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ORNITHONYMY AND LEXICOGRAPHICAL SELECTION CRITERIA

James Lambert

Abstract

Due to the great variety of life on Earth and the human propensity to give names to practically all other lifeforms, the recording of names for items of flora and fauna presents an ever-present challenge to lexicographers. Despite this, there is very little discussion of this subject in the metalexical literature. This paper examines this topic through assessing the recording of ornithonyms (names for bird species) in six dictionaries of Indian English and matching these against selection criteria in order to determine what factors may have influenced the selection process. This focus raises issues relating to the inclusion/exclusion of ornithonyms in dictionaries as well as the question of how lexical items are determined as belonging to a specific regional variety of English, with implications for other varieties of English, other vocabulary domains, and lexicographical practice in general.

1. Introduction

The recording of names for items of flora and fauna is an ever-present challenge to lexicographers. The reason for this is the complexity inherent the field itself, due in part to the great variety of lifeforms and in part to the ever-changing nomenclature used to identify individual species. While dictionaries might aspire to be completist, it is doubtful whether any dictionary ever truly attempts to cover the entirety of the flora and fauna of a living language due to the overwhelming number of entries this would necessitate. Taking birds as an example, there are over 10,000 species worldwide, and even a country as small as Singapore has over 375 recorded species (Nature Society, Singapore 2011), while Hong Kong has over 500 species on its official list (Hong Kong Birdwatching Society 2015). For print dictionaries the ever-present problem of space restriction militates against the full lexicographical recording of such variety, and although electronic dictionaries have essentially unlimited space, lexicographers still need to balance practical utility against the time and expense of researching and writing entries. Since it is impossible to second-guess what a user will want to look up, there is a general lexicographical rule of thumb to err on the side of inclusion. However, there is also little point in having an entry in a dictionary for the sake of completism if no user ever actually consults that entry. A robust set of selection criteria not only has the ability to make the task of writing flora and fauna entries more manageable, but also promises to introduce a level of consistency in treatment and coverage.

To date there appears to have been little metalexical investigation of the topic of selection criteria for flora and fauna lexis. Johnson raised the question of whether it was appropriate to include names for plants and animals in a dictionary as far back as 1747 (8), opting for inclusion himself. A century and a half later, Morris's historical dictionary of

Australian English (1898) was criticised by contemporary reviewers for including too many terms for flora and fauna (e.g. [Review of *Austral English*] 1898: 49), and later commentators followed suit (Baker 1945: 28; Wilkes 1978: v). However, such criticisms fail to suggest practical selection criteria that Morris could have profitably used. More recently, Moore (2013) has discussed some methodological issues relating to lexicographical coverage of flora and fauna. He states that '[o]ne of the principles of inclusion/exclusion may well be a form of speciesism,' noting that 'in the animal kingdom, if you're a vertebrate you've got a much greater chance of earning a dictionary guernsey than if you're an invertebrate' (54).¹ He also notes that the recently-revised third edition entries in the *Oxford English Dictionary* demonstrate no serious attempt at comprehensiveness, and suggests that 'some unwritten (and perhaps even not entirely understood) process of inclusion and exclusion' is being implemented (54). In line with these comments, Winer observes that 'general dictionaries include a relatively small number (and small percentage) of common names for flora and fauna, concentrating on the most well-known, widespread, important, salient, cited, or otherwise notable (e.g. in popular proverbial expressions)' (2010: 115). This implies the use of two selection criteria – frequency and prominence – both of which are difficult to determine without access to a robustly representative corpus or an extensive and comprehensive citation collection. It is common for names of flora and fauna to be included in dictionaries devoted to regional varieties of English (e.g. Morris 1898; Ramson 1988; Silva 1996; Orsman 1997), though the introductions to such dictionaries provide at best sparse information regarding selection criteria, if at all, and hence it is difficult to judge how well such lexis has been covered. Winer notes, briefly, that in the case of Caribbean English the treatment of flora and fauna lexis in various dictionaries published between 1967 and 2003 has been 'fairly limited in scope, and in some cases infested with errors' (2010: 115), but similar assessments are not easy to find. Thus, in addition to a dearth of treatment from theoretical perspectives in the literature, there also appears to be very little assessment of flora and fauna lexis in existing dictionaries.

As the topic of selection criteria for flora and fauna is so wide-ranging, the present study focusses specifically on ornithonymy, the naming of bird species, in dictionaries of Indian English, with the understanding that many of the issues dealt with will transfer to other subsets of flora and fauna, and also be applicable to dictionaries of other varieties of English as well as to dictionaries in general, irrespective of language or focus. The selection of which ornithonyms to include in a dictionary is dependent on the type of dictionary. For exclusive dictionaries, that is, those which only record lexis restricted to a certain variety of English, only ornithonyms that are unique to or of significance in the particular variety of English need entries. For inclusive dictionaries, that is, those that cover the whole of the language, all well-known bird names, such as *dodo*, *ostrich*, *penguin*, etc., require entries. For reasons of space, selection criteria for inclusive dictionaries are not discussed here.

