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Remarks on the types of the New Guinea endemic *Otidiphaps* Gould, 1870

by Guy M. Kirwan & Hein van Grouw

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SUMMARY.—We detail the types and some other early specimens of the four taxa currently usually treated as subspecies of the New Guinea endemic, Pheasant Pigeon *Otidiphaps nobilis*. This material has been subject to a number of erroneous statements in the previous literature. In chronological order of description, *O. n. nobilis* Gould, 1870, was based on a single specimen of unknown provenance and collector, now at the Natural History Museum, Tring; *O. n. cervicalis* E. P. Ramsay, 1880, and its objective junior synonym *O. n. regalis* Salvin & Godman, 1880, were based on multiple syntypes taken in 1879 (several of them the same specimens), all held in Tring (despite being previously reported as such, two specimens in Sydney appear to have no name-bearing status); *O. n. insularis* Salvin and Godman, 1883, is known from the two syntypes, collected in 1882 and held in Tring, and just one other specimen, taken in 1896 and held in the American Museum of Natural History, New York; and *O. n. aruensis* Rothschild, 1928, was based on a specimen collected in June 1914, now in New York, although there is a significantly earlier specimen of this taxon in the Museum Heineanum Halberstadt.

Pheasant Pigeon *Otidiphaps nobilis* is a geographically widespread but rarely encountered species endemic to New Guinea, where it is present over hilly and montane regions of the mainland, as well as on the Aru Islands, the North-western (Raja Ampat) Islands, Geelvink Bay (Teluk Cenderawasih) Islands (Yapen) and the D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago (Fergusson Island) (Mayr 1941, Rand & Gilliard 1967, Beehler & Pratt 2016). It has usually (since Peters 1934, Mayr 1941) been considered to comprise four reasonably distinctive subspecies, but recently del Hoyo & Collar (2014) elected to treat all of them as species based on application of the Tobias *et al.* (2010) criteria. The present contribution analyses the type material pertaining to the four taxa (plus one synonym), which in several cases has been subject to a degree of confusion, doubt and erroneous statements in the literature.

GREEN-NAPED PHEASANT PIGEON

Otidiphaps nobilis Gould, 1870, *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (4)5: 62. —‘Probably procured on some one of the islands of the Eastern Archipelago or in New Guinea.’ Distributed on Batanta, Waigeo and Yapen Islands, and the mountains of western New Guinea (Tamrau, Arfak, Fakfak, Kumawa, Wandammen, Weyland, Snow, Foja, and mountains on upper Mamberamo River, e.g., Van Rees) (Beehler & Pratt 2016). Reportedly absent from Salawati Island (Diamond 1985). Eastern extent of distribution remains to be determined, but presumably meets *O. n. cervicalis* in western Papua New Guinea (Beehler & Pratt 2016).

The holotype (Figs. 1–2, Table 1) is an adult (stated on the label to be from ‘Bransbore, New Guinea’) provided to Gould by a ‘Mr. James Gardner of Holborn [London]’ held at the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK 1872.5.28.28) (Warren 1966). Salvadori (1882: 189) speculated it might have been taken on the island of Batanta, but his rationale is unclear.



Figure 1. Holotype of *Otidiphaps nobilis* Gould, 1870, NHMUK 1872.5.28.28 (Jonathan Jackson, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)



Figure 2. Plate 53 in Gould (1871) of *Otidiphaps nobilis*, based on the holotype, the only specimen available to Gould at the time (Hein van Grouw, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

'Bransbore' is an enigma. In the original description Gould did not mention Bransbore, rather he specified that he did not know the specimen's collection locality, a point he underlined the next year (Gould 1871), at which time he pondered, obviously incorrectly, that it might have come from Gilolo (an old name for Halmahera). So, whether Gould later added the label with the supposed locality is unknown. Intriguingly, the English text on the label is a translation of an imperfectly transcribed Dutch text, in a different hand, on the reverse of the same label, and the supposed locality is spelled 'Bransbare'.

G. Chiozzi (*in litt.* 2022) reports that there was formerly a specimen of this taxon held in the Museo di Storia Naturale di Milano (MSNM). It came from the Count Turati collection (original no. 9311), having been purchased by the latter in 1870 from a certain Botto (possibly Domenico Botto of Genoa, a trader in silkworm eggs, who travelled to

TABLE 1
Type specimens of the various taxa of *Otidiphaps* Gould, 1870, including some material previously reported as having type status and specimens newly identified herein. For museum acronyms see main text.

