



Nomenclatural and taxonomic status of birds described by Johan Peter Falck in 1786

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ABSTRACT. Johan Peter Falck (1732–1774) became in 1786 the author of nine species-group names of birds, the existence of some of them escaped the attention of later ornithologists. Eight of them are junior subjective synonyms. They include *Ardea pumila* (= *Ardeola ralloides*), *Anas fistularis* (= *Anas rufina*), *Falco vespertinoides* (= *Falco aesalon*), *Scolopax pusilla* (= *Calidris alpina*), *Larus atricilloides* (= *Larus minutus*), *Alauda nigra* (= *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*), *Motacilla lugubris* (= *Oenanthe pleschanka*), and *Emberiza sibirica* (= *Calcarius lapponicus*). However, *Tetrao kakelik* Falck, 1786 should be used as a valid name for the Chukar Partridge as *Alectoris kakelik* (Falck, 1786) with *Alectoris chukar* (Gray, 1830) as its junior synonym.

INTRODUCTION

Johan Peter Falck (1732–1774) was a Swedish naturalist, who was primarily interested in botany. His only ornithological contribution is a posthumously published annotated list of birds recorded during his expedition to Central Asia in 1768–1774 (Falck 1786b: 326–410). Although Falck's name now and again appears in ornithological literature, some of his new avian species were overlooked by subsequent ornithologists and most authors appear not to be acquainted with his book in personam. The aim of the present work is thus to evaluate the nomenclatural and taxonomic status of nominal avian taxa described by Falck (1786b), and to address related nomenclatural and taxonomic issues.

Johan Peter Falck (also Germanized as Johann Falk and Latinized as Falckius) was born in Kockstorp, Västergötland, Sweden, in 1732 (IK Foundation 2005). After studies at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, under Karl von Linné (1707–1778), he went to Sankt-Peterburg, Russia, where he became curator of a private natural history collection and later botanist in city herb garden. In 1768 he joined the expedition to Asia organized on behalf of Russian tsarina Ekaterina II (1729–1796) by the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Sankt-Peterburg, where he became leader of the so-called Orenburg unit, which explored Central Asian steppes. On the way back to Sankt-Peterburg, Falck committed – after a chronic ailment – suicide in Kazan, Russia, on “31 March” [= 12 April] 1774 (Georgi 1775: 802–806; date recalculated from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar).

Falck's collections and field-notes were preserved and brought to Sankt-Peterburg by Johann Gottlieb Georgi (1729–1808), who accompanied Falck on the expedition during its beginning and then again toward its end. However, no ornithological specimens survived till today (Steinheimer 2005, V.M. Loskot, pers. communication in December 2005). Georgi later edited and published Falck's field-notes (Falck 1785, 1786a,b; see also Falck 1824–1825 for a Russian translation of this work).

Falck believed that he discovered several birds as new for science, described and named them. Georgi compared these names with available literature, adopting Linné (1766) as the standard. As judged after citations in the ornithology section of Falck's book (1786b), he also consulted Linné (1761), Brisson (1763), S. G. Gmelin (1770), Lepechin (1770), Pallas (1770, 1771, 1773, 1774, 1776) and Gldenstdt (1774), and also discussed various topics directly with Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811), a leading zoologist of the then Russia (see Georgi in Falck 1786b: [3]). Georgi replaced Falck's names with senior synonyms, where he believed they are available, listing the original Falck's names either in synonymy, or in relevant foot-note, or not at all. The remaining names can be unequivocally attributed to Falck, not to Georgi (cf. ICZN 1999, Art. 50.1).

SYSTEMATIC ACCOUNT

The following list is arranged according to the first appearance of the species in Falck (1786b).

***Falco vespertinoides* Falck**

Falco vespertinoides Falck, 1786b: 329, not figured.

STATUS: Available name.

TYPE: Unspecified birds recorded and/or collected at the type locality.

TYPE LOCALITY: "In der Baschkirey, Permien und in der Isettischen Provinz." (Falck 1786b: 329) = Bashkortostan, Perm region and Iset' Province, i.e. the steppe region south of the Ural Mountains in Russia.

