

MEMORANDUM ON PROPOSAL TO VALIDATE *CACATUA*

submitted by the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the International Ornithological Congress. Z.N.(S.) 1647

The Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the International Ornithological Congress (hereafter referred to as S.C.O.N.) opposes the application to use the plenary power to credit Brisson (1760) with authorship of the generic name *Cacatua*. For reasons discussed below, the S.C.O.N. believes that it would create an unnecessary precedent, highly disturbing to nomenclatural stability, to attribute generic status, with authorship in Brisson, to a name that was not a genus in his "Ornithologie"—as a device to achieve priority.

This would not only require suspension of the provisions of the Code, but would be contrary to repeated decisions by the Commission on Brissonian names and to the most authoritative usage prior to the Règles (Cf. Opinion 37, 1911, *Smiths. Publ.* 2013, pp. 125–137; supplemented by Direction 105, 1963, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.*, vol. 20, pp. 343–344; see full discussion J. A. Allen, 1910, *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 28).

*Substitute Proposal*

To settle the current conflict in usage, the S.C.O.N. submits, instead, this proposal (which will involve no exceptions to previous Brissonian rulings)—the validation of *Cacatua Vieillot*, 1817, as a *nomen conservandum*.<sup>1</sup>

*Outline of the Situation*

"*Cacatua*" of Brisson. The nomenclature of Brisson is discussed in detail in an authoritative article by Commissioner Allen (1910) mentioned above, which gave the background for the Opinion 37 of 1911, written by him for the Commission, establishing that only the 115 genera considered and listed as such by Brisson himself have any nomenclatural standing under his authorship. Direction 105, 1963, merely implemented and clarified this long established and correct decision. Admittedly "*Cacatua*" is not one of the 115 genera of Brisson. It is one of a number of specific substantives included by Brisson in his genus *Psittacus*. There are dozens of other such Latin substantives whose first post-1758 appearance was in the "Ornithologie". These have the same "Brissonian" status as "*Cacatua*", but nobody today credits them to Brisson. Were such names to be given Brissonian status as of 1760, a major and useless revolution in ornithological nomenclature would result,

<sup>1</sup> The S.C.O.N. has been informed that this proposal is fully acceptable to the proponents of the original application [Z.N.(S.) 1647] to validate *Cacatua* as a Brissonian name. The supporting arguments here presented do not purport to represent the views of such original applicants, for this memorandum was independently prepared by the S.C.O.N.

Since the preparation of this paper—a draft of which was sent to Australia—the S.C.O.N. has been informed by the Convener of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union's Checklist Committee that the committee voted in favor of the proposal to adopt *Cacatua Vieillot*—as here recommended.



involving changes of authorship, changes and transfers of names, and changes of applicability through alteration of generic type-species.

Brisson's great multi-volume "Ornithologie" was written in parallel columns of French and Latin. The "Ornithologie" is in no sense a binominal work. Like many early zoologists, Brisson recognized genera. His genera Brisson did not leave in doubt, for he named them in Latin and French calling them expressly "genus" and "genre", designating and numbering them as such in the introductory "Tabula Synoptica", in the text, and in the volume indexes. There were 115 such genera, and they are the accepted valid current names (where not junior synonyms or homonyms of Linnaean 1758 names).<sup>2</sup>

In naming species, Brisson did not use the 1758 Linnaean method. Brisson's system (though not binominal) was plain and internally consistent—he simply translated or adapted into Latin the French vernacular name listed by him for the species. If the French specific name consisted of one word, Brisson's Latin name was mononominal; if the French specific name consisted of two, three, or four words, the Latin name was polynominal. Similarly, whether the generic name was included in the Latin name of the species depended on whether or not the French vernacular name included the French generic name. As a consequence, in a large proportion of cases the name of a species, even when polynominal, did not include the name of the genus in which Brisson placed it. But Brisson left no doubt as to generic allocation, for the included species were listed under their genus in sequence, with Arabic numbers, the numbers starting anew with each genus. The consistency of Brisson's translating system led him to use the same substantive (with modifiers) for species which he placed in different genera. For example, because the French called many red birds "Cardinal", he used the Latin "Cardinalis", with modifying adjectives, in at least three of his genera (*Passer*, *Tangara*, and *Coccothraustes*); similarly, although he recognized a genus for the thrushes called *Turdus* ("Grive" in French), he also named a species in his very different genus *Tringa*, "*Turdus aquaticus*" because the French vernacular name was "Grive d'eau".

