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Coming to terms with Verreaux's Eagle and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl

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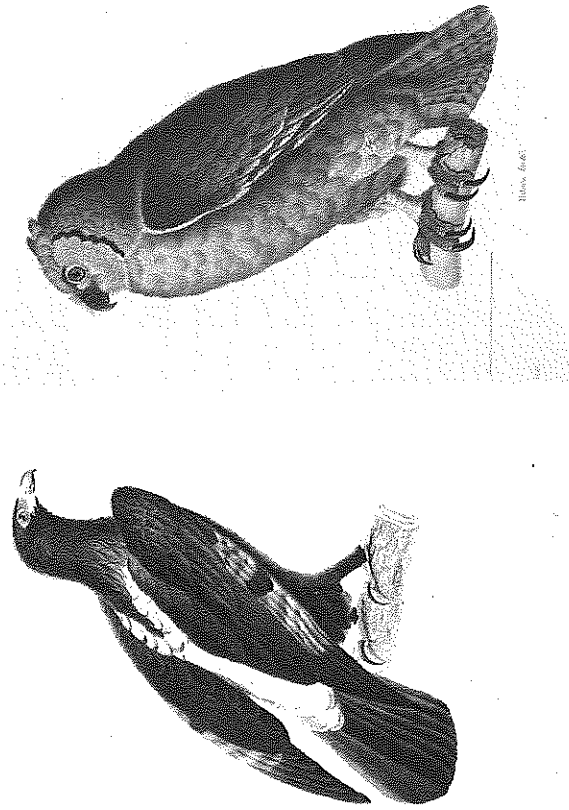
Jules Pierre (1807-1873), Jean Baptiste Édouard (1810-1868), and Joseph Alexis Verreaux (?-1868) were sons of the famous Parisian taxidermist, Jacques Philippe Verreaux, who founded the Maison Verreaux. The institution was primarily involved in the trade of natural history specimens, and through this enterprise contributed, arguably, much to the advancement of science in the 19th century (Molina 2002).

It is therefore not surprising that their memory lives on in a number of species which bear their names. However, for whom the respective species are named, and how the spelling of the common name is presented, has engendered some confusion. The common name for *Bubo lacteus* (Temminck 1820), Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, comes from a description by Bonaparte (1850, page 49) where he refers to *Bubo verreauxi*. In this instance we assume that the reference is for Jules, the "better" known of the Verreaux brothers, so the apostrophe finds a place before the "s". A supporting suggestion is that 11 accounts of *verreauxi(t)* in mainland African birds are all named for Jules. However, Édouard does appear to have one bird named after him, Crested Guinea-fowl *Guttera edouardi*. Similarly, for *Aquila verreauxii* there is no indication (or evidence elsewhere, to the best of our knowledge) in the original description that Lesson (1830) named the species for more than one brother. The spelling of the common name should thus be Verreaux's Eagle, reflecting ownership in the singular.

The common name change, from Black Eagle first appearing in Simmons (2005), was necessitated in the first place because of the confusion with the Indian Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis penniger* an unrelated but look-alike bird of Asia.

This point was originally raised by the editor-in-chief of the 7th edition of "Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa", the late Phil Hockey (Hockey 2005), who noted that the two brothers were recognised in the naming of this big black eagle and thus the name should be Verreaux's (or perhaps even Verreaux's?) and not Verreaux's as frequently recorded. However, the source of information for Hockey (2005) is obscure. The use of the apostrophe for Roberts' VII (Simmons 2005) possibly follows Jobling (1991), who subsequently recognised the possible error in that no convincing proof has been supplied that the eagle was named for two (or more) brothers (see David and Dowsett 2006).

The conflicting position of the apostrophe, i.e. before or after the "s" is commonly seen in scientific papers, field guides, and texts, including those widely available on the internet. For this reason we clarify the spellings. We hope this short note goes some way in rectifying the flaws in the reporting on these iconic birds.



ALOUÉ B. VERREAUX
1807-1868
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
OF THE VERREAUX HOUSE
IN CAPE TOWN

Figure 1. *Aquila verreauxii*, as depicted in Plate 38 of Lesson (1830), and *Bubo lacteus*, as depicted in Plate 4 of Temminck (1820).

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Associate editor's note: Two Latin linguistics experts, Prof K. Kritzing and Dr J. Steenkamp of University of Pretoria, were consulted to give their opinion on the correct punctuation of Verreaux's Eagle. Their conclusion is that Verreaux's Eagle is correct, but that the "s" after the apostrophe can even be omitted totally, as in Achilles' tendon and Verreaux Eagle. Verreaux is a French word and as such there are rules governing the use of words ending in the silent -s, -z, or -x. They further comment that a generic name is never plural, and that the specific name can therefore only be nominative singular/genitive singular /genitive plural. *Verreauxii* is the correct declension in the genitive singular. The most recent rules concerning binomials were promulgated in Vienna in 2004, but Steenkamp cites "Botanical Latin" by W.T. Stearn as being the source of all Latin rules that most people will ever need to use.

The status and breeding success of Verreaux's Eagles *Aquila verreauxii* in the Magaliesberg, South Africa

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Abstract

Motivated by concern over a possible decline in the number of Verreaux's Eagles *Aquila verreauxii* in the Magaliesberg, the ridge was surveyed during the 2012 breeding season and all active nests were subsequently monitored. Territory occupancy remains high compared with historical data from the 1980s and productivity is within the range expected for this species.

Key words: Verreaux's Eagle, breeding, Magaliesberg

Introduction

Aerial raptor survey data for 2004 (Whittington-Jones et al. 2010) suggested that the breeding population of Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* in the Magaliesberg might have declined, possibly significantly, since the ridge was first intensively surveyed for the species in the 1980s (Allan 1988). Verreaux's Eagle observations were incidental to the main objective of the aerial survey, but subsequent ground-based surveys during 2010 confirmed that several historical territories appeared to be unoccupied (W. Naser unpublished data). Bird atlas data also suggested a decline in reporting rates for the Magaliesberg between the 1980s and the present (Underhill 2010). A comprehensive survey of all breeding sites (historical and active) was therefore warranted.