REMARKS: Georgi (1801: 1700) listed this species as valid, but it seems to have been overlooked by other authors. Detailed description and dimensions given by Falck (1786b: 329-330) allow identify the bird as a Merlin *Falco columbarius* Linné, 1758. Considering the type locality and distribution of Merlin (see Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001) I synonymize here *Falco vespertinoides* Falck, 1786b with *Falco aesalon* Tunstall, 1771, the Eurasian form of the Merlin.

***Anas fistularis* Falck**

Anas fistularis cristata Brisson, 1760: 398, not figured.

Anas fistularis cristata Brisson 1763: 465, not figured.

Anas fistularis "Brisson" Falck, 1786b: 348, not figured.

STATUS: Falck (1786b: 348) attributed this species to Brisson (1763: 465), but the latter book is not strictly binomial. Hence, *Anas fistularis* is available with Falck (1786b) as its author (ICZN 1999).

TYPE: Unspecified birds recorded and/or collected at the type locality (Falck), and unspecified birds described by Brisson (1760, 1763) as *Anas fistularis cristata*, incl. those described by authors cited by Brisson (1760, 1763), i.e. Schwenckfeld (1603), Willughby (1676), Ray (1713), Marsili (1726) and Rzaczyński (1736).

TYPE LOCALITY: "In den Smpfen Sibiriens." (Falck 1786b: 348) = in the wetlands of Siberia, i.e. in the steppes south of the Ural Mountains, Russia. The type locality further includes regions listed by the aforementioned authors, i.e. northern Poland (Rzaczyński 1736), Silesia (Schwenckfeld 1603), the Danube in Hungary and/or Romania and/or Bulgaria (Marsili 1726) and Italy (Willughby 1676, Ray 1713).

REMARKS: Brisson (1760, 1763) recognized four *fistularis* "species": *Anas fistularis*, *Anas fistularis cristata*, *Anas fistularis americana* and *Anas fistularis jamaicensis*. Of these,

Anas fistularis cristata was correctly identified with Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (Pallas, 1773) by Gmelin (1789: 541) and Salvadori (1895: 328), while the remaining three “species” refer to other duck species in modern understanding. Description given by Falck (1786b: 348) allows identification of his *Anas cristata* with Red-crested Pochard. Hence, I synonymize here *Anas fistularis* Falck, 1786 with *Anas rufina* Pallas, 1773 = *Netta rufina* (Pallas, 1773).

***Larus atricilloides* Falck**

Larus atricilloides Falck, 1786b: 355, pl. 24.

STATUS: Available name.

TYPE: Unspecified birds recorded and/or collected at the type locality.

TYPE LOCALITY: “An den salzigen und übrigen Seen der Isettischen, Kirgisischen und Ischimschen Steppe” (Falck 1786b: 355) = saline and other lakes in the steppes at Iset’, in Kyrgyzstan and at Ishim, i.e. steppes south of the Ural Mountains, eastwards till the Altai Mountains.

REMARKS: Gmelin (1789: 601), Latham (1790: 813) and Georgi (1801: 1767) listed *Larus atricilloides* Falck as a valid species, but Giebel (1875: 449) and Saunders (1896: 174) correctly synonymized it with *Larus minutus* Pallas, 1776.

***Ardea pumila* Falck**

Ardea pumila Lepechin, 1770: 502, pl. 14, fig. 1 (name contained in a non-binomial work).

Ardea pumila “Lepechin” Falck, 1786b: 365.

STATUS: Falck (1786b: 365), Gmelin (1789: 644), Giebel (1872: 422), Sharpe (1898: 203) and Hartert (1920: 1246) attributed this name to Lepechin (1770), but the latter work is non-binomial (ICZN 1970). Falck (1786b) was first to use the name in a manner required by the ICZN (1999) and he is thus to be regarded as its author.

TYPE: Unspecified bird(s) described and/or illustrated by Lepechin (1770), and unspecified birds recorded and/or collected by Falck (1786b) at the type locality.

TYPE LOCALITY: “Ad mare Caspium” (Lepechin 1770: 503), and “am Tereck und in allen Kaspischen Steppen” (Falck 1786b: 365) = on Terek river and in all Caspian steppes.

