

LETTER

Sir,

Hindwood (Notornis 16: 64-65) has again brought in discussion the matter of authorship of the new animals described in White's *Journal* (1790), concluding that there is: "no doubt at all that Shaw was responsible for the scientific names of both the birds and the fish described in White's *Journal*."

As I am one of: "some recent authors who attribute the name [*Aegotheles cristatus*] to White," it is perhaps well to state my reasons for doing so, as Hindwood's letter is evidence that on previous occasions I have not been clear enough.

Authorship of scientific names in zoology is covered by article 50 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, which I quote here for the benefit of those who do not have the code available: "The author (authors) of a scientific name is (are) the person (persons) who first publish(es) it in a way that satisfies the criteria of availability, unless it is clear from the contents of the publication that only one (or some) of the joint authors, or some other person (or persons) is alone responsible both for the name and the conditions that make it available." Of great importance are the words "clear" and "alone." In my opinion the correct interpretation of this article is that the author of a work is regarded as responsible for its contents unless it is specifically stated that certain sections have been contributed by somebody else. This is certainly not the case in White's *Journal*, where in the introduction only assistance from others is acknowledged.

The confusion has been caused by a lack of appreciation that two different kinds of authorship are involved. There is the authorship as understood in systematic zoology, which has been codified as above, in which everything appearing under the name of an author is attributed to him. The second interpretation of authorship is the question who has actually written a certain section. This is the more common use of authorship, and the one adhered to by Hindwood. In matters of nomenclature, however, the person under whose name an article appears is responsible for its contents, the question of who has actually written it (or at some later date claims to have written it) being for this purpose irrelevant.

Inasmuch as there is no *clear* statement in the *Journal*, that anybody but White is responsible for its contents, White remains the author of the whole, no matter how much circumstantial evidence there is that others have assisted him and have contributed the bulk of certain sections.

Finally a word about the gender of *Aegotheles*. Scarlett (Notornis 15: 256) treated it as masculine, as did such competent scholars as Salvadori and Hartert. Peters (Check-list Birds of the World IV: 181) expressly states that the gender is masculine. Contrary to this, Hindwood claims that: "The correct usage of *cristatus* Shaw in its present combination with *Aegotheles* is *cristata*"; in other words, Hindwood regards the gender of *Aegotheles* as feminine. According to a Greek dictionary consulted by me *Aegotheles* is a classical name, used in the works of Aristotle, where it is masculine. The correct name of the bird under discussion is therefore *Aegotheles cristatus* (J. White).

— G. F. MEES