borne by the Pittas mentioned by him I have for many years contended that those given in his article were the only correct ones, in spite

of the adverse criticism and practice of my ornithological friends in the Old World, and in my forthcoming monograph of the family the species will appear under the names as given by Dr. Stejneger.

But on one or two points I find myself unable to agree with my friend's views, and although perhaps they may not be of very especial importance so far as the Pittas are concerned, yet as the conclusion Dr. Stejneger has reached would seem to ante-date the publication of the 'Analyse' by the 'Nouveau Dictionnaire,' and so seriously affect many genera and species published in the former work, it is perhaps as well to consider the value of the evidence our author relies upon to maintain his position. His proofs, why the 'Analyse' was the last published, are that quite a number of names contained in that work are *not* found in the first four volumes of the 'Nouveau Dictionnaire'; consequently the latter must have been issued first, and although under the name *Asturia cinerea*, Vol. III, a reference is made to the 'Analyse,' yet as no page is given, this is an additional reason that the 'Dictionnaire' was published first. These are, I believe, all the proofs presented by Dr. Stejneger, and on which he rests his case.

Let us see, therefore, how the evidence obtained from a careful investigation of the work in question affects his position. The 'Analyse' is dated 1816. With no evidence to the contrary we must acknowledge that it was published during that year. The 'Nouveau Dictionnaire' is in a great measure a recapitulation of the 1803 edition, somewhat amplified, but the revision and addition of new matter, so far as Vieillot is concerned, is done hastily and imperfectly. The fact that the thirty-six volumes were issued in four years shows how rapid was the publication — Vols. I–VI in 1816, Vols. VII–XVIII and XXV in 1817, Vols. XIX–XXIV and XXVI–XXVIII in 1818, and Vols. XXIX–XXXVI in 1819, — or, in 1816 one volume every two months, in 1817 more than one a month, in 1818 one in a little over a month, and in 1819 a little over one every two months. (It is possible that the date of Vol. XXV (1817) is a typographical error.) If, therefore, the revision of these volumes was accomplished anywhere near the dates of their publication, it need cause no surprise that omissions occur in them. Dr. Stejneger's argument affects only the

first six volumes published in 1816, because I gather nowhere in his article that he denies that the 'Analyse' was issued in that year.

Now, in regard to the first citation of Dr. Stejneger, that the omission of names from the 'Dictionnaire' which appear in the 'Analyse' is a proof that the former antedates the latter, it must be of course admitted that if these omissions occur only in the volumes published in 1816, and never in the later volumes, after, even as Dr. Stejneger will acknowledge, the 'Analyse' was published, his case would be a very strong one indeed; but what are the facts? I have looked up in the 'Dictionnaire' every name given by Vieillot on pages 68, 69, and 70 of the 'Analyse,' with the following result. Of new species there are sixteen, of which thirteen are mentioned in the 'Dictionnaire,' but unfortunately for Dr. Stejneger's argument, the volumes in which all of the absent ones should appear were published *after* 1816. These species are *Musophaga cristata*, *Tyrannus cinereus* and *Phænicopterus parvus*. Of the "nouveaux noms" taken from the Greek there are ninety-one mentioned. Of these *twenty* are not given in the 'Dictionnaire,' although *thirteen* of the missing twenty should have appeared in the volumes issued *after* 1816. It would therefore seem very clear that because any name is omitted from the 'Dictionnaire' that is contained in the 'Analyse,' is no evidence whatever that the former antedates the latter, for if it were for the first six volumes issued in 1816, it would be equally so for the rest, and then it might be claimed that the 'Analyse' was not published until after 1819!

Of all the names given on pages 68, 69, and 70 of the 'Analyse,' to only *four* is any reference made in the 'Dictionnaire,' viz., *Asturia cinerea*, Vol. III, 1816, *Ortygodes variegata*, Vol. XXIV, 1818, *Pica rufiventris* and *Physeta*, both in Vol. XXVI, 1818, the last three mentioned two years after the appearance of the 'Analyse'; but with none of them is any page of Vieillot's pamphlet cited, which proves, if it proves anything, that he was not in the habit of giving the page. This really is the fact, pages hardly ever being cited from any work, but the numeration of the *plates* often, and therefore the absence of page number cannot possibly be advanced as an argument to prove that the first six volumes of the 'Dictionnaire' were published before

the 'Analyse,' but that on the contrary in the one instance in Vol. III he referred to his work in the same way as he did in Vols. XXIV and XXVI, as actually published and in existence, which Dr. Stejneger acknowledges to be a fact at the date of the last two volumes. It will thus be seen that the reasons given by Dr. Stejneger for his belief that the 'Analyse' appeared after the first six volumes of the 'Dictionnaire' fail to support his view, but that the evidence tends directly against it, and more strongly to confirm our belief that the 'Analyse' was a prior publication.