In his parrot genus *Psittacus* (genre "Perroquet" in French), he used a variety of Latin substantives depending *solely* on French vernacular usage. Thus those birds known in French as "Are", he designated in Latin "Ara"; the French "Kakatoès" he called "Cacatua"; the French "Perruche" (a then vernacular for a female parrot) he called "Psittaca" (feminine of *Psittacus*); the French "Lorie" became "Lorius", the French "Perruche petite", "Psittacula". Scattered throughout were birds with the French substantive "Perroquet", and these were the only species which he called by the Latin name "Psittacus" (the generic name of the entire group). The Latin substantive adopted thus depended, not on Brisson's views of relationship, but on conformity with French vernacular usage.

<sup>2</sup> Under the Règles, Opinion 37 recognized as available Brisson's 115 genera on the theory that Brisson was a "binary", although not binominal, author. Under the Code different language is used, but the same result follows because of the publication of these genera in the index (see Art. 11(c) (ii)), and also because a previously made decision of the Commission as to a particular work remains effective (Art. 86(a)).

Brisson's generic names were validated under the Plenary Powers in Direction 16, 1955. See *Bull. zool. Nomencl.*, 19: 9, 1962. [Editor]



The number of Brissonian Latin substantive names is very great. Many of them (as was true of many of his generic names) had long been in the literature published in Latin before Linnaeus, or were probably used by the learned. In later binominal works most, possibly all, of these substantives were introduced as true generic names by subsequent authors, sometimes "ex Brisson", sometimes with a rather different application.

Such well-known generic bird names (to mention only a very few) as *Fregata*, *Egretta*, *Ara*, *Psittacula*, *Turtur*, *Cardinalis* had their first post-1758 publication as substantives (not as genera) in Brisson's "Ornithologie"—yet, though in current use, no modern ornithological work credits them to Brisson. Their status as "Brissonian" is exactly the same as that of "Cacatua", although in some cases (e.g. *Turtur*, *Psittacula*, *Cardinalis*) their current application is different from that which would be required if Brisson were to be regarded as author. There are a number of other Brissonian substantives, formerly widely used as generic names under later binominal authorship, which were superseded (from twenty to fifty years ago) with the application of the rule of priority under the Règles. Authoritative ornithological literature long before the Règles recognized that such generic names could not be credited to Brisson, 1760, for they were not genera in Brisson. In effect to invite applications for their restoration, through the device of crediting "Cacatua" to Brisson 1760, would be the greatest disservice to nomenclatural stability.

*Cacatua of Vieillot.* The first valid generic usage of *Cacatua* was by Vieillot, admittedly credited by him to Brisson, 1817 (*Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat.* 17 : 6). Although some nineteenth century authors credited the name to Brisson (especially in the period before there was crystallization and general consensus on nomenclatural principles), by the latter nineteenth century, the nomenclaturally more authoritative works credited Vieillot (rather than Brisson) with authorship of the genus *Cacatua* (e.g. Gray, 1870, "Handlist of Genera and Species of Birds"; Meyer and Wigglesworth, 1898, "Birds of the Celebes"; Waterhouse, 1899, "Index Generum Avium"; Salvadori, 1901, "Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum", vol. 20 (Psittacidae); Sharpe, 1901, "Handlist of Genera and Species of Birds"; Sherborn, 1902, "Index Animalium 1758-1800").

After the general acceptance of the Règles, enunciating the principle of strict priority (and disregarding such factors as correct classical construction, appropriateness, and the original describer's preference), it became evident that Vieillot's name was not the earliest, although the availability of the others was questioned for lack of adequate diagnoses.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, under Opinion 39 of 1912, dealing with Cuvier's "Leçons d'Anat Comp.", 1800, *Kakatoe* of Cuvier appeared to be the earliest available (see discussion below). Nevertheless a number of authors, especially those writing on the birds of the

<sup>3</sup> As pointed out in the application, Z.N.(S.) 1647, other names (subsequent to *Kakatoe* Cuvier 1800 and before *Cacatua* Vieillot 1817) had appeared in the literature: *Cacatoës* Duméril 1806, *Catacus* Rafinesque 1815, and *Plyctolophus* Vieillot 1816. All three names have been attacked as objectionable, and, so far as we know, they have not been used in literature of the past fifty years, except for *Cacatoës* Duméril, which was briefly favored by Mathews and a number of others during the first quarter of this century, until it became known that the earlier *Kakatoe* Cuvier had been declared available.



