STERNA CERULEA BENNETT, 1840 (AVES): PROPOSED CONSERVATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS
Z.N.(S.) 2233

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This application is designed to preserve the long established and generally used specific name of Sterna cerulea Bennett, 1840, Narr. Whaling Voy. 2: 248, a common and widespread tern of the tropical and subtropical Pacific Ocean that was described by Bennett from a specimen obtained at Christmas Island. It is currently placed in the genus Procelsterna and is known by the English name of Grey Noddy. Sterna australis Gmelin, 1789, Syst. Nat. 1 (2): 608 (based on the Southern Tern of Latham, 1785, Gen. Synopsis Birds 3 (2): 365, from Christmas Island, Pacific Ocean) was identified for the first time by Stresemann (1950, Auk 67: 78, 86). Stresemann pointed out that Sterna australis Gmelin is a senior synonym of Sterna cerulea Bennett, but he did not adopt the earlier name and he expressly recommended that Bennett's name should be retained in the interests of uniformity and stability of usage. The name Sterna australis Gmelin has not been used for the species by any one, so far as we are aware.

2. The Grey Noddy has been universally known by the name Sterna cerulea Bennett for over a century. A sample of the literature for the last fifty years makes the scale of its usage apparent (Appendix 1).

3. Revival of Sterna australis Gmelin, 1789, in place of Sterna cerulea Bennett, 1840, would disturb the stability and universality of usage of Sterna cerulea Bennett, 1840. Articles 23 (a, b) and 79 (b) provide that where a junior name has been used for 50 years or more to the exclusion of the senior synonym, by at least five authors in ten publications, a prima facie case exists for rejecting the senior synonym. The list of publications in Appendix 1 demonstrates such established usage of Sterna cerulea Bennett. In accordance with Article 80, Sterna cerulea Bennett, 1840, should be maintained as the valid name until the decision of the Commission is published.
4. We have considered the alternative solution of giving *Sterna cerulea* Bennett, 1840, nomenclatural precedence over *Sterna australis* Gmelin, 1789. The only advantage to be gained from that procedure would be if the Grey Noddy were found to consist of several sibling species. As the type-locality for both nominal species is the same (Christmas Island), and as the Grey Noddy has been investigated in detail, we hold that it would be simpler to suppress the unused senior synonym *S. australis*.

5. We are currently preparing a check-list of the birds of the tropical Pacific giving distributional information (Bruce) and a handbook to the birds of the south-east Pacific (Holyoak and Thibault) and consequently we request a prompt decision on this question. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly requested:

(1) to suppress by exercise of the plenary powers the specific name *australis* Gmelin, 1789, as published in the binomen *Sterna australis* Gmelin, 1789, for the purposes of the Law of Priority, but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;

(2) to place the specific name *australis* Gmelin, 1789, as published in the binomen *Sterna australis* Gmelin, 1789, (suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above), on the Official Index of Specific Names Rejected in Zoology;

(3) to place the specific name *cerulea* Bennett, 1840, as published in the binomen *Sterna cerulea* Bennett, 1840, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.

Appendix 1

1976, duPont, *South Pacific Bds.:* 64.

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