

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SUPPRESS THREE COMPLETELY OVERLOOKED TRIVIAL NAMES APPLIED BY LINNAEUS TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS IN 1776, TOGETHER WITH AN EQUALLY OVERLOOKED GENERIC NAME PUBLISHED ON THE SAME OCCASION

**Application submitted by
Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the
International Ornithological Congress
(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)502)**

Covering letter dated 19th October 1950, from Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature.

As Chairman of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature, I have received an application signed by nine American ornithologists asking that the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature should permanently suppress three trivial names proposed by Linnaeus for North American birds, the publication of which in 1776 has been brought to light through papers by Mr. W. L. McAtee published in 1949 and 1950 respectively. The three names which form the subject of the foregoing application were published in a hitherto entirely overlooked list entitled "A Catalogue of the Birds, Beasts, Fishes, Insects, Plants, etc., contained in Edwards' Natural History."

The application received in regard to these names is submitted herewith for consideration by the International Commission (Enclosure 1). That application has been considered by the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature, the statement prepared by which is now submitted as Enclosure 2.

The three trivial names covered by the present application namely *lutea* Linnaeus, 1776 (as published in the combination *Muscicapa lutea*), *pensylvanica* Linnaeus, 1776 (as published in the combination *Passer pensylvanica*), and *americ.* [sic] Linnaeus, 1776 (as published in the combination *Vermivora americ.* [sic]) have never been used for the species concerned, apart from the occasion on which they were first published. The same is true of the generic name *Vermivora* Linnaeus, 1776, the name used as the generic name for the third of the foregoing species. The introduction at this date of the foregoing names would cause much unnecessary confusion and would serve no useful purpose whatever. It is for this reason that the International Commission is accordingly asked (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress for the purposes, both of the Law of Priority and of the Law of Homonymy (a) the generic name *Vermivora* Linnaeus, 1776, and (b) the three specific trivial names specified above, (2) to place the foregoing names on the appropriate *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Names*, (3) to place on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology* the trivial names currently used for the species concerned, namely: (i) the name *magnolia* Wilson, 1811 (as published in the combination *Sylvia magnolia*), (ii) the name *albicollis* Gmelin, 1789 (as published in the combination *Fringilla albicollis*), (iii) the name *vermivora* Gmelin, 1789 (as published in the combination *Motacilla vermivora*); (4) to place the name *Helmitheros*

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Rafinesque, 1815 (gender of generic name : neuter) (type species, by monotypy ; *Motacilla vermivora* Gmelin, 1789) on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology*.

ENCLOSURE 1

Application submitted by nine American ornithologists

The International Zoological Congress at Monaco (1913) adopted a special article appended to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature which gives the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature authority to suspend the rules if their application would result in greater confusion than uniformity. This rule is to be applied specifically in cases where long-forgotten names are unearthed that have priority over well-established names. At the International Ornithological Congress at Uppsala a committee was established at the suggestion of the Secretary of the International Commission, Mr. Francis Hemming, to collaborate with the International Commission with particular reference to the Monaco Resolution. The undersigned submit to this committee the following request for a suspension of the rule of priority in order to preserve three well-known names of North American birds. We ask the committee to endorse our application and to forward it to the International Commission.

2. The work in which the overlooked names occur is a publication by Linnaeus, consisting of a catalogue of the birds and other animals contained in Edwards' *Natural History*, published in 1776. All the details about this publication are presented by Mr. James L. Peters, 1950 (*Auk*, **67** : 375-377). Eighteen new names are proposed in this publication, but many of them are actually only misspellings of established names. In only three cases is the nomenclature of accepted bird names threatened. They are as follows :—

(1) Magnolia Warbler. The species name *magnolia* Wilson, 1811 (*Sylvia magnolia* Wilson, 1811, *Amer. Ornith.* **3** : 63) has been applied to this species for many generations. The name is antedated by *Muscicapa lutea* Linnaeus, 1776 (: 11) in the recently discovered publication.

(2) White-throated Sparrow. This species has been known for more than 150 years under the name *albicollis* Gmelin (*Fringillo albicollis* Gmelin, 1789, in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) **1**(2) : 96). This name is antedated by *Passer pensylvanica* Linnaeus, 1776 (: 13).

(3) Worm-eating Warbler. This species has been known under the name *vermivora* Gmelin, 1789 (*Motacilla vermivora* Gmelin, 1789, in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) **1**(2) : 951). for more than 150 years. It is antedated by *Vermivora americ.* Linnaeus, 1776 (: 13).

3. So far as known, none of the three Linnaean names has been cited in the literature between 1776 and 1949 when Mr. McAtee first called attention to this publication. The names had thus been forgotten for a period of 173 years. On the other hand, the names which they would replace are the well-established names of some of our most familiar birds. They have been listed literally in many thousands of publications.

4. This is clearly a case in which strict adherence to priority would result in greater confusion than uniformity. The International Commission is therefore requested to place the Linnaean names *Muscicapa lutea*, *Passer pensylvanica* and *Vermivora americ.* on the list of *nomina rejecta*, and in turn to place the

names *Sylvia magnolia* Wilson, 1811, *Fringilla albicollis* Gmelin, 1789, and *Motacilla vermivora* Gmelin, 1789, on the list of *nomina conservanda*.

5. Failure of speedy action on this request would result in grave damage to the prestige of taxonomy.

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ALBERT WOLFSON (*North Western University, Evanston, Ill.*)

ENCLOSURE 2

Statement prepared by the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature

1. The generic name *Vermivora* Linnaeus, 1776, *Cat. Birds, Beasts, Fishes, Insects . . . in Edwards' Natural History* : 13.
It is recommended that the above name should be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the following name by which the genus concerned is now known should be made a *nomen conservandum*;—*Helmitheros* Rafinesque, 1819, *J. Physique* **88** : 418 (type species, by monotypy: *Motacilla vermivora* Gmelin, 1789, in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) **1**(2)951).
2. The trivial name comprised in the specific name *Muscicapa lutea* Linnaeus, 1776, *ibid.* : 11.
It is recommended that the above name be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the trivial name comprised in the name currently accepted for this species, namely *Sylvia magnolia* Wilson, 1811, *Amer. Ornith.* **3** : 63, be made a *nomen conservandum*.
3. The trivial name comprised in the specific name *Passer pensylvanica* Linnaeus, 1776, *ibid.* : 13.
It is recommended that the above name be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the trivial name comprised in the specific name currently accepted for this species, namely *Fringilla albicollis* Gmelin, 1789, in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) **1**(2) : 96 ("Pennsylvania"), be made a *nomen conservandum*.
4. The trivial name comprised in the specific name *Vermivora americ.* [sic] Linnaeus, 1776, *ibid.* : 13.
It is recommended that the above name be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the trivial name comprised in the specific name currently accepted for this species, namely *Motacilla vermivora* Gmelin, 1789, in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) **1**(2) : 951 ("Pennsylvania"), be made a *nomen conservandum*.

R. MEINERTZHAGEN, *Chairman of the Standing Committee.*

E. STRESEMANN, *Zoologisches Museum der Universität, Berlin.*

JOHN T. ZIMMER, *The American Museum of Natural History, New York.*



Meinertzhagen, R. 1952. "Proposed use of the plenary powers to suppress three completely overlooked trivial names applied by Linnaeus to North American birds in 1776, together with an equally overlooked generic name published on the same occasion." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 9, 65–67. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.10233>.

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