

## Application of the new names in the 1794 J.R. Forster footnote on Norfolk Island birds

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**Abstract** Johann Reinhold Forster (1794) described a handful of new bird taxa in a footnote to his translation of Philip Gidley King's account of a visit to Norfolk Island. While most of these new bird names have older synonyms, are *nomina nuda* or are previously published, three of them – *Psittacus hypopolius*, *Columba argetraea* and *Mostacilla* [sic: *Motacilla*] *ventilabrum* – are available by description and are open to interpretation as the valid senior names for the Norfolk Island kaka, Norfolk Island fruit pigeon and Norfolk Island grey fantail respectively. However, Forster (1794) based these descriptions on a mixed type series of birds from mainland New Zealand (South Island) and Norfolk Island, and, by lectotypification, these three names are here established for the New Zealand forms, thereby maintaining priority for names already in wide use for the three Norfolk taxa, namely *productus* Gould, 1836 for the kaka, *spadicea* Latham, 1801 for the fruit pigeon, and *pelzelni* G.R. Gray, 1862 for the grey fantail.

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Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) was the naturalist on James Cook's second voyage of discovery to the Antarctic and Pacific in 1772-1775, while his son Georg (1754-1794) sailed as an assistant artist (Beaglehole 1961). Although prevented by the British Admiralty from publishing on the natural history results of the voyage (Mathews 1925; Iredale 1937; Whittell 1954: 253), the elder Forster nevertheless added a footnote to his 1794 translation of Commandant Philip Gidley King's account of establishing a penal colony on Norfolk Island in 1788-1790 (J.R. Forster 1794: 313). In that footnote, Forster reported the birds that he himself had found on Norfolk Island when it was discovered by Cook on 10 October 1774. We translate: "During our visit to Norfolk-Island on 10th October 1774 we met with following birds also known [to us] from New Zealand: a large, green parrot, which we named *Psittacus hypopolius*; a parakeet, the same kind one

finds also on New Amsterdam, *Psittacus euchlorus*; a reddish brown, beautiful pigeon with white belly, *Columba argetraea*; a wagtail with a fanned tail, *Motacilla ventilabrum*; three storm petrels, *Procellaria gavia*, *Procellaria tridactyla*, and a variety of Linné's *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. Shags were nesting on the cliffs, Linné's *Pelecanus piscator*. Furthermore, we discovered a new, very beautiful flycatcher *Muscicapa dipapha*. It was black, had a white forehead and upper wing-coverts, [and was] on wings, breast and belly of wonderful scarlet colour".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The original text reads as followed: "Als wir am 10ten Oktober 1774 die Norfolk=Insel besuchten, fanden wir folgende auch in Neuseeland von uns angetroffene Vögel: einen großen grünen Papagay, den wir *psittacum hypopolium* nannten; einen Perrokiht, desgleichen man auch in Neuamsterdam findet, *psittacum euchlorum*; eine braunrothe schöne Taube mit weißem Bauche, *columbam argetraeam*; einen Quecksterz mit einem Fächerschwanze, *mostacillam* [sic: *motacillam*] *ventilabrum*; drei Sturmvoegel, *procellariam gaviam*, *procellariam tridactylam*, und eine Abart von Linnés *procellaria aequinoctialis*. An den Felsen nisteten die Seeraben, Linnés *pelecani piscatores*. Noch fanden wir einen neuen sehr schönen Fliegenschneider [sic], *muscipam dipapham*. Er war schwarz, hatte eine weiße Stirn und obere Deckfedern, an Flügel, Brust und Bauche von herrlicher Scharlachfarbe".

