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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

EDITED BY R. TODD ENGSTROM

The following critiques express the opinions of the individual evaluators regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and value of the books they review. As such, the appraisals are subjective assessments and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or any official policy of the American Ornithologists' Union.

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Priority! The Dating of Scientific Names in Ornithology: A Directory to the Literature and Its Reviewers.—Edward C. Dickinson, Leslie K. Overstreet, Robert J. Dowsett, and Murray D. Bruce, Eds. 2011. Aves Press, Northampton, United Kingdom. 320 pp., 28 figures, data CD-ROM. ISBN 9780956861115. Hardcover, about $130.00.—Most ornithologists probably pay little (if any) attention to the name of an author and a date following a scientific name of a bird in a publication. Indeed, to judge from recent numbers of major ornithological journals, most ornithologists seldom see, let alone incorporate, the name of an author and a date following the scientific name of a bird, even in papers that touch on systematics and nomenclature. This is despite the fact that four articles (21–24) of the most recent (1999) International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (hereafter "the Code") are devoted to Dates of Publication and the Principle of Priority; in Recommendation 22.A.1, "it is strongly recommended that the date of publication (and the authorship…) of a name be cited at least once in a work which deals with a taxon." Why are ornithologists (and editors) so negligent with respect to this practice? Perhaps it is because our knowledge of the species identified by the scientific name is aided by the English or other vernacular name used, and our confidence that the author–date information is readily and reliably available in worldwide or regional check-lists compiled by those persnickety few who understand (and care about) the importance of the date. This book is about how those few investigators have determined and verified the dates and how they can continue to do so when and if new questions arise. As such, it is a book that all will benefit from knowing about, but one that few will actively use.

Although ornithology is the focus of this book, many of the publications analyzed for dating problems are general zoological resources and contain new names for organisms other than birds. Thus, it can be useful to colleagues working on dating or nomenclatural problems in other animal groups, and it would be neighborly if you would call it to their attention. Indeed, some of the information used here in determining dating is based on the work of systematists in mammalogy and herpetology.

The Code, and common sense, stipulates that each taxon of organism can have only one valid scientific name, and that a name can apply to only one taxon. The Principle of Priority is that the first name properly proposed for a taxon is the valid one. The dating of a publication in which a name appears is how priority is determined. Today nearly every book or journal issue has a date imprinted on the spine or an early page. Usually this date is an accurate statement of when the publication was available to the general public or interested audience. This was not always so, for numerous reasons, and determining the actual date of publication can be challenging.

The first chapter is about the four articles of the Code that pertain to dating of names, and priority, from the starting point of 1 January 1758 (the 10th edition of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*). One would think that a Code in its fourth edition should be easily followed, but this chapter points out several instances where it is vague or ambiguous, where the "text can be read differently by reasonable people." These ambiguities partly suggest the need for this book and the complexities involved in dating.

Chapter 2 presents a history of the development of the physical elements that make up a publication—paper, type, ink, sewing, and binding—and how each of these elements can play a role in dating old works. Presented as a general overview, this section is worth reading for its own information content, even by those not interested in dating. It gives one an appreciation for the past couple of hundred years of advancement in what we now take for granted when we pick up a book or journal. Differences in the feel and look of the paper can give a clue to the use of different stocks for older works published in parts, as can watermarks and chain lines, and perhaps, thus, differences in the dates of the work. There is a discussion of the various types of illustrations in early works, wood cuts and copper plates, and their use in printing and their incorporation into a bound volume with the text. This chapter delves even into the matters of distribution and sale, as these, rather than the writing or printing, determine the actual date of availability of a publication and, thus, the new names it contains. This was a particular problem for large works issued over time, in parts; a title page may have been issued only with the last part and its date may not be accurate for the earlier parts bound into the finished work. Finally, the accuracy of a date may depend on what

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calendar was used when and where the volume was published; the Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar at different times in different places, and other calendars were used in some places. As interesting and thought-provoking as this chapter is by itself, it would be more relevant to the book if there were examples of how each element played a part in firmly establishing the date of some important nomenclatural work.

Chapter 2 concludes with a multipage list of resources available for consultation in determining accurate dates, which easily could be its own chapter. These resources range from the original work itself, with all its editions and versions, and covers and wrappers, through dated advertisements for the work and minutes of society meetings that indicate the receipt of a volume, to library catalogues and almost any other place where a date has been used. Some may be as minor as notes scrawled on the cover of a publication or catalogue card by a librarian when a volume was received. Many of these secondary resources reflect the investigations of much earlier workers, such as C. D. Sherborn and C. W. Richmond, who were pioneers in compiling accurate citations and dates.