Papuan area, continued to use *Cacatua*, taking the view that *Kakatoe* was a *nomen nudum* and that earlier usage should prevail (apparently despite Commission Opinions 39 and 37; see Mayr, 1937, *Amer. Mus. Novit.* no. 947 : 6).

The extensive use of *Cacatua* has continued to date. Indeed the name has gained recently, for (as mentioned in the application) several influential Australian ornithologists, who had formerly employed *Kakatoe*, have since 1962 switched over to *Cacatua*. This is important, as the genus is essentially a group of the Papuan and Australian areas and the Australians, in the past, were the chief supporters of *Kakatoe*. Moreover a number of widely used works (some of them popular, but still important) use *Cacatua* (Mayr, 1941, "List of New Guinea Birds"; Delacour and Mayr, 1946, "Birds of Malyasia"; Delacour, 1947, "Birds of the Philippines"; Gilliard, 1958, "Living Birds of the World"; Austin, 1961, "Birds of the World").

*Kakatoe* of Cuvier. The generic name *Kakatoe* appears in table 2 of the tables classifying the entire animal kingdom (down to genera) in Cuvier's 1800 "Leçons d'Anatomie Comparée," at the end of vol. 1. In these tables the Latin generic names are accompanied by French equivalents, but by no diagnoses. Many zoologists regarded these names as *nomina nuda* in Cuvier (see Sherborn, 1902, "Index Animalium"). However in 1912 the International Commission ruled unanimously in Opinion 39 (Smiths. Publ. no. 2060, p. 91) that the Cuvier generic names in the tables were available (i.e. not *nomina nuda*), where by the accompanying French names they could be identified in the published works listed by Cuvier in the introduction to his Leçons<sup>4</sup> (and provided they were not junior homonyms or synonyms). As a result of this Opinion, a number of the Cuvier names in the tables (not previously published) have become the current generic names, not only in ornithology but in other fields of zoology.<sup>5</sup> Mathews in 1917 (*Birds of Australia* 6 : (2) 160–164) clearly explained why under Opinion 39 *Kakatoe* Cuvier became the earliest available name. Consistently thereafter he used that name. The Australian Checklist Committee, which prepared the 1925 "Official Checklist of Birds of Australia," adopted *Kakatoe*. Thereafter, at least until about 1962, it appears to have been used by all Australian authors. J. L. Peters in 1937 adopted *Kakatoe* in "Check-list of Birds of the World," vol. 3. Following Peters a very substantial literature (some of it popular), in addition to the Australian, has adopted that name (e.g. Berlioz, 1950, in Grassé, "Traité de Zoologie,"<sup>6</sup> 15 : 935 ; Duke

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<sup>4</sup> Whether this would be a sufficient "indication" under the new Code (cf Art. 16(a) (i) and Art. 16 (b) (i)) is unnecessary to decide, for under Art. 86(a) previous Commission decisions remain effective as to the particular work involved. The present proposal avoids any such issue.

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<sup>5</sup> We have not cross-checked all the names in the Cuvier tables to determine how many were new (most were not). However, in addition to *Kakatoe*, in ornithology *Psittacula* Cuvier has become current (apparently used by everyone), and in mammalogy *Pteromys* Cuvier (Old World flying-squirrels) —both based on the tables of the Leçons.

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<sup>6</sup> The conflict of usage is indicated by the fact that in this same volume two other writers used *Cacatua* (without indicating authorship) and one of these writers used both *Cacatua* and *Kakatoe*.



of Bedford, 1954, "Parrots and Parrot-like Birds"; Rand and Rabor, 1962, "Birds of the Philippine Islands: etc." *Feldiana Zool.* **35** (7) : 331; Thomson *et al.*, 1964, "A New Dictionary of Birds"; Fisher and Peterson, 1964, "The World of Birds").

### *Solution of the Problem*

Whatever may be the technical merits, a current conflict of usage unquestionably exists. This requires action by the International Commission for its solution. The course adopted should be that most likely to achieve universality of usage in the particular case and least likely to have collateral unsettling effects on other current names.

*Cacatua* of Vieillot was undoubtedly the prevailing name in the literature of at least the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. *Cacatua* has continued to be used by a substantial number of distinguished ornithologists who reject *Kakatoe* of Cuvier.

