

# Typification of the scarlet form of Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis* Ashby, 1917

RICHARD SCHODDE, ANDREW BLACK, PHILIPPA HORTON  
and BRIAN BLAYLOCK

**ABSTRACT** – Review of the original description of *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis* Ashby reveals that it was based on at least 14 specimens in the E. Ashby, F. E. Parsons and South Australian Museum collections from the Fleurieu Peninsula in general, and between Normanville, Second Valley and Cape Jervis in particular, as well as two skins in the S. A. White collection from Mount Compass. No types were designated, thus establishing the specimens as unenumerated syntypes. Condon's (1976) designation of SAMA B2323 as a holotype is thus invalid and its interpretation as a lectotype by inference (Schodde 1997) is no longer admissible under clarified wording in Article 74.6 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999). This is fortunate because the type material identified by Condon has been lost and, having been designated invalidly under the Code, allows all remaining specimens of the original type series to be reinstated as syntypes. Ten extant specimens have been traced and are held in the residual Ashby family collection and in the South Australian Museum, Museums Victoria, American Museum of Natural History and Smithsonian Institution.

In July 1917, Edwin Ashby (1917) published a description of what he called the Fleurieu Peninsula Rosella, or scarlet form of the Crimson Rosella, as a new subspecies *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis*. It was based on specimens he and Frank E. Parsons had taken 'last Easter' [= 6-9 April 1917] between Normanville and Cape Jervis and expressly at Second Valley, as well as two specimens in the S. A. White collection from Mount Compass, and any then in the South Australian Museum (SAMA) from the Fleurieu Peninsula, south of Adelaide in South Australia. Two of the specimens, which had been mounted, were later illustrated in colour in the journal *Emu* (Ashby 1918: plate XVII). No type specimens were designated, all above-quoted specimens thus becoming syntypes.

## Specimens in the type series

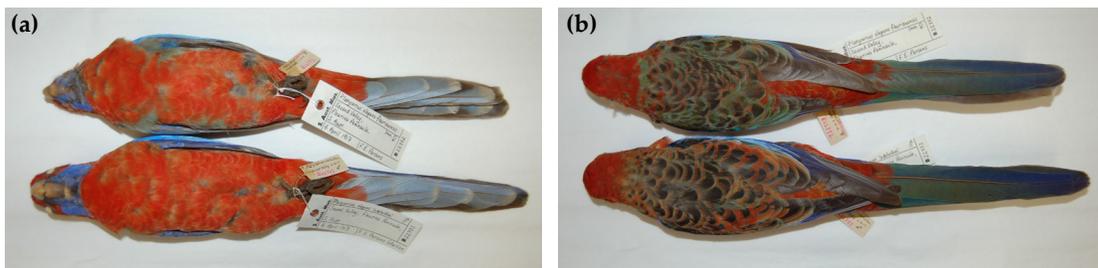
Ashby's mounted specimens of *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis* cannot be located now. It seems more than likely that they remained in his possession and were lost in the bushfire that ravaged his property in March 1934, destroying

the house, contents and collections, including type material (Robertson 1979). Fortunately, some of Ashby's bird skins were hastily retrieved as the fire approached and are held today by his descendants. Listed in the family's catalogue is '29. *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis* Ashby 1917 Location Second Valley Sout[h] Australia female 7.4.17'. In addition, another specimen, collected by Joe Rau '20 miles [ca 30 km] W of Victor Harbor' in October 1903, would have been present in SAMA at the time of Ashby's description. There are also three skins from the Parsons collection in SAMA (two of which are shown in Figure 1), one from Ashby in Museums Victoria (NMV) taken at Cape Jervis, two from his collection in the American Museum of Natural History, New York (AMNH) and two, each labelled as 'cotype' of *fleurieuensis*, in the United States National Museum of Natural History (USNM) of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, all taken before July 1917. Of the two specimens Ashby (1917) cited 'in Capt. White's collection ... from Mount Compass', there is no record in the S. A. White collection in SAMA, nor were they listed in the catalogue

**Table 1.** List of specimens inferred to have been examined by Edwin Ashby at the time of, and to have formed the basis of, his description of *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis*. All localities are in South Australia. See text for explanation of museum acronyms.

Museum registration number	Collector and collection date	Collection locality	Other details
Ashby (private) Collection	probably E. Ashby, April 1917	Second Valley, Fleurieu Peninsula	two mounts illustrated in plate XVII (Ashby 1918), lost presumed destroyed
SAMA B2323 male	E. Ashby, 7 April 1917	Second Valley	skin specimen, lost
SAMA B5333 female	E. Ashby, 7 April 1917	Second Valley	skin specimen, lost
S.A. White collection	Unknown	Mount Compass, Mount Lofty Ranges	two skin specimens, unlocated
Ashby (private) Collection No. 29 female	E. Ashby, 7 April 1917	Second Valley	extant skin specimen
SAMA B9101 female	J. Rau, October 1903	20 miles W of Victor Harbor, Fleurieu Peninsula	extant skin specimen
SAMA B22848 juvenile male	F. E. Parsons, December 1916	Yankalilla, Fleurieu Peninsula	extant skin specimen
SAMA B22772 immature female	F. E. Parsons, 6 April 1917	Second Valley	extant skin specimen (Figure 1)
SAMA B22773 male	F. E. Parsons, 6 April 1917	Second Valley	extant skin specimen (Figure 1)
NMV B17312 female	E. Ashby, 7 April 1917	Cape Jervis, Fleurieu Peninsula	extant skin specimen
AMNH 178303 male	E. Ashby, 7 April 1917	Second Valley	extant skin specimen
AMNH 178305 female	E. Ashby, 6 April 1917	Second Valley	extant skin specimen
USNM 254919 male	E. Ashby, 14 March 1917*	Second Valley	extant skin specimen
USNM 425205 male	F. E. Parsons, 14 March 1917*	Cape Jervis	extant skin specimen

