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Third time lucky for Forsten's pigeon; *taeniura, forsterii, forsteni*

by Hein van Grouw , Wim Dekkers  & Kees Rookmaaker 

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SUMMARY.—Temminck's major work on pigeons became famous partly because of the complementary plates by Knip, even though Knip had used subterfuge to make the published work appear to be hers. It was generally assumed that this permanently ended their partnership as the evidence for renewed cooperation between the two, present in Knip's second pigeon book, was widely overlooked. A rediscovered letter from Temminck to Knip confirms the renewed partnership, with Temminck supplying specimens of new species of pigeon to be included in Knip's work. One of these was a *Ducula* from Sulawesi, collected by the Dutch naturalist Forsten. Due to a spelling mistake, this species initially did not receive the name intended by Temminck. Although the error was subsequently corrected by Bonaparte, his action is invalid in the eyes of the *International code for zoological nomenclature*. Another article in the Code, however, dealing with a different matter, is applicable and rules that the 'amended' name is valid after all.

'Article 32.5.1. If there is in the original publication itself, without recourse to any external source of information, clear evidence of an inadvertent error, such as a lapsus calami or a copyist's or printer's error, it must be corrected. Incorrect transliteration or Latinization, or use of an inappropriate connecting vowel, are not to be considered inadvertent errors'
ICZN (1999: 39)

Like many ornithologists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Coenraad Jacob Temminck (1778–1858), Dutch zoologist and from 1820 the first director of the Dutch National Natural History Museum in Leiden, published his research in multi-volume books. His detailed and often beautifully illustrated works made Temminck one of the most famous ornithologists of his era.

During his lifetime, journals became an increasingly popular medium for naturalists to communicate their findings, as they were far more efficient vehicles for reporting new species than books. In a period of constant discovery and increasing competition, naturalists could no longer afford to wait until a book was ready to be published. There was likewise a need to increase the speed of publication of the results of the efforts of the Natuurkundige Commissie voor Nederlandsch-Indië (Natural Science Committee for the Dutch East Indies, see Appendix 1). Output had been slow and intermittent ever since the start, in 1820, resulting in an increasing reluctance of the Dutch government to finance this large-scale collecting exercise. Finally, by Royal Decree on 10 February 1839, it was settled that the findings of the commission should be published in a new and regular series entitled *Verhandelingen over de Natuurlijke Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Overzeesche Bezittingen* (Transactions on the Natural History of the Dutch Overseas Possessions). It was published in 29 issues between 1839 and 1847 (Husson & Holthuis 1955: 17–24).

Not everyone was happy with this decision. Eltio Alegondus Forsten (1811–43), since 1838 a member of the Natuurkundige Commissie, was already abroad when he

complained about it in a letter to the museum's administrator in Leiden (Forsten 1841a)¹. Forsten stated that he did not intend to contribute to the *Verhandelingen* as, in his opinion, it would result in *his* findings disappearing anonymously in a larger work on colonial natural history. Instead, he wished to publish his own book, under his own name, on the natural history of Celebes (modern Sulawesi) when he returned (Forsten 1840), as this would improve his chances of a scientific career and perhaps even royal honours, as it had for fellow Committee members Salomon Müller (1809–1864) and Pieter Willem Korthals (1807–92) (van Wingerden 2020: 806). However, like many of his predecessors, Forsten never returned. Dogged by constant ill health, he died on 2 January 1843 at the age of 31, on the island of Ambon (Veth 1879: 107).

Histoire naturelle générale des pigeons (1808) or Les pigeons (1811)?

Around 1806 Temminck planned to write the first detailed and illustrated monograph on wild pigeons, which became known as the *Histoire naturelle générale des pigeons* (Temminck & Knip 1808). He commissioned Pauline de Courcelles (1781–1851) to execute the plates for this major work, which was published over time in 15 parts (*livraisons*) and included many new species, mainly based on specimens in his own collection or in the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN) in Paris.

