

AUTHORSHIP AND TYPIIFICATION OF *Strepera fusca*. While we were preparing an inventory of the type specimens of birds in the South Australian Museum (Horton and Blaylock in prep.), a question arose concerning the correct author of *Strepera fusca*, a synonym of *S. intermedia*, now a subspecies of the Grey Currawong *S. versicolor*.

Strepera fusca was proposed at the meeting of the South Australian Ornithological Association (SAOA) on 12 May 1905, as follows: 'Birds from Yorke's and Eyre's Peninsulas in South Australia were found to be of a darker brown, with a very great amount of white on the wing, and it was considered that these birds were not *Strepera melanoptera* nor yet *Strepera plumbea*, and it was suggested to designate them *Strepera fusca*, or the Brown Crow-Shrike' (Mellor 1905). The ground-work for this discussion was laid at the previous meeting of the SAOA on 10 March 1905, when the topic of 'the *Strepera* Family' was reviewed and a specimen from Eyre Peninsula was shown by Captain S.A. White and another from Yorke Peninsula by E. Ashby (Mellor 1905). The minutes of the 12 May meeting were subsequently published in the next issue of *Emu* (SAOA 1905). At no stage was a particular author specified for *Strepera fusca*, nor were any type specimens identified. From the report of the minutes (SAOA 1905), nevertheless, and the minutes themselves (Mellor 1905), it is clear that seven members were present at the meeting, including J.W. Mellor and Edwin Ashby.

Subsequently, Mellor published a full description of *Strepera fusca* as a new species, apparently believing that the SAOA suggestion of *S. fusca* in 1905 was just that, and not validly published (Mellor 1910). He based his description on specimens that he had personally collected on Eyre Peninsula in October 1899 and October 1909. Mathews (1912), however, treated the name as a synonym of *Strepera versicolor intermedia* Sharpe, 1877, and quoted it as '*Strepera fusca* Ashby, *Emu* vol. v. p. 27. 1905: Eyre's Peninsula, South Australia. (Type examined.)'. Then, in *The Birds of Australia*, Mathews (1923) explained, 'Five years later Mellor proposed in an orthodox manner *Strepera fusca* as a new species, but the name must date from the first introduction, and it is exactly the same bird as Sharpe thirty years before had named *S. intermedia* from the same locality.' The type specimens of *S. intermedia* were collected at Port Lincoln by John Gould

(Sharpe 1877).

Mathews' attribution of the name *fusca* to Edwin Ashby, with the type locality of Eyre Peninsula, has been continued in the literature until now, for example in *The Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia* (RAOU Checklist Committee 1926) and Condon (1969). Yet, because of conflicting information surrounding the early publications of the name, issues of original publication, authorship and type specimens still need proper resolution.

1. First publication and its date

Mathews' (1923) assertion that *S. fusca* must date from 1905, from publication of the minutes of the May SAOA meeting in the *Emu*, is correct. There is sufficient description accompanying the name, and, under Article 15.1 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999), it is validly published as a name proposed conditionally. Thus *Strepera fusca* as published later by Mellor (1910), being based on different type specimens (see below), is a junior subjective synonym and junior primary homonym, and therefore is invalid (ICZN 1999: Arts 61.3.1, 57.2).

2. Authorship

As no person was singled out as responsible for *Strepera fusca* in its first publication, all seven of the members present at the May 1905 meeting of the SAOA are authors. Although they are not listed in the report of the meeting (SAOA 1905), all were mentioned throughout the text in relation to various matters and can thus be determined from the contents (ICZN 1999: Art. 50.1). In such circumstances, the secretary, or other reporter of the meeting, is not the author (ICZN 1999: Art. 50.2). The authors, then, in alphabetic order, are E. Ashby, J.W. Mellor, A.M. Morgan, F.E. Storr, M. Symonds Clark, A.H.C. Zietz and F.R. Zietz

Why Mathews (1912) assumed that Ashby was the author may never be known. Perhaps he was influenced by receiving a specimen from Ashby—see type specimens below. In the original publication of *Strepera fusca*, Ashby was only mentioned as follows, 'Several skins recently collected by Mr. E. Ashby on Kangaroo Island were of particular interest; he had seen a large number of the birds there, and had identified them as the Black-winged Crow-Shrike (*Strepera melanoptera*), there being no trace of

white in the wing, and a specimen shown tallied exactly with one from the Forrest Ranges [Forest Range, South Mt Lofty Ranges] in South Australia and one from Port Augusta in the north.' (SAOA 1905).

