

# Surname dynamics in avian nomenclature

Adrian Koopman

Faculty of Arts and Design, Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa  
koopmana@worldonline.co.za

This article begins by explaining the roles surnames play in formal scientific nomenclature, where surnames may appear in both the vernacular names (Wahlberg's Eagle) and the scientific names (*Aquila walbergi*) of birds, as well as in the descriptions of the formal naming process found in ornithological publications. The article explains the former usage as honouring someone in the ornithological world, while the latter usage refers to the person who first identified and named a new species of bird. The article goes on to note that both those who do the naming of new species of birds and they who are honoured for their contribution to ornithology by having new species of birds named after them belong to the same closed world, with the result that often the same surnames crop up in both onomastic roles: honouree and namer. Looked at diachronically, such surname usage creates distinct dynamics. The second half of the article looks at other types of surname dynamics: immigrants changing their surnames on arriving in a new country, the rebranding of film stars and singers, the use of noms-de-plume, and surname change (or exchange) on marriage. The article concludes by situating surname usage in avian nomenclature within a wider context of surname dynamics, and suggests that ornithologists and onomasticians see these surnames from considerably different perspectives.

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## Introduction

The scientific names of birds are multifunctional. At the primary level they are similar to all proper names in that their function is to denote. At another level, they may do one of three things: 1) they may describe the bird, as in *Macronyx croceus* (the Yellow-throated Longclaw) where *macronyx* means "large claw" and *croceus* means "yellow"; 2) they may locate the bird, as in *Thalassoica antarctica* (Antarctic Petrel) where *thalassoica* means "associated with the sea" and *antarctica* (obviously) refers to the Antarctic; and 3) they may honour a person, usually someone renowned in ornithological circles, as in *Smithornis capensis* (the Broadbill) where *Smithornis* means "Smith's bird", and as in *Francolinus levallantii* (Red-winged Francolin) where *levallantii* honours the French explorer Francois Le Vaillant. It is this last function, of honouring certain persons, which concerns us in this article. As in any naming system, there are at least four entities: the name, the entity named, the namer and the context in which the naming takes place. In this paper we add a fifth entity: any person who may be honoured by having a bird named after them. There are thus two elements in this system of avian nomenclature which exhibit proper names, usually in the form of surnames – the person who names, and the person honoured in a name. As the people who give birds scientific names are usually scientists, specifically ornithologists, and in the earlier days travellers and explorers, and the people who are honoured are also scientists, ornithologists, travellers and explorers, very often the same surnames appear in lists of both bird namers and "bird honourees".

The majority of the population, no matter what their mother tongue, are not expert birdwatchers or ornithologists. If they look up at the sky and see a large bird wheeling around, they might say "Look, there's an eagle!" or "Kyk daar – Lyk soos 'n arend!" or the equivalent in any other language. If,

however, they are fortunate enough to have an expert with them, who has a good pair of binoculars, he or she may be able to confirm that the bird is in fact a Wahlberg's Eagle (for instance). They could then look this species up in a field guide to bird identification, where they might find the following:

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi* Sundevall 1851 *Oefv. K. Sv. Vet-Akad. Förh.* 7:109. in *Caffraria superior* = Mohapoani, Witfontein Mountains. W. Transvaal.<sup>1</sup>

There are six elements to this entry for the bird:

1. Its English vernacular name: Wahlberg's Eagle
2. Its Latin scientific name: *Aquila wahlbergi*. In both these names (English and Latin) Swedish explorer and collector Johan August Wahlberg (1810–1856) is commemorated.
3. The person who named this bird *Aquila wahlbergi*: The Swedish zoologist Dr Carl Jakob Sundevall (1801–1875), who would have been sent a preserved specimen of this bird by Wahlberg.
4. The date on which Sundevall named this bird: 1851.
5. The place where this name was published: *Oefv. K. Sv. Vet-Akad. Förh.*<sup>2</sup>
6. The place where the type specimen was found: Mohapoani in the Witfontein Mountains in the western Transvaal.

Of these six elements, the first three are the most important, as they contain the surnames which are the subject of discussion in this article. The other three elements are important in the formal naming process in ornithological nomenclature, but are not of relevance in this article.

