

ON THE GENERIC NAMES *IBIS* LACEPÈDE, AND *EGATHEUS* BILLBERG.

BY GREGORY M. MATHEWS, F. R. S. (Edin.).

WHEN Lönnberg (Journ. für Ornith., 1906, pp. 531-533) introduced Billberg's work to the notice of twentieth century Ornithologists, he showed *Egatheus* Billberg, 1828 was equivalent and anterior to *Plegadis* Kaup, 1829 and should therefore replace the latter.

For a time this was accepted, but when Richmond examined the work he recorded (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. XXXV, p. 607, 1908) that *Egatheus* on tab. A. was a "New name for *Ibis* Lacepède (used for *Tantalus falcinellus* on p. 158)", with a footnote quotation giving Billberg's reason for its introduction: "Dissentientibus auctoribus, quænam esset Egyptiorum *Ibis*; hoc nomen avis in historia insignis justius ut specificum conservari credidimus, adeoque *Egatheum* a græco *ἱεραθεος*, sacer, prætulimus."

Consequently, *Plegadis* Kaup was continued for *P. falcinellus* by American ornithologists (A. O. U. Check-List, 3rd Ed., p. 92, 1910).

When I made up my 'Reference List' I was not satisfied as to the rights of the cases and allowed the use of *Egatheus* Billberg until such time as I should have occasion to monograph the birds in my 'Birds of Australia.'

However, under date Oct. 3rd, 1912, my friend Dr. Chas. W. Richmond wrote me as follows: "*Egatheus* will never do in place of *Plegadis* Kaup 1829. Billberg used *Egatheus* as a classical substitute name for *Ibis* Lacepède. The name occurs on table A, which is (with tables B & C) designated at the bottom as 'ante pag. 1,' so the contents of the tables are to be dealt with before the body of the work. Billberg did not intend to separate *Egatheus* from *Ibis*, but in the body of the work (p. 158, not 166) he only had the Glossy Ibis to deal with and called it *Egatheus*, because *Ibis* was not classical." This was followed by a letter dated Oct. 5th, 1912: "I think a further note on the subject of *Ibis* Lacepède may be of interest to you, inasmuch as what I wrote you about *Egatheus* did not cover the whole case. I am not able at this moment to clear

it all up, but I think *Ibis* Lacepède will prove to be a synonym of the *Tantalus* of Cuvier's *Tabl. Élém.*, 1798, or in other words will have for its type the *Tantalus ibis*, and thus will replace *Pseudotantalus* Ridgway, and remove *Ibis* from the family of Ibises! This will result as follows:—

*Tantalus ibis* will become *Ibis ibis*, with *Pseudotantalus* and *Egatheus* as syn.

*Ibis aethiopica* will become *Threskiornis aeth.*

The family name of the Ibises will become probably *Plegadidae*.

“In Lacepède's *Tableaux*, 1799, you will find no mention of *Numenius*, but the ‘Courlis’ group is called *Tantalus*, and the ‘Ibis’ is given the new generic name *Ibis*. In Cuvier's *Leçons*, 1800, the ‘ibis’ is called *Tantalus*, and the ‘courlis’ *Numenius*. To settle the question it will be necessary, I think, to consult the introductory part of Lacepède's 1799 paper (not accessible here) and see if he did not take his vernacular group names from Cuvier's *Tabl. Élém.*, 1798, also to consult the ‘Didot’ edition of Buffon (Sherborn knows all about this work) and see if either Lacepède or Daudin did not deal further with *Ibis* there. The Didot edition is not to be had here.”

Such an interesting problem deserved immediate attention and herewith are given the results of my investigations.

To deal first with Lacepède's *Tableau*, 1799. The introduction does not give any clue to the origination of Lacepède's divisions; no references to contemporaries are included. From a comparison of the tables in Cuvier's *Leçons*, I suggest that Cuvier borrowed from Lacepède, rather than vice versa. The Cuvierian (1800) groups seem to approximate quite closely to the Lacepède (1799) groups and not as closely to the *Tabl. Élém.* (1798) ones. It seems that Cuvier framed his tables after Lacepède had laid his before the Paris Institute in 1798 (Sherborn, *Natural Science*, 1899, pp. 406–409), where Cuvier would see them. It does not matter much, however, as there is nothing yet known to decide either way.

In the ‘*Tableau*’ the diagnosis of *Ibis* reads “Le bec long, fort, tranchant, et émoussé à son extrémité, des places dénuées de plumes sur la tête.”

