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# Note on the nomenclature of *Myrmothera guttata* Vieillot, 1824 (Passeriformes, Thamnophilidae)

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**SUMMARY.**—Work on the publication date of Bonnaterre & Vieillot's *Tableau encyclopédique et méthodique* calls into question the priority of some names in use today. Among these *Myrmothera guttata* Vieillot, 1824, proves to be a junior synonym of a name introduced earlier. The possible reversal of precedence is studied here in compliance with the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

The Principle of Priority (Art. 23) is one of the pillars of the *International code of zoological nomenclature* (hereafter the Code) whose scope is 'to promote stability and universality in the scientific names of animals and to ensure that the name of each taxon is unique and distinct' (ICZN 1999). For more than a decade, the publication dates of several important 19th-century ornithological works, in which many new species were described, have been studied and corrected, as a result sometimes questioning the priority of names currently in use (e.g., Dickinson & Lebossé 2018, Dickinson *et al.* 2019). The relevant work to the case discussed herein is Bonnaterre & Vieillot's *Tableau encyclopédique et méthodique des trois règnes de la nature* (1790–1823, hereafter *Tableau encyclopédique*), whose publication date was clarified by Dickinson (2011). Based on his work and during my ongoing search for type material in the Baillon Collection of the Musée George Sand et de la Vallée Noire, La Châtre, France (hereafter MLC; see Gouraud 2015), I came across a valid name—*Myrmothera tessellata* Vieillot, 1822—which was published before that currently in use: *Myrmothera guttata* Vieillot, 1824. The former name is therefore senior synonym of the latter. I have investigated the implications of the rediscovery of this name, introduced by Vieillot in 1822, for the nomenclature of what is currently known as Rufous-bellied Antwren *Iseria guttata* (Vieillot, 1824).

Although the Principle of Priority is fundamental to the stability of nomenclature, it should not 'upset a long-accepted name in its accustomed meaning by the introduction of a name that is its senior synonym' (Art. 23.2). Art. 23.9.1.1 ('the senior synonym...has not been used as a valid name after 1899') and Art. 23.9.1.2 ('the junior synonym...has been used for a particular taxon, as its presumed valid name, in at least 25 works, published by at least 10 authors in the immediately preceding 50 years and encompassing a span of not less than 10 years') are intended to ensure this, and both must be met to prevent a reversal of precedence and the continued use of the junior synonym. After having addressed the possible reversal of precedence, I will address the whereabouts of the type specimens.

## *Myrmothera tessellata* Vieillot, 1822

**Full reference.**—*M[yrmothera] Tessellata* Vieillot in Bonnaterre & Vieillot, 1822: 683–684, livraison 91 (July 1822).

*M. tessellata* was introduced by Vieillot in 1822 in the *Tableau encyclopédique*. The section *Ornithologie* in which this taxon was described comprises eight livraisons, the dates of which were detailed by Dickinson (2011: 78, and references therein). Livraison 91, which contains pp. 529–848 and concerns us here, appeared in July 1822. The bird described by



Figure 1. Plate 155 of the *Galerie des oiseaux*: 'Le Fourmilier Moucheté (*Myrmothera guttata*)' (© Ernst Mayr Library, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, via Biodiversity Heritage Library: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>)



Figure 2A: Specimen MLC.2011.0.1526, holotype of *Myrmothera tessellata* Vieillot, 1822. B: the original pedestal inscriptions read: 'Myrmothera / tessellata V[ieillot] / fourmilier / marqueté Vieill[ot] / Encycl[opédie] / Cayenne / M. Bécœur'. The red label to indicate type status will be added as soon as possible (© Christophe Gouraud / Musée George Sand et de la Vallée Noire, La Châtre)

Vieillot is a good match for a female Rufous-bellied Antwren *Iseria guttata* (Vieillot, 1824) whose description, of a male, appeared two years later in Vieillot & Oudart's *La galerie des oiseaux, dédiée à son Altesse Royale Madame, Duchesse du Berri* (1820–26, hereafter *Galerie des oiseaux*) under the name *Myrmothera guttata*. More precisely, the text appeared on the first page of livraison 44 (p. 251) and the plate (155; see Fig. 1) was the last of livraison 45 (A. Lebossé *in litt.* 2020). Both livraisons were dated 1824 by Lebossé & Dickinson (2015: 51). Thus, *Myrmothera tessellata* Vieillot, 1822, is a senior synonym of *Myrmothera guttata* Vieillot, 1824, the name currently in use.

**Reversal of precedence.**—Both conditions of Art. 23.9.1 are met and therefore the younger name (*Myrmothera guttata*) is valid. The conditions of Art. 23.9.1.2 are met (see list of works in Appendix). To my knowledge, the condition in Art. 23.9.1.1 applies. Thus, the younger name has precedence. Applying Art. 23.9.2, the younger but valid name *Myrmothera guttata* Vieillot, 1824, is a *nomen protectum* and the older name *Myrmothera tessellata* Vieillot, 1822, is a *nomen oblitum*.

**Types.**—Although the *Galerie des oiseaux* aimed to describe and figure at least one species of each genus in the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris (MNHN) collections, Vieillot's protologue for *M. guttata* is based on a bird from Cayenne (French Guiana) originally owned by the Comte de Riocour, most of whose collection was acquired by Adolphe Boucard in 1889 (Renshaw 1905: 422). The Boucard collection was subsequently dispersed among several museums, especially MNHN (25,000 specimens), the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC (10,000 duplicates) and those in Madrid and Lisbon<sup>1</sup>, which acquired 8,000 birds (Mearns & Mearns 1998: 286, 302). The holotype could not be found at MNHN (P. Boussès *in litt.* 2021). It is also not in Washington (not listed by Deignan 1961; confirmed by C. Milensky *in litt.* 2021) and Philadelphia (N. H. Rice *in litt.* 2021), where some specimens ended up. The Natural History Museum, Tring, also possesses some Boucard specimens, but the type was not listed by Warren & Harrison (1971) or in the online NHMUK database (<https://data.nhm.ac.uk/search>). Finally, it has not been found in the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid

<sup>1</sup> The entire collection was destroyed by fire in March 1978 (Roselaar 2003: 275).



(J. Barreiro Rodríguez *in litt.* 2021). In summary the whereabouts of the type specimen is unknown.

With respect to *Myrmothera tessellata*, Vieillot's description clearly indicates that the individual described was in the Baillon Collection and came from Cayenne. The holotype has been found (MLC.2011.0.1526; Fig. 2a) and it matches Vieillot's protologue. The pedestal inscriptions also state that the bird is from Cayenne (Fig. 2b) in accordance with the given type locality.

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### Appendix

Sample of 25 works, published by at least ten authors in the immediately preceding 50 years and encompassing a span of not less than ten years, where the junior synonym (i.e. *Myrmothera guttata* Vieillot, 1824) has been used for a particular taxon, as its presumed valid name, as required by Art. 23.9.1.2 and in compliance with Art. 23.9.6 of the Code. The references are listed in chronological order.

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