

# NOMENCLATURAL AND TAXONOMIC STATUS OF BIRDS DESCRIBED BY MATHIAS PILLER AND LUDWIG MITTERPACHER IN THEIR *ITER PER POSEGANAM SCLAVONIAE PROVINCIAM* (1783)

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In 1783 Mathias Piller (1733–1788) and Ludwig Mitterpacher (1734–1814) described six species of birds from the Osijek region in today's north-eastern Croatia as being new for science. A revision of the nomenclatural and taxonomic status of these nominal species revealed that five of them are junior subjective synonyms. They include *Ardea obscura* (= *Nycticorax nycticorax*), *Charadrius illyricus* (= *Burhinus oedicnemus*), *Falco cinereus* (= *Circus macrourus*), *Falco rubiginosus* (= *Circus aeruginosus*), and *Rallus dubius* (= *Gallinula chloropus*). The sixth form (*Falco marginatus*) is sometimes recognized as a valid subspecies of *Accipiter gentilis*, but its taxonomic identity within the latter species is uncertain. The type locality of all of these species is restricted herein to Korod, Croatia, where the type specimens were collected during 21–23 June 1782.

**Key words:** Mathias Piller, Ludwig Mitterpacher, Aves, taxonomy, nomenclature, Croatia, 18th century

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Godine 1783. Mathias Piller (1733–1788) i Ludwig Mitterpacher (1734–1814) opisali su šest vrsta ptica s osječkog područja (sjeveroistočna Hrvatska) kao nove za znanost. Revizijom nomenklaturalnog i taksonomskog statusa ovih nominalnih vrsta utvrđeno je da su pet od njih mlađi subjektivni sinonimi. To su *Ardea obscura* (= *Nycticorax nycticorax*), *Charadrius illyricus* (= *Burhinus oedicnemus*), *Falco cinereus* (= *Circus macrourus*), *Falco rubiginosus* (= *Circus aeruginosus*) i *Rallus dubius* (= *Gallinula chloropus*). Šesti oblik (*Falco marginatus*) se ponekad priznaje kao validna podvrsta vrste *Accipiter gentilis*, ali njen taksonomski identitet unutar te vrste je nesiguran. Tipski lokalitet svih ovih vrsta je ovdje ograničen na Korod, gdje su tipski primjerici prikupljeni u razdoblju 21.–23. lipnja 1782.

**Ključne riječi:** Mathias Piller, Ludwig Mitterpacher, Aves, taksonomija, nomenklatura, Hrvatska, 18. stoljeće

## INTRODUCTION

Mathias Piller (1733–1788) and Ludwig Mitterpacher (1734–1814) were educated Jesuit naturalists, who worked in various places in the then Austrian Monarchy (PAUŠEK-BAŽDAR, 1995a,b). On 17 June – 12 August 1772 (see SRŠAN, 1995, for the recalculated dates used throughout this paper) they undertook a trip from Buda (now Budapest, Hungary) to the province of Slavonia (now in north-eastern Croatia) and back. The resulting travel book, published in 1783 in Buda (PILLER & MITTERPACHER, 1783) contained valid descriptions of various plant and animal species, including six species of birds. LATHAM (1790) excerpted the book for his *Index ornithologicus*, but its extreme rarity caused the Piller and Mitterpacher (1783) nominal bird species to be insufficiently known to subsequent ornithologists, who seem to have adopted references to the latter book from Latham (1790) or even attributed the authorship of the Piller and Mitterpacher new bird species to Latham himself (see below). The authoritative treatise *Die Vögel der Paläarktischen Fauna* listed only three of these species (HARTERT, 1903–1922; HARTERT & STEINBACHER, 1932–1938). DOMBROWSKI (1912) and RICHMOND (s.d.) probably consulted directly the PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) book, listing all their new bird species, but did not consider their status in any detail. Below, I discuss the nomenclatural and taxonomic status of the bird species described by PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783).