Chapters 3 (Books, 95 pp.) and 4 (Periodicals, 89 pp.) constitute the meat of this volume on dating. Each entry is headed with a full citation, which is followed by remarks on publishing details, reasons for considering the date problematic, references to published authorities on the case, and conclusions or recommendations on the proper date. The last entry indicates whether the authors consider the case resolved, settled as the best available information, or yet unresolved. This is not, of course, a complete list of ornithological works. Each work or series must have introduced new scientific names for birds, and the dates of the works must at some time have been in doubt, misunderstood, or miscited. Most of the books were published in the 1800s. Only a few are from the 1900s, only two after the 1930s. This suggests that authors and publishers have become more aware or more careful in dating their works accurately. And, of course, there have been fewer new names introduced.

The "remarks on publishing details" give the results of scholarly studies that must have involved hundreds of hours in library stacks and archives, searching for clues on when parts of long-term works were printed, changes of names of periodicals, whether dated preprints were available to authors, and other evidence that helps to determine, validate, or correct given or assumed dates. Not all the work is original for this volume, but merely drawing everything together is a major feat of dedication to the topic.

The Auk is listed among the periodicals, partly because some October numbers were published after the end of the calendar year and some January issues were published in the previous December. There are only two (presently unused) names whose dates should be advanced because they were published in December rather than January. There were other publication irregularities in 1992–1996, in which time several new names appeared but no year–date problems resulted. The preceding *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club* is not included, perhaps because no dating irregularities were obvious.

The main part of the book is followed by a useful glossary of important terms used in it, mainly related to the publishing process discussed in Chapter 2 or to terms in the Code. There are five short appendices, on the French revolutionary calendar, the months of the year in Russian, references for the study of watermarks, a method of deriving dates for early numbers of the *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*, and a list of periodicals the compilers had hoped to cover but did not, for unstated reasons.

The CD-ROM accompanying the book contains 66 tables, in pdf format, presenting true publication dates for certain books (Tables 1–18) and periodicals (19–65) discussed in the text. These tables would take 156 pages to print out. Table 66 is a 34-page alphabetical list of bird names for which the dates have been changed since the publication of the Peters *Checklist* volumes, where it has been found that the names were misdated. This list is by the scientific name used in the third (2003) edition of the *Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (of which Dickinson was the editor) and will be keyed to the soon-to-appear fourth edition of that work. Obtaining correct dates, and spellings, for that checklist seems to have been the major impetus for this entire work.

There are very few minor errors in the book. Co-author L. Overstreet informed me that the date for the beginning of the year in the United Kingdom until 1752 should be 25 March rather than 1 April (p. 42). In the caption for figure 5, the word "printing" appears twice; the second presumably should be "publication." In a discussion of Code Article 22, Citation of date (p. 21), there is the peculiar statement that the use of a comma between the author's name and date "is becoming less frequent—a trend apparently promoted in the U.S.A." In fact, the citation of author and date with a scientific name is infrequent in journals and books in the United States (as elsewhere), other than in the AOU *Check-list* and its annual supplements in *The Auk*. In those publications the comma is always used in the citation of the name of a taxon. The comma is omitted when an author–date citation in a paper is to a reference in the Literature Cited. This latter practice is also common in non-taxonomic literature. Perhaps Dickinson has confused these two situations. I noticed a single typo, a missing end parenthesis in the entry for *Thrum's Almanac* on p. 156.

This is a book that must be available in institutions where workers are engaged in systematic revisions and taxonomic reviews. The price may make it difficult for individuals, but most ornithologists would benefit from having it available and reading at least parts of it.—Richard C. Banks, *3201 Circle Hill Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22305, USA. E-mail: rcbalone@aol.com*

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Illinois Birds: A Century of Change.—Jeffery W. Walk, Michael P. Ward, Thomas J. Benson, Jill L. Deppe, Stacy A. Lischka, Steven D. Bailey, and Jeffrey D. Brawn. 2011. Illinois Natural History Survey Special Publication 31. vi + 230pp. ISBN 9781882932269. Paperback, $32.00.—This book looks at bird populations in Illinois over a hundred-year time span, from the early

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