\*Both USNM specimens bear the date 14 March 1917. USNM 425205 was previously SAMA B22752, sent on exchange to the Smithsonian in July 1950; in SAMA records it is also dated 14 March 1917. We assume therefore that Ashby and Parsons had visited the Fleurieu Peninsula prior to the trip they made the following month.



**Figure 1.** Two syntypes of *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis*: upper bird SAMA B22772 immature female, lower bird SAMA B22773 adult male, both collected Second Valley, Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia, 6 April 1917 by F. E. Parsons; a) ventral, b) dorsal. Images Philippa Horton

of his collection prepared by his widow before it was transferred to the Museum. All the specimens that we have traced or found to be missing in the syntype series are shown in Table 1.

### Condon's designation of a 'holotype' of *fleurieuensis*

In listing type specimens of birds in SAMA, Condon (1976) identified the two mounted *Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis* illustrated by Ashby (1918) in *Emu* as holotype and paratype and surmised that they were the two Ashby specimens he then found in the Museum's collection. These were a male, SAMA B2323 (registered in 1918), and a female, SAMA B5333 (registered in 1925), both taken at Second Valley on 7 April 1917. Both were among Ashby's 379 specimens that had passed to the Museum prior to the bushfire (Horton *et al.* 2018). However, register and card records indicate that B5333 was a skin, not a mount, and that B2323 was probably also a skin, so it is unlikely that either had been a subject in Ashby's illustration. Neither is held in SAMA today, nor was either included in a list of *P. elegans* specimens prepared for incoming curator S. A. Parker between 1976 and 1978. Repeated searches since have failed to find them. That could have been a serious loss because Condon (*l.c.*) had nominated one of them, B2323, as the holotype.

### Type specimens and their purpose

In order to clarify the discussion below, we offer a summary of types and their purpose in scientific nomenclature. Type specimens for species and subspecies serve not as typical examples of those taxa but as reference points for the scientific names that connect the taxa to human knowledge; they serve as name-bearers for species and subspecies. Primary types function as the name-carriers and secondary types are adjunct specimens referred to in original descriptions of the taxa.

The four categories of primary types are:

**Holotype** – the single specimen, specified or unspecified, on which a newly described species or subspecies is based.

**Syntypes** – all specimens (two or more) on which a newly described species or subspecies is based when no holotype is designated or implied, as in the case of *fleurieuensis* Ashby.

**Lectotype** – a single specimen selected subsequently from a syntype series to serve *in lieu* of a holotype (because one was not specified in the original description). It is not obligatory to select a lectotype under the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, hereafter the Code (ICZN 1999), and, unless there are inherent taxonomic or nomenclatural issues in a syntype series, it is usually preferable not to in the Aves (see below).

**Neotype** – this can only be designated when (a) the holotype, syntypes or lectotype have been lost and (b) there is an express need to define the taxon concerned objectively.

Secondary types include paratypes (additional specimens referred to in original descriptions where a holotype is explicitly designated) and paralectotypes (the remaining specimens of a syntype series after a lectotype has been chosen). Neither paratypes nor paralectotypes have any name-bearing function, nor do they necessarily gain that function if a holotype or lectotype is lost or destroyed. This is particularly significant for former syntypes, which do not regain status if their lectotype was validly designated – see Articles 72.1.3 and 73.2.2 of the Code (ICZN 1999).

### Correction to lectotype of *fleurieuensis*

The second edition of the Code (ICZN 1964), with the above information on type specimens, should have been available to Condon (1976), yet he appears to have been unaware that his designation of two SAMA specimens as holotype and paratype was faulty because holotypes

can only be designated in original descriptions or where just one specimen is involved in that description – and here Condon quoted two. Schodde (1997: 177-178) subsequently corrected the designation of B2323 to lectotype under Article 74b of the third edition of the Code (ICZN 1985). This article stated, somewhat ambiguously:

When it cannot be determined that a nominal species-group taxon was established on a single specimen, and a holotype was not designated [here by Ashby], the first subsequent author [here Condon] to have published the inference that one original specimen is the ‘holotype’, or ‘the type’, is deemed, should another syntype or syntypes be discovered, to have designated a lectotype.

