

The correct generic name for the Great Argus (Aves: Phasianidae)

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Abstract. A nomenclatural revision of the generic names applicable to the Great Argus, *Argusianus argus* (Linnaeus, 1766), is presented. The valid name for this pheasant is *Argusianus* Gray, 1855. *Argus* Temminck, 1807, and *Bremus* Billberg, 1828, are preoccupied, while *Argusianus* Rafinesque, 1815, and *Argusianus* Gray, 1849, are nomina nuda.

Key words. *Argus*, *Argusianus*, *Bremus*, nomenclature, ornithology

INTRODUCTION

The Great Argus, *Argusianus argus* (Linnaeus, 1766), is a conspicuous species of Southeast Asia (McGowan, 1994; Madge & McGowan, 2002). It was described by Linnaeus (1766: 272) as *Phasianus argus*, but it is usually placed in the monotypic genus *Argusianus* (e.g. Peters, 1934, Dickinson, 2003, Dickinson & Rensen, 2013). This generic name has been usually attributed to Rafinesque (1815), but Richmond (1908) suggested that it should be attributed to Gray (1855), while Gregory (2011) suggested that it should be dated from Gray (1849). The situation thus requires clarification. Moreover, this generic name competes for priority with *Argus* Temminck, 1807, and *Bremus* Billberg, 1828. Below I present a nomenclatural analysis of this case, following the currently valid International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999; hereafter the Code). The generic names are arranged in chronological order.

Argus

Phasianus argus Linnaeus was first separated at the generic level by Temminck (1807: 149), who called the genus *Argus*. The type species of *Argus* Temminck is, by monotypy, *Argus giganteus* Temminck (1807: 149), created as a new replacement name for *Phasianus argus* Linnaeus, 1766.

The generic name *Argus* Temminck, 1807, is potentially a junior homonym of *Argus* Bohadsch (1761: 65; Gastropoda), *Argus* Scopoli (1777: 432; Lepidoptera) and *Argus* Poli (1795: 106, 153, 162; Gastropoda). The generic name *Argus* Bohadsch, 1761, was totally suppressed by ICZN (1944), but ICZN (1956) limited the suppression to the Principle of Priority, resurrecting the availability of *Argus* Bohadsch, 1761, for the Principle of Homonymy. Note that ICZN (1956:

336) incorrectly stated that Bohadsch (1761) described *Argus* on page 56, this being an obvious misprint for 65. ICZN (1956) totally suppressed the generic name *Argus* Scopoli, 1763, dating it from Scopoli (1763: 176), where the name was not used in generic sense. However, Scopoli (1777: 432) used *Argus* as a valid generic name and the opinion of the ICZN applies to Scopoli's *Argus* irrespectively of the incorrect citation (cf. Art. 80.4 of the Code).

Thus, the generic name *Argus* Temminck, 1807, is preoccupied by *Argus* Bohadsch, 1761, and *Argus* Poli, 1795, and cannot be used as a valid generic name. However, it is not preoccupied by *Argus* Scopoli, 1763, or 1777 (contra Gregory, 2011: 206), because this name is not available for the Principle of Homonymy due to the action by ICZN (1956).

Rafinesque (1815: 69) listed “*Argus* R.” as a phasianid genus without defining it in any way. Some authors (e.g. Peters 1934: 132) believed that the “R” (standing for Rafinesque) was printed in error and that Rafinesque (1815) took the name from Temminck (1807). However, there is no evidence that Rafinesque (1815) knew Temminck's (1807) work and *Argus* Rafinesque, 1815, explicitly attributed by Rafinesque to himself, thus should be considered nomenclaturally independent of *Argus* Temminck, 1807, as was first observed by Richmond (1908: 591). Thus, *Argus* Rafinesque, 1815, is a nomen nudum (see also Richmond, 1908: 591; Sherborn, 1923: 460; Gregory, 2011: 207).

Baker (1930: 447) listed *Argusa* Kelham (1881: 530) as an available generic name. However, *Argusa* of Kelham (1881) is obviously a subsequent incorrect spelling of *Argus*, not an available name.

Bremus

Billberg (1828: table 1) created the generic name *Bremus* as a new replacement name for *Argus* Temminck, 1807, with which it thus shares the type species (for which see above). Richmond (1908: 594) observed that *Bremus* Billberg, 1828, is preoccupied by *Bremus* Jurine (in Panzer 1801: 164; Hymenoptera; see Morice & Durrant 1914 for this work) and

Bremus Panzer, 1801 [Hymenoptera] and his results were repeated by Gregory (2011: 207). However, Panzer's (1801) work was suppressed by ICZN (1939). Thus, *Bremus* Jurine, in Panzer, 1801, does not preoccupy *Bremus* Billberg, 1828, since 1939 (contra Gregory, 2011), although it did so in Richmond's (1908) times. *Bremus* Panzer, 1801 [for the date of publication of this work see Sherborn, 1923a; Sandhouse, 1943: 532; and Evenhuis, 1997: 600] was suppressed for the purposes of the Principle of Priority, but not for the purposes of the Principle of Homonymy by ICZN (1939).

Argusianus

Rafinesque (1815: 219) published the generic name *Argusianus* as a new replacement name for *Argus* Rafinesque, 1815. As this generic name is a nomen nudum (see above), *Argusianus* Rafinesque is also a nomen nudum (see also Richmond, 1908: 594; Gregory, 2011: 207).

Richmond (1908: 591, 594) suggested that *Argusianus* should be attributed to Gray (1855: 103), but Gregory (2011: 207) argued that it should be dated from Gray (1849: 47) and his view was adopted by Dickinson & Remsen (2013: 33). Gregory's (2011) opinion is wrong, however, because Gray (1849: 47) listed *Argusianus* Rafinesque, 1815, in the synonymy of *Argus* Temminck, 1807. The generic name *Argusianus* thus cannot date from this work (Art. 11.5 of the Code). Also, this name cannot be validated from Gray (1849) under the provisions of Art. 11.6 of the Code, because it was not *first* listed by Gray (1849) in synonymy, having been taken from Rafinesque (1815).

Thus the first place where the generic name *Argusianus* was introduced in agreement with the Code is Gray (1855), as has been suggested already by Richmond (1908).

CONCLUSIONS

Summarising the above data, the generic name for the Great Argus should be *Argusianus* and this generic name should be attributed to Gray (1855). The synonymy is as follows:

Argusianus Gray, 1855

Argus Temminck, 1807: 149 [preoccupied].

Bremus Billberg, 1828: table 1 [preoccupied].

Argusianus Rafinesque, 1815: 219 [nomen nudum].

Argusianus Gray, 1849: 47 [nomen nudum].

Argusianus Gray, 1855: 103.

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