PILLER and MITTERPACHER (1783) seem to have been primarily interested in entomology, botany and geology, because notes on these natural history objects are scattered throughout their book. On the other hand, their description of birds is limited to pp. 23–29 of their largely chronologically arranged book. According to relevant remarks surrounding these pages (PILLER & MITTERPACHER, 1783; SRŠAN, 1995) they reached Osijek [45.56°N, 18.70°E] on 20 June and left the region for Požega [45.33°N, 17.68°E] on 24 June. In the meantime they visited »Kolosvár« [= Kolodvar = Korođ; 45.41°N, 18.75°E]. This settlement is located in the center of the Palača wetlands, which once extended from Osijek in the north to Vinkovci [45.29°N, 18.80°E] in the south. These wetlands had been drained at their northern end near Čepin [45.52°, 18.58°E] and Osijek by the early 1780s (PILLER & MITTERPACHER, 1783: 20; SRŠAN, 1986), but marshes and lakes were still present at Korođ (PILLER & MITTERPACHER, 1783: 22–23). The description of the Korođ area directly precedes PILLER's and MITTERPACHER's (1783) list of local birds (pp. 23–29), which indicates that all birds were collected in wetlands in the vicinity of Korođ, Osijek-Baranja County (Osječko-baranjska županija), Croatia. The type locality of all bird species described by PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) thus is restricted here to this area, which is hereafter briefly referred to as »Korođ«. Since Piller and Mitterpacher arrived in the area on 20 June and left it on 24 June (see above), they had to collect all birds at Korođ during 21–23 June 1782.

Piller, who was a professor of natural sciences at the University in Buda (later in Pest) in 1877–1888 (PAUŠEK-BAŽDAR, 1995a; BUDA *et al.*, 2004), had a large collection of natural history specimens (see PILLER 1792) and it is probable that at least some of the birds collected at Korođ were deposited there (cf. PILLER & MITTERPACHER 1783: 23). However, none of these specimens have survived (cf. STEINHEIMER 2005).

It is unclear which literature served Piller and Mitterpacher as a basis for their ornithological studies. In the ornithological part of their book they referred only to

KRAMER (1756), PALLAS (1773, 1776), and S. G. GMELIN (1774), but it follows from references given elsewhere, that their knowledge of scientific literature was much broader.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

The following list is arranged alphabetically according to the original names given to the bird species by PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783). Current nomenclature follows DICKINSON (2003). All species listed below still inhabit Croatia (LUKAČ, 2007).

### *Ardea obscura* Piller & Mitterpacher

*Ardea obscura* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783: 24, pl. 2.

**Nomenclature:** Some authors (e.g. VIEILLOT, 1817: 435; DUMONT, 1821: 94; MACGILLIVRAY, 1852: 433; MORRIS, 1855: 127; REICHENOW, 1877: 237) attributed this species to LATHAM (1790: 679). However, the latter author adopted the name from PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783), referring explicitly to »It. Poseg. p. 24. t. ii.« The name is thus available for nomenclatural purposes with PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) as its authors.

**Type series:** Not specified, but probably a single specimen collected by Piller and Mitterpacher during 21–23 June 1782 at Korođ, Croatia.

**Now:** *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax* (Linné, 1758).

**Remarks:** Early authors listed *Ardea obscura* as a valid species (e.g. LATHAM, 1790: 679), as a dubious species (e.g. VIEILLOT, 1817: 435), or as a synonym of the European Night Heron, which is currently known as *Nycticorax nycticorax* (Linné, 1758) (e.g. MACGILLIVRAY, 1852: 433; MORRIS, 1855: 127; REICHENOW, 1877: 237; DOMBROWSKI, 1912: 692). HARTERT (1920a: 1233) tentatively and inexplicably synonymized *Ardea obscura* Piller & Mitterpacher with *Ardea purpurea* Linné, 1758. *Ardea obscura* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783, even if synonymized with *Nycticorax nycticorax* (Linné, 1758), does not preoccupy *Nycticorax obscurus* Bonaparte, 1857 (note that *Nycticorax obscurus* Lichtenstein, 1854: 90, is a nomen nudum), because the species-group name *obscura* of PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) has never been combined with the genus *Nycticorax* Forster, 1817.

### *Charadrius illyricus* Piller & Mitterpacher

*Charadrius illyricus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783: 26, pl. 3.

**Type series:** Not specified, but probably a single specimen collected by Piller and Mitterpacher during 21–23 July 1782 at Korođ, Croatia.