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Lichtenstein (1844) later published J.R. Forster's notes on birds from Cook's second voyage, referring the new names for Norfolk Island birds to taxa already described earlier from New Zealand by Johann Friedrich Gmelin (1788, 1789). Quoting Lichtenstein (1844) as Forster (1844), the synonymies of the *Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum* (Salvadori 1891: 5 for *hypopolius* [not *euchlorus* p. 44], 1893: 237 for *argetraea*; Sharpe 1879: 168 for *dipapha*, 309 for *ventilabrum*; Salvin 1896: 381 for *gavia*, 395 for *aequinoctialis* ref. Linnaeus, 438 for *tridactyla*; Ogilvie-Grant 1898: 432 for *piscator* ref. Linnaeus) and other revisers such as Sharpe (1906) and Mathews (1927, 1930) followed suit. Nevertheless, Iredale (1937) and Mathews (1943, 1946), followed by Schodde (1997a, 1997b) and McAllan (2007), concluded that the names had been published for Norfolk Island taxa first, thereby displacing the long-established species-group names of *productus* Gould, 1836 for the extinct Norfolk Island kaka (Psittacidae), *spadicea* Latham, 1801 for the extinct Norfolk Island fruit pigeon (Columbidae) and *pelzelni* G.R. Gray, 1862 for the Norfolk Island grey fantail (Rhipiduridae). Although Schodde (*ll.cc.*) rejected the Forster names because of now-suspended applications to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to suppress them, McAllan (*l.c.*) persisted in advocating a change from *spadicea* Latham, 1801 to *argetraea* J.R. Forster, 1794 for the Norfolk Island fruit pigeon. The purpose of this note is to settle the application of the Forster names published in 1794 for Norfolk Island birds, hereafter called collectively "the Forster names".

Of the Forster names, *Psittacus euchlorus* and the four seabird names are *nomina nuda*, or previously published, and they have no potential impact on current nomenclature. Although *euchlorus* Wagler ex J.R. Forster, with type locality Tonga, applied to *Vini australis* (J.F. Gmelin, 1788) when first available published (Wagler 1832: 565; also J.R. Forster in Lichtenstein 1844: 160; Salvadori 1891: 44), the younger Forster's diary of Cook's second voyage (G. Forster 1777a: 158, 1777b: 346=446; G. Forster 2007: 131, 528) shows that both Norfolk Island and New Zealand red-fronted parakeets (*Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae* (Sparrrman) *sensu lato*) had been implicated in the minds of the Forsters as well (Steinheimer in prep.). *Muscicapa dipapha* J.R. Forster, 1794, its specific epithet probably an error for *dibapha* but nonetheless correct under Arts. 32.2 and 32.5 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999), is available by description (Art. 12.1, *cf.* Art. 72.3). Yet it is a junior objective synonym of *Petroica multicolor* (J.F. Gmelin, 1789), itself based on Latham's "red-bellied flycatcher" described from Cook's material from Norfolk Island (Latham 1783; J.F. Gmelin 1789; Sharpe 1879: 168; Mathews 1928, 1930). Thus *dipapha* J.R. Forster too

has no effect on current nomenclature.

The last three Forster names – *Psittacus hypopolius*, *Columba argetraea* and *Mostacilla* [*sic: Motacilla*] *ventilabrum* – are also available by description, however meagre. More importantly, they do impact on current nomenclature: they are open to interpretation as the valid senior names for the Norfolk Island kaka, Norfolk Island fruit pigeon and Norfolk Island grey fantail respectively, as noted above. Yet only Iredale (1937) and Mathews (1943, 1946), supported by McAllan (2007), have accepted this view. All three, moreover, overlooked the seniority of *ventilabrum* J.R. Forster. The identity of the Forster parrot and pigeon, vague due to skimpy diagnoses and disputed by McAllan (2007) in the case of *Psittacus hypopolius*, is clarified by the younger Forster's paintings of *Psittacus hypopolius* and *Columba argetraea* (Lysaght 1959: 285, 304) and by the elder Forster's description of both taxa (J.R. Forster in Lichtenstein 1844) when considered in conjunction with the younger Forster's diary of ornithological findings on both Norfolk Island and New Zealand (G. Forster 1777a: 158, 1777b: 346=446; G. Forster 2007: 131, 528). There it becomes clear that *hypopolius* does apply to the kaka (Schodde *et al.* 2007; *contra* McAllan 2007), its original description amplified to "very large, greyish-green, with a reddish breast" (G. Forster 1777a: 158; G. Forster 2007: 131). *Columba argetraea*, as commonly surmised, applies to the New Zealand Pigeon, *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* (J.F. Gmelin, 1789) (also Salvadori 1893: 237; Sharpe 1906: 193; Lysaght 1959: 304); according to the younger Forster (1777: 346=446), "the pigeon" on Norfolk Island "was exactly the same" as the one in New Zealand.