REMARKS: *Ardea pumila* was listed as a valid species by Gmelin (1789: 644) and Georgi (1801: 1781), but Giebel (1872: 422) and Sharpe (1898: 203) correctly synonymized it with *Ardea comata* Pallas, 1773 and *Ardea ralloides* Scopoli, 1769, respectively, i.e. with *Ardeola ralloides* (Scopoli, 1769). *Ardea comata* Pallas, 1773 is a synonym of *Ardea ralloides* Scopoli, 1769 (e.g. Sharpe 1898: 203, Hartert 1920: 1246).

***Scolopax pusilla* Falck**

Gallinago anglicana Brisson 1763: 288 (name contained in a non-binomial work).

Scolopax pusilla Falck, 1786b: 371, not figured.

STATUS: Available name. Sharpe (1896: 603) attributed this species to Gmelin (1789: 663), but the latter worker correctly listed Falck (1786b) as the author of *Scolopax pusilla*.

TYPE: Unspecified birds recorded and/or collected by Falck (1786b) at the type locality.

TYPE LOCALITY: “In der Isettischen Provinz” (Falck 1786b: 371) = in the Iset’ Province, i.e. in the modern Sverdlovsk Province, Russia.

REMARKS: Gmelin (1789: 663) and Georgi (1801: 1785) listed *Scolopax pusilla* Falck as a valid species. Giebel (1877: 467) erroneously synonymized it with *Pelidna Bonapartei* (Schlegel, 1844), which is a synonym of *Calidris fuscicollis* (Vieillot, 1819) (see Sharpe 1896: 575), but Sharpe (1896: 603; with question mark) and Hartert (1920: 1574, Hartert

& Steinbacher 1936: 472) correctly synonymized *Scolopax pusilla* Falck, 1786b with *Tringa alpina* Linné, 1758 = *Calidris alpina* (Linné, 1758).

Gallinago anglicana Brisson, 1763: 288 was listed in the synonymy of *Scolopax pusilla* by Falck (1786b: 371). The name was created in a non-binomial work and its mere listing in synonymy does not make it available for nomenclatural purposes (ICZN 1999, Art. 11.6).

***Tringa pileata* Falck**

Tringa pileata Falck, 1786b: 376, not figured.

STATUS: This species-group name was listed in the synonymy of *Charadrius gregarius* Pallas, 1771 = *Vanellus gregarius* (Pallas, 1771). It was not made available for nomenclatural purposes by this act (ICZN 1999, Art. 11.6).

***Tetrao kakelik* Falck**

Tetrao Kakelik Falck, 1786b: 390, not figured.

Perdix kakelik (Falck): Latham 1790: 655 [New combination.]

Caccabis kakelik (Falck): Zarudnyj 1914: 52 [New combination.]

Alectoris kakelik (Falck): Buturlin 1935: 193 [New combination.]

STATUS: Available name. Ogilvie-Grant (1893: 113) was uncertain about the taxonomic identity of *Tetrao kakelik* Falck for unknown reasons, and Bianki (1907: 170) and Hartert (1917: 280, 1921: 1907) argued that Falck's description of this species is too brief to allow its exact identification and preferred to use species-group names *chukar* Gray, 1830 (e.g. Ogilvie-Grant 1893, Bianki 1907) or *graeca* Meisner, 1804 (e.g. Hartert 1917, 1921) for the bird. However, other authors correctly pointed out that Falck's description of his *Tetrao Kakelik* is fully useful and that it has priority over both *graeca* Meisner, 1804 and *chukar* Gray, 1830 (e.g. Zarudnyj 1914: 52, Johansen 1961: 258, Potapov in Gračev 1987: 73, 1989: 58).

TYPE: This bird was not seen by Falck (1786b), who described it on the basis of reports given to him by an unspecified reporter or reporters. This reporter was probably Christoph Bardanes (ca. 1730 – ca. 1780), Falck's assistant, surgeon and taxidermist (see Georgi in Falck 1785: 4), who traveled on behalf of Falck to the regions of Boxara and Xiva, and to Dzungaria in 1771 (see Falck 1785: 357-402). The type of *Tetrao kakelik* Falck is unspecified birds inhabiting the type locality (see below) and those kept in captivity in Boxara region (see Falck 1786b: 390).

