

Comment on NACC Proposal 2015-B-3b

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There is no justification for placing the species *mana* in a monotypic genus. The supposed similarity between the Kauai “creeper” *bairdi* and the Hawaii “creeper” *mana* was always overstated (Pratt 1979, 2001, et seq.). These two species are not that similar in plumage or external bill shape and not at all similar in internal skull morphology. Having looked at most of the specimens of Hawaiian birds in world museums, I have never encountered a single example of one of these species being misidentified as the other, which is not too surprising considering that they come from opposite ends of the main Hawaiian archipelago, which is a statement in itself. A two-species *Oreomystis* concept never made any biogeographical sense. The statement that the supposed resemblances of *bairdi* and *mana* is “one of the most remarkable and noteworthy examples of convergence ever demonstrated” (Pratt 2001, 2014) is rampant hyperbole. These are, after all, two small drab birds with pointed, insectivorous bills. In this respect they are each convergent on dozens, nay, probably hundreds, of other species of birds in various families. This is not on a level with Australian marsupials evolving the dental and phalangeal morphology of the primate *Daubentonia* (aye-aye) on Madagascar (Cartmill 1974). Now that is a remarkable and noteworthy example of convergence. On the other hand, the juvenile plumage of *mana* is essentially identical to that of *Loxops coccinea* (s.s.) and there are numerous specimens in museums of each species that have been misidentified as the other, as noted by Olson (2009). This close relationship is fully borne out by the DNA evidence. The only really anomalous feature of *mana* is the lack of a tubular tongue, which may very well be a paedomorphic feature. Do akepas and amakihis have a fully tubular tongue at hatching? I seriously doubt it, although this bears checking. So it is quite possible that the “reversal” to a non-tubular tongue could evolve rapidly by retention of a juvenile character. The species *mana* is a Big Island endemic that must have evolved very rapidly, perhaps directly from *Loxops coccinea*. Its divergence cannot have been 1.9 my ago (Pratt 2014 following Lerner et al. 2011) as the island of Hawaii is much younger than that. It should be mentioned that Pratt’s (2009) “diagnosis” of *Manucerthia* is not really a diagnosis, although simply calling it one probably satisfies the requirements of the 1999 Code for establishing new taxa. A true generic diagnosis would involve presenting characters by which the new genus may be distinguished from all other genera in the family. Whatever the so-called “morphotype/genus principle” (Pratt 2014) may be, there is no “morpho” in many of the “characters” mentioned in Pratt’s (2009) diagnosis, such as song, juvenile begging calls, creeping behavior, etc. Also, where are juvenile begging calls put into any sort of a phylogenetic analysis? Of how much use is this going to be when so many of the drepanidids are extinct? What is the primitive state of juvenile begging calls? What are the begging calls of cardueline finches like and how much variation is there in them within and between genera, etc. etc.? Citing this kind of

information is nothing more than anecdotal at this point and should have no place in the deliberations of what the systematic relationships of any of the drepanidids may be. Where has this mysterious “morphotype/genus principle” been applied elsewhere in the Checklist Committee’s deliberations? Are there any morphotypes associated with the numerous genera into which *Parus* has been split, for example?

Recommendation: The Hawaii Creeper should be listed as *Loxops mana* (Wilson).

Olson ,Storrs L. 2009. Additional data on the occurrence of the plantaris muscle in the Hawaiian finches (Carduelinae: Drepanidini). *Wilson Journal of Ornithology*. 121(3): 621-623.

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