The third name, *Motacilla ventilabrum*, applies to the New Zealand fantail group, for which *Rhipidura fuliginosa* (Sparrrman, 1787) (melanistic morph) and *Rhipidura flabellifera* (J.F. Gmelin, 1789) (pied morph) are both synonyms (*e.g.* Lichtenstein 1844: 86 (footnote); Sharpe 1879: 309; Mathews 1930: 481, 1943: 165). Like *ventilabrum*, they were also described from Cook's second voyage. The connection between *flabellifera* and *ventilabrum*, which the elder Forster later referred to *Muscicapa* (in Lichtenstein 1844: 86), is clarified by Latham's English description of the fan-tailed flycatcher (Latham 1783: 340) = J.F. Gmelin's *Muscicapa flabellifera* (J.F. Gmelin 1789: 943). It matches much of the elder Forster's independent, Latinised account of *ventilabrum* almost word for word through most paragraphs (*cf.* Forster in Lichtenstein 1844: 86), and credits Forster with providing the information on behaviour. Latham evidently had access to and used J.R. Forster's original notes for *ventilabrum* when drawing up his description of the fan-tailed flycatcher. Moreover, a painting of "*Muscicapa ventilabrum*" in the Natural History Museum, London, by the younger Forster

(G. Forster no. 155) is “very close” to Latham’s (1783: plate 49) figure of his fan-tailed flycatcher (Lysaght 1959: 308), and is annotated with the same Maori name, *diggo wagh wagh*. Because of the consistent treatment of its gender in both the original and subsequent descriptions by the elder Forster (J.R. Forster 1794, in Lichtenstein 1844), we interpret *ventilabrum*, meaning a fan, as a noun in apposition and thus invariable (Arts. 31.2.1 and 31.2.2 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature).

The names for Norfolk Island taxa that the Forster names would replace – *productus* Gould for the kaka, *spadicea* Latham for the fruit pigeon, and *pelzelni* G.R. Gray for the fantail – have been taken up widely throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from Salvadori (1891, 1893), Sharpe (1899), Hull (1910) and Mathews (1928, 1930) to Peters (1937) and onwards. They are cited collectively as “the in-use Norfolk names” below. Today they are used not only in all Australasian handbooks, checklists and conservation manuals dealing with Norfolk Island and Australasian birds (Schodde *et al.* 1983; Checklist Committee O.S.N.Z. 1990; Higgins & Davies 1996; Higgins & Peter 2002; Heather & Robertson 1997; Schodde & Mason 1997; Schodde & Mason 1999; Stanger *et al.* 1998; Garnett & Crowley 2000; Holdaway *et al.* 2001; Clayton *et al.* 2006), but also in historical papers (*e.g.*, Hindwood 1965) and major global monographs and checklists (Goodwin 1967 and subsequent editions; Forshaw 1973, 2006; Wolters 1975–1982; Sibley & Monroe 1990; Baptista *et al.* 1997; Gibbs *et al.* 2001; Dickinson 2003). All references to the kaka and pigeon in modern treatises concerned with extinct and vanishing birds, furthermore, have employed *productus* and *spadicea* exclusively (Greenway 1967; Ovington 1978; Fuller 2001; Holdaway & Anderson 2001; Steadman 2006).

Unfortunately, the threat posed by the Forster names cannot be resolved by their routine suppression under Art. 23.9 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999) because the requirements of that article are not met: both *hypopolius* and *argetraea* have been employed as valid for the Norfolk Island kaka and Norfolk Island fruit pigeon since 31 December 1899 (Iredale 1937; Mathews 1943, 1946), contravening Art. 23.9.1.1. And although *ventilabrum* has not, to our knowledge, been used as valid for the fantail since 1844 (Lichtenstein 1844), its competing in-use junior synonym, *pelzelni* G.R. Gray, has not been cited sufficiently in the last 50 years to satisfy Art. 23.9.1.2.

