

Case 2879***Aptornis* Owen, [1848] (Aves): proposed conservation as the correct original spelling**

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve the name *Aptornis* Owen, [1848, April] for extinct large flightless birds (family APTORNITHIDAE Bonaparte, 1856) from New Zealand. The name first appeared (a week earlier) as *Apterornis*, probably due to a spelling error; this spelling has been used on only four occasions, all since 1985. The name *Apterornis* Sélys-Longchamps, 1848 (October) referred to different extinct flightless birds (family RAPHIDAE Wetmore, 1930), including the white dodo from Réunion.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Aves; extinct flightless birds; *Aptornis*; New Zealand.

1. Owen ([June 1844]; *Transactions of the Zoological Society of London*, vol. 3, part 3; ref. 1844b) described and illustrated the skeletal remains of extinct large flightless birds from New Zealand. Among them was a tibia (p. 247; pl. 25, figs. 5, 6; pl. 26, figs. 5, 6) on which he based a new species of *Dinornis* Owen, 1843 (the moas), *D. otidiformis*. The name *Dinornis otidiformis* had been mentioned a few months earlier (Owen, [March 1844]; *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, vol. 11; ref. 1844a) but was not then made available. The publication dates of the early volumes of the *Transactions* were set out by Peavot (1913, pp. 814–815); those for the 1830–1859 volumes of the *Proceedings* were listed by Sclater (1893, p. 438). Bruce & McAllan (1990, pp. 458, 459) claimed that *The Literary Gazette* of December 1843 ‘is the original publication for *D. otidiformis*’. However, there is no description of the taxon and the name was not made available in this work.

2. Further remains of *Dinornis otidiformis* Owen, [1844] were found and the taxon was referred to a new genus. A report (*Proceedings*, vol. 16, p. 1, published on 13 April 1848; ref. 1848a) of a lecture by Owen noted: ‘The author alluded to a form of tarso-metatarsal bone, which had supported a strong back-toe, and resembled the metatarsus of the Dodo, but was shorter and thicker, as apparently belonging to the tibia of the species described in a former memoir (*Zool. Trans.* iii. 1843 [recte [1844]], p. 247), to the *Dinornis otidiformis*, but which must belong to a genus (*Apterornis*) distinct from both *Dinornis* and *Palapteryx*’. The name appeared (p. 251) in the index to the part as ‘*Apterormis*’.

3. In a paper in the *Transactions* (vol. 3, part 5, published on 22 April 1848; ref. 1848b), Owen noted (p. 347): ‘There are eight tarso-metatarsal bones, with the articular surface for a very strong hind-toe, and of a conformation more nearly resembling those of the *Dodo* than those of the *Dinornis* or *Palapteryx*, but shorter and thicker in proportion than in the *Dodo*, and appertaining to the same bird as the tibiae and femora in my Memoir of 1843 [recte [1844]] under the name of *Dinornis*

otidiformis ... The large surface for the hind-toe; the strong calcaneal process ... and the more posterior position of the condyle for the inner toe, all concur to indicate the generic distinction of the bird to which it belonged from either *Dinornis* or *Palapteryx*; and I propose to indicate the new genus by the name of *Aptornis*'. The name *Aptornis* was mentioned twice with the same spelling.

4. It seems very probable that the earlier spelling *Apterornis*, in a report not actually written by Owen, was an error, particularly since the further misspelling '*Apterormis*' appeared in the index, but under Article 32b of the Code it is an available name, attributable to Owen (Article 50b). *Apterornis* has not generally been used by subsequent authors and has appeared only three times (all since 1985; see para. 5 below). Mantell (August 1848, p. 233) adopted the name *Aptornis*. Bonaparte (1856, p. 109) based the family APTORNITHIDAE on the genus *Aptornis* Owen, [1848]. The spelling *Aptornis* has been adopted by the vast majority of subsequent authors; these include Fürbringer (1888), Hamilton (1891), Lydekker (1891, pp. 147, 152), Gadow (1893, p. 182), Sharpe (1894, p. 207), Andrews (1896; 1899, pp. 69, 71), Beddard (1898, p. 378), Rothschild (1907, pp. 145, 147), Lowe (1926, p. 177), Oliver (1955, p. 596), Lambrecht (1933, p. 485), Stresemann (1933, p. 763), Dechaseaux (1955, p. 1961), Piveteau (1955, p. 1077), Scarlett (1955, p. 262), Berndt & Meise (1962, p. 96), Trotter (1965, p. 177), Romer (1966, p. 376), Brodkorb (1967, p. 131) and Mlíkovský (1982, p. 725).