Near the end of the process Pauline, then Knip-de Courcelles (hereafter Knip) abused Temminck's trust by using subterfuge to appropriate the credit for the work. Without Temminck's knowledge, she issued a new title page and made some alterations to the text. It was eventually published as *Les pigeons* (Knip & Temminck 1811). For more details see Dickinson *et al.* (2010).

The alterations to the title of the work, the authors and the dates of publications created problems in the field of taxonomy and led to confusion, first identified by Mees (1975: 126–127). Should taxonomists cite Knip or Temminck as the authority of the scientific names and with what dates? Dickinson *et al.* (2010: 213–214, 218) proposed to solve this dilemma by suggesting that it must be seen as two works: the first and largest part (1808–10, *livraisons* 1–13) of which Temminck alone was the author and therefore the authority for the names, and the last parts (1811, *livraisons* 14–15) wherein both should be seen as authors. Despite Knip's fraud, her magnificent illustrations played a major role in making Temminck's work on pigeons famous.

Les pigeons, volume 2 (1838–43)

Nearly 30 years later, Knip produced a second volume of her *Les pigeons* together with Florent Prévost (1794–1870), an illustrator and assistant naturalist at MNHN, Paris, who wrote the species accounts. It was commonly assumed that her partnership with Temminck had ended permanently, despite Stresemann (1975) pointing out that it had not. Discussing Knip's second volume, he wrote 'She seems to have reconciled with Temminck at the time, because he allowed her to portray some of the species of pigeons discovered by members of the Natural History Commission [Natuurkundige Commissie]' (Stresemann 1975: 118, although this was not mentioned in the original edition of the same work; Stresemann 1951).

A letter from Temminck to Knip dated 24 January 1842 confirms the renewed collaboration (Temminck 1842) (see Appendix 2). It was preserved in a collection of

¹ Most references in the main text are noted with page numbers except Forsten's handwritten documents, as these are not published in a printed format. For these the last three numbers of the scan code are given instead, e.g. (Forsten 1840–42: 019) refers to scan number NNM001001075_019. The scan can be found by following the relevant URL in the reference list.

documents purchased by the Royal Library at The Hague in an auction in 2004 and discovered a few years later. The letter but not Stresemann's statement was mentioned by Dickinson *et al.* (2010: 210–211, 215–216), who extensively researched the publication dates of the *livraisons*. Many other students of Temminck have missed both facts, despite the evidence being in plain sight since 1843 in Knip's second *Les Pigeons*.

In his letter to Knip, Temminck (1842) mentioned that he would try to convince libraries in the Netherlands to acquire her new work and that he would supply specimens of new species of pigeon to be included in Knip and Prévost's work. One of these was an imperial pigeon *Ducula* sp. from Sulawesi, collected by Forsten.

Forsten's Pigeon—discovery

In his diary² Forsten (1840–42: 33) mentioned that on 16 May 1840 he collected a pigeon in forest on a hill west of the village of Kojjal near Tondano. 'Kojjal' is present-day 'Koya' (in Minahasa Regency, Sulawesi), on the north-west side of Lake Tondano. Forsten immediately realised that it was an unknown species. He wrote that it resembled 'Colombe à lunettes' *Columba perspicillata* in Temminck's *Planches coloriées*—one of the references Forsten used for identifying species—but there were differences. He called it '*Columba*



Figure 1. Adult male White-bellied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula forsteni* (Bonaparte, 1854), collected by Forsten in North Sulawesi, in the Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, RMNH.AVES.216523; this specimen, together with two others in Leiden, RMNH.AVES.216524 (female) and RMNH.AVES.216525 (male), are syntypes of the name *Forsterii*, and therefore also of the name *forsteni* (© Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden)

² Forsten's diary is, in fact, a copy rewritten by an anonymous person (Forsten 1840–42: 001–120, Mulyasari 2015: 2). On the first page there is a note that it is a copy (Forsten 1840–42: 003). The original diary, written by Forsten himself, was found among the personal estate of the German geologist Carl Schwane (1817–51), a member of the Natuurkundige Commissie, who died in Bogor. Its current whereabouts, if the diary still exists, is unknown (van Steenis-Kruseman 1950: 179).



