



Nomenclatural notes on the East Asian form of the Mew Gull *Larus canus* Linnaeus, 1758 (Aves: Laridae)

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The Mew Gulls of East Asia are currently recognized as a subspecies called *Larus canus kamtschatschensis* Bonaparte (1857: 224) (e.g. Vaurie 1965: 478; Burger & Gochfeld 1996: 603; Ůdin & Firsova 2002: 200; Dickinson 2003: 146; Olsen & Larsson 2003: 74). I present below an annotated list of the synonyms applied to this gull form, chronologically arranged according to the date of their descriptions. I show that Bonaparte's (1857) *kamtschatschensis* is a *nomen nudum* and that Bruch's (1855) *camtschatchensis* is the correct name for the subspecies.

Nomenclatural issues follow the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1999; hereafter referred to as the Code).

Systematic list

Larus niveus Pallas, 1811

Pallas (1811: 320) described this form on the basis of specimens collected "in mari boreo et Camtschatico". The taxonomic meaning of Pallas's *niveus* is somewhat uncertain, although it is most probable that Pallas applied the name to the East Asian form of *Larus canus* (Stejneger 1885: 73–75; Saunders 1896: 279; but see Bruch 1855: 285 and Saunders 1878: 175). In any case, *Larus niveus* Pallas, 1811, is a junior primary homonym of *Larus niveus* Boddaert (1783: 58) = *Pagophila eburnea* (Phipps, 1774: 187) and of *Larus niveus* Ödmann (1783: 100) = *Pagophila eburnea* (Phipps) and thus cannot be used for the East Asian form of *Larus canus* (Art. 57.2 of the Code).

Larus canus major Middendorff, 1853

Middendorff (1853: 243) described this form as *Larus canus* var. *major* on the basis of birds recorded by him in 1843–1844 in the Stanovoy Mountains and at Okhotsk Sea. Brodtkorb (1936: 122) restricted the type locality to the western slopes of Stanovoy Mountains and suggested that *Larus canus major* Middendorff, 1853, is a junior secondary homonym of *Laroides major* C.L. Brehm (1831: 738) = *Larus argentatus* Pontoppidan (1763: 622). To the best of my knowledge, C.L. Brehm's *Laroides major* has never been "published in combination with the same generic name" (Art. 53.3 of the Code), i.e. *Larus* Linnaeus (1758: 136). Ridgway's (1919: 580) incorrect statement that G.R. Gray (1840: 78) designated *Larus major* C.L. Brehm as the type species of the genus *Laroides* C.L. Brehm (1830: col. 993) cannot be understood as a transfer of C.L. Brehm's *major* to the genus *Larus* (G.R. Gray 1840: 78 wrote *L. major*). Thus, *Laroides major* C.L. Brehm and *Larus canus major* Middendorff are not secondary homonyms.

However, T. Forster (1817: 32) arbitrarily replaced bird names then in use by earlier "classical names, including *Larus atricilla* Linnaeus (1758: 136) with *Larus major* Baltneri. *Larus major* Baltneri is not a trinomial, because the words mean in Latin *Larus major* of Baltner. Leonard Baldner's (or Baltner's, as his name was sometimes spelled) manuscript from 1666 was published much later by Lauterborn (1903), but Willughby (1676: 263) and Ray (1713: 129) have referred to *Larus major* of Baldner, and one or both of the latter works were presumably the source of T. Forster's information. *Larus major* T. Forster, 1817 is available for the purposes of zoological nomenclature as a new replacement name for *Larus atricilla* Linnaeus (1758) and lies in its synonymy. *Larus canus* var. *major* Middendorff, 1853, is thus a junior primary homonym of *Larus major* T. Forster, 1817, and unavailable (Art. 57.2 of the Code).