

ON THE NAMES PROPOSED BY RENNIE IN  
MONTAGU'S ORNITHOLOGICAL DICTIONARY.

BY

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IN 1831 a new edition of Montagu's *Ornithological Dictionary of British Birds* was published under the editorship of James Rennie. In this work two generic names and three specific names are proposed for the first time, mainly (as stated by the author) because the names which they were intended to replace "served to propagate error or absurdity." The two generic names (*Anorthura* and *Nyctichelidon*) are included in most lists of synonyms and need not be discussed here. With one exception the specific names have no importance and can also without hesitation be relegated to the synonymy, but it is strange that in spite of the intensive study of the older authors which has been carried on of late years, these names seem to have been generally overlooked.

The three names referred to are (1) *Fringilla spiza*, proposed for the Chaffinch, *F. cœlebs* L. (p. 78); (2) *Motacilla Lotor* for the Pied Wagtail, *Motacilla alba* L. (p. 377) and (3) *Corvus predatorius* for the Rook, *C. frugilegus* L.

The only one of the three which requires consideration is that of the Pied Wagtail, and in this connection it must be remembered that the striking difference between the Pied and White Wagtails had been noted long before Gould made his communication to the Zoological Society of London and also used the name of *Motacilla Yarrellii* in the list of plates in his *Birds of Europe* in 1837. It is true that Temminck's *Motacilla lugubris* was a mixture of birds from Russian Siberia and other sources, but it must not be forgotten that Vieillot also described the British race under the same name as Temminck and pointed out the differences between the two races of Wagtail in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*, II., p. 404.

On page 377 of the second edition of the *Ornith. Dictionary* there is an article on the "Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla Lotor* Rennie)," in which Rennie remarks: "It being manifestly absurd to name this the *White* Wagtail, as Linnæus does, I have changed the specific to *Lotor*, in accordance with an expressive provincial name." Then follows Montagu's description of the Pied Wagtail, with notes on its habits and nidification as observed in the British Isles. Rennie evidently was unaware that the Scandinavian bird differed from our native form, and it has been decided by a majority of the B.O.U. List Committee that this is a "substitute" name, and can therefore be disregarded.