Museum reg. no.	<i>Otidiphaps</i> taxa				
	<i>nobilis</i> Gould, 1870	<i>cervicalis</i> Ramsay, 1880	<i>regalis</i> Salvin & Godman, 1880	<i>aruensis</i> Rothschild, 1928	<i>insularis</i> Salvin & Godman, 1883
NHMMUK 1872.5.28.28	Holotype				
AM A.9281		No type status			
AM A.9282		No type status			
NHMMUK 1889.2.12.120		Syntype	Syntype		
NHMMUK 1880.6.23.40		Syntype	Syntype		
NHMMUK 1889.4.20.529		Syntype	Syntype		
NHMMUK 1889.4.20.530		Syntype	Syntype		
AMNH 616495				Holotype	
NHMMUK 1889.2.12.119					Syntype
NHMMUK 1889.2.12.484					Syntype

Japan that same year) and was also of uncertain locality; the MSNM register reports that it was labelled ‘?N. Guinea’. Unfortunately, the specimen was destroyed during the Second World War (see further below, under *O. cervicalis*), but the parallels with Gould’s holotype are intriguing. A second specimen in the Turati collection (original number: 19640) was collected in 1879 on Waigeo and sold by A. A. Bruijn (Ternate) to Léon Laglaize in 1880. These two collectors are known to have exchanged specimens between them before sending material to Europe (Voisin & Voisin 2016: 44). This specimen eventually suffered the same fate as the previous one.

GREY-NAPED PHEASANT PIGEON

Otidiphaps nobilis var. *cervicalis* E. P. Ramsay¹, 1880, *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* 4: 470.—Goldie River [09°38’S, 147°25’E], New Guinea. The range of this taxon encompasses the mountains of eastern and south-eastern New Guinea (e.g., Adelbert, Saruwaged, Sepik-Ramu, Kuper), including the Huon Peninsula (Beehler & Pratt 2016).

This name is based on an unspecified number of syntypes (reportedly both males and females), of which two adult males said to have been collected in December 1879 by Carl Hunstein (1843–88), held in the Australian Museum, Sydney (AM A.9281 and AM A.9282) have generally been accepted to be part of the series (Longmore 1991). However, our research (with the assistance of L. R. Tsang, Collection Manager, Ornithology, Australian Museum) sheds considerable doubt on their assumed type status. Firstly, Ramsay (1880) gave no hint that the specimens he saw were collected by anyone other than the Scottish trader Andrew Goldie (1840–91). Although Hunstein later worked for Goldie, they apparently did not meet until late April 1879 and Hunstein, who had arrived in New Guinea in 1878, collected with another German, Capt. Edwin Redlich until the latter’s death in 1880 (Moore & Mullins 2012). Secondly, AM A.9281 and A.9282 were registered at AM only in December 1880 (the date recorded on their labels; L. R. Tsang *in litt.* 2023) and seem to have

¹ As noted by Dickinson (2006: 238), Bruce *et al.* (2016: 99) and Bruce (2023: 69, footnote 193), confusion between E. P. Ramsay and R. G. W. Ramsay is largely obviated by the belated recognition that the latter is most appropriately referred to as Wardlaw Ramsay; nevertheless, use of the initials for the present authority ensures that any lingering confusion is removed.

been the same specimens as purchased directly from Hunstein earlier in the same year, as recorded by Stephen & Buckland (1880: 11). L. R. Tsang (*in litt.* 2023) reports the evidence of a newspaper cutting, dated 11 September 1880, which strongly indicates that Hunstein may have collected them around late June of that year, and that he was still working with Redlich at the time. Thirdly, a juvenile *Otidiphaps* was evidently purchased from Hunstein concurrently (Stephen & Buckland 1880: 11), which fact would seem likely to have been mentioned by Ramsay if the specimen had been available to him for the original description. Finally, whereas Hunstein evidently recorded the sex of the specimens he collected, there is no indication from other material of this species taken by Goldie (see below) that he was so fastidious about noting such information, perhaps because his primary collecting interests had been botanical (Moore & Mullins 2012, Mullins 2012, Mullins & Bellamy 2012).