**Now:** *Burhinus oedicnemus* (Linné, 1758).

**Remarks:** HARTING (1882: 255) observed that *Charadrius illyricus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783 antedates *Oedicnemus crepitans* of TEMMINCK (1815: 332), a name then widely used for the European Thick-Knee, and suggested that the former name should be used for the latter species. However, SHARPE (1896: 4) correctly showed that both *Charadrius scolopax* of S. G. GMELIN (1774: 87) and *Charadrius oedicnemus* of LINNÉ (1766: 255) antedate Piller's & Mitterpacher's *Charadrius illyricus* and that

Linné's (1766) *oedicnemus* should be used for the European Thick-knee (see also HARTERT, 1920b: 1518).

### *Falco cinereus* Piller & Mitterpacher

*Falco cinereus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783: 27.

**Type series:** Not specified, but probably a single specimen collected by Piller and Mitterpacher during 21–23 June 1782 at Korođ, Croatia.

**Now:** *Circus macrourus* (Gmelin, 1770).

**Remarks:** PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783: 28) identified this bird with *Laniarius cinereus* of BRISSON (1763: 106). The latter species was listed as a pre-Linnean synonym of *Falco* (= *Circus*) *cinereus* Gmelin, 1788 by J. F. GMELIN (1788: 276), which probably led subsequent authors to synonymize *Falco cinereus* Piller & Mitterpacher with the broadly understood *Falco* (= *Circus*) *cyaneus* Linné, 1766 (e.g. BONAPARTE, 1828: 30; WILSON & BONAPARTE, 1831: 222, 1832: 390; GRAY, 1848: 79, 1850: 20; COUES, 1874: 327; DOMBROWSKI, 1912: 588; STRESEMANN, 1925: 92).

However, PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783: 27) said that »remiges primores sex supra atrae apicis limbo cinereo«, i.e. »six primaries are above black with gray tips«, which allows the identification of *Falco cinereus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783 with *Falco* (= *Circus*) *macrourus* Gmelin, 1770. The species was unknown to HARTERT (1903–1922; HARTERT & STEINBACHER, 1932–1938).

*Falco cinereus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783 is senior primary homonym of *Falco cinereus* Gmelin, 1788 (see J. F. GMELIN, 1788: 267).

### *Falco marginatus* Piller & Mitterpacher

*Falco marginatus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783: 28.

**Nomenclature:** *Falco marginatus* was attributed to LATHAM (1790: 26) by some authors (e.g. SONNINI, 1803: 562; DUMONT, 1817: 460; GIEBEL, 1872: 441). However, LATHAM (1790: 26) adopted this name from PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) explicitly referring to »It. per Posegan. p. 28«.

**Type series:** Not specified, but probably a single specimen collected by Piller and Mitterpacher during 21–23 June 1782 at Korođ, Croatia (see also KEVE & PÁTKAI, 1961: 550). STRESEMANN (1925: 92) stated that the type was collected in the vicinity of Vukovar, Croatia [45.34°N, 19.00°E], which is correct, because Korođ lies ca. 20 km from Vukovar in a bee line. However, some subsequent authors (e.g. PEETRS, 1931: 207; VAURIE, 1965: 160, STRESEMANN & AMADON, 1979: 346–347) incorrectly listed just Vukovar as the type locality.

**Now:** *Accipiter gentilis* (Linné, 1758).

**Remarks:** Early authors considered *Falco marginatus* Piller & Mitterpacher as a valid raptor or, more specifically, buzzard species (e.g. LATHAM, 1790: 26; DAUDIN, 1800: 167; SONNINI, 1803: 562; DUMONT, 1817: 460). GIEBEL (1872: 441, 1875: 165) interpreted the bird as a Northern Goshawk, now known as *Accipiter gentilis* (Linné, 1758) (see also DOMBROWSKI 1912: 571). LÖNNBERG (1925) separated Northern Goshawks from the Balkans as *Astur* (= *Accipiter*) *gentilis balcanicus* (p. 105). STRESEMANN (1925: 92) suggested that this subspecies should bear the name *marginatus*

following PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783). The description of *Falco marginatus* given by PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783: 28) shows that the species was based on a juvenile bird (see also HARTERT, 1914: 1146; STRESEMANN, 1925: 92); no measurements are given. If goshawks from the Balkans and most of continental Europe are united in a single subspecies, as e.g. suggested by GLADKOV (1941), VAURIE (1965: 160), WATTEL (1973), ORTA (1994: 162) and FERGUSON-LEES & CHRISTIE (2001: 599), then *Falco marginatus* Piller & Mitteracher, 1783 falls into the synonymy of *Falco* (= *Accipiter*) *gentilis gentilis* Linné, 1758. However, if the birds from the Balkans are separated at the subspecies level, as it has been suggested or accepted e.g. by LÖNNBERG (1925), PETERS (1931: 207), MATVEJEV (1950: 249), KEVE & PÁTKAI (1961), MATVEJEV & VASIĆ (1973: 29), STRESEMANN & AMADON (1979: 346) and DICKINSON (2003: 108), then the name of this subspecies is uncertain, because the holotype of *Falco marginatus* Piller & Mitterpacher is lost and its original description does not permit any decision as to whether the bird belonged to the Central European or Balkan form.

### *Falco rubiginosus* Piller & Mitterpacher

*Falco rubiginosus* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783: 29.

**Nomenclature:** *Falco rubiginosus* was attributed to LATHAM (1790: 27) by some authors (e.g. SONNINI, 1803: 562; EYTON, 1836: 5). However, LATHAM (1790: 27) adopted this name from PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) explicable referring to »It. Poseg. p. 29«.

**Type series:** Not specified, but probably a single specimen collected by Piller and Mitterpacher during 21–23 June 1782 at Korod, Croatia.

**Now:** *Circus aeruginosus* (Linné, 1758).

**Remarks:** This species was listed as valid by some early authors (e.g. LATHAM, 1790: 26; DAUDIN, 1800: 167; SONNINI, 1803: 562; DUMONT, 1817: 461). Later, it was considered a synonym of the broadly understood *Circus cyaneus* (LINNÉ, 1766), e.g. by BONAPARTE (1828: 30), WILOSN & BONAPARTE (1831: 222, 390), SELBY (1833: 66), MALHERBE (1843: 38), GRAY (1848: 79, 1850: 20), GIEBEL (1872: 704, 1875: 168), and COUES (1874: 327). DOMBROWSKI (1912: 580) synonymized the species with *Circus aeruginosus* (Linné, 1758). HARTERT (1903–1922; HARTERT & STEINBACHER, 1932–1938) did not list this species, and STRESEMANN (1925: 92) left it unidentified. The description by PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783: 29) best agrees with the female or juvenile plumage of *Circus aeruginosus* as suggested by DOMBROWSKI (1912).

### *Rallus dubius* Piller & Mitterpacher

*Rallus dubius* Piller a Mitterpacher, 1783: 26.

**Nomenclature:** GIEBEL (1877: 407) attributed this species to VIEILLOT (1823: 1069), but the latter author referred to »Latham, Index, n. 19« [= LATHAM 1790: 760], who in turn explicitly referred to »It. Poseg. p. 26«. Thus, PILLER & MITTERPACHER (1783) are the authors of this name.

**Type series:** Not specified, but probably a single specimen collected by Piller and Mitterpacher during 21–23 June 1782 at Korod, Croatia.

**Now:** *Gallinula chloropus* (Linné, 1758).

**Remarks:** This species was listed as valid by some early authors (e.g. LATHAM, 1790: 760; VIEILLOT, 1803: 193; SONNINI, 1819: 562; VIEILLOT, 1923: 1069), but most subsequent authors (incl. HARTERT, 1903–1922; HARTERT & STEINBACHER, 1932–1938) neglected its existence. It was clearly based on a juvenile *Gallinula chloropus* (Linné, 1758), as correctly recognized e.g. by DOMBROWSKI (1912: 835). *Rallus dubius* Piller & Mitterpacher, 1783 is a senior primary homonym of *Rallus dubius* Portis, 1877, a fossil bird of doubtful affinities from the Miocene of Italy (PORTIS, 1877: 183; OLSON, 1977: 349, MLÍKOVSKÝ, 2002: 271–272). OLSON (1977: 349) replaced the latter name with *Rallus richmondi* Olson, 1977.

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