The Australian students, who since 1925 have been the chief users of *Kakatoe*, seem now prepared—to judge from recent publications of several of their most influential ornithologists—to accept *Cacatua* if the Commission so rules.<sup>7</sup> Hence there is reason to believe that if *Cacatua* Vieillot is declared a *nomen conservandum*, as a means of ending a conflict of usage, the decision will meet general acceptance.

On the other hand, use of the plenary power to turn "*Cacatua*" Brisson into a generic name as of 1760 would have broadly unfortunate results: (a) it would tend to undermine stability of other names by encouraging attempts to attribute Brissonian generic authorship, and thus priority, to the numerous other substantives of identical Brissonian status, which have been superseded within the past fifty years; (b) it would tend to defeat the very objective of attaining universality by stimulating very strong and justified objections as a matter of general principle.<sup>8</sup> For it is clear: (1) that "*Cacatua*" was not regarded as a genus by Brisson; (2) that even before the Règles the nomenclaturally most authoritative literature did not credit *Cacatua* to Brisson;

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<sup>7</sup> See footnote 1 as to Australian vote in favor of *Cacatua* of Vieillot.

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<sup>8</sup> The very fact that the application cites the supposed special case of "*Gallinago* Brisson" as a precedent shows how one exception invites applications for others, and can be self-defeating of a meritorious purpose. Over a generation ago the Commission ruled that *Gallinago* Koch was the valid generic name of the snipe. Later the prior name "*Capella*" of Frenzel was discovered and was adopted by many ornithologists who considered that under the *then* rules the earlier decision no longer applied (as well as those who did not adhere to the International Rules). To settle the conflict the Commission felt that its earlier validation of *Gallinago* should be upheld. But instead of simply ruling that Koch's name was a *nomen conservandum*, it adopted the unnecessary device of creating priority for *Gallinago* by validating it as a genus of Brisson, 1760—which in fact it was not, and which was opposed by ornithological usage and the rationale of Opinion 37. The Brissonian aspect of the decision was strongly attacked (Wetmore, 1958, *Ibis* **100** : 125–127 ; but *cf.* Mayr, 1963, *Ibis* **105** : 402–403). Objection to the Brissonian decision caused the questionable nature of Frenzel's "*Capella*" to be disregarded. As a result the intended universality failed of achievement, for two among the works most influential in determining usage declined to accept the Commission's decision: the American Ornithologists' Union's "Check-list of Birds of North America," 1957, and Ripley's "Synopsis of the Birds of India and Pakistan," 1961.



(3) that under the Règles and the Code "Cacatua" has no nomenclatural status as a name of Brisson; and (4) that the Commission has repeatedly ruled that only the 115 true genera of Brisson have nomenclatural status.

The Commission can avoid opening up a Pandora's box of Brissonian problems by simply validating *Cacatua* Vieillot, 1817, as a *nomen conservandum*. Under the Code such action is effective regardless of prior names, known or unknown (Code Art. 23(a) (ii)). If, as seems probable, Australian ornithologists now find *Cacatua* acceptable, such action should terminate the existing conflict of usage.

The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is requested:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the following generic names for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy:
  - (a) *Kakatoe* Cuvier, 1800 (*Leçons d'Anatomie Comparée* 1 : tab. 2);
  - (b) *Cacatoës* Duméril, 1806 (*Zoologie Analytique* : 50);
  - (c) *Catacus* Rafinesque, 1815 (*Analyse de Nature* : 64);
  - (d) *Plyctolophus* Vieillot, 1816 (*Analyse* : 26, 70);
- (2) to place the generic name *Cacatua* Vieillot, 1817, based on "Cacatua" Brisson, 1760, *Ornithologie* 4 : 204 = *Psittacus albus* P. L. S. Müller, 1776, *Systema Naturae Suppl.* : 76, no. 50, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology;
- (3) to place the specific name *albus* P. L. S. Müller, 1776, *Systema Naturae Suppl.* : 76, no. 50, as published in the binomen *Psittacus albus*, type of the genus *Cacatua* Vieillot, 1817, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology;
- (4) to place the generic names suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology.

*Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature  
of the International Ornithological Congress*

- J. P. Dorst, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France.  
E. Eisenmann, American Museum of Natural History, New York, U.S.A.  
F. Salomonsen, Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.  
K. H. Voous, Zoölogisch Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.  
C. Vaurie, American Museum of Natural History, New York, U.S.A.  
*Chairman.*



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