The second point in which I take issue with our author is that the species of Vieillot's genus *Pitta* and those of the French name Brève are not taken from Buffon (although Vieillot expressly states they are), but from Montbeillard, and he quotes the 'Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux,' Vol. III, 1775, p. 412—an edition of eight volumes 1770–1781. In this volume four species are given under Brève as stated by Dr. Stejneger, and one as 'L'Azurin,' which is *Pitta guiana* P. L. S. Müller, the *Brève de la Guiane* of plate 355 of the 'Planches Enluminées.'

The standard edition of Buffon's Hist. Nat. Ois., commonly known as the 'Planches Enluminées,' is in ten volumes published from 1770–1786; and this is the work usually understood when any reference is made to Buffon concerning birds, and the one generally quoted. Why Dr. Stejneger should deem it necessary to select something else, and so endeavor to make Vieillot, when he designates in the 'Analyse' "Buffon's Brèves" as the species for his genus *Pitta*, include any not mentioned in the work above referred to, seems strange, as so little is to be gained by it anyway. The word *Brève* is a French term universally applied to the species of *Pitta*, the same as *Colubri* or *Oiseaux-mouches* is to Hummingbirds, and includes all the species comprised in the family. That Vieillot regarded 'L'Azurin' as a *Pitta* (no matter what Montbeillard considered it) is shown in the 'Dictionnaire,' Vol. IV, p. 356, where he calls it 'La Brève Azurine,' and if Dr. Stejneger considers that the 'Analyse' was published after the 'Dictionnaire,' then this species must be included in Vieillot's genus *Pitta*, because it is in both the edition quoted by him as well as in plate 355 of the standard edition, and therefore his volume would contain five *Pittas* against four in the work from which I quote, in either case making *Pitta* a composite genus containing both long- and short-tailed species.

What the type of *Pitta* may be is of no consequence whatever at the present day; but by no process of elimination that I know, either of the A. O. U., or any other Code, can a genus which has been proposed to include four short-tailed birds (as is the case with Dr. Stejneger) or three (as is the case with Volume IV from which I quote of the 'Planches Enluminées'), all generically alike, be narrowed down to compel the selection of one species only, when no genera have been accepted for the reception of any of the others. Under such circumstances it is usual, I contend, (no especial species having been indicated by the author of the genus) to select the one first mentioned, which in both works cited is Pl. 89, Brève des Philippines, *Pitta sordida* P. L. S. Müller, as given in my paper on the genus *Pitta*, and (if he is unwilling to accept this species) I can see no reason whatever why Dr. Stejneger should ignore plates 257 and 258, the *Pitta moluccensis* Müller and *Pitta coronata* Müller (generally the same as Edwards's species on plate 324 of his work), both given in the volume he cites, in order to pick out a bird not figured by Buffon at all, and not even mentioned in the standard work from which I have quoted.

As to Montbeillard being the author of the volume from which Dr. Stejneger quotes, he is equally so in the one to which I have made reference, and his name in conjunction with Buffon is given as co-author of the 'Planches Enluminées,' and it was natural for Vieillot to mention him, but we should by no manner of means imagine that by so doing he denied to Buffon any authorship in the work; but, by giving in the 'Analyse' Buffon's Brèves as the species he intended to be contained in his genus *Pitta*, he meant those included in the 'Planches Enluminées' and there figured, and not Edwards's species of which Buffon makes no mention in his completed edition.

In conclusion I would point out the fact that, in the 'Dictionnaire,' Vieillot refers to the complete edition of the 'Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux,' 1770-1786, and enumerates only as found in Buffon's work the four species represented on plates 89, 257, 258 and 355, the last being Vieillot's *Brève azurine*, and although he gives in his list with others not in the 'Planches Enluminées,' the *Brève de Ceylon* as figured on plate 324 of Edwards's 'Birds,' he nowhere refers to it as belonging to the species he included in his genus *Pitta*, viz. Buffon's Brèves.