5. Olson (1975, p. 63; 1977, p. 373) used the name *Aptornis*. In 1985 (p. 162), however, he discovered the priority of the spelling *Apterornis* and adopted the latter: '*Apterornithidae*. The strange birds from the Quaternary of New Zealand that are properly known as *Apterornis* Owen, which name has a week's priority over *Aptornis* Owen, have usually been thought of as rails ...'. This was followed by Carroll (1988, p. 626, '*Apterornithidae Apterornis* [*Aptornis*]'), who took the classification in his catalogue from Olson (1985), and by Hesse (1990, p. 12) and Livezey (1994). In a joint forthcoming publication with one of us (Weber & Hesse, in press), Hesse has accepted the use of the spelling *Aptornis*. Other authors since 1985 have continued to use the spelling *Aptornis*; these include Müller (1985, p. 618) and Worthy (1989). The Checklist Committee of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (1990, p. 126), Fordyce (1991, p. 1308), Millener (1991, p. 1331) and Holdaway (1991, pp. 156, 161) have noted that *Apterornis* has priority but have continued to use the name *Aptornis* (and APTORNITHIDAE).

6. Sélys-Longchamps (October 1848, p. 293) described a new genus of large extinct and flightless birds, *Apterornis* (family RAPHIDAE Wetmore, 1930, the dodos). The genus included three or four new nominal species, among them *A. solitarius*, the solitaire or white dodo from Réunion, which is known from descriptions and illustrations of then living specimens. *Apterornis* Sélys-Longchamps was used as a valid generic name by Rothschild (1907, p. 145, pl. 32), Lambrecht (1933, p. 468) and Renshaw (1934, p. 48, pl. on p. 49; 1938), and for a subgenus of *Porphyrio* Brisson, 1760 by Fürbringer (1888, p. 1236). It was cited as a synonym of *Notornis* Owen, 1848 by Sharpe (1899, p. 109), but has been considered a junior subjective synonym of *Raphus* Brisson, 1760 by others (see, for example, Greenway, 1967, pp. 120, 122; Wolters, 1975, p. 43; Luther, 1986, pp. 102, 184). Recognition of the spelling *Apterornis* for the name of Owen's genus would render *Apterornis* Sélys-Longchamps a junior homonym.

7. Owen (1871) described a second *Aptornis* species (*A. defossor*) which was larger than *A. otidiformis*, on the basis of a nearly perfect skull. Owen himself (1871, p. 353; 1872a; 1872b; 1879, pp. 179–188, 290–316, pls. 43, 83–86) consistently used the spelling *Aptornis* for his genus and never mentioned that it had first appeared as *Apterornis*. He noted (1871, p. 353): ‘I proposed the name *Aptornis*’, and (p. 353, footnote): ‘In the ‘Revue Zoologique’ for October 1848, M. de Sélys-Longchamps proposed the minor abbreviation ‘*Apterornis*’ for some, then vaguely indicated, extinct birds of the Mascarene Islands’. Owen also noted (p. 365, footnote): ‘By a curious coincidence, at a later period of the year (1848) in which I proposed a diminutive of ‘*Apterygiornis*’ for the large extinct Coot of New Zealand, the accomplished Belgian ornithologist, M. de Sélys-Longchamps, was moved to propound a minor diminutive of the same term for some loosely indicated Mascarene birds, one of which we now know to have been an extinct Coot of the Mauritius. Without entering into the question of the degree of synonymy of *Aptornis* and *Apterornis*, the priority of proposition of the first will, I apprehend, secure it for the main subject of my present Memoir’.

8. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to rule that the correct original spelling of the generic name *Apterornis* is *Aptornis* Owen, [1848];
- (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Aptornis* Owen, [1848] (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Dinornis otidiformis* Owen, [1844];
- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *otidiformis* Owen, [1844], as published in the binomen *Dinornis otidiformis*;
- (4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology the name *Apterornis* Owen, [1848] (ruled in (1) above to be an incorrect original spelling of *Aptornis* Owen, [1848]).

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