Edward Pierson Ramsay (1842–1916) was the first Australian-born curator of the Australian Museum and his tenure was notably successful, but it was nevertheless the case that he was not always careful in his descriptions of new birds—mistakes and inconsistencies in nomenclature were made, the material available to him was not always made clear, and the disposition of the relevant specimens went far beyond Sydney and is, as a result, frequently also subject to doubt (McAllan *et al.* 2005, McAllan 2016; W. Longmore *in litt.* 2023). In the present case, Ramsay was not specific as to how many specimens of the new taxon were available to him (and this may never become clear now), but in light of his claim to have examined both sexes, the fact that the two AM skins long assumed to be syntypes are both labelled as males, suggested that other material belonging to the original series must have existed, perhaps even at AM (W. Longmore *in litt.* 2023). It is clear from the first paragraph of Ramsay (1880: 464) that Goldie, who was present at the meeting at which the description of *O. cervicalis* was first read, brought a collection of birds (and other natural history items?) with him to Australia in late 1879, to which Ramsay evidently had initial access. Thereafter Goldie sent parts of this material elsewhere, as it is believed that the Australian Museum lacked funds to purchase the specimens at that time (W. Longmore *in litt.* 2023). Gould & Sharpe (1882: text accompanying Plate 61; see Fig. 3) stated that: ‘From the same collector [Goldie] Messrs. Salvin and Godman received the specimens from which they drew up their description of *O. regalis*; and it seems a great pity that some notice was not given before the despatch of the specimens to England to the effect that they had already been deposited with Mr. Ramsay for the purpose of description.’ Unfortunately, a retrospectively published (and edited) memoir of the years 1875 to 1879 by Goldie finishes in May of the last-named year (Moore & Mullins 2012).

Frederik DuCane Godman (1834–1919) received this box of birds from Goldie sometime in the first half of 1880, including the syntypes of what he and Osbert Salvin (1835–1898) would describe as *Otidiphaps regalis* (see below). Godman selected those specimens he wished to keep for his own collection and forwarded the rest (including one of the types of *regalis*) to the British Museum (BM, where they were received on 23 June 1880). Part of Godman’s private collection, including the other type specimen of *regalis*, was donated by him to the BM in 1889.

Two specimens (Fig. 4) of *Otidiphaps cervicalis* at the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK 1889.2.12.120 and NHMUK 1880.6.23.40; see also below) were part of the batch received by Godman from Goldie in the early part of 1880, are labelled as being from Ramsay’s type locality, and thus possess very strong claims to be considered syntypes, having been almost certainly seen by Ramsay. Furthermore, two additional *cervicalis* specimens at NHMUK (Fig. 5) also received from Salvin and Godman in 1889 (NHMUK 1889.4.20.529 and NHMUK 1889.4.20.530) are also from Goldie and presumably stem from the same batch of material received from the latter in early 1880. They emanate from the



Figure 3. Plate 61 in Gould & Sharpe (1882) of *Otidiphaps regalis* Salvin & Godman, 1880, which name is a synonym of *O. nobilis cervicalis* E. P. Ramsay, 1880 (Hein van Grouw, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

relevant region of south-east New Guinea, in the environs of Port Moresby (where Goldie was based), and likewise appear candidates for syntype status of both *cervicalis* and its synonym *regalis* (Table 1). Pertinently, none of these four NHMUK skins is labelled as to sex, meaning that if Ramsay's original description is to be taken at its word at least one further specimen with syntype status could await identification. Indeed, there is a specimen of *cervicalis* (MV 46201) from Goldie held in Museums Victoria, Melbourne, which therefore bears investigation in this respect (see <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/specimens/419843>); unfortunately, our attempts to contact the relevant curators have to date gone unanswered. Possibly, however, Ramsay merely assumed that one or more of the skins he saw was female, perhaps based on minor differences in plumage, without the sex being recorded on any of the labels?

Another very early specimen in the collection of Count Ercole Turati (1829–81) was mentioned by Salvadori (1882: 191). G. Chiozzi (*in litt.* 2022) has confirmed that, in fact, Turati had two specimens of *cervicalis* (original numbers: 19936 and 20269) that were subsequently held at MSNM, but both were destroyed by bombing in 1943 during the Second World War.