This is too broad a definition for exact work, so that it is satisfactory to have more data given almost simultaneously by Daudin. An edition of Buffon was apparently printed off by Plassan in 1799 and not issued completely; it was then taken over and issued by Didot. The full history of this complex transaction has been unravelled by Sherborn (*loc. cit.*) and Richmond (Auk, 1899, pp. 325-329; also Auk, 1900, pp. 166-167). According to the latter the XIVth volume of the *Quadrupedes* was not issued until 1802, and included in that volume were *Tableaux des Mammifères... et Oiseaux*.

The latter is entitled "Tableau | des | Sous-Classes, Divisions, | Sous-Divisions, Ordres | et Genres | Des Oiseaux, | par le C<sup>en</sup> Lacepède; | Avec l'indication, de toutes les espèces | décrites par Buffon, et leur distribution | dans chacun des genres, | par F. M. Daudin."

On p. 334, we find the genus *Ibis* and thereunder are included:

Le Couricaca	<i>Ibis loculator</i>	XIV, 182
L'Ibis blanc	<i>candidus</i>	XV, 188
L'Ibis noir	<i>niger</i>	193
Le Courlis rouge	<i>ruber</i>	212
Le Courlis des bois	<i>cayanensis</i>	222
L'acalot	<i>mexicanus</i>	225
Le grand courlis de Cayenne	<i>albicollis</i>	228
Le matuitui des rivages	<i>griseus</i>	227
Le courlis brun a front rouge	<i>fuscus</i>	221
Le courlis blanc	<i>albus</i>	XV, 219
Le courlis verd, ou courlis d'Italie	<i>falcinellus</i>	204
Le courlis brun	<i>manillensis</i>	206
Le courlis a tête rue	<i>calvus</i>	208
Le courlis huppé	<i>cristatus</i>	210

The reference is to the volume of *Birds* where the bird is described under the vernaculars given.

From among these then I conclude a type of *Ibis* Lacepède must be selected. It may be that the better reference would be to *Ibis* Daudin but it matters little.

It will be at once noted that *athiopica* Latham is missing and consequently so far Richmond's conjecture is correct and *Ibis* Lacepède (or Daudin) cannot be used any longer in the general acceptance of that name.

Though the majority of the species above belong to the family Ibididae (auct.), only two are called in the vernacular by Buffon Ibis, *L'Ibis blanc* and *L'Ibis noir*. Moreover, under the generic heading *L'Ibis*, Buffon had written "Nous avons dit que les Anciens distinguoient deux espèces d'ibis, l'une blanche & l'autre noire."

Further, *L'Ibis blanc* is the *Tantalus ibis* of Linné; consequently, by tautonymy, this becomes the type and Richmond's suggestion is confirmed; therefore *Ibis* Lacepède, 1799 (or Daudin, 1802) must replace *Pseudotantalus* Ridgway (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., p. 550, 1883). *Egatheus* Billberg was absolutely introduced as a substitute for *Ibis* Lacepède and must therefore follow that name and disappear as an absolute synonym. I was not certain of this before, but Dr. Richmond has satisfied me that such was the case.

It might be noted that in the Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., Vol. XXVI, p. 4, 1896, *Ibis* was used as of Cuvier, 1816; that was an altogether different introduction, the type being *I. aethiopica* (Latham) by tautonymy. But there was a prior *Ibis* of Illiger, 1811, which was overlooked if *Ibis* Lacepède was ignored as unidentifiable, and Illiger quotes *Ibis* Lacepède in his synonymy.

Gray, in the Appendix List Genera Birds, p. 13, 1842, introduced *Threskiornis* for *Tantalus aethiopicus* Latham, and in the Cat. Gen. Subgen. Birds, p. 115, 1855, noted 'Ibis Cuv. 1817' as a synonym of this group. This name must now be resumed. It will therefore be seen all of Richmond's suggested changes are necessary:

**Ibis** Lacepède, Tableau Oiseaux, 1799 (or Daudin Hist. Nat.).

Type (by tautonymy), *Ibis candidus* Daudin, 1802 (= *Tantalus ibis* Linné).

Synonyms: *Ibis* Illiger, 1811 and *Egatheus* Billberg, 1828,

will replace PSEUDOTANTALUS Ridgway, 1883.

**Threskiornis** Gray, Appendix List Genera Birds, p. 13, 1842.

Type (by original designation), *Tan. aethiopicus* Latham.

Synonym: *Ibis* Cuvier, 1816 not *Ibis* Lacepède, 1799, etc.,

will replace IBIS (Cuvier) Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., Vol. XXVI, p. 4, 1896.

PLEGADIS Kaup, 1829, will remain as used in the Check-List North Amer. Birds, 3rd Ed., 1910, p. 92, but the Family name of the Ibises, *ibid.*, p. 91, will become PLEGADIDAE.