

The oldest name of the mainland form of the Asian Golden Weaver *Ploceus hypoxanthus*

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Two races of *Ploceus hypoxanthus* are listed by Dickinson (2003): *P. h. hymenaicus* Deignan, 1947, and *P. h. hypoxanthus* (Sparrman, 1788). Although it is now just over 60 years since Deignan (1947) provided the name, *hymenaicus*, that he believed was needed for the first form, we have discovered that an earlier name for it provided by Hume (Hume & Davison 1878) was not, as Deignan claimed, a *nomen nudum*¹.

Hume (Hume & Davison 1878: 399) discussed what he called the Golden Burmese Weaver Bird and named it, saying 'In our museum it stand [sic] as *chryseus*'. This phrase is to be found at the end of Hume's footnote (idem.). Deignan argued that *chryseus* was thus named without description and therefore a *nomen nudum*; and he then in turn provided a new name, *hymenaicus*, for it, listing as type a specimen from Nong Boraphet, a large lake in the central plains of Thailand.

However, Deignan overlooked details in the text to which the footnote relates. In the text above on p. 399, Hume (loc. cit.) wrote 'the Golden Burmese Weaver Bird commonly called *hypoxanthus*, Daud., (a name which cannot possibly apply, the species thus named being totally differently colored and very closely allied to the South African *Crithagra sulphurata*) and to which the descriptions of Lesson's *javanensis*, the name most recently assigned to this species applies extremely ill, (seeing that when the bird becomes golden yellow, its bill is black and not yellowish), ... There is, thus, a diagnostic description which may be paraphrased as 'differently coloured from the Javan population with, in adult breeding dress, the bill black not yellowish'. To this we may now add the characters put forward by Deignan (1947): 'in breeding dress separable in the male from *P. h. hypoxantha* (as exemplified by Javan specimens) by having the feathers of the mantle fringed with a more greenish, less golden, yellow, and by having the upper breast, adjacent to the black throat patch, more strongly suffused with raw sienna; possibly also by greater length of wings and tail.'

A few words are necessary about the specific name. First, Hume was following Blyth (1852: 114) in believing the name *hypoxanthus* to be attributable to Daud. [= Daudin], for Blyth, with a query, listed *Loxia hypoxantha* Daudin; however, such a source was not accepted by Sharpe (1890: 475), who attributed the first use of the name to Blyth's Catalogue '1849' = 1852 (Dickinson 2004). But no description is to be found

there nor a valid indication. The next citation listed by Sharpe (1890) is Bonaparte (1850: 443) where there *is* a description, and an attribution to Daudin. But, interestingly, there is also a reference in Bonaparte to 'Sparrman, Mus. Carls. III. t. 71 jun'. This is a reference to drawing 71 in Sparrman (1788), which was accompanied by text and is now treated as the source of the name (Sherborn 1902: 474).

The name *chrysaeus* was used as valid in the form *Ploceëlla chrysa* by Baker (1926: 76) and, as implied by Deignan, it had, until 1947, been known by Hume's name. There is thus no obstacle to restoring Hume's name, *chryseus*, for the mainland Asian form of *Ploceus hypoxanthus*.

Thus the correct name for the mainland form is *Ploceus hypoxanthus chryseus* (Hume, 1878).

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¹ Latin = 'naked name; a name published without sufficient descriptive information or definition to satisfy criteria required by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature and thereby invalid' (Eritzoe et al. 2007).