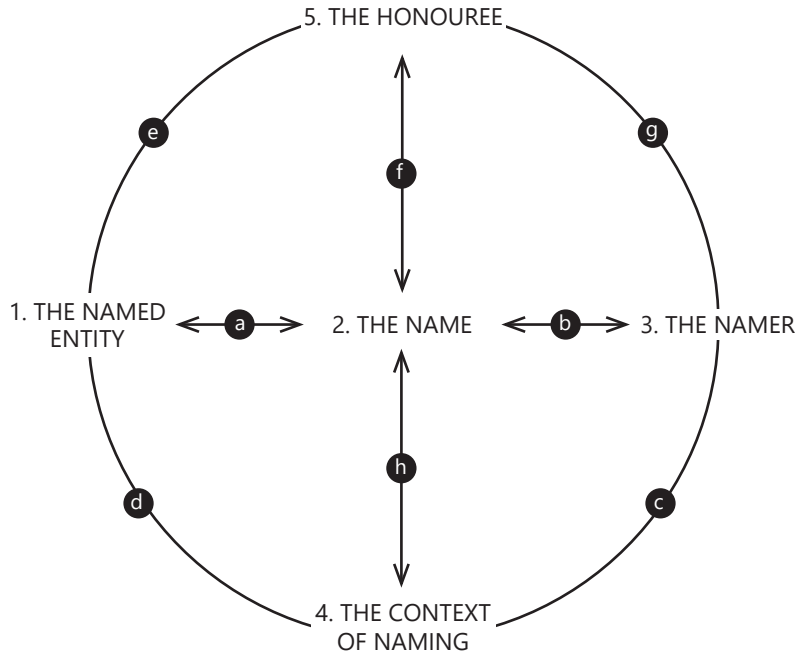
Avian nomenclature, that is to say the scientific naming of taxa (hierarchical levels) in the discipline of ornithology, generally follows the same patterns as with other biological naming:

- There are various taxonomic levels in a set hierarchy: for example the Fiscal Shrike (with the "binomial" name *Lanius collaris*) belongs to the genus *Lanius*, which is part of the family *Laniidae*, which is part of the order *Passeriformes*, which is part of the Class *Aves*. The Fiscal Shrike is one of four species belonging to the genus *Lanius*. As can be seen, all levels of taxa are named. In this article we are interested only in the binomials which indicate certain *species* of birds.
- Those who describe new species (and so in the process name them) follow certain morphological rules, and certain procedural rules, some of which will be described in this article.
- There are normally three reasons for selecting a species name for a new species, and these can be roughly classified as "descriptive" where the name says something about the bird itself (plumage, call, flight, etc.), "locational", where the name indicates where the bird is characteristically found, or where the type specimen was found, and "commemorative" or "dedicatory", where the name honours some person who has played a notable role in ornithology. It is this last category of names which this article is specifically interested in.

### The five constituents of avian nomenclature

In Figure 1 depicting avian nomenclature, there are five *constituents* of this particular naming system. These are marked by the Arabic numerals 1 to 5 as follows: 1) The named entity, 2) The name, 3) The namer, 4) The context of naming, and 5) The honouree. *Any* naming system has the four basic constituents "name", "named entity", "namer" and "context"; it is only in biological naming (whether of plants, animals, insects, or birds) that the fifth constituent is added: a person who may be honoured or commemorated by the choice of a specific name. To enlarge on the five constituents:

1. *The named entity* is a species of bird (or occasionally a genus of birds): this is the *referent* of the name: a real-life creature of bone, flesh and feathers, that walks and flies, and sings and calls, and mates and nests. It is represented in language by a string of phonemes and morphemes together constituting the two-word or three-word phrases scientists call binomials or trinomials,



**Figure 1** The constituents and dynamics of the avian naming system

for example *Haliaeetus vocifer* (the Fish Eagle) or *Francolinus afer swynnertoni*, the subspecies of the Red-necked Francolin found specifically in the Chirinda Forest area in Zimbabwe. Of the five constituents of this particular naming system, this is the only one that walks, calls and flies;

