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Correcting the “correct” name for the Asian Brown Flycatcher (Aves: Passeriformes, Muscicapidae, *Muscicapa*)

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Mlíkovský (2012) claimed that *Muscicapa latirostris* Raffles, 1822 was the correct name for the Asian Brown Flycatcher, and rejected its senior synonym, *Muscicapa dauurica* Pallas, 1811. *Muscicapa dauurica* is in equal or greater use today for this flycatcher, to which the references to it in Mlíkovský (2012) testify even though they are far from comprehensive. Other major references using *dauurica* Pallas are Sibley & Monroe (1990), Inskipp *et al.* (1996), Kennedy *et al.* (2000), Dickinson (2003), Rasmussen & Anderton (2005), Clement (2006), Wells (2007) and Mann (2008).

The heart of Mlíkovský's (2012) argument lies in his reference to Pallas's (1811a: 461) original description of *dauurica* as a variety of *Muscicapa grisola* (“*Muscicapa Grisola* β *Varietas Daurica*”). Mlíkovský dismissed this as “nothing more than ‘a Daurian variety’ (of *Muscicapa grisola*) in his [Pallas's] Latin-language book. Pallas (1811a,b) used to list varieties in this way, which, unfortunately, misled various subsequent authors to understand these technical terms as scientific names...”.

In his posthumously published descriptive catalogue of Russian animals, Pallas (1811a,b) makes numerous references to “varieties”. They include colour variations and domestic breeds as well as morphological and/or geographical entities. In several cases, it is clear that he refers to those varieties with descriptive terms. Unfortunately, Pallas writes consistently in Latin, without making clear distinction between scientific names and other words. Later authors have understood most of his varieties as infrasubspecific individual variation, and have neglected the varieties denoted solely by a Greek letter, adopting instead a subset of varieties as available names because they refer to diagnosed geographic entities. These include the bird names “*Muscicapa Grisola* β *Varietas Daurica*”, which is followed by a detailed diagnosis distinguishing it from other *Muscicapa grisola*; and *Tetrao Perdix* “*Varietatis rupestris dauuricae*” (currently *Perdix dauurica*), followed by a diagnosis. Both are geographical names, referring to the distribution in Dauria (Transbaikal). Regardless of how other varieties are treated in Pallas (1811a,b), the descriptions of those two varieties are perfectly acceptable as descriptions of subspecific taxa (see example 1 under Article 45.6.4 of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* 1999).

The taxonomic category “variety” is today considered infrasubspecific by the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature 1999; hereafter the Code); and newly-named varieties are now unavailable and fall outside regulation (Articles 1.3.4, 10.2, 15.2, 23.3.4, 45.5 and Glossary of the Code). Mlíkovský (2012) cited none of these rulings or definitions, but did mention following the Code on nomenclatural matters. What he has evidently overlooked, however, are the provisions of Article 45.6 which permit the specific or subspecific acceptance, under certain conditions, of nominal categories that would be considered infrasubspecific today. Moreover, Articles 1.3.4, 10.2 and 45.5 make it clear by reference that Article 45.6 takes precedence if those conditions are met. In the case of *Muscicapa grisola* var. *dauurica* Pallas, clause 4 of Article 45.6 is critical. It states: “it (= the name) is subspecific if first published before 1961 and its author expressly used one of the terms “variety” or “form” (including use of the terms “var.”, “forma”, “v.” and “f.”, unless its author expressly gave it infrasubspecific rank, or the

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