In a subsequent paper, Ramsay (1883: 16, 27) remarked on the species' unusual abundance in the region worked by Goldie and his collectors, among them Hunstein and Rolles. However, he also reported that this batch of Goldie material (whether or not any of it formed part of the 1879 consignment is unknown) had reached him via a dealer (Wilson of Mason Brothers) and that he had separately received some specimens directly from Hunstein. Furthermore, the comments concerning *Otidiphaps* are clearly linked to the latter material; it seems most likely that Ramsay's remarks were based on the specimens

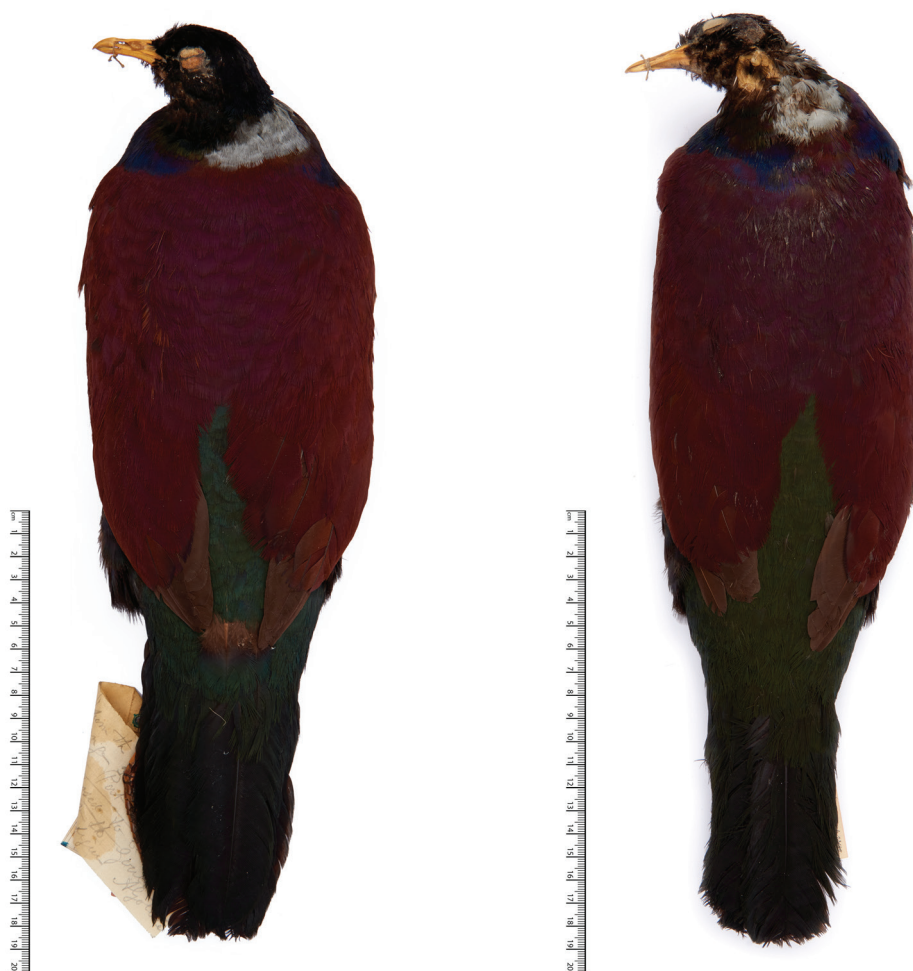


Figure 4. Syntypes of *Otidiphaps nobilis* var. *cervicalis* E. P. Ramsay, 1880, and *Otidiphaps regalis* Salvin & Godman, 1880, NHMUK 1889.2.12.120 (left) and NHMUK 1880.6.23.40. Both specimens were received by Godman from Goldie shortly after Ramsay had examined them. Salvin and Godman, unaware of Ramsay's publication, named the species again, kept one specimen for their own collection and passed the other to the British Museum in June 1880 (Jonathan Jackson, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

purchased in 1880 (Stephen & Buckland 1880: 11)—see above. It is apparent that Goldie relied on a reasonably extensive network for disposing of specimens; his arrangement with Ramsay commenced in 1877 (Mullins & Bellamy 2012) and, as he began to discover how lucrative birds could be, ornithological material was regularly sent to England and elsewhere in Australia (Sharpe 1906, Allingham 1924). Hunstein too had other avenues for disposing of specimens; according to Sharpe (1880: 231, 1906: 262), in September 1880 the British Museum purchased from the London dealers Edward Gerrard & Sons 43 specimens collected and supplied directly by Hunstein, and 15 others from Hunstein reached the BM via either Gustav Schneider (1867–1948) or his father, also Gustav Schneider (1834–1900), the Basel-based taxidermists (Sharpe 1906: 464).