2. *The name*: this constituent is a linguistic item and so belongs to a specific language. In this paper we will look at some English vernacular names, but the paper's main thrust is on the Latin-based scientific names – the binomials mentioned above;
3. *The namer*: in some ornithological publications one may find an entry such as the following: Natal Nightjar – *Caprimulgus natalensis* – A. Smith 1845 Near Port Natal = Durban. "A. Smith" here refers to Dr Andrew Smith, a Scottish army surgeon who was one of the most prolific collectors and namers of bird species in southern Africa in the early years of the nineteenth century. He would have described this bird in a scientific journal in 1845 after deciding it was new to science, using the genus name *Caprimulgus* (i.e. "goat-sucker") already coined several years previously by the Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus and adding the specific epithet *natalensis* himself to indicate the location where he had found the species. Dr Smith is our "namer" in this naming system;
4. *The context of naming*: there are two contexts here: one is the process and the conventions of scientific naming, governed by internationally recognised rules and by professional bodies;<sup>3</sup> the other is the much less understood process of vernacular naming. In this article the major emphasis is on the scientific naming process; and
5. *The honouree*: the process of discovering a new bird species and making it known to the world at large is a complex one. During the latter part of the eighteenth century and for most of the nineteenth century this meant finding financial sponsors for an exploratory expedition, supporting "explorer-naturalists" on such expeditions (transport, accommodation, guiding through unknown territory, etc.), finding new specimens, preparing them (the processes of taxidermy), sending the specimens back to

Europe to a dealer in natural specimens, or to the original sponsor, or to a museum, and only then the process of describing and naming each new species in an acceptable publication (a zoological journal, for example, or the annals of a particular museum). Any person involved in this lengthy and complex process could become the “honouree” in the naming system described in this article.

### The dynamics of commemorative naming

In the diagram of the commemorative aspect of avian nomenclature, there are also eight *dynamics*. These are marked by the letters *a* to *h*, as follows:

- a. A dynamic of *identity*: the name identifies or denotes the bird. This is the relationship between word and referent, in Sørensen’s terms the relationship between the *denotative* and the *denotatum* (Sørensen 1963);
- b. Here we look at the *namer as a “wordsmith”* – a linguistic creator, a person using his or her specific knowledge of nomenclatural rules to coin new words;
- c. Here we look at the *namer as a scientist*, a zoologist, and ornithologist: a specialist working within the field of ornithology to fit a new species into a complex set of taxa;
- d. The dynamic here is the *process of acceptance*: in order for the link between a new species and a new name to be accepted, a description of the bird must be published in a medium accessible to scientific peers, and tested by them;
- e. There can surely be no direct dynamic between the bird and the honouree, but only through the name itself. Unless perhaps in some way the new species influences the selection of a particular person: a newly discovered species of gull may recall a well-known scholar of gulls, or the author of a book on sea-birds, or even a famous maritime explorer, each of whom may be thought to be suitable for honouring. The dynamic here is one of *embedding*: when Russian zoology professor and widely published ornithological writer Alexander von Nordmann (1803–1866) is honoured in the name *Glareola nordmanni* (the Blackwinged Pratincole), the linguistic process is described as “embedding” (see Koopman 2005; 2011). In non-linguistic terms, the specific epithet *nordmanni* can be said to act as a memorial stone for the late professor;
- f. The dynamic here is one of *custom and usage*: there is no internationally accepted rule that requires the name of a new bird species to honour someone in the world of ornithology. The namer is perfectly free to use a specific epithet that is descriptive or locational in nature. Dedicating a new species to a particular person through a name is simply a well-established practice in the biological sciences and embedded surnames can be found in botanical names as well as in the names of fish, insects, mammals, reptiles and other living creatures;
- g. *Relationship between peers*: those who eventually name a new species are not always the same group of people as those who travel to distant parts and discover and collect new species. Often the namer is a zoologist working in a distant museum far from the jungles or deserts where the species was discovered. But there exists (and I am using the historic present here) a group of people who not only travel, explore and discover, but also “name as they go”. And it frequently happens that these people name new species of birds after each other. It is this particular dynamic which lies at the heart of this article; and
- h. This is a complex double dynamic: a bird species (the “named entity”) carries the name chosen by the namer, which may embed the surname of an honouree. At the same time in a full description of a bird species, the details of the naming process will included the name of the individual who proposed the name of the bird. To exemplify: in “Wahlberg’s Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi* Sundevall 1851 *Oefv. K. Sv. Vet-Akad. Förh.* 7:109. in *Caffraria superior* = Mohapoani, Witfontein Mountains.

