



## On the nomenclature of the Pale Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis unicolor infuscatus* E. Hartert, 1902 (Aves: Muscicapidae) with lectotype designation for *Cyornis cyanopolia* Blyth, 1870

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In autumn 1869, Edward Blyth (1810–1875) visited the bird collection of the Rijks Museum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden (RMNH, now: Netherlands Centre for Biodiversity Naturalis, NCB, Leiden) to check its holdings of birds from India, and he then published his findings accompanied by taxonomic notes in the journal *Ibis* (Blyth 1870: 157–176). One of the taxa mentioned was a muscicapid flycatcher of which he had examined specimens collected on Sumatra, Java and Borneo. The reason Blyth listed them in this publication was that, to his eye, they appeared similar to birds he already knew and had described under the name *Cyornis unicolor* Blyth, 1843, from Sikkim. However, instead of applying this name in his discussion of these birds in the Leiden collection, presumably because of some uncertainty he retained MS names mentioned on their museum labels, listing them as “*Cyornis cyanopolia* (Boie)” and “*Muscicapa infuscata* (Müller)” (Blyth 1870). In doing so he laid the ground for a long-sustained dispute over name availability, redoubled by the discovery of Finsch (1901) that more than one taxon was involved. Aspects of this situation have been summarized recently by Dickinson *et al.* (2002), Mees (2004) and LeCroy (2008).

Prompted by an argument from Mees (2004) for reasserting the availability of the name *cyanopolia*, this contribution aims at a final resolution of the status of the names involved. It constitutes part of a project funded in 2007 by the P.A. Hens Memorial Fonds specifically to research the taxonomic identity of specimens in composite type series in the Leiden bird collection and to assess nomenclatural consequences. Most results have already been published (Quaisser & Dekker 2008). *Cyornis cyanopolia* Blyth, 1870 is one of the problems remaining to be discussed.

### Original description, and the history and status of names involved

Blyth (1870: 165) wrote: “CYORNIS CYANOPOLIA (Boie), from Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, differs in no respect that I can perceive, whether from recollection or comparison with Dr. Jerdon’s description, from *C. unicolor*, nobis, of Sikkim Himalaya. The female (*Muscicapa infuscata*, Müller) is rufous-brown above, darker upon the crown, and brighter on the tail; lower parts pure white, except the sides of the breast, which are coloured like the back. Wing 3·125 in.”

*Cyornis cyanopolia* Blyth, 1870, was treated as a valid taxon name at least by Salvadori (1874), who followed Blyth in listing *M. infuscata* as its synonym, and by Vorderman (1889). Sharpe (1879) mentioned both names in the synonymy of *C. unicolor*. Working on a catalogue of the bird collection in the Leiden museum, Finsch (1901) then found out that Blyth’s series included two taxa, one of them indeed a form of *Cyornis unicolor*, the other, representing the specimens that Blyth had described as ‘female’, identified as *Rhinomyias pectoralis* (Salvadori, 1868), currently known as *R. umbratilis* (Strickland, 1849). Consequently, Finsch restricted the name *cyanopolia* to the ‘males’, but without selecting a lectotype. As such, this restriction had no nomenclatural consequences for *cyanopolia*. Nor, *contra* Mees (2004), did Finsch state that he had removed the brown birds from the type series of *C. cyanopolia*.

Hartert (1902) did not accept Blyth’s upholding of the name *Cyornis cyanopolia* and considered *Muscicapa infuscata* to be available. Clearly unaware of Finsch’s findings, and with no intention of creating a new taxon, he accordingly described a specimen available to him from Gunung (Mt.) Tahan, Peninsular Malaysia, as *Cyornis unicolor infuscata* (Blyth), and included all of the specimens Blyth had examined in Leiden by virtue of referring to the latter’s publication and the localities given therein. Subsequently, Robinson and Kinnear (1928) decided that *C. u. infuscata* E. Hartert, 1902 was preoccupied by Blyth’s usage and proposed a new replacement name: *Cyornis unicolor harterti* Robinson & Kinnear, 1928. Thus, depending on whether or not *M. infuscata* Blyth, 1870 is treated as available, one or the other name has to be used, and in modern references these trinomina have appeared almost equally often (see, e.g., Watson *et al.* 1986; Howard & Moore 1991; Robson 2000, Dickinson *et al.* 2002; Dickinson 2003; Clements 2007 for *harterti* and Smythies 1999; Dickinson *et al.* 2004; Wells 2007; LeCroy 2008 for *infuscatus*).