Synonym:

Otidiphaps regalis Salvin and Godman, 1880, *Ibis* (4)4:364, Plate 11 (Fig. 6).—Owen Stanley Range, 30 miles inland of Port Moresby, eastern New Guinea. Apparently described



Figure 5. Probable syntypes of *Otidiphaps nobilis* var. *cervicalis* E. P. Ramsay, 1880, and *Otidiphaps regalis* Salvin & Godman, 1880, NHMUK 1889.4.20.529 (left) and NHMUK 1889.4.20.530; both specimens were sent to Godman by Goldie and probably formed part of the same batch as the specimens in Fig. 4 (Jonathan Jackson, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

without being aware of Ramsay's name *cervicalis*, Salvin & Godman (1880) were opaque as to the number of specimens they had before them of their new taxon, *regalis*, but Warren (1966) assumed (?) that it was just one, and therefore considered the adult collected in 1879 by Andrew Goldie (see above) and held at the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK 1889.2.12.120) to be the holotype of this name (taking her lead from Salvadori 1893: 612). However, our research indicates that a second specimen, NHMUK 1880.6.23.40, was received by Godman at the same time (see above) and when accessioned to what was then the British Museum was also noted as being a type in the register book; thus there are certainly two (and probably four) syntypes of the name *regalis* (Figs. 4–5, Table 1).

Salvadori was swift (by contemporary standards) to alert Salvin and Godman to the perceived primacy of Ramsay's name *cervicalis*; see Letters, Announcements, etc. in *Ibis* 4(5): 178–179 (January 1881), wherein it was stated that copies of the latter's paper had still not reached England. The following year, in the third volume of his overview of the Papuan avifauna, Salvadori (1882: 190) drew further attention to the seniority of *cervicalis*.

He also made his views on the case clear to Ramsay himself, by letter (dated 30 December 1881) (McAllan *et al.* 2005: 71). Having first berated the unnecessary synonymy, Gould and Sharpe (1882), however, took a different view, opining (without foundation) that ‘it is therefore extremely probable that Messrs. Salvin and Godman actually published their description first’. This assertion, which was clearly Sharpe’s (rather than Gould’s), was made despite correctly noting that Ramsay’s paper had been read first at a meeting of the Linnean Society of New South Wales on 31 December 1879, although, as reported by Fletcher (1896), the relevant issue of its Proceedings did not appear until May 1880. Despite the lag, Ramsay’s name has precedence; the relevant part of the *Ibis* containing Salvin and Godman’s description of *regalis* is dated in July 1880, although Salvadori (1882) thought it was not published until October and it is possible that he had proof of this. Nevertheless, despite the point being moot, for issues in this serial Dickinson *et al.* (2011) advised ‘where exact dates are available they should be relied on, in all other cases the last day of the given month [in this case 31 July 1880] must be used’. Finally, it also bears mention that in other cases in which he *knew* others might work on the same material as him and seek to describe new taxa, Ramsay was sufficiently collegiate to take precautions to try and avoid this by making his intentions clear to the other parties (McAllan 2016: 32), thereby making Sharpe’s charges against him doubly unfair.



Figure 6. Plate 11 of *Otidiphaps regalis* Salvin & Godman, 1880, accompanying the original description and based on the specimens Godman received from Goldie in early June 1880, see also Figs. 4–5 (Hein van Grouw, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

BLACK-NAPED PHEASANT PIGEON

Otidiphaps insularis Salvin and Godman, 1883, *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* 1883: 33. —Fergusson Island. Endemic to a single island in the D’Entrecasteaux Archipelago (Beehler & Pratt 2016).

Salvin and Godman (1883) reported that Andrew Goldie collected two specimens (syntypes; see Fig. 7, Table 1) of this pigeon in the mountains above 2,000 ft. on Fergusson Island in 1882. Though the wording of the original description makes clear that two specimens were available to the describers, only one (NHMUK 1889.2.12.119) was listed as being at NHMUK by Salvadori (1893) and Warren (1966). It subsequently transpired that the second bird, the only other specimen of this taxon held at NHMUK, had lost its original Salvin & Godman label, probably before it was received by the British Museum, and therefore it was never registered as a type. The style of its preparation is identical to that of NHMUK 1889.2.12.119, and both specimens bear a similar small, square, paper tag with the number 2 written on it. Based on this, it is safe to assume that this is indeed the



Figure 7. Syntypes of *Otidiphaps insularis* Salvin & Godman, 1883, NHMUK 1889.2.12.119 (left) and NHMUK 1889.2.12.484 (Jonathan Jackson, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

second syntype, and it has been allocated the next available number in the original batch with which it arrived, 1889.2.12.484.