First an overview of ornithonymy and its inherent complexity is provided, followed by list of criteria for inclusion of ornithonyms in dictionaries. These criteria are then matched against actual dictionary practice through an examination of the ornithonyms included in six different dictionaries of Indian English. For the sake of clarity, biological names are given in *italics* (with capitalised genus name, and lower case specific epithet, as required in scientific literature) while the ornithonyms present in the surveyed dictionaries are distinguished by being given in **bold sans serif**. Other names are in **bold italics** when referring to the ornithonym

as an example or plain Roman type when referring to the bird. Biological names used in this paper are those of the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) world check list (Gill and Donsker 2015). Due to the historical nature of the lexicons surveyed, the notion of ‘India’ employed in this study equates to that of the traditional Indian Subcontinent, including the modern-day nation states of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Consistent with this is the fact that avifaunally this area forms a natural biogeographic region, within which 1441 species of bird are recorded by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005), the most up-to-date description of India’s avifauna.

2. Features and complexities of ornithonymy

Ornithonyms can be divided into four distinct categories: (a) biological names, (b) common names, (c) folk names, and (d) aviculture trade names.² From the point of view of biology, a bird has both a biological name and a common name. The biological name consists of genus and species, and, if not monotypic, a subspecies epithet, though these are only required when referring specifically to subspecies or races of a bird. The so-called ‘common name’ is the generally accepted name in a current language, and thus differs among languages, unlike the biological name, which remains the same irrespective of language.³ Common names are frequently in the form of modifier + noun, such as *little cormorant*. The noun part of the common name generally equates to the genus level (e.g. all *shrikes* are of the genus *Lanius*) or family level (e.g. all *woodpeckers* are of the family Picidae), though this is not universal or required for common names, and some ornithonyms are used for birds from a variety of genera or families (e.g. the term *owl* is used for birds of the families Strigidae and Tytonidae). Alternately, many genera have a variety of nouns used in common names (e.g. a bird of the genus *Turdus* can be a type of *thrush*, *blackbird*, or *ouzel*). Modifiers are frequently in the form of a pseudo-participial (e.g. *red-whiskered bulbul*), especially where there is a large number of species for that type of bird, such as the bulbuls, of which 24 species occur in South Asia (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005: I. 222-223). However, a number of species have a single-word common name (e.g. *smew* for *Mergellus albellus* or *mallard* for *Anas platyrhynchos*). While biological names are strictly governed by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, common names are not strictly regulated. However, common usage in scientific literature and a desire to have a universally accepted set of common names for birds worldwide, means that increasingly there is a movement towards standardisation for common names, with the ideal of having the biological name for each species in the world corresponding to a unique common name. In practice, such an ideal has not yet been attained.

As a result of taxonomic refinements and reconsiderations, biological and common names of birds have undergone great variation over the course of the last three centuries, with different forces operating both towards increasing and decreasing the overall number of names. The recognition of the subspecies as a valid taxonomic rank in the early twentieth century led to ‘the fall, by more than half, in the number of bird species judged to exist in the world’ (Collar, Patil and Bhardwaj 2015: 17). While Watson has observed that birds have been ‘described and subsequently identified using a far more restrictive set of criteria than other organisms’ (2005: 60), the number of ornithonyms is now on the increase as the current trend in ornithology is

towards ‘splitting’ rather than ‘lumping’ (splitting is the process of raising two or more subspecies to species level, while lumping is the amalgamation of two or more species or subspecies into a single species). The extensive and ongoing redefinition of bird taxa currently taking place is a result of: (a) progress in genetic technology; (b) greater attention accorded to bioacoustics; and (c) the increasing adoption of the Tobias criteria (Tobias et al. 2010) for phenotypic discrimination, which provides a quick method of determining species delimitation based on plumage, morphological, morphometric, and vocalisation features, without recourse to more time-consuming (and expensive) genetic sampling in order to assess molecular differences.

The nexus between biological and common names is further complicated by the fact that science and everyday language do not move at the same speed or in complete concert with one another. In situations where a taxon undergoes a change in taxonomic status and common name, the previous common name often retains currency for a substantial amount of time. Not only do technically out-dated common names survive in ornithological literature published prior to the taxonomic revisions, but they are also often retained in colloquial use by both birders and biologists, as well as the general public. Such names are sometimes recorded as ‘alternate common names’ in field guides and other ornithological literature. Another complicating factor is that in some cases common names vary according to the variety of English. For example, in New Zealand English the smaller albatrosses of the genus *Thalassarche* are known as *mollymawks*, whereas the rest of the world regularly uses the term *albatross* for all members of the family Diomedidae. To a certain extent this situation also applies to biological names due to the static nature of print media, especially as there can be long periods before updated editions are published, if they are published at all.

