

SHORT NOTE

Molecular systematics of Macquarie Island and Reischek's parakeets

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Our previous study (Boon *et al.* 2001) demonstrated an apparently close genetic relationship between the nominate taxa *Cyanoramphus erythrotis* (Macquarie Island) and *C. hochstetteri*. Detailed DNA sequencing of Control Region targets from the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) genomes of either fresh or museum specimens of these species showed only between two and five nucleotide differences over the 395 nucleotide target region compared. Taken together with extensive phylogenetic analyses of these and those from other *Cyanoramphus* specimens lead us to conclude that the latter should be relegated to a subspecies of the former as *C. e. hochstetteri*. These findings were presented in good faith based on our understanding that the Canterbury Museum specimen of the Macquarie island parakeet (AV2099) from which we extracted DNA for analysis was an authentic specimen of *C. erythrotis*.

Scofield (2005) has presented convincing arguments to show that AV2099 is much more likely to be a specimen of the red-crowned parakeet found on the

Antipodes (Reischek's parakeet). Given that this is, in fact, the case, then perhaps it is not surprising that we found close affinity between DNA extracted from this specimen and from authentic samples of *C. hochstetteri*. Under these circumstances we feel that it is incumbent upon us to withdraw our suggestion above. However, the data of Boon *et al.* (2001) do still lead to the convincing separation of Reischek's parakeet distinct from all other red-crowned parakeet types. This observation should now be taken to support the retention of the taxonomic name *C. hochstetteri*. The status of the Macquarie island parakeet remains, for the present, unresolved, indeed unexamined, by molecular methods and the taxonomic name of *C. erythrotis* should be conserved for reasons of continuity as advocated by Scofield (2001). Further we agree with him that this should serve as an object lesson in the need for caution when labelling museum specimens, or when interpreting existing labels.

LITERATURE CITED

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- Scofield, R.P. 2005. The supposed Macquarie Island parakeet in the collection of the Canterbury Museum. *Notornis* 52: 117-120

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