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LETTER

The Editor,
Sir,

10 June 1986

The correct name of *Rallus hodgeni*

I am sorry to see that Dr Olson (*Notornis* 33: 32) wants to return to the early 19th century habit of correcting scientific names because they were considered to have been "incorrectly formed". In the present case the author (R. C. Scarlett) named the new fossil species for the owners of Pyramid Valley Swamp, but chose the family name of the brothers as the dedication name (*hodgeni*). There is no unequivocal indication that this was an error for *hodgenorum*. For all we know, the wives of the Messrs Hodgen are co-owners of the swamp, and what ending would then be appropriate?

Even though Art. 31c suggests renaming incorrectly formed dedication names, ornithologists generally have placed stability and convenience higher than adherence to Latin grammar. For instance, Frank M. Chapman described in 1931 a South American bird as *Brachygalba lugubris naumburgi*, dedicating it to Elsie Naumburg. In order not to disturb stability, no one in the 55 years since then has "corrected" it to *naumburgae*.

Rallus hodgeni has not only priority, but is also a simpler and shorter dedication name. Why then abandon it owing to application of the anachronistic article 31c?

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