There is, nevertheless, a simple alternative. It is abundantly clear from the Forsters’ accounts of the birds on Cook’s second voyage (G. Forster 1777a, 1777b; J.R. Forster in Lichtenstein 1844) that they believed the kaka, fruit pigeon and

fantail on Norfolk Island to belong to the same species discovered earlier on the South Island of New Zealand, at Dusky Sound. Although not appreciated by recent revisers, this is stressed in the protologue of the Forster names: “when visiting Norfolk-Island we encountered the following birds also met by us in New Zealand...” (J.R. Forster 1794: 313, footnote)<sup>2</sup>. Thus their names were based on taxa recorded, in their original descriptions, from *both* Norfolk Island *and* New Zealand. Both islands therefore comprise the type locality (Art. 76.1 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature). New Zealand populations of the Forster names all have prior in-use names: *meridionalis* J.F. Gmelin, 1788 for the kaka, *novaezealandiae* J.F. Gmelin, 1789 for the fruit pigeon, and *fuliginosa* Sparrman, 1787 and *flabellifera* J.F. Gmelin, 1789 for the fantail, respectively. Consequently, lectotypifying the Forster names with New Zealand material from Cook’s second voyage at once disposes of them as junior synonyms and leaves the present in-use Norfolk names unaffected and valid. Just as importantly, it validates and settles traditional nomenclature by returning *hypopolius* J.R. Forster, *argetraea* J.R. Forster and *ventilabrum* J.R. Forster to the respective synonymies of New Zealand’s South Island kaka, New Zealand fruit pigeon and South Island fantail, as in Wagler (1832: 505, 696), Lichtenstein (1844: 72, 86 – but not *Columba argetraea* J.R. Forster on p. 80), Sharpe (1879: 309; 1906: 181, 193, 196), Salvadori (1891: 5; 1893: 237), Mathews (1927: 53, 283; 1930: 481), and Lysaght (1959: 285, 304, 308). Under Art. 76.2, the place of origin of the lectotype becomes the type locality of the nominal species-group taxon.

Tracing the ornithological material from Cook’s second voyage, all of which we may assume to have been seen by the elder Forster as the official naturalist and incorporated into his notes and journal, is difficult because next-to-nothing of the specimen material survives. It was dispersed long ago by Joseph Banks and the sale of the Leverian Museum in 1806 (Sharpe 1906; Whitehead 1969; Medway 1976). Whatever was figured by the younger Forster (Sharpe 1906: 179–199; Lysaght 1959), or published from the elder Forster’s notes, or is Cook material from Dusky Sound, or was described in the *Museum Carlsonianum* by Anders Sparrman (1786–1789), a student-assistant naturalist on the second voyage (Medway 2004), must have come from Cook’s second voyage. Where New Zealand specimens of the kaka, pigeon and fantail from that voyage have been found, or their drawings and descriptions identified, they have been chosen below as the lectotypes for the Forster names. By this action, *Psittacus hypopolius* J.R. Forster, 1794, becomes a

<sup>2</sup> The original text reads as followed “als wir...die Norfolk=Insel besuchten, fanden wir folgende auch in Neuseeland von uns angetroffene Vögel...”

junior objective synonym of *Psittacus meridionalis* J.F. Gmelin, 1788, based on the southern brown parrot of Latham (1781: 264); *Columba argetraea* J.R. Forster, 1794, becomes a junior objective synonym of *Columba novaeseelandiae* J.F. Gmelin, 1789, based on the New Zealand pigeon of Latham (1783: 640); and *Motacilla ventilabrum* J.R. Forster, 1794, becomes a junior objective synonym of *Muscicapa flabellifera* J.F. Gmelin, 1789, based on the fan-tailed flycatcher of Latham (1783: 340).