### Revision to syntype series

Since that correction to lectotype, the wording of the relevant article has been changed in the fourth edition of the Code and has clarified the error of designating a holotype in the case of *fleurieuensis* (ICZN 1999: Article 74.6). It rules instead that

When it has been accepted that a nominal species-group taxon was based on a single specimen and the original description neither implies nor requires that there were syntypes, and if it is considered subsequently that the original description was based on more than one specimen, the first author to have published before 2000 the assumption that the species-group taxon was based upon a single type specimen [= holotype or “the type”] is deemed to have designated that specimen as the lectotype.

Because articles in successive editions of the Code supersede those in previous editions except where explicitly reaffirmed (see Articles 84 in editions 1 to 3, ICZN 1961, 1964, 1985, and Article 86.3 in edition 4, ICZN 1999), Article

74.6 in the fourth edition overrules any action previously taken under Article 74b in the third edition.

Article 74.6 makes it clear that not only is Condon’s (1976) holotypification of *P. e. fleurieuensis* invalid, but also that Schodde’s (1997) interpretation of lectotypification is now inadmissible. That is because the original description of *fleurieuensis* does imply and require that there were syntypes, and that the name *fleurieuensis* was based on not one but a series of specimens. Thus the whole case generated by holotypifying then lectotypifying *fleurieuensis* has failed.

Typification of *P. e. fleurieuensis* now returns, without complication, to the syntype series of surviving specimens referred to in its original description: pre-July 1917 specimens from localities in the Fleurieu Peninsula south of Normanville and Mount Compass from the E. Ashby, F. E. Parsons and S. A. White collections and SAMA. The situation that was faced by loss of the only primary type of *fleurieuensis* under previous editions of the Code (e.g. ICZN 1985) has now been turned around. Under the current edition (ICZN 1999), 10 syntypes have been traced, all but one dispersed among public Australian and United States museums (Table 1).

Lectotypification of one of these syntypes still remains an option under Articles 74.1 and 74.7 of the Code (ICZN 1999). We have not done so however, because species-group taxa in the Aves are populations in nature and, for a name-bearer of any such population, a syntype series is as effective as a lectotype. In addition, the spread of syntypes of the same taxon among different institutions enhances security and accessibility for these taxonomic name-bearers, and it also adds to the cultural and scientific value of the institutions holding them, improving institutional capacity to compete for funding. Designating a lectotype now could also limit options for nomenclatural stability should future study find that a population (for example

*fleurieuensis*) comprises more than one taxon, however unlikely that may be.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Patrick Taggart for information on the Ashby family private collection, Wayne Longmore for details of the Museums Victoria specimen, and Paul Sweet for details including individual photographs of Ashby specimens in the AMNH collection. We are grateful to the two reviewers for their constructive comments on the originally submitted manuscript.

## REFERENCES

- Ashby, E. 1917. Description of a new sub-species of *Platycercus elegans* (Gmelin). *Emu* 17: 43-45.
- Ashby, E. 1918. Fleurieu Peninsula Rosella (*Platycercus elegans fleurieuensis*). *Emu* 17: 117, plate XVII.
- Condon, H. T. 1976. Vertebrate type-specimens in the South Australian Museum. IV. Birds. *Records of the South Australian Museum* 17: 189-195.
- Horton, P., Black, A. and Blaylock, B. 2018. Ornithology at the South Australian Museum, Adelaide: 1856 to 1939. In *Contributions to the History of Australasian Ornithology. Volume IV*. W. E. Davis Jr, W. E. Boles and H. F. Recher (eds). Memoirs of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, No. 23, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp. 241-457.
- ICZN (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature). 1961. *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature, London, pp. xvii + 176.
- ICZN (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature). 1964. *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. Second edition. International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature, London, pp. xx + 176.
- ICZN (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature). 1985. *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. Third edition. International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature, British Museum (Natural History), London, pp. xx + 338.
- ICZN (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature). 1999. *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. Fourth edition. International Trust for Zoological Nomenclature, c/-The Natural History Museum, London, pp. xxix + 306.
- Robertson, E. 1979. Ashby, Edwin (1861–1941). In *Australian Dictionary of Biography. Volume 7*. N. B. Nairn and A. G. Serle (eds). Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, pp. 108-109.
- Schodde, R. 1997. Psittacidae. In *Zoological Catalogue of Australia. Volume 37.2 Aves (Columbidae to Coraciidae)*. W. K. Houston and A. Wells (eds). CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, pp. 109-218.

**Richard Schodde**

Australian National Wildlife Collection

CSIRO National Research Collections

GPO Box 1700

Canberra, ACT 2601

[rschodde@grapevine.com.au](mailto:rschodde@grapevine.com.au)

**Andrew Black, Philippa Horton and Brian Blaylock**

South Australian Museum

North Terrace

Adelaide, SA 5000

[abblack@bigpond.com](mailto:abblack@bigpond.com)

[philippa.horton@samuseum.sa.gov.au](mailto:philippa.horton@samuseum.sa.gov.au)

[47bjblaylock@gmail.com](mailto:47bjblaylock@gmail.com)