3. Type specimens

All specimens from Eyre or Yorke Peninsulas shown at the May 1905 meeting must be syntypes because no individual specimen was designated 'type'. We have been able to locate only two specimens that were evidently exhibited. One is in the S.A. White Collection, now held at the South Australian Museum (SAMA), registration number B54309, collected at Stokes on Eyre Peninsula in October 1899 by H.M. White, brother of S.A. White. In her catalogue of the collection, Mrs M. White (widow of S.A. White) listed two specimens with the same details, but the second, a female, she noted as missing on 31 May 1964. S.A. White was not present at the May 1905 meeting, but he did exhibit an Eyre Peninsula specimen at the March 1905 meeting when *Strepera* was first discussed, and it is reasonable to assume that his cousin and neighbour J.W. Mellor would have taken White's specimen(s) to the May meeting.

The other specimen is an Ashby skin from Mathews' Collection, now in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), registration number AMNH 673738. Ashby's original label shows '*Strepera fusca* suggested name' on one side and on the reverse '*Strepera cuneicaudata*' with a line drawn through *cuneicaudata*, and 'Edithburgh, S.A. Oct. 1886, No. 91'. Mathews' green type label has on one side his catalogue number 3740 and '*Strepera versicolor fusca*', and on the reverse 'Mellor, Emu V p. 27, 1905' (M. LeCroy pers. comm.). It is strange that Mathews (1912, 1923) neglected to include Yorke Peninsula in the distribution when clearly he saw this specimen from there. Typical of his befuddling of information is the attribution on his label of the 1905 *Emu* publication to Mellor, not Ashby.

At a meeting of the SAOA in February 1925, a further discussion took place on 'The *Strepera*, or Bell-Magpies' which recorded, 'The bird collected by Mr. Ashby near Cape Spencer in 1886, and named *fusca*, is identical with the Port Lincoln bird named by Sharpe in 1877 *intermedia*.' (SAOA 1925). Ashby (1926) then quoted the same sentence and added in brackets

'Mathews confirms this'. In that paper he gives further details of this bird: he and James G. McDougall found it at a nest with one egg at Sandy Point near Cape Spencer on 9 October 1886 (earlier in the narrative he says 9 September 1886), and they collected both bird and egg. After describing the nest and egg, Ashby continues, 'The egg I am giving to the South Australian Museum and the skin I gave to Mathews.' Ashby (1929) later confirms that the skin was shown 'at one of the early meetings' of the SAOA, and also that the month of collection was October. The egg is still held at SAMA, registration number B5630. The skin must be the syntype at AMNH (673738), as all of the other specimens of *S.v. intermedia* at AMNH, where the Mathews Collection is held, were collected in 1911 (M. LeCroy pers. comm.). Why then do the records of its provenance, Edithburgh and Cape Spencer, differ? Edithburgh is on the east side of the foot of Yorke Peninsula and Cape Spencer, the most southerly point in the west, is some 80 km away. The most likely explanation is that collectors in the early days often used the name of the closest 'major' town to where the specimen was collected, and in general were not particularly careful with locality data. Ashby's vagueness is further illustrated by the confusion in the date (see above) and by his reference in his 1929 paper to having collected two eggs in 1886, not one. Ashby (1929) also remarked, 'when additional specimens were obtained on Eyre Peninsula, at the RAOU 'Camp-out' [held in 1909], this species was described by me under the name of *S. fusca*'. It was actually Mellor (1910) who wrote this description.

Concerning *Strepera fusca* Mellor (1910), its author said that his description was taken from 'birds collected by me on Eyre Peninsula during a trip in October 1899, and again while conducting the scientific expedition during the ninth congress of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, at Warunda Creek, central Eyre Peninsula, in October, 1909. On both occasions I was accompanied by Capt. S.A. White, of the Reedbeds near Adelaide, who also secured specimens.' Mellor's collection was given to S.A. White, and in the S.A. White Collection are two specimens labelled in red 'Type', both collected at Warunda Creek in October 1909. These are almost certainly the ones collected by J.W. Mellor, and both are syntypes of his junior synonym. Another specimen in the S.A. White

collection from Warunda Creek was collected by S.A. White at the same campout. But there are no specimens in the White Collection taken by J.W. Mellor in 1899. It is possible that these were thrown out, as John Samuel-White (son of S.A. and M. White) recalls that his mother despaired of the Mellor skins, as many were in a poor state, and believes that she may have discarded the worst of them (J. Samuel-White pers. comm.). Had these survived, they would have been syntypes of *S. fusca* Ashby *et al.* (1905), assuming that Mellor took them to the 1905 SAOA meeting.

4. Corrected citation of name, author, original publication and typification

Strepera fusca Ashby, Mellor, Morgan, F.E. Storr, Symonds Clark, A.H.C. Zietz and F.R. Zietz, 1905 *Emu* 5 (1), 26-27.

Syntypes:

AMNH 673738, Mathews Catalogue No. 3740, Male, Collected Edithburgh, S.A., E. Ashby, No. 91, October 1886

SAMA B54309 (S.A. White Collection), Malé, Collected 'Kapinka', Stokes, Eyre Peninsula, S.A., H.M. White, 4 October 1899

Type locality: Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas, South Australia

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