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On: 26 December 2014, At: 07:14

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

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Annals and Magazine of Natural History: Series 4

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tnah10>

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Alfred Newton M.A. F.R.S. V.P.Z.S.

Published online: 15 Oct 2009.

To cite this article: Alfred Newton M.A. F.R.S. V.P.Z.S. (1877) LXII.—The nomenclature of the groups of Ratitæ, *Annals and Magazine of Natural History: Series 4*, 20:120, 499-500, DOI: [10.1080/00222937708682271](https://doi.org/10.1080/00222937708682271)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00222937708682271>

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Southern Division : 1* species added, viz. ditto.

South-west District : 6 or 7† species added, viz. *Aquila chrysaëtus*, *Glaucidium passerinum*, *Bubo ignavus*, *Loxia pityopsittacus*, *Garrulus glandarius*, *Muscicapa parva*, *Lagopus albus* ?.

LXII.—The Nomenclature of the Groups of Ratitæ.

By ALFRED NEWTON, M.A., F.R.S., V.P.Z.S.

SINCE Professor Huxley published (Proc. Zool. Soc. 1867, pp. 415–472) the results of his researches on the classification of Birds, no thinking ornithologist can have doubted that the different groups of his “Order” *Ratitæ* are natural and well-defined, any more than that these groups are severally equivalent to the so-called “Orders” of *Carinatæ* as accepted by most ornithologists. But ten years have passed away without any one attempting (so far as I know) to give these groups definite names; and no inconsiderable inconvenience has sprung from this abstinence, to put an end to which I now, with the good-will of Prof. Huxley, venture to bring forward some suggestions on the subject.

I would premise, however, that if, as I believe, these groups are established on a basis even surer than those to which, by the consent of almost all ornithologists, the name of “Order” has been assigned, it would be fitting to apply to the former also the same name. Prof. Huxley, moved by considerations which I fully appreciate, though into them I need not here enter, proposed to treat the whole existing Class *Aves* as composed of but two “Orders,” *Ratitæ* and *Carinatæ*. But some deference is due to the views so long entertained by writers who have always been regarded as authorities on the classification of birds; and though, when compared with the “Orders” of other Classes of Vertebrates, the generally received “Orders” of most ornithologists unquestionably fail to exhibit the same trenchant characters, yet very great confusion would follow were we to give up the title we have been accustomed to apply to these groups of Carinate Birds. It seems to me that the easiest mode of escaping this practical difficulty is to raise the groups *Ratitæ* and *Carinatæ* to the rank of Subclasses‡; for

* Making up to date authentic total for Southern Division of 231.

† Making up to date authentic total for South-west District of 174.

‡ This was doubtless intended to have been done by Messrs. Sclater and Salvin (*Nomenclator Avium Neotropicalium*, p. iv); but by an obvious oversight the word “Subordo” is printed in place of “Subclassis,” “Subordo” in its proper sense being used on the opposite page and elsewhere.

then their subdivision will not involve the introduction of any radically new notions of taxonomy or nomenclature.

Leaving, then, the "Orders" of *Carinatæ* to take care of themselves, my present business is with the subdivisions of *Ratitæ*; and accordingly I beg leave to suggest that this important though comparatively small group be termed a Subclass, and, following the indisputable characters assigned by Prof. Huxley, that its component parts be named as follows:—

Subclass RATITÆ.

Order I. STRUTHIONES. Fam. *Struthionidæ*.

„ II. RHEÆ. Fam. *Rheidæ*.

„ III. MEGISTANES. Fam. i. *Dromæidæ*, Fam. ii. *Casuariidæ*.

„ IV. IMMANES. Fam. i. *Dinornithidæ*, Fam. ii. *Palapterygidæ**.

„ V. APTERYGES. Fam. *Apterygidæ*.

„ VI. ÆPYORNITHES. Fam. *Æpyornithidæ*.

Of the names abovesuggested there is only one (*Immanes*) that can be called new to the literature of ornithology, since *Megistanes* was used in 1816 by Vieillot (*Analyse &c.* p. 53) for the whole group of Ratite Birds then known, while, according to the received laws of nomenclature, I am strictly within my right in proposing to limit the term to a portion of that group. I would gladly have assigned it to the order containing the Moas, to which its meaning would make it very applicable; but I am forbidden by the consideration that they, being then undiscovered, were not included in it. It may be objected that *Immanes*, being an adjective, should not be used as a substantive; but in anticipation thereto I may cite the precedents of *Ratitæ* and *Carinatæ*.

There is no need for me to dwell on the characters of these Orders and families; for they have been sufficiently set forth by others, except in the case of *Æpyornithes*, for which (as in the case of other fossil forms) we must await further investigation, though there can be hardly any doubt of its distinctness from the rest. The sequence also of the several groups is immaterial to the object I have now had in view, and upon that I say nothing.

Magdalene College, Cambridge,
31st October, 1877.

* On the supposition that the opinions expressed by Dr. Haast (*Trans. and Proc. New-Zeal. Inst.* vi. pp. 426, 427) can be substantiated; but they have since been disputed by Capt. Hutton (*op. cit.* ix. pp. 363-365), and, for the present, it is advisable to suspend our judgment on this point.