

The First Specimens of *Dacelo novaeguineae* and *D. leachii* in European Collections

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In a recent paper (1956) I drew attention to a letter from Sonnerat to Sir Joseph Banks which shows that the young Frenchman could have acquired skins of the Australian Kookaburra amongst the other birds he obtained from Banks when the *Endeavour* was at Capetown on her way back to England in 1770. The mainland of Australia was visited only on the first of Cook's three voyages, and we know from Latham that Banks had a Kookaburra in his collection in 1782. Dr. W. R. P. Bourne has now drawn my attention to the fact that MS. lists of some of Banks's collections still exist, although they have long been overlooked as they were catalogued as lists of drawings. In three of these lists there are brief descriptive notes of birds, and two of these concern two specimens referred to by Latham when he drew up his description of the Great Brown Kingfisher (1782, pp. 609-610). The MS. notes are as follows—

Alcedo . . . 37. *Al. brach. fusco et griseo variegata, alarum tectricibus viridipygioq. caeruleis nitidissimus*. Buffon 7. 181. pl. enl. 663. Sonnerat Voy. 171. tab. 106. 1 specimen.

37a *præcedentis varietas s. avis junior*. 1 specimen.

The references to Sonnerat and Buffon are to descriptions of *Dacelo novaeguineae* (Hermann) 1783, but the wing coverts and rump in that species could not be described as a 'splendid blue' and it seems clear that Banks's specimens were of two distinct species—*D. novaeguineae* and *Dacelo leachii* Vigors and Horsfield 1827. This is confirmed by Latham who stated that the lower part of the back and the rump in one of Banks's birds was a fine pale blue green and "on the middle of the wing coverts a large patch of glossy pale blue green: outer edge of the quills blue: . . . tail . . . barred ferruginous and steel black with a gloss of purple." This was surely a female of *D. leachii*, the only character given in the description which applies not to this species but to *D. novaeguineae* being a dark area beneath the eye which was perhaps mentioned through an error in transcription as Latham goes on to describe a supposed female which was clearly a specimen of *novaeguineae*; the latter was almost certainly the '*avis junior*' in the MS. list quoted. Mathews was probably aware that Latham's description applied to both species, since he says that it was only partly applicable to *D. novaeguineae* (1918, p. 118). He does not, however, mention it in his notes on *D. leachii*.

It is pleasant to be able to add another Australian bird to the records of Cook's voyages, especially as in this case no

nomenclatural changes are involved. Gmelin (1788, p. 454) described both the supposed male and female of Latham's Great Brown Kingfisher as *Alcedo fusca*, but five years earlier Boddaert had used that binomial for *Alcedo smyrnensis* Linn. 1758, and his name is valid for one of the Asian forms of that species. Gmelin's *fusca* thus becomes a homonym and is not available for *D. leachii*.

It is perhaps worth while giving the evidence for the validity of Hermann's name of *D. novaeguineae* for the Kookaburra since this was queried by the committee responsible for the second edition (1926) of the *Official Check-list of the Birds of Australia*. Both Boddaert and Hermann named the Kookaburra from Daubenton's plate, but Hermann's note on it appeared in his *Tabula Affinitatum Animalium* which was reviewed in the *Gottingische Anzeigen*, bd. 3, stuck 185, pp. 1854-1860, Nov. 15, 1783, while Boddaert's name, *Alcedo gigas*, published in his *Table des Planches Enluminées d'Histoire Naturelle de M. D'Aubenton* (p. 40, no. 663), must have been later as the preface to that work is dated 1st Dec., 1783. It seems that Mathews knew something of this, for he used Hermann's name in 1927, but apparently did not publish his reasons for doing so. The references given by Peters in 1945, when he too used Hermann's name, are unsatisfactory, since they lead back to an unsupported statement by C. W. Richmond on Hermann's priority over Boddaert.

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