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The valid name of the Slaty-backed Flycatcher (previously, *sordida* Godwin-Austen, 1874, and *hodgsonii* J. P. Verreaux, 1871), and the gender of *Caffornis*: comments on Zuccon (2011)

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In their study of members and relatives of *Ficedula* flycatchers, Outlaw & Voelker (2006) considered that genus *Muscicapella* Bianchi, 1907, which had been subsumed in *Niltava* Hodgson, 1837, by Watson (1986), but retained by other authors (e.g. Dickinson 2003, Clement 2006), should be placed within a broad genus *Ficedula* Brisson, 1760. As a result, *Nemura hodgsoni* [not *hodgsonii*], introduced by Moore, 1854 (in Horsfield & Moore 1854: 300), and the only species in *Muscicapella*, competes for precedence in *Ficedula* with *Siphia hodgsonii* (Slaty-backed Flycatcher), introduced by Verreaux ('1870' = 1871: 34). Verreaux's name, which was subsequently often misspelled '*hodgsoni*', is therefore a junior homonym under Art. 58.14 of the *International code of zoological nomenclature* (ICZN 1999), hereafter the Code, and requires reconsideration.

As set out by Watson (1986: 340), alternatives are available, as two new names had been coined for precisely the above eventuality: *Muscicapa amabilis* Deignan, 1947, and *Muscicapa erwini* Wolters, 1950, both *nomina nova* for *Siphia hodgsonii* J. P. Verreaux. Watson (1986: 339) also listed *Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, as an applicable name, prior to Verreaux's *hodgsonii*, but did not use it because he (p. 340) considered it to be preoccupied by *Siphia erythaca* Blyth, 1847. Outlaw & Voelker (2006), apparently seeing no clear homonymy between *erithacus* and *erythaca*, suggested that *erithacus* should be applied to the Slaty-backed Flycatcher. However, Zuccon (2011) stated that this did not appear to be correct.

Zuccon (2011) argued that *Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861 (in Blyth 1861: 201) is preoccupied by *Siphia erythaca* 'Jerdon' [= Blyth] (1847: 126), because they differ only in the use of *i* or *y* according to Art. 58.2 of the Code, and thus represent variant spellings. He added that the two names are primary homonyms (Art. 53.3.1) and that *Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, is invalid and unavailable. Zuccon then indicated that *Erythrosterina sordida*, introduced by Godwin-Austen (1874: 158), is the next available and valid name for Slaty-backed Flycatcher.

Treatment of *sordida* Godwin-Austen, and of *hodgsonii* J. P. Verreaux, has been somewhat chaotic. Sharpe (1879: 156) listed *Muscicapa sordida* (Godwin-Austen) and *Poliomyias 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux) as separate species, whereas Oates (1883: 287), who thought *E. sordida* was probably the female of *P. hodgsoni* [sic], listed it under *Poliomyias 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux). Later, Oates (1890: 14) treated *sordida* as a synonym of *Cyornis 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux) whereas Sharpe (1901: 223), not 'Sharpe (1903)' as indicated by Zuccon (2011: 196), listed *sordida* as a synonym of *Poliomyias 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux). The name *sordida* was not recorded by Watson (1986) because it already had been synonymised by Sharpe (1901). However, it was adopted by Dickinson & Christidis (2014: 605), who mistakenly referred to Zuccon & Ericson (2010), instead of Zuccon (2011), as the authority for using *sordida*.

We have revisited the issue and we conclude that Outlaw & Voelker (2006) were correct in accepting use of *erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, for Slaty-backed Flycatcher. Resolving the perceived homonymy is not straightforward. The key difference between *erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, and *erythaca* Blyth, 1847, currently a junior synonym of *Muscicapa mugimaki* Temminck, 1836, is not between *i* and *y*, but that between *-us* and *-a*. This is because they are two different nouns, not two adjectival words. Lewis & Short (1891: 657) indicated that *erithacus* is the Latin noun *erithacus* [unknown bird], and Liddell & Scott (1996: Suppl., p. 134) listed the noun ερυθάκος [unknown bird], which is Latinised with the *-a* ending (= *erythaca*). Just as adjectival species-group names such as *chinensis* and *sinensis* are not homonyms, neither are the nouns *erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, and *erythaca* Blyth, 1847, and they therefore do not fall under Art. 58.2, just like the nouns *consobrina* and *consobrinus*. As a result, the combination *Ficedula erithacus* (Jerdon & Blyth, 1861) must be accepted as the valid name of Slaty-backed Flycatcher.¹

We also take this opportunity to point out that Zuccon (2011: 197) erred in stating that the genus '*Caffornis* Roberts, 1922 ... is masculine'. Genus-group names ending in the Greek noun ορνις, which is masculine as well as feminine (Liddell & Scott 1996), must be assigned gender according to Art. 30.1.4.2 of the Code: they are masculine unless combined with a feminine adjectival species-group name when originally established. According to Jobling (2010: 83), *caffer* is adjectival, with the feminine ending *-ra*. Because Roberts (1922: 232) used the combination *C[affornis] caffra* in the original description of *Caffornis* without specifying genus gender, as well as *Caffornis caffra namaquensis* W. L. Sclater, 1911 (p. 233), *Caffornis* Roberts is feminine.

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¹*Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, must not be confused with *Siphia erithacus*, introduced by Sharpe (1888: 199), but clearly unavailable. The latter was listed as *Cyornis erythaca* [sic] by Sharpe (1901: 217), but correctly by Watson (1986: 349) under *platenae* Blasius, 1888, which has priority.

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