TYPE LOCALITY: "In der Bucharey, Chiwa, Soongorey" (Falck 1786: 390) = Boxara and Xiva khanats (corresponding with southern parts of modern Uzbekistan), and Dzungaria (probably referring to eastern parts of modern Kazakhstan).

REMARKS: Currently used standard classification of the genus *Alectoris* Kaup, 1829 (Watson 1962a,b, Vaurie 1965, Johnsgard 1988, McGowan 1994, Madge & McGowan 2002; see also Randi et al. 1992, Randi 1996, Randi & Lucchini 1998) treats the widespread Central Asian Chukar Partridge as a single species, which is divided in 14 (Vaurie 1965, McGowan 1994) to 16 (Madge & McGowan 2002) subspecies. Following ICZN (1999), the Chukar Partridge should bear the name *Alectoris kakelik* (Falck, 1786), because it is the oldest name available for the species and because it has never been forgotten (ICZN 1999, Art. 23.9.1), being applied to the Chukar Partridge e.g. by Buturlin (1935: 193), Ivanov (1953: 74, 1976: 58), Johansen (1961: 258), Kuz'mina (1962: 448) and Gračev (1987: 70, 1989: 55) after 1899 (the conditions of Art. 23.9.1.1 are herewith not met). Although the name *Alectoris chukar* is now in prevailing use (98,4 % of 381

records of strings ‘*Alectoris chukar*’ and ‘*Alectoris kakelik*’ found on internet using Google Scholar on 25.12.2005), there is no nomenclatural reason to abandon the oldest available name given to the species. In accordance with the authors cited above I suggest that Chukar Partridge be known as *Alectoris kakelik* (Falck, 1786b), the name which has priority over *Alectoris chukar* (Gray, 1830).

***Alauda nigra* Falck**

Alauda nigra Falck, 1786b: 393, pl. 27

STATUS: Available name.

TYPE: Unspecified birds recorded and/or collected at the type locality.

TYPE LOCALITY: “In den Kaspischen Steppen” (Falck 1786b: 393) = Caspian steppes.

REMARKS: Description given by Falck (1786b: 393) clearly allows identification of the bird as a Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* (Forster, 1768). Gmelin (1789: 795) synonymized *Alauda nigra* Falck, 1786b with *Alauda tatarica* Pallas, 1773 (see also Georgi 1801: 1820), which in turn was synonymized with *Alauda yeltoniensis* Forster, 1768 = *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* (Pallas, 1773) by Sharpe (1890: 559).

***Emberiza sibirica* Falck**

Emberiza sibirica “Falck et Pall.” Falck, 1786b: 398, not figured.

STATUS: Available name. Falck (1786b: 398) noted that he received specimen or specimens of this species in spring 1771 at Iset’ at the same time as did Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811), leader of another unit on the same expedition. This is perhaps the reason, why the name *Emberiza sibirica* was attributed to both Falck and Pallas (by Georgi?). However, Pallas (1773: 710) described this species under the name *Fringilla calcarata*. It is highly improbable that he would describe this bird under two different names and in two different genera, so that the name *Emberiza sibirica* should be attributed to Falck alone.

TYPE: Birds collected in spring 1771 at Iset’ and unspecified birds recorded and/or collected at the type locality.

TYPE LOCALITY: “im Frühlinge 1771 in der Isettischen Provinz ...; nachher kam sie mir in ganz Sibirien ... vor” (Falck 1786b: 398) = Iset’ Province in spring 1771 and later in all Siberia (visited by Falck), i.e. Central Asian steppes eastwards to Novosibirsk.