The term ‘folk name’ is used here to refer to ornithonyms that differ from common names. Folk names are generally not used in the scientific or bird-watching community. An example of a folk name in Indian English is **paddy bird** which is used for any of various egrets commonly found feeding in paddy fields. Unlike common names, folk names can refer to more than one species (**paddy bird** is applied equally to *Bubulcus ibis*, *B. coromandus*, *Egretta alba*, *E. intermedia*, and *E. garzetta*). Folk names are generally restricted to highly conspicuous species that occur in human-dominated landscapes, commonly interact with humans, or are subject to hunting. Finally, the aviculture industry, while usually employing common names and folk names, occasionally uses ornithonyms that do not occur widely outside the industry. An example is the ornithonym *Peking robin*, the usual bird trade name for the small babbler *Leiothrix lutea*, which in ornithological literature has the common name *red-billed leiothrix*.

The complexity of ornithonymy increases the further back in time one looks. During the colonial era in India, bird nomenclature was in a constant state of flux, resulting in a confusion of names, both biological and common. In the case of biological names, the now universally accepted International Code of Zoological Nomenclature was formulated over a period of many decades, and was not formally published until 1961 (in English and French only) (see Ride et al. 1985). Hence, in the colonial era, biological names were largely decided upon by each individual naturalist who published a scientific description of a bird, and thus more than one biological name existed for many species. This necessitated the addition of the name of the authority who first proposed the scientific name to be placed after each use of a scientific name,

in order to confirm the precise species being discussed. For example, when Yule, Burnell & Crooke mention the **golden oriole**, they give its biological name as ‘*Oriolus aureus* Jerdon’ (1903: 555), indicating that ‘*Oriolus aureus*’ is the scientific name used by the ornithologist Thomas Jerdon. The same bird was at the time also commonly referred to by a different biological name, *Oriolus oriolus*, given by Linnaeus (1758: I. 107). Still other biological names in nineteenth-century use were *Oriolus galbula* and *Coracias oriolus* (Latham 1822: III. 135). Today the Indian subspecies (formerly *Oriolus oriolus kundoo*) has been split from the European subspecies, to form a separate monotypic species under the biological name *Oriolus kundoo*, with the common name **Indian golden oriole** (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005: I. 358), thus making the bird a new near-endemic. However, even quite recent books record the same bird under the old biological and common names, lumped with its European relative (e.g. Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp 1999: 214; Brazil 2009: 300).

Keeping up with the latest in taxonomy is a challenge for lexicographers, and caution needs to be exercised especially with regard to proposed taxonomic revisions. For example, Sibley and Munro (1990) proposed splitting two subspecies of **black kite** into two separate species: **black kite**, *Milvus migrans*, and **black-eared kite**, *Milvus lineatus*. While this gained some acceptance (e.g. Porter and Aspinall 2010), other authorities have not accepted this split (e.g. del Hoyo, Elliott, and Sargatal 1994; Rasmussen and Anderton 2005; Gill and Donsker 2015), and the inclusion of the term *black-eared kite* in a dictionary might be premature. On the other hand, the recent taxonomic splitting of the **fork-tailed** or **Pacific swift** into four separate species (Leader 2011), includes the new species **Salim Ali’s swift**, *Apus salimalii*, the first common name to recognise India’s preeminent ornithologist, Salim Ali (1896-1987). In this case, an Indian English dictionary, especially one that wanted to focus on, and promote itself on, its Indianness, might wish to include the new species. Another complexity for lexicographers to navigate is the fact that there is no one agreed taxonomic authority. In the case of birds, there are several competing taxonomies: some cover all birds in the world (e.g. Clements 2007; the International Ornithologists’ Union; del Hoyo et al. 2014), while others cover more localised regions (e.g. the American Ornithological Union; Birdlife Australia). Each of these accepts or rejects certain taxonomic revisions, and each updates their taxonomies irregularly but not infrequently.

3. Methodology

In order to assess the ornithonyms in dictionaries of Indian English, a set of potential criteria that lexicographers may have used to select lexical items for dictionary inclusion was created. These criteria are based in part on the typical criteria used for determining the provenance of lexical items for dictionaries of regional varieties of English (e.g. Ramson 1988: vi; Orsman 1997: vii), though adapted and further extended in response to the characteristics of Indian avifauna and ornithonyms. Thus, for an ornithonym to be classed as an Indianism, it might satisfy one of the following criteria:

1. the name originated in India
2. the name is borrowed from an Indian language, partially or wholly
3. the name is an application of a pre-existing bird name to an Indian bird

