



## **The type specimens of *Urospizias dampieri* Gurney Sr., 1882**

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# The type specimens of *Urospizias dampieri* Gurney Sr., 1882

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John Henry Gurney Sr. (1819–90) examined a series of raptors collected by Lieutenant (later Rear-Admiral) George Edward Richards (1852–1927) in New Britain that had been passed to him for examination by Canon H. B. Tristram (Gurney 1882a). Among them were three adult females, all taken at Blanche Bay in June 1879, of a species that he considered with some reservations to be *Urospizias etorques* Salvadori, 1875, from New Guinea, which is now treated as a junior synonym of *Accipiter hiogaster leucosomus* (Sharpe, 1874). Gurney (1882a) in fact based this assessment on four New Britain specimens, the three received via Tristram plus an adult male, collector unstated, preserved in the then British Museum (now Natural History Museum, NHMUK). His reservations were largely the result of not having to hand an adult *U. etorques* from New Guinea with which to compare the New Britain specimens.

Shortly thereafter, Gurney (1882b) revisited the issue, the Norwich Museum (later Castle Museum, Norwich) having now obtained an adult female *U. etorques* from the Astrolabe Mountains, New Guinea, collected by Andrew Goldie. This persuaded him that the New Britain specimens indeed formed a new species, which he named *Urospizias dampieri*, now *Accipiter hiogaster dampieri*, after the famous navigator William Dampier (1651–1715), who in 1699 had been the first European to discover the New Britain archipelago. As evidence, Gurney noted the smaller size of the New Britain females, as well as reiterating subtle plumage distinctions that he had previously mentioned (Gurney 1882a), derived from Salvadori's (1880) discussion of *U. etorques*. Although presenting mensural details for the New Guinea bird newly to hand, Gurney (1882b) did not repeat them for the New Britain birds, but instead referred to those already presented in Gurney (1882a).

Possibly due to this lack of precise mention of the relevant New Britain specimens in the species description by Gurney (1882b), the syntypes on which this taxon was based appear to have been overlooked subsequently. Checking the published catalogue of Tristram (1889: 59) reveals that he retained two of Richards's specimens (*a* and *b* under *Astur etorques*), which subsequently passed with much of his bird collection to what is now National Museums Liverpool (NML); these specimens are now registered as NML-VZ

TABLE 1  
Details of the syntypes of *Urospizias dampieri*, Gurney Sr., 1882.

NML-VZ T10112	Female. Blanche Bay, New Britain. 22 June 1879. Coll. G. E. R[ichards]. Iris brown. Feet orange. Bill black, yellow at base.
NML-VZ T4422	Female. Blanche Bay, New Britain. 26 June 1879. Coll. G. E. R[ichards]. Iris brown. Feet orange. Bill black, yellow at base.
NHMUK 1955.6.N.20.2707	Female. Blanche Bay, New Britain. 26 June 1879. Coll. G. E. R[ichards]. Iris brown. Feet orange. Bill black, yellow at base.
NHMUK 1881.3.29.1	Male. New Britain. May 1878. G. B[rown].

T10112 and NML-VZ T4422 (Table 1). However, there is no mention of them in the bird type catalogue of Wagstaffe (1978).

The third Richards specimen was passed with the rest of Gurney's raptors, previously held in the Castle Museum, Norwich, to NHMUK in 1954, where it is now registered as 1955.6.N.20.2707 (Table 1). Based on both the Gurney collection label it bears and on his complete but unpublished birds of prey catalogue (1889–91), this was seemingly acquired by Gurney for the Norwich Museum via Philip Sclater at the Zoological Society of London. This had already happened by the time Gurney (1884) revisited identification issues concerning *dampieri*, when he additionally confirmed that this specimen was one of the syntypes used in the original description. Again, however, there is no mention of it in the NHMUK bird type catalogue (Warren 1966).

The extremely limited information that Gurney (1882a) presented about the identity of the fourth specimen he examined amounted to merely that it was a male and in the British Museum. Nevertheless, checking the registers and collection of NHMUK indicates that it must have been specimen 1881.3.29.1, collected in New Britain in May 1878 by the Revd. George Brown (1835–1917), a Methodist missionary to Melanesia (see Beolens *et al.* 2014). Gurney (1882a) was published in January 1882, suggesting that he must have examined material he referenced therein prior to autumn 1881. Brown's specimen 1881.3.29.1 was accessioned into the British Museum collection in March 1881, in good time for this to have happened, and it is the sole male *dampieri* specimen present of which this is true. This specimen is also not mentioned by Warren (1966).

We therefore conclude that the four syntypes of the name *Urospizias dampieri* Gurney Sr., 1882, are those listed in Table 1.

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