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## NOMENCLATURE

by Edward Necek, Australia

Now that I have more time and have become a desk-bound aviculturist I'd like to use this opportunity to explain why the average aviculturist should not be so "touchy" when dealing with the scientific nomenclature of birds. It is not necessary to mention why we are saddled with a binominal or trinominal system of scientific names. We will mention only that if one wants to seriously study birds, one's native tongue is not sufficient. One must also learn the languages that are used by the scientists — Latin and Greek. These two languages, especially the Latin, are the keys which will unlock the door behind which are the secrets of how the birds were named.

Do not be surprised if the scientific names are not an exact translation of what you call a bird in your own language. Most birds are called by different common names in different countries. These names usually derive from the bird's color, plumage, shape of body, place of dwelling, voice, or song. In order for people of different countries and languages to communicate more easily and accurately it was necessary to adopt a common name in a universal language. Latin and Greek were the languages agreed upon.

In ancient times various writers in Greek and Latin described the plants, birds, and animals. They formed, over the centuries, a body of written works dealing with natural history. The people who studied the birds came to know them by the Greek and Latin names that were used in the only available literature. As centuries went by a group of people emerged and began to study the birds on a higher than average level of learning. Nowadays these people are called scientists.

Today's scientists hold the sole authority to decide by which name this or that bird will be called. By now we have a body of scientists in nearly every land. They are often united by one or more scientific organization. These organizations are often recognized as the highest authorities having jurisdiction over the naming or renaming, the classification or reclassification of all the birds.

Scientists studying birds often come across a bird whose name has been changed. These name changes are usually published in a scientific journal and the reasons for the change are explained in scientific terms. These names are con-

stantly changing and it is no wonder that the average aviculturist cannot keep up — he does not have easy access to the scientific journals and he would have trouble understanding them if he read them. Most of the less technical books on aviculture are a long ways behind the scientist's up-to-date journals when it comes to nomenclature.

Nowadays we have more than enough self-proclaimed scientists who are acting as though they were experts. Granted, it is not necessary to go through the normal educational channels to become a scientist. Some scientists and experts have been self-taught and have become recognized authorities in their field of interest. But if they want to become recognized they must follow the rules and procedures that are recognized by the sciences. As it happens, however, some of the scientific guidelines are rather ambiguous and even scientists can differ with one another.

One scientist explained to me how birds are named in Latin. He wrote; trichos = hairy, glossus = tongue, rubrus = red, and torquis = collar, hence *Trichoglossus rubritorquis*, the scientific name of the Red-Collared Lorikeet. In *Parrots of the World* by Forshaw the name is *Trichoglossus haematodus rubritorquis*.

Well, by now perhaps some of the newer aviculturists will have some idea of the origin of scientific names even if it is only my version which I learned during many years among serious aviculturists.



Apologies to Dan Martin of Seminole, Florida. He provided the excellent pictures that supported the Chestnut-Breasted Mannikin article by Terry Dunham in the June/July 1977 issue of "Watchbird".

Occasionally, as when Mr. Moore pointed out a change in the Gouldian Finch's scientific name, an aviculturist brings to ones attention the "new name" for a given bird. Books, too, will often state that such-and-such bird was formerly called this or that. Yet neither the book nor the aviculturist tell us where the new knowledge was obtained nor why the name was changed. Mr. Moore, for example, in *Watchbird*, Vol. IV, No. 1, Feb/Mar 1977, pointed out the new name for the Gouldian Finch and he mentioned literature where the new name could be found. Well, as it happens, I can point out several books that still have the old name for Gouldian Finches.

The old name for Gouldians is found in *The Dictionary of Birds in Color* by Bruce Campbell, 1974 and in *Aviary Birds in Color* by D. Avon and T. Tilford with text by F. Woolham and Foreword by P.J. Olney, Curator of Birds, Zoological Society of London, 1974. These books are of a later date than K. Immelman's *Australian Finches*. Should I believe that these authorities are wrong? And to top this, the 98th Annual Report 1975-1976 of the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia Inc., states: "CLASS AVES. Nomenclature for Australian birds according to Condon, H.T., 1975: Checklist of the Birds of Australia, 2nd edition, 1926, and supplements 1 to 9. Order Passeriformes: Gouldian Finch — *Poephila gouldiae*." Now whom shall I believe?

I have heard it said many times, "But the new name is recognized by the authorities." Apparently not all of the authorities are in agreement nor are all of the newest books uniform in their nomenclature. I would be very obliged if some one will inform me how to properly start an article on Gouldian Finches. Should I use these Latin names?

*Poephila gouldiae mirabilis* — Red-Headed Lady Gould

*Poephila gouldiae armitiana* — Yellow-Headed Lady Gould

*Poephila gouldiae nigrocephaleus* — Black-Headed Lady Gould

The Latin name for the Black-Headed Lady Gould is my own combination because I am not aware of its correct name. I have never seen it in literature.

I shall be very grateful to the one who shows me the correct and accurate Latin name for the Lady Gould Finch. I'd like to know how and why the name was changed. When the change is satisfactorily explained to me I'll be delighted to use *Chloebia* instead of *Poephila*. Not to old to learn.

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