RALLUS TABUENSIS GMELIN, 1789 (AVES): PROPOSED CONSERVATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS BY THE SUPPRESSION OF RALLUS NIGRA (sic) MILLER, 1784.
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This application is designed to preserve the long established and generally used specific name of Rallus tabuensis Gmelin, 1789, Syst. Nat. 1(2), p. 717 (based on the Tabuan Rail of Latham, 1785, Gen. Syn. Bds 3, p. 135, from Tongatapu Island), a widespread crake from the Philippines to New Zealand and south east Polynesia. It is currently placed in the genus Porzana (see Olson, 1973, Wilson Bull. vol. 85, pp. 381-416) and it is known by the English name of the Spotless Crake.

2. Sherborn & Iredale (1921, Ibis (11) vol. 3, pp. 302-309) pointed out that the name Rallus nigra Miller, 1784, Var. Sub. Nat. Hist. 9, pl. 50, from the island of Tahiti, antedates Rallus tabuensis Gmelin, 1789, but they did not know whether there might be some difference between birds from Tongatapu and Tahiti. Lysaght (1956, Bull. Br. Orn. Cl. vol. 76, pp. 97-98) commented that Amadon, who used the name tabuensis (1942, Am. Mus. Novit. 1175, pp. 10-11), had been unable to detect any differences between Tongatapu and Tahiti birds, which he classified in the same (nominate) subspecies as Porzana tabuensis tabuensis (Gmelin, 1789). As a result Lysaght advocated the adoption of Miller's name, nigra, for the species. We have also examined specimens from Tongatapu, Tahiti and from other localities in the Tonga and Society Islands and found no morphological differences between them.

3. The specific name nigra, based on Rallus nigra Miller, 1784, has been used as Porzana nigra (Miller, 1784) in place of Porzana tabuensis (Gmelin, 1789) only five times (see Appendix 1). The name was originally published in the form Rallus nigra, although Rallus niger (masculine) would have been correct. Subsequent authors have not corrected the spelling because transferred to the genus Porzana the feminine ending becomes suitable.

4. Peters (1934, Checklist Bds World Volume 2, p. 188) tentatively placed Rallus nigra Miller, 1784 in the synonymy of Porzana atra North, 1908, the endemic crake of Henderson Island, which he placed in the monotypic genus Nesophylax. Lysaght (1956, op. cit.) has shown that Peters' description of Miller's plate was inaccurate in some import-
ant details, apparently because he examined the second edition of Miller's plates (1796, Cimelium Physica) in which the hand-colouring is less accurate than in the first edition. More importantly, Peters evidently overlooked the locality 'Otaheite' [= Tahiti] given in the interleaved text when he stated that Miller gave no locality. In view of the locality, there can be little doubt that Rallus nigra Miller, 1784 is different from the endemic Henderson Island Crake, Porzana atra North, 1908, and that it is the same as Porzana tabuensis (Gmelin, 1789).

5. With the few exceptions noted in paragraph 3 above and in Appendix 1, the Spotless Crake has been known overwhelmingly, and is currently known, by the name Porzana tabuensis (Gmelin, 1789) (see Appendix 2). This name is used in the literature listed in Appendix 2, selecting publications chiefly from the last fifty years, but also including a few major older works that are or were relied on for nomenclature by zoologists.

6. While Porzana nigra (Miller, 1784), based on Rallus nigra Miller, 1784, has priority over Porzana tabuensis (Gmelin, 1789), based on Rallus tabuensis Gmelin, 1789, its adoption would disturb the stability and universality of usage of Rallus tabuensis Gmelin and cause confusion. Peters' (incorrect) attribution of Rallus nigra Miller, 1784 to Porzana atra North, 1908 in the generally standard Checklist of the Birds of the World would aggravate the confusion if Miller's specific name were to replace Porzana tabuensis (Gmelin, 1789), the identity of which has not been in dispute. Article 79(b) allows a junior synonym to be conserved in the interest of promoting stability and universality of usage or avoiding confusion. Suppression of Miller's name is preferable to a Ruling that Gmelin's name should be given precedence when they are regarded as synonyms because the birds of Tahiti are now well known and it is extremely improbable that nigra could apply to some form other than the nominate tabuensis. In accordance with Article 80, Rallus tabuensis Gmelin, 1789, the currently used name, must be maintained as the valid name until the decision of the Commission is published.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is therefore requested:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name nigra Miller, 1784, as published in the binomen Rallus nigra, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;

(2) to place the specific name tabuensis Gmelin, 1789, as published in the binomen Rallus tabuensis, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology;

(3) to place the specific name nigra Miller, 1784, as published in the binomen Rallus nigra and suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.
APPENDIX 1

Books and papers using the name *nigra* Miller, 1874 for the Spotless Crake:

APPENDIX 2

Recent and major books and papers using the name *tabuensis* Gmelin, 1789 for the Spotless Crake:
DELACOUR & MAYR 1946. *Bds Philippines*, p. 64.