Figure 2. Specimen (NHMUK 1844.5.1.7) of White-bellied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula forsteni* (Bonaparte, 1854), purchased by the British Museum from Leadbeater in 1844; it was without doubt collected by Forsten and therefore a fourth syntype (Jonathan Jackson, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

taeniura Mihi' [named by me], based on the broad grey tail-band (Latin *taenia* 'band', Greek *oura* 'tail'), but Forsten's wishes did not come to pass.

Nowhere in his diary and notebook is it recorded how many he or his hunters collected, but three examples collected by Forsten are now in the collection of the Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden (Fig. 1). Another in the Natural History Museum (NHMUK) at Tring, appears also to have been collected by Forsten (Fig. 2). It was purchased in May 1844 from the London-based taxidermist and dealer Benjamin Leadbeater (1773–1851). There is no evidence that any other collector was active on Sulawesi during 1841–44. The first Western naturalist to visit Sulawesi after Forsten was Heinrich Zollinger (1818–59) in 1847 (van Gorsel 2022), followed by Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) in 1859 (van Wyhe & Rookmaaker 2015), who also collected a few specimens of the same species at Tondano (Fig. 3). Therefore, the specimen at NHMUK received in 1844 must have been collected by Forsten and was probably sold to Leadbeater by Temminck as a duplicate. Temminck and Leadbeater knew each other, as Temminck had borrowed specimens from him in the past to be figured in his *Nouveau recueil de planches coloriées d'oiseaux* (Temminck & Laugier de



Figure 3. Male (right) and female (left) specimens of White-bellied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula forsteni* (Bonaparte, 1854), collected by Wallace in 1859 at Tondano, North Sulawesi, in the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK 1860.9.6.4 and NHMUK 1873.5.12.2142, respectively) (Jonathan Jackson, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

Chartreuse 1820–39). On arrival at the then British Museum in 1844, it was registered as ‘*Columba forsteri* [*sic*, see below] new sp. Celebes’.

Forsten’s Pigeon—naming

Forsten’s ‘*Columba taeniura*’ was one of the new species Temminck intended to publish in Knip & Prévost’s work. However, instead of giving it the name ‘*taeniura*’ suggested by its discoverer, Temminck named it for him: *forsteni*. It is unknown how this was communicated to Knip & Prévost, but Temminck might have included instructions when he sent the specimen to Paris. Prévost mistakenly changed the name in his account (translated from French): ‘We are indebted to Mr. Temminck for his communication on this magnificent species, which was named by him to honour Mr. Forster, medical doctor and member of the Natuurkundige Commissie, who discovered it in the northern part of the Island of Celebes, where fig and nutmeg trees grow in abundance’ (Knip & Prévost 1838–43: 87). Because of the error in the name—Forster instead of Forsten—the name given to the species in the book was ‘Colombe de Forster *Columba Forsterii* – Temm.’ (Fig. 4).

Charles-Lucien Bonaparte (1803–57) noticed this error in 1854. Bonaparte was the nephew of Emperor Napoleon I and an ornithologist. He was banned from Italy and France because of his political ideas and remained a political refugee in the Netherlands in 1849–50. During this time, he studied the Leiden collection, and therefore he was well acquainted with Temminck and his work (van den Hoek Ostende *et al.* 1997: 7).