W. Transvaal”, the name *Wahlberg* is embedded in *Aquila wahlbergi*, a name chosen by [Dr Carl Jakob] Sundevall.

### The namers of birds

The nineteenth century (and to a lesser extent the eighteenth century) was when the greatest activity took place in the naming of new biological specimens. Dedicated collectors of plants, mammals, insects, birds and other biological entities travelled and explored all over the world, sending their specimens back to museums in Europe and America, where ornithologists, herpetologists, entomologists and other experts compared these specimens to existing specimens in their collections, and if one was decided to be new to science, named it. In the earlier days, when communication was slow and less than reliable, species, of birds for example, might have been named over and over again as each individual expert, working in isolation in his or her museum in Leipzig or Paris or London decided that they had a new species. This resulted in birds accumulating a considerable number of names. The following is an example, giving the history of the scientific names of the Helmeted Guinea fowl, with the scientific name of *Numida meleagris* in the seventh edition of *Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa*. Immediately underneath this entry is the name *Phasianus meleagris*, a Linnaean name of 1756. The table below is derived from Stark and Sclater (1906: 232), who call this bird the Crowned Guinea fowl *Numida coronata*. I have left out the details of publication of each name, and the subsequent authors who have adopted one or the other of the names given in Table 1. The list is in chronological order.

**Table 1** Scientific names of the guinea fowl

Scientific name	Date	Namer
<i>Phasianus meleagris</i>	1756	Linnaeus
<i>Numida meleagris</i>	1785	Sparrmann
<i>Numida coronata</i>	1844	Gray
<i>Numida mitrata</i>	1867	Layard
<i>Numida cornuta</i>	1870	Finsch and Hartlaub
<i>Numida transvaalensis</i>	1899	Neumann

It will be seen that while Stark and Sclater use Gray’s 1844 name for this species of guinea fowl, the authors of the latest *Roberts* have used Sparrmann’s 1785 name. No-one has used Linnaeus’s original name *Phasianus meleagris*.

In the last two hundred or so years, hundreds of different travellers, explorers, and amateur and professional ornithologists have named birds. From the various editions of *Roberts Birds of South Africa* (the first edition of 1948 to the seventh edition of 2005), the list below shows the most prolific authors of the names of birds occurring in southern Africa, with the dates of the naming.

- Carl Linnaeus: 142 species (1758–1771)
- Austin Roberts: 127 species (116+11) (1908–1948) (almost all subspecies)
- Dr Andrew Smith: 93 species (1831–1847)
- Anton Reichenow: 70 species (1875–1918)
- Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot: 58 species (1817–1820)
- Carl Johan Gustav Hartlaub: 47 species (38+9) (1848–1886)
- Phillip Clancy: 45 species (1952–1965) (almost all subspecies)
- Richard Bowdler Sharpe: 37 species (1871–1908)
- Carl Jakob Sundevall: 37 species (1850–1858)
- George Ernest Shelley: 36 species (1870–1858)

The original namer here, the Swede Carl Linnaeus, still dominates the list with the names he gave between 1758 and 1771. Two other persons here, Austin Roberts and Philip Clancey, named birds in the twentieth century, long after most species of birds in the world had been identified and named, and so had to content themselves with discovering and naming subspecies. Dr Andrew Smith is one of the major bird namers who collected, identified and named birds while actually resident in South Africa – while playing the role of a military surgeon. Most of the others are museum-based taxonomists who relied on specimens sent to them by collectors.

### Those honoured in names

As was said earlier, the process of discovering a new bird species and making it known to the world at large is a complex one. The process often begins by the finding of a wealthy sponsor of a collecting expedition. Then comes the tracking down of birds in remote parts of the world, shooting or netting them, and preparing their bodies for transport back to museums overseas. Thereafter comes the process of identifying each bird, and if a new species, the naming, and then the publication of the name in an academically acceptable publication. Any persons taking part in this process may be honoured: the wealthy patrons, the travellers and collectors, the museum-based taxonomists, together with professors of ornithology, and authors of respected ornithological works. Very often the name of the person so honoured is copied into the vernacular book name as well, as in Table 2's random list of ten people (the namer and the date of naming are given in parentheses).