These are the only specimens apart from a female collected by Albert Stewart Meek (1871–1943) on Fergusson Island on 25 May 1896, held at the American Museum of Natural History, New York (AMNH 616494). This taxon was first seen in the field by scientists only in 2022 (Kirwan *et al.* 2023).

WHITE-NAPED PHEASANT PIGEON

Otidiphaps nobilis aruensis Rothschild, 1928, *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 48: 88.—Aru Islands. This very poorly known taxon is endemic to the Aru group.

The holotype (Fig. 8, Table 1), an adult (said to be male) collected in June 1914 by Wilfred J. C. Frost (?1875–1957), and apparently received by Rothschild via the ornithologist and dealer William Frederick Henry Rosenberg (1868–1957), is held at the American Museum of Natural History, New York (AMNH 616495) (Greenway 1978). It is not known on which island Frost obtained the holotype, but he took another specimen of this taxon



Figure 8. Holotype of *Otidiphaps nobilis aruensis* Rothschild, 1928, AMNH 616495 (© Thomas Trombone, American Museum of Natural History, New York)



Figure 9. *Otidiphaps nobilis aruensis* specimen in the public exhibitions at Museum Heineanum Halberstadt; where and when it was collected is unknown, but it came to the museum before 1886 and was initially ascribed to *regalis* (and then to *cervicalis*) (© Rüdiger Becker, Museum Heineanum Halberstadt)

on the island of Kobroor [Kobruur] (06°14'S, 134°55'E) (AMNH 616497), and in May 1914 he was collecting at Golili (Frith & Beehler 1998: 531, Ellis 2010). Golili is listed by Beehler & Mandeville (2017: 214), but there is no information as to whether it is a locality on one of the main Aru Islands or a smaller island in the group (B. M. Beehler *in litt.* 2022).

Frost's specimen, however, was not the first. Heine & Reichenow (1886: 287) mentioned a male, which they ascribed to *cervicalis*, in the Museum Heineanum Halberstadt. Photographs of this bird (Fig. 9), which currently forms part of the museum's public exhibition, demonstrate that it is *aruensis*. Details concerning the specimen's provenance are unfortunately extremely poor. It was purchased from Dr Jean Guillaume Charles Eugene Rey (1838–1909) of Leipzig, but from where, when or whom he acquired the individual is unknown (his natural history dealership commenced operation in 1874); there is no reference to the Aru Islands on the original label. Very few expeditions visited the Aru Islands prior to the mid-1880s (see Frith & Beehler 1998: 531) and none seems an obvious source for the Halberstadt specimen, but six birds (of which only four survived the Second World War) acquired on a visit sometime during 1872 by J. T. Cockerell reached the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, via the dealer Gustav Frank (P. Eckhoff *in litt.* 2023). Rey identified the bird as *regalis*, perhaps influenced by Sharpe's text and the relevant plate (in Gould & Sharpe 1882; see above and Fig. 3), whereas this attribution was 'corrected' by Heine & Reichenow (1886) to *cervicalis*; all three of the persons concerned missed the opportunity to describe it as a new taxon.

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Leah Tsang of the Australian Museum (AM) kindly sent photographs of the labels of the two *Otidiphaps nobilis cervicalis* held in Sydney and helped determine their probable status. Wayne Longmore very helpfully discussed these same specimens at some length and we also thank Anthony Gill (AM) for other correspondence on this issue. Giorgio Chiozzi provided information concerning specimens formerly held in the Museo di Storia Naturale di Milano. Rüdiger Becker was similarly helpful concerning the specimen still present in the Museum Heineanum Halberstadt, and Pascal Eckhoff very promptly sent information concerning specimens in the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin. Tom Trombone sent photos of the holotype of *O. n. aruensis* in New York. Bruce Beehler supplied some information pertaining to localities. We thank Clemency Fisher and Robert Prŷs-Jones for their referees' reports.

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