Bonaparte realised that the name *forsterii* for the species was a mistake and wrote (translated from the French): ‘An error, for which it will be ungenerous to blame the manager of the printing works or the typesetter, has changed wrongly the specific name



Figure 4. Colombe de Forster *Columba Forsterii* Temminck, 1842, in *Les pigeons* (Knip & Prévost 1838–43, pl. 47); copy held in the Rothschild Library, NHMUK, Tring (Hein van Grouw, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

of the fourth *Hemiphaga* that I will call *Hemiphaga forsteni*. Temminck wanted to honour Mr. Forsten, Chairman [sic] of the Natuurkundige Commissie for the Dutch East Indies, who made many discoveries: others, better acquainted with the famous German traveller [presumably Johann Georg Forster (1754–94)] than the Dutch medical doctor substituted *Forsteni* for *Forsteri*... (Bonaparte 1854: 1077). The species, whose common name is White-bellied Imperial Pigeon, has been known as *Ducula forsteni* (Bonaparte, 1854) ever since.

Discussion

Forsten had intended to publish the descriptions of the new species he collected on Sulawesi, and White-bellied Imperial Pigeon would then have been known as '*Ducula taeniura*'. Without Forsten's knowledge, Temminck decided to describe some of the pigeon species himself, including White-bellied Imperial Pigeon, specimens of which had arrived at the museum in 1841 (Forsten 1841b). Instead of doing so rapidly and efficiently in the *Verhandelungen*, the series in which museum staff were supposed to publish the results of the Natuurkundige Commissie, for unknown reasons Temminck chose a book. Perhaps because he knew Knip was working on a second volume of her *Les pigeons*, Temminck renewed their partnership, hoping that the new pigeons, with names provided by him, could be published in a book rather than a journal.

For whatever reason, White-bellied Imperial Pigeon was not named as intended by its discoverer, Forsten, i.e., *taeniura*, and neither did it, in the first instance, receive the name intended by Temminck, i.e., *forsteni*, due to a spelling mistake. Only after rectification by Bonaparte more than ten years later did the species receive its intended name, with Forsten, posthumously, garnering the honour of having *his* pigeon named after him.

However, Bonaparte's revision runs counter to the *International code for zoological nomenclature* (ICZN 1999). The *Code* is designed to resolve the past and guide the future. As the misspelling does not appear to be a 'slip of the pen' (*a lapsus calami*), being consistent throughout Prévost's text, the name cannot be corrected under Art. 32.5.1. without recourse to an external source of information, for example, a note from Temminck to Prévost with the correct name.

Bonaparte's action can be considered an 'emendation' under Art. 33.2, but as the conditions required by both Art. 33.2.1 and Art. 33.2.2. are not met, his action must be viewed as an 'unjustified emendation' under Art. 33.2.3. Bonaparte's name would have remained a junior synonym but for Desmarest (1826: 340). Bonaparte was apparently unaware that *Columba forsterii* Prévost, 1843, is a junior homonym of *Columba forsteri* Desmarest, 1826, and thus permanently invalid under Art. 58.14³. Although the species Desmarest described—Purple-capped Fruit Dove—is now named *Ptilinopus porphyraceus* (Temminck, 1821), Desmarest's name nevertheless pre-occupies Prévost's name. *Hemiphaga forsteni* Bonaparte, 1854, now *Ducula forsteni* (Bonaparte, 1854) is therefore the valid name, not because of any perceived 'correction', although that unquestionably was Bonaparte's intention, but because it is the first available name for the relevant taxonomic concept. So, third time lucky and *Ducula forsteni* it is.

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³ Seemingly, the name *Columba forsteri* was also employed three years later by Wagler (1829: 739–740), but from the original description it is not clear which modern species Wagler was naming. Generally, it is assumed to have been Polynesian Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aurorea* (Peale, 1848) (Bruce *et al.* 1985). However, although usually cited as *Columba forsteri* Wagler, 1821, Wagler in fact named it *Columba R. Forsteri*, which expands to '*reinholdiforsteri*' (Holyoak & Thibault 1984: 120) and thus not a senior homonym of Prévost's *forsterii*.