**Table 2** Examples of persons honoured and those doing the honouring

English vernacular name	Scientific name	Namer and date of naming
Coqui Francolin	<i>Francolinus coqui</i>	(Smith 1836)
Shelley's Francolin	<i>Francolinus shelleyi</i>	(Grant 1890)
Hartlaub's Francolin	<i>Francolinus hartlaubi</i>	(Bocage 1869)
Swainson's Francolin	<i>Pternistes swainsoni</i>	(Smith 1836)
Ludwig's Bustard	<i>Otis ludwigii</i>	(Rüppell 1837)
Temminck's Courser	<i>Cursorius temminckii</i>	(Swainson 1822)
Bradfield's Swift	<i>Apus bradfieldii</i>	(Roberts 1926)
Monteiro's Hornbill	<i>Tockus monteiro</i>	(Hartlaub 1865)
Gray's Lark	<i>Ammomanes grayi</i>	(Wahlberg 1855)
Swynnerton's Robin	<i>Swynnertonia swynnertoni</i>	(Shelley 1906)

Note that in Table 2 we find *Francolinus shelleyi* (Shelley's Francolin), named by Grant in 1890, and *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* (Swynnerton's Robin), named by Shelley in 1906, and *Tockus monteiro* (Monteiro's Hornbill), named by Hartlaub in 1865, and *Francolinus hartlaubi* (Hartlaub's Francolin), named by Bocage in 1869. In other words, in this list of four bird species, Shelley and Hartlaub are both namers *and* honourees. As the people who give birds scientific names are usually scientists, specifically ornithologists, and in the earlier days travellers and explorers, and the people who are honoured are also scientists, ornithologists, travellers and explorers, very often the same surnames appear in lists of both bird namers, and "bird honourees".

It is in fact not difficult to set up chains of names such as the following. We start with the same bird that featured earlier in this article: *Aquila wahlbergi* (Wahlberg's Eagle), named by Sundevall in 1851. When Sundevall became famous for his ornithological writings, he too was honoured, as for example in the name *Zosterops pallidus sundevalli* (a subspecies of the Cape White-eye), named by Hartlaub in 1865. Hartlaub himself then developed a reputation and his work was commemorated in names such as *Francolinus hartlaubi* (Hartlaub's Francolin), a name given by Bocage 1869. The work

of the French taxonomist Bocage also became worthy of notice, as in *Coccopygia melanotis bocagei* (a subspecies of the Sweet Waxbill), named by Shelley in 1903. Shelley's work in identifying birds was well-known well before this date, and in 1890 Grant honoured him with the name *Francolinus shelleyi* (Shelley's Francolin). Grant himself is honoured in the name *Terpsiphone viridis granti* (a subspecies of the Paradise Flycatcher), a name given by Roberts in 1948, right at the end of his career. Roberts' contribution to ornithology in southern Africa was, however, recognised long before this date, and in 1909 Haagner gave the name *Anthoscopus caroli robertsi* to a subspecies of the Grey Penduline Tit.

As can be seen here, this chain of naming and commemorating – just one of hundreds of such chains that could be constructed – starts in 1851, and continues to 1948, nearly a hundred years later. As the work of each taxonomist or ornithologist becomes known, so he is honoured by one who comes later and then also develops a reputation, to be subsequently honoured in another bird name. The chain eventually comes to an end when there are no more new birds to be identified and given names. As it is, several of the bird names above are of subspecies, the only "vehicles" left to carry a commemorative name.

It could be said that there is a particular kind of *diachronic dynamic* going on here: as time goes by the surnames of eminent persons in the ornithological world are recycled and recycled again, both as namers and as honourees. The South African military surgeon Dr Andrew Smith both names and is honoured in names; the Swedish zoologist Dr Carl Jakob Sundevall appears both in brackets after a bird name as a namer, and in the form *sundevalli* in bird names themselves. Given that in a way this is a "closed world" of the experts who collect, identify and name new species, it is almost as if there is a form of "surname exchange" going on: X names a bird after Y, while Y names a bird after X.

The surname dynamic described here is only one of several different types of surname dynamics, and to give context to "bird surname dynamics" we describe some of these next.

### **Other surname dynamics**

Under this heading we can consider (1) the "de-ethnocising" of immigrants; (2) the rebranding of singers, actors and film stars; (3) authors and their *noms de plume*; and (4) women on their marriage.