REMARKS: There was considerable confusion about the authorship of *Emberiza sibirica*. Gmelin (1789: 875) attributed it to Lepechin (1771: “483” = 485) and to Falck (1786b: 398), listing it in the synonymy of *Emberiza aureola* Pallas, 1773. Suškin (1925: 35) attributed the name to Gmelin (1789: 875) and a few subsequent authors followed his opinion (e.g. Vaurie 1959: 691, Paynter 1970: 23, Stepanjan 2003: 723, 727), although there is no reason for this (see also Hartert & Steinbacher 1932: 87). However, Lepechin (1771) did not use this name in his non-binomial work, calling the bird “*Emberiza superne rubra*, subtus flava, fascia pectorali transversa ferruginea” (Lepechin 1771: 485). Falck (1786b: 398) provided a description of the bird and should be regarded as the author of the name. Moreover, the bird described and figured by Lepechin (1771: 485-486, pl. 23, fig. 1) is indeed Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* Pallas, 1773, as recognized already by Gmelin (1789: 875), while the description provided by Falck (1786b: 398-399) shows clearly that *Emberiza sibirica* Falck, 1786b is synonymous with *Fringilla lapponica* Linné, 1758 = *Calcarius lapponicus* (Linné, 1758).

Suškin (1925: 29) described *Emberiza elegans sibirica* as a new subspecies of the Yel-

low-throated Bunting *Emberiza elegans* Temminck in Temminck & Laugier, 1836 (see Dickinson 2001 for the date of this publication). In belief that this name is preoccupied by *Emberiza sibirica* Gmelin, 1789, he later renamed the subspecies as *Emberiza elegans ticehursti* (Suškin 1926: 35). Hartert & Steinbacher (1932: 87) argued that *Emberiza sibirica* “Gmelin, 1789” has no standing in zoological nomenclature and resurrected the name *sibirica* Suškin for the subspecies. Subsequent authors either overlooked or neglected this observation and continued to call the subspecies *ticehursti* Suškin (e.g. Vaurie 1956: 8, 1959: 691, Portenko 1960: 370, Mauersberger 1966, Paynter 1970: 23, MacKinnon & Phillipps 2000: 526), or used *sibirica* Suškin for the subspecies (e.g. Vorob’ev 1954: 187). This subspecies is often treated as inseparable from the nominotypic *Emberiza elegans elegans* Temminck in Temminck & Laugier, 1836 (e.g. Spangenberg & Sudilovskaja 1954: 419, Stepanjan 2003: 723). If separated, it indeed should bear the name *ticehursti* Suškin, 1926, because *Emberiza elegans sibirica* Suškin, 1925 is a junior primary homonym of *Emberiza sibirica* Falck, 1786b.

***Emberiza aureola* Pallas**

Emberiza aureola Pallas, 1773: 711

REMARKS: The name *Emberiza aureola* is attributed to both Falck and Pallas in Falck (1786: 398), with correct citation of Pallas (1773: 711), who created this name for the Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (Pallas, 1773). I found no reason, why the authorship of this name should be changed.

***Motacilla lugubris* Falck**

Motacilla lugubris Falck, 1786b: 405, not figured.

REMARKS: Georgi (in Falck 1786b: 405) observed that the species, which Falck intended to name *Motacilla lugubris*, was already described by Pallas (1770: 584, pl. 22, fig. 3) under the name *Motacilla leucomela*. He used Pallas’s name for the species, mentioning that proposed by Falck only in a footnote (Georgi in Falck 1786b: 405). *Motacilla lugubris* Falck was probably never used as a valid name and, consequently, does not enter zoological nomenclature (ICZN 1999, Art. 11.6). *Motacilla leucomela* Pallas, 1770 is synonymous with *Motacilla pleschanka* Lepechin, 1770 = *Oenanthe pleschanka* (Lepechin, 1770); see ICZN (1970).

CONCLUSIONS

Johan Peter Falck listed 222 species of birds, recorded by himself and his companions during his 1768–1774 expedition to the Central Asiatic steppes. The published version of the manuscript (edited by Johann Gottlieb Georgi) included nine species believed by him to be new for science or attributed to authors, who did not publish these names in a manner required by ICZN (1999). Eight of these names are subjective junior synonyms of names created by other authors. *Tetrao kakelik* Falck, 1786 is the oldest available name for the Chukar Partridge, and should be used for the species.

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