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Appendix 1: Natural Science Committee for the Dutch East Indies

The Dutch Natuurkundige Commissie voor Nederlandsch-Indië (Natural Science Committee for the Dutch East Indies) was established on 2 May 1820, by Royal Decree of King Willem I of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The committee was a costly, large-scale surveying and collecting endeavour, to explore mineral deposits and chart the flora and fauna of the Indonesian archipelago (Weber 2019: 73). In the same Royal Decree, it was stated that material collected by the committee must be deposited in the new National Natural History Museum in Leiden and the scientific results be published by the museum's scientific staff. The museum and the committee were separate but intertwined organisations (Gassó Miracle 2021: 103). Members received training in taxonomy and specimen preparation at the museum, and museum staff were aware of the members' activities in the field. They would receive shipments of specimens, publish new species, and keep track of correspondence and reports from the field (van Wingerden 2020: 807). Temminck, as director of the museum, filled the Natuurkundige Commissie with staff from the museum whenever opportunity arose (van Wingerden 2020: 807). After 30 years, with diminishing results, the Natuurkundige Commissie was officially dissolved in 1850, by which time, of the 18 members of the Commissie during this time, only six were still alive (Gassó Miracle 2021: 114).

Appendix 2: Temminck's letter to Knip (1842).

English translation of French transcript

Address on the envelope: Madame Knip-de Courcelles, rue du Bac 77, Paris.

Leiden on 24 January 1842.

Madam!

These are no longer promises carried away by the wind, which I come to show off to you: I am certainly coming to you in the Month of March and contrary to the song, the trinity will not happen, without Marlborough, having come to talk to you.⁴

To tell you that I am interested in the game would not be gallant; however, it is the fact, because I can't wait to finish with my bookseller, the dear Mr. Levrault, who furiously lures me and ends up not answering me anymore.⁵

My dealings with the librarian at The Hague have not been as favourable to You as those made with that of Teyler in Harlem; in fact the first is reduced to what is strictly necessary and the second can cut straight through.

It is true that the Ministry of the Interior in Paris had subscribed for 30 copies of my *Planches coloriées*⁶, but those times have passed: a woman author could still recall those beautiful days that have passed and will

⁴ Temminck was referring to the popular French folksong *Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre*, a burlesque lament on the death of John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough (1650–1722). It was written on a false rumour after the Battle of Malplaquet in 1709, the bloodiest battle of the War of the Spanish Succession, and tells how Marlborough's wife, awaiting his return, is given the news of her husband's death, that he has been buried and that a nightingale sang over his grave. However, her husband actually died in 1722. Temminck referred to the following chorus:

*La Trinité se passe
Miron-ton, miron-ton, mirontaine
La Trinité se passe
Marlbrough ne revient pas
Marlbrough ne revient pas*

[The Trinity Sunday (the first Sunday after Whitsun) passes without the return of Marlborough].

Temminck suggested the opposite: 'The Trinity Sunday will not pass without the return of Marlborough'. He considered himself Marlborough. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity defines one God existing in three divine persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit who descended like a dove. Temminck's letter deals with pigeons.

⁵ In a previous letter, Madame Knip probably would have mentioned that she was aware of a conflict between Temminck and Levrault, his current publisher, based at rue de la Harpe no. 81, Paris.

⁶ Madame Knip probably mentioned in a previous letter that she heard a rumour about the order by the French Interior Minister of 30 sets of Temminck's *Planches coloriées*.

never return; that is why all works of luxury are dying or are dead, and you must have had great courage or powerful protectors to dare to start the work you are publishing now.

I hope soon to supply your publication by sending a new reinforcement of pigeons which I intend to send to Mr. Prévost, and which I urge you to draw promptly so that on my next trip to Paris, they can be completed and return with me. Your improvised⁷ author will no doubt do you the gallantry of mounting [the bird skins].

I will not attach to this shipment the beautiful objects intended for the Museum of Paris; they are in large enough quantity and I myself will be the bearer of them; moreover, I will not relinquish it except from hand to hand. A scalded cat fears even cold water!

I have the honour to greet you and am sincerely
Your devoted Servant,

C.J. Temminck

⁷ Temminck referred to Florent Prévost as an 'improvised' author. Apparently Temminck had refused to become the author of Knip's new work for, presumably, obvious reasons.