#### **The "de-ethnocising" of immigrants**

The ugly word "de-ethnocising", which I have coined here, refers to immigrants to a particular country who change their names on arrival in order to conceal their ethnic origin. Bill Bryson describes this as it applies to immigrants to America:

From the earliest days, immigrants from non-English-speaking countries...adapted their names to ease their way into American society. Paul Revere's father, a French Huguenot refugee, arrived in America as Apollos Rivoire (Bryson 1998: 141).

Bryson goes on to report several equally concealed origins of a number of major figures in America's history: General George Custer, who "emerged from a long line of Kösters"; the Rockefeller dynasty, who began as Roggenfelders; the evangelist Bill Sunday who came from the family Sonntag; Buffalo Bill Cody, whose original family name was Kothe; and President Hoover, whose forebears were Hubers. Bryson continues with hundreds of examples of immigrants with Polish, Russian, German, Swedish, Italian and other surnames who adapted them to sound more "American" (in other words to sound more English). He gives examples of how Jung became Young, how Schmidt and Müller became Smith and Miller. "Occasionally", says Bryant, "slightly more ingenuity was required, as when Bon Coeur was turned into Bunker and Wittenachts became Whitenecks" (1998: 141).

And then loan translations were also used, where the underlying meaning of a name became the new English surname. Thus both the Polish surname Kowalczyk and the Czech surname Kovář became Smith.

In all of these examples, the surname dynamic that is involved is one of *adaptation*: existing surnames were adapted to become English *equivalents* of the original. There was no exchange of one surname for another entirely different one, as is seen in our next category.

### ***The rebranding of singers, actors and film stars***

Again, we use American film stars, actors and singers to exemplify this particular kind of surname dynamic. As with the previous category, it is usually both first names (given names) as well as the family name or surname which is affected. The list is also taken from Bryson (1998: 305–306), and I have cut his list of 42 persons down to a more manageable dozen (see Table 3). The “stage names” or “screen names”, i.e. the newly created names, are on the left and the original birth names on the right.

**Table 3** “Stage names” or “screen names” of selected actors and actresses

Stage or screen name	Birth name
Rudolph Valentino	Rodolpho d’Antonguolla
Joan Crawford	Lucille LeSueur
Lauren Bacall	Betty Jean Perske
Tony Curtis	Bernard Schwartz
Kirk Douglas	Issur Danielovitch Demsky
Rita Hayworth	Margarita Carmen Cansino
Rock Hudson	Roy Scherer
Troy Donahue	Merle Johnson
Dean Martin	Dino Crocetti
Heddy Lamour	Hedwig Kiesler
John Wayne	Marion Morrison
Marilyn Monroe	Norma Jean Mortenson

The list is instructive. While a few persons have merely adapted their given names, as in Rudolph from Rodolpho, Heddy from Hedwig, and Dean from Dino, surnames have been completely changed. Those of us who recognise the singers, actors and film stars listed in Table 4 will know them by their stage names or screen names and with these connotations or associations in mind, will see the stage names as being more appropriate. Nonetheless, there are some interesting dynamics here: Joan Crawford chose an obviously English-sounding name to replace her clear French-origin name Lucille LeSeuer, while Hedwig Kiesler replaced her German-sounding name with the French-sounding (in the surname at least) Heddy Lamour. Marion Morrison replaced the name Marion, nowadays seen almost exclusively as a female name, with the uncompromisingly male name John and used the matching monosyllabic Wayne to complete his stage image. Rita Hayworth sounds convincingly English, but the original Margarita Carmen Cansino surely sounds far more romantic and exotic.

The important thing to note about these “stage names” from an onomastic point of view (rather than from a marketing point of view) is that they all involved *exchange* of surnames, rather than the process of adaptation we saw in the name changes of immigrants. In the list of a dozen film stars and actors, their original surnames have been replaced by something new.