Formal designation of lectotypes follows, in accord with Arts. 74.4 and 74.7 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999), as modified by Declaration 44 (ICZN 2003):

1. *Psittacus hypopolius* J.R. Forster, 1794, Lieutenant Kings Nachrichten von der Norfolk=Insel, und von seiner Rückkehr über Port=Jackson, Batavia, Isle de France, und das Vorgebirge der guten Hoffnung nach England, p. 313, footnote. Pp. 281-328 in Part 3 (3) in Forster, J.R., ed. Die Neuesten Reisen nach der Botany=Bay und Port=Jackson. Nebst Nachrichten von den Fortschritten und Entdeckungen in Neu=Südwallis und der Südsee. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Mit Anmerkungen. *Magazin von merkwürdigen neuen Reise Beschreibungen*, vol. 11. Vossische Buchhandlung, Berlin.

LECTOTYPE: NMW 41.026, Neu Seeland (= Dusky Sound, South Island, New Zealand) – see Pelzeln (1873: 32), Pelzeln & Lorenz (1888: 40), Medway (1976: 123-124) and Schifter *et al.* (2007: 159) = *Psittacus meridionalis* J.F. Gmelin, 1788 = *Nestor m. meridionalis* (J.F. Gmelin). **Purpose:** to separate nomenclaturally the forms of the genus *Nestor* in New Zealand and Norfolk Island on which *Psittacus hypopolius* J.R. Forster is jointly based.

2. *Columba argetraea* J.R. Forster, 1794, Lieutenant Kings Nachrichten von der Norfolk=Insel, und von seiner Rückkehr über Port=Jackson, Batavia, Isle de France, und das Vorgebirge der guten Hoffnung nach England, p. 313, footnote. Pp. 281-328 in Part 3 (3) in Forster, J.R., ed. Die Neuesten Reisen nach der Botany=Bay und Port=Jackson. Nebst Nachrichten von den Fortschritten und Entdeckungen in Neu=Südwallis und der Südsee. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Mit Anmerkungen. *Magazin von merkwürdigen neuen Reise Beschreibungen*, vol. 11. Vossische Buchhandlung, Berlin.

LECTOTYPE: the specimen of *Columba argetraea* figured by Georg Forster on 3 April 1773, at Dusky Bay (= Sound), South Island, New Zealand, with the Latin name *Columba argetraea* and Maori name "hagarreroo". This figure is annotated by Jonas Dryander and lodged in the Natural History Museum, London, as G. Forster drawing no. 137 (Sharpe 1906: 193; Lysaght 1959: 304) = *Columba novae Seelandiae* J.F. Gmelin, 1789, based on the New Zealand pigeon of Latham (1783: 640),

from Dusky Bay with the same Maori name = *Hemiphaga n. novaeseelandiae* (J.F. Gmelin), specimen untraced (Medway 1976). **Purpose:** to separate nomenclaturally the forms of the genus *Hemiphaga* in New Zealand and Norfolk Island on which *Columba argetraea* J.R. Forster is jointly based.

3. *Mostacilla* [sic: *Motacilla*] *ventilabrum* J.R. Forster, 1794, Lieutenant Kings Nachrichten von der Norfolk=Insel, und von seiner Rückkehr über Port=Jackson, Batavia, Isle de France, und das Vorgebirge der guten Hoffnung nach England, p. 313, footnote. Pp. 281-328 in Part 3 (3) in Forster, J.R., ed. Die Neuesten Reisen nach der Botany=Bay und Port=Jackson. Nebst Nachrichten von den Fortschritten und Entdeckungen in Neu=Südwallis und der Südsee. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Mit Anmerkungen. *Magazin von merkwürdigen neuen Reise Beschreibungen*, vol. 11. Vossische Buchhandlung, Berlin.

LECTOTYPE: the specimen of the fan-tailed flycatcher figured on pl. LXIX in Latham (1783), South Island, New Zealand = *Muscicapa flabellifera* J.F. Gmelin, 1789, based on the fan-tailed flycatcher in Latham (*l.c.*) = *Rhipidura f. fuliginosa* (Sparman, 1787), specimen untraced (Gyldenstolpe 1926; Medway 1976, 2004). **Purpose:** to separate nomenclaturally the forms of the genus *Rhipidura* in New Zealand and Norfolk Island on which *Muscicapa ventilabrum* J.R. Forster is jointly based.

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