4. the name has an Indian geographical epithet
5. the name honours an Indian ornithologist, or other prominent Indian
6. the bird is (almost) exclusively found in India (endemic or near-endemic)
7. the bird has a special significance in Indian history or culture
8. the bird is subject to conservation efforts and has a strong Indian media profile
9. the name has greater currency in India than elsewhere

It should be noted that criteria 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are technically special cases of criterion 1. Thus, in this study criterion 1 refers to ornithonyms that originated in India, were formed anew with English elements rather than loan words from Indian languages, do not contain Indian geographical epithets or eponyms, and are not used for endemic or near-endemic species. As any particular ornithonym can satisfy more than one category, overlaps should be expected. For instance, a bird for which the ornithonym originated in India may also be an endemic or near-endemic, or an ornithonym may consist of both a geographical epithet and a word borrowed from an Indian language, such as, *Indian pitta*. Beyond the categories listed here, there are still numerous names of birds that naturally occur in India that do not meet any of the requirements for being an Indianism. For instance, the *mallard*, the *crested serpent eagle*, the *Egyptian vulture*, and the *orange-bellied leafbird*, are all common and naturally-occurring birds in India, but they also occur widely in many other countries, do not have names that are based on Indian languages or that originated in India, and have no special significance in Indian culture. Such names do not qualify as Indianisms, and so do not need to be included in exclusive dictionaries of Indian English.

In order to assess the selection of birds covered by Indian English dictionaries, the avian entries of six dictionaries were extracted: Whitworth (1885), Yule, Burnell & Crooke (1903), Hawkins (1984), Sengupta (1996), Hankin (2003), and the *Macmillan Comprehensive Dictionary* (2006). With the *Macmillan Comprehensive Dictionary*, the only inclusive dictionary, that is, not wholly restricted to Indianisms, items were only selected for the survey if the entry made specific mention of India or if the term was derived from an Indian language. Omitted from the resulting lists were names of mythical birds, such as *garuda*, *roc* and *simurgh*, terms for domesticated fowl, and extralimital birds, that is, birds not occurring in India or the Indian Ocean. Thus while Yule, Burnell & Crooke (1903) has entries for the extralimital *cockatoo*, *penguin* and *toucan*, they do not claim these as Indian birds. Where two different ornithonyms were recorded for the same bird (e.g. **baya** and **weaver-bird**), these were counted separately, except if the differences were merely variant spellings (e.g. **myna** and **mina**). Variant ornithonym pairs such as **baya/baya weaver**, **sarus/sarus crane**, or **brahminy kite/brahminy kite-hawk**, although technically two different names, were counted as one. This was done in keeping with common lexicographical practice which is to include such pairs as variant forms in a single dictionary entry. Using these parameters, the number of ornithonyms in each dictionary was as follows: Whitworth 18, Yule, Burnell & Crooke 42, Hawkins 31, Sengupta 34, Hankin 19, and *Macmillan Comprehensive* 34. Taking into account the overlap between the lists, this amounts to a total of 96 ornithonyms for 76 birds (62 individual species, and 14 genus- or family-level ornithonyms, such as **bee-eater**, which applies to numerous species). Some ornithonyms were used for more than one bird, and some birds had more than one name recorded in the dictionaries.

A number of terms were difficult to assign to categories. The term **bulbul** was included in five of the dictionaries assessed, yet determining the term's Indianness presents challenges. There are numerous species of bulbul in India, yet there are also numerous species of bulbul in China, Southeast Asia, and thence all the way eastwards to the Wallace Line. To the west of India, bulbuls range throughout central Asia westward to the Middle East, Turkey, and northern Africa. The word is originally Persian and came into India in Mughal times, being adopted into Hindustani and other northern Indian languages. In literature the bulbul was particularly associated with Persian poetry wherein it occupied a place equivalent to the nightingale of English poetry. The term **Persian nightingale** (Yule, Burnell & Crooke 1903: 125; Hankin 2003: 64) was a loosely-applied synonym for the bulbul in that it did not refer to any specific species, but rather to the bird of poetry, though Murray connected it specifically with the red-whiskered bulbul, *Pycnonotus jocosus* (1836: III. 63). Since bilingual dictionaries of Persian merely define *bulbul* as 'nightingale' (e.g. Barretto 1804: I. 326; Byramji 1882: 306; Awde and Shahribaf 2006: 74), it is difficult to know to which bird or birds the Persian term was originally applied. It was in all probability the white-eared bulbul, *Pycnonotus leucotis*, though it may have been the common nightingale, *Luscinia megarhynchos*, or the thrush nightingale, *Luscinia luscinia*, or the term may have even been loosely applied to all three species: all occur in Iran, and all have loud, complex songs that are usually delivered at dawn and dusk (Svensson 2009). However, the distinction between the 'European' (*Luscinia*) and 'Persian' (*Pycnonotus*) nightingales was recognised early