### ***Authors and their noms de plume***

It is well known that some people prefer to write under an alias, often referred to by the French term *nom de plume*, meaning “name of the pen”. The term “pseudonym” is also often used of this name



which is not the “real” name of the author, as indeed is the term “pen name”. Some examples are given below of various writers who are well known by their *noms de plume* rather than their birth names.<sup>4</sup>

The three Victorian novelists, the Brontë sisters, all wrote under a *nom de plume*, sharing the same pseudonymic surname: Anne Brontë wrote under the name Acton Bell, Charlotte Brontë under the name Currer Bell, while Emily Brontë’s pen name was Ellis Bell. The author Ayn Rand was born as Alisa Azinov’yevna Rosenbaum, but like John Wayne on the silver screen, decided to go for something more monosyllabic on the cover of her books. The famous writer of children’s books – Dr Seuss – was born Theodore Seuss Geisel, so simply tacked “Dr” onto his middle name. George Orwell, well known for *Animal Farm* and *1984*, as well as several other works, was Eric Blair in real life. The writer of historical fiction John Le Carre was David John Moore Cornwall when he was not writing. The famous American humourist Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clements, while Lewis Carroll, the creator of *Alice in Wonderland*, was in private life the Cambridge mathematics tutor Charles Lutwidge Dodgson.

In some cases, one pen name actually conceals more than one writer, as is the case with the writer of detective fiction Ellery Queen, who is really both Frederic Dannay *and* Manfred B. Lee. And then in contrast, some writers use more than one *nom de plume*, as seen in the following.

The early American writer Washington Irving published under his own name as well as writing under the names Diedrich Knickerbocker and Jonathan Oldstyle. Well-known British writer J. K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series, has also published under the names Newt Scamander, Kennilworth Whisp and Robert Galbraith. By far the owner of the most pen names is Benjamin Franklin, scientist, politician, and inventor, regarded as a “Founding Father of America”. He was clearly a prolific writer as well, not merely content to write under the name Benjamin Franklin, but also as Richard Saunders, Silence Dogood, Polly Baker, Martha Careful, Benevolus, Anthony Afterwit and Caelia Shortface.

There are clear similarities between stage names and pen names, each type of name change being part of image marketing. But there are also significance differences: in a stage name, the newly named person is not only clearly visible as a real person, but is thrust as much as possible in the public eye. The author of a book, on the other hand, is removed from the reader of the same book, and unless such an author gives public interviews and wishes to become famous, may often just be a name on the cover of a book and nothing more. Indeed, many authors adopt pseudonyms or *noms de plume* in order to conceal their real identity. For example, in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain, it was considered scandalous for a woman to write fiction, hence the three Brontë sisters writing under apparently male pseudonyms. Victorian writer Mary Anne Evans wrote a number of classics of literature, including *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*. The name on the cover of these books, however, is George Eliot.

The other major point of difference is that (to the best of my knowledge) no film star, singer or actor has ever used more than one stage name (and certainly not simultaneously). While not every author may write under as many *noms de plume* as Benjamin Franklin did, there is nothing to prevent them using more than one pen name.

### **Women’s surnames on marriage**

In most Western societies, one or the other surname dynamic occurs. The following are possibilities.

#### *Woman’s surname changes to that of the husband*

This is certainly the most common of the various dynamics. Although more and more women retained their own family name after marriage in the latter half of the twentieth century, it remains still the most likely thing to happen after a marriage. While the women’s maiden name may be given in such

circumstances as newspaper notices of the birth of children, or of the death of a woman, almost always using the French *née* ("born as"), to all intents and purposes, she enters her new married life using her husband's surname. Earlier, it was common for her also to be addressed by her husband's full name, for example on envelopes, as "Mrs John Fairfield", but nowadays her own given names are coupled with her husband's family name, and the children use that too.

#### *Woman's surname remains unchanged*

It is becoming more and more common in the Western world for a woman to retain her birth surname after marriage, and very often the title Ms is used in such circumstances, rather than Mrs.

#### *Combination of the above two*

Often women choose today, if they marry after having embarked on a professional career which continues after the marriage, to use their maiden surname as a professional woman, but to use the husband's surname in general society.

#### *Putting the husband and wife's surnames together*

A commonly adopted strategy to deal with the question of how to deal with the choice between two surnames is to use both of them, separated by a hyphen. This produces what is commonly known as a "double-barrelled surname", an unfortunate choice of phrase, because "double-barrelled" is usually descriptive of shotguns, and the phrase "shotgun wedding" has completely different connotations.

