

Popayan, Colombia, January 15, 1953.

Fabio Leonel Werneck,
Caixa Postal 426,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Dear Doctor Werneck:

Just a few lines to let you know that I am
firmly settled, and am again able to continue my work on the Mallo-
phaga. I have retired from active field work and will devote most of
my time to my bird lice.

I have just finished checking over very carefully Hopkins & Clay's
new list of the Mallophaga of the World. It is, I am sure, a very fine piece
of work, and something very badly needed, and the authors are to be congrat-
ulated on it. However, I must say that I think that they have been much
too conservative in their treatment of the genera, relegating to synonymy
a good many perfectly good genera, not only of my own, but of other authors.

I certainly agree with them in their treatment of most of Eichler's
genera, and most of Keler's, but I think that they are serving no good pur-
pose in lumping a heterogeneous lot of species together and calling it a
genus. It is absolutely impossible to characterize some of the genera as
they have

now left them. Neither have they been consistent, retaining some
genera which are closer to others than some of those which they have syno-
nymized.

It seems to me, after all is said, that systematic classification
is merely a means to an end, and an aid in separating the many ecological
forms so that they may be recognized. A genus is a purely artificial group
in most cases, while their phylogenetical relationships are not always clear,
and in many cases never can be clear, since so many previously existing forms
have become extinct. So why bother in trying to solve so many hypothetical
questions. What are, or are not, generic characters, always will be more or less
an individual opinion. Everyone's opinion is as good as the other man's, provid-
ing he has sufficient knowledge of the subject. There always have been "lumpers"
and "splitters", both of species and genera, and there always will be more.
Keler and Eichler, and to a lesser extent Conil, may be classed as "splitters",
while now Hopkins and Clay have reversed their former attitude and have become
"lumpers". The same thing has been happening with the birds.

Another unfortunate thing with the new List, is that they have listed the
forms of lice all as species, ignoring all subspecific rank, so that unless one
has the original description it is impossible to tell what are the relationships
whether species or subspecific.

Personally, I cannot follow them in some of their decisions, and do not
intend to do so, and I am sure that there are other authors that will think as I
do. I should very much like to have your opinion on this matter. I do not like
to use "subgenera", and I do not think it is necessary. There are always some
species which are very difficult to allocate, having a mixture of characters
belonging to two well-recognized genera, but that cannot be helped, and they must
be recognized as such.

Although I have not been able to do any work on mammal Mallophaga, I am
always interested in your very fine work with them, and I trust that you may
continue it.

Wishing you every success, and hoping to hear from you, I am,

Yours very sincerely,

M.A. Carriker, Jr.
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