

SHORT NOTE

Stabilisation of the genus-group name of the New Zealand bellbird

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During research for the upcoming OSNZ checklist it came to the attention of the authors that *Anthornis* G.R. Gray, 1840, currently in use as the genus to which the New Zealand bellbirds belong, is, in fact, a junior synonym of *Anthomiza* Swainson, 1837.

Under the recently adopted *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, the principle of reversal of precedence (ICZN 1999: 27, Article 23, clauses 23.9.1.1 & 23.9.1.2) rules that names in prevailing usage must be maintained when the following conditions are both met:

“23.9.1.1. the senior synonym or homonym has not been used as a valid name after 1899; and

23.9.1.2. the junior synonym or homonym has been used for a particular taxon, as its presumed valid name, in at least 25 works, published by at least 10 authors in the immediately preceding 50 years and encompassing a span of not less than 10 years.”

The purpose of this note is to demonstrate that these criteria are met in this case. Thus, we propose that *Anthornis* be preserved as a *nomen protectum*, to remain as the generic name in prevailing usage for New Zealand bellbirds, and that *Anthomiza* be regarded as a *nomen oblitum*.

***Anthomiza* Swainson, 1837** (p. 326). *Nomen oblitum*. Type species by original designation: *Anthomiza caeruleocephala* Swainson 1837, *nomen novum* for *Certhia melanura* Sparrman, 1786. Based on the bird depicted in Plate 5 of Sparrman's (1786) *Museum Carlsonianum*.

Received 15 June 2005; accepted 30 June 2005
Editor M. Williams

We could find no instance of *Anthomiza* having been used as the valid generic name for New Zealand bellbirds since 1899 despite an extensive search of both New Zealand and overseas references.

***Anthornis* G.R. Gray 1840** (p. 15). *Nomen protectum*. Type species by original designation: *Certhia melanura* Sparrman, 1786. Unnecessary *nomen novum* for *Anthomiza* Swainson, not a junior homonym of *Anthomyza* Fallén, 1810.

***Anthomyza* G.R. Gray 1840** (p. 15). Unjustified emendation of *Anthomiza* Swainson, and a junior homonym of *Anthomyza* Fallén, 1810.

Anthornis has prevailed as the generic name for New Zealand bellbirds since Gray (1840) erected it as a replacement name for his own unjustified emendation of *Anthomiza* into *Anthomyza*. The name *Anthomiza* must be considered as the “correct original spelling” (ICZN 1999: Article 32.2). The fact that Swainson's orthography was grammatically incorrect does not constitute a valid reason to emend the spelling of *Anthomiza* (ICZN 1999: Article 32.5.1).

Despite being the result of a confusion, *Anthornis* was accepted by contemporary authorities (e.g., Gray 1862, 1871; Hutton 1871; Sclater 1886; Buller 1873, 1888) and, to the best of our knowledge, all other subsequent workers (e.g., Mathews 1930, 1931, 1946). Twenty-five of the most important publications that use this generic name in the last 50 years are: Falla *et al.* 1966; Salomonsen 1967; Kinsky 1970; Wolters 1979; Gill 1980; Clout & Gaze 1984; Craig & MacMillen 1985; Robertson 1985; Craig & Douglas 1986; Bartle & Sagar 1987; Rasch & Craig 1988; Sibley & Munroe 1990; Turbott 1990; Innes & Hay 1991; Heather *et al.* 1996; Castro & Robertson 1997; Clements 2000; Holdaway *et al.* 2001; Murphy & Kelly 2001; Fitzgerald & Gibb 2001; Higgins *et al.* 2001; Worthy & Holdaway 2002; Anderson & Craig 2003; Dickinson 2003; Driskell & Christidis 2004.

We can find no original description for *Anthomiza caeruleocephala* other than that given on page 327 in Swainson first volume of his “*Natural history and classification of birds*” (1837) viz “*A. caeruleocephala*. Mus. Carl. i. pl. 5”. On page 201 and 202 of the same volume he states:

“The specific names, placed under each group are not always those by which the bird is mentioned in the work referred to; for many of the names used by these authors, even when good, have not the claim of priority, or the birds have not been placed in the group under which they here stand: the nomenclature, therefore, must be rather considered our own, than that of the authors quoted; since, in

such cases, we have used their figures as references only, without adopting their nomenclature. Where original specific names are not erroneous, or otherwise objectionable, we have, as a matter of course, always retained them; choosing, where necessary, such as have the additional claim of priority."

Therefore, we conclude that the description given by Swainson (1837, p. 327) is in fact the original description of *Anthornis caeruleocephala*. Thus, *Anthornis caeruleocephala* Swainson, 1837 is a junior synonym of *Anthornis melanura* (Sparrman 1786).

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Keywords New Zealand bellbird; *Anthornis*; nomen proctum; *Anthornis*; nomen oblitum; International Code of Zoological Nomenclature