Double-barrelled surnames usually put the husband's name first and the wife's original surname second. Such a surname strategy is very popular in South Africa among black women of high status, and especially so among politicians.

#### *Husband taking wife's surname*

This is certainly among the least common of the situations. It is rare to hear of a man willing to give up his own family name and adopt that of his wife, with the children also taking the wife's surname. Such a strategy implies the ending of the family line, as definitive an end as having no children to "pass on the family name".

#### *No need to change surname*

Equally rare is when a marriage takes place between a man and a woman with the same surname. This would be impossible in most African societies, where the surname is also the clan name, and one may not marry anyone in the same clan as all clan members are "brothers" and "sisters" in the wider sense. However, in Western society where people with, say, the extremely common surname Smith do not belong to any "Smith clan", it is not uncommon for John Smith to meet Jane Smith and fall in love with her. If they eventually marry, none of the five options given above are necessary. I personally know of three such marriages where all the wife had to do was put Mrs in front of her surname where previously she had used Miss.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have looked in some detail at the way scientific names for birds are formed, and have identified in such names two proper name elements: an embedded surname, almost invariably of a person being honoured for some contribution to ornithology, and in full descriptions of birds, a namer: the person who has identified a new species and given it a formal scientific name. We have

noted that such “honourees” and the namers of birds belong to a closed community of ornithologists so that in the total body of bird names in existence, namers and honourees may well be, and often are, the same people. We have in effect seen that in a diachronic description of bird naming, the same surnames are recycled again and again and may appear year after year over a long period of time, either as namers or as people honoured in a name. This I have described as a *dynamic* process, given that it involves change, indeed frequent change, over a period of time.

To put this dynamic process into a wider context, I have looked at other dynamic processes which involve surnames and surname change over time. In doing so, other types of surname dynamics have been identified:

- we have seen that immigrants may *adapt* their surnames to remove features which identify a certain ethnic origin;
- we have seen that film stars, actors and singers may *exchange* their family names for a completely different, artificially constructed name with more “brand appeal”;
- we have seen that authors may choose to hide their real identity, again by *replacing* a family name with an artificial construct; and
- we have seen that in a marriage, different kinds of surname dynamics may be employed, either involving exchange, addition of one surname to another, or no change at all (which in itself is a conscious decision).

The difference between surname dynamics in avian nomenclature and the four surname dynamics given above is that in the four given above each may be realised by just one single person (or in the case of marriage, two). That is to say that I can illustrate surname exchange among film stars, for example, by simply referring to an individual like Marilyn Monroe (néé Norma Jean Mortenson). I cannot do so with bird names. The surname dynamics in bird naming can only be seen in a complete diachronic overview of the system of naming. Only then does the *systematic replacement* of an earlier namer by a later namer become apparent. As we saw above, once a contributor to avian knowledge becomes well known, he is honoured by having a bird named after him, and once the person who has given such a name becomes well known, he is honoured in his turn. In such a way, surname exchange takes place slowly, earlier surnames of namers becoming embedded in later bird names, and the process continues and repeats itself over the years.

Books giving details of bird names, including scientific names, and including the details of the naming process, are those books which are usually accessed only by ornithologists and other people such as amateur “birders”. In all such cases, the major interest in the books is on the birds themselves. The bird names are there purely for identification purposes (their referential function) and no other. Inclusion of the namer as well is purely for the taxonomist who wants to know where and how that particular species was first identified as a species distinct from any other. To my knowledge, few, if any, onomasticians consult bird guides and other ornithological works in order to access the proper names of people per se. This article has attempted to do so, and in doing so I have come to the realisation that, while to an ornithologist a system of bird naming is all about the birds, *to an onomastician the actual birds involved, and what species or genera they are, are actually irrelevant*. They are merely a vehicle or a medium in which a particular kind of surname exchange takes place.

## Notes

1. Adapted from the entry for Wahlberg’s Eagle in Hockey, Dean and Ryan (2005: 56).
2. This is an abbreviated form of *Öfversigt Kongl. Vetenskap-Akademiens Förhandlingar*, which translates roughly as “The Proceedings of the [Stockholm] Academy of Science”.

3. Such as, just for example, the Fourth Edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, adopted in 2000 by the International Union of Biological Sciences.
4. Much of the data comes from the website [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_pen\\_names](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pen_names).

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