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## Relicts from Tertiary Australasia: undescribed families and subfamilies of songbirds (Passeriformes) and their zoogeographic signal

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### Abstract

A number of hitherto unrecognized, deeply divergent taxa of Australasian songbirds have been revealed by DNA sequence studies in the last decade. Differentiation among them is at levels equivalent to family and subfamily rank among songbirds generally. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to name and describe eleven of them formally under Articles 13.1, 13.2, 16.1 and 16.2 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature so that they are made available for use in zoology. The taxa are: families Oreoicidae, Eulacestomatidae, Rhagologidae, Ifritidae and Melampittidae, and subfamilies Pachycareinae, Oreoscopinae, Toxorhamphinae, Oedistomatinae, Peltopsinae and Lamproliinae. The families to which the subfamilies belong are documented. Morphological and behavioural traits of the new family-group taxa are discussed; reasons for taxonomic rankings are summarized; and grounds for the geographic origin of corvoid songbirds, to which all the new families belong, are briefly addressed. One new genus, *Megalampitta* in Melampittidae, is also described.

**Key words:** taxonomy, nomenclature, songbirds, family-group taxa, New Guinea, Australia, zoogeography

### Introduction

Over the last decade, DNA sequence technology has realigned much of the phylogeny and classification of Class Aves (birds). Advances in our understanding of avian relationships have been most marked in the suborder Passeri (songbirds), which comprise almost half the world's species of birds. Impact has perhaps been greatest in the Australasian avifauna, the sequencing identifying Australasia (eastern Gondwana) as the source of the songbird radiation globally (Barker *et al.* 2002, 2004; Ericson *et al.* 2002; Jønsson *et al.* 2011; Aggerbeck *et al.* 2014).

These studies and others (*e.g.* Jønsson & Fjeldså 2006; Driskell *et al.* 2007; Jønsson *et al.* 2007; Irestedt *et al.* 2008; Norman *et al.* 2009a,b; Zuccon & Ericson 2012) reveal the primary songbird lineages endemic to Australasia as deeply diverged, at levels ranked as families and subfamilies elsewhere among songbirds. Many have been recognized (Schodde 1975; Coates 1990; Christidis & Boles 1994, 2008; Schodde & Mason 1999; Dickinson 2003; del Hoyo *et al.* 2002–2011) and have been validly named and described under the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, hereafter the Code (ICZN 1999); see listings in Bock (1994). Yet several of the smaller groups either lack names or have been given names that are invalid because they have not been introduced in accord with the Code. Thus our purpose here is to name and describe them formally so that they can be brought into use in zoology. There are eleven such groups, all of which are sister to other Australasian-centered family-group taxa. They comprise: (1) two subfamilies in the family Acanthizidae (Australasian scrubwrens and thornbills), a member of the Australo-Papuan superfamily Meliphagoidea; (2) two subfamilies in the New Guinean family Melanocharitidae (berrypeckers), of uncertain phylogenetic position; (3) five families in the corvoid assemblage, a large group of mostly Old World families (over 700 species) that has its greatest diversity of root taxa in Australasia (Jønsson *et al.* 2011; Aggerbeck *et al.* 2014); and (4) two subfamilies respectively in the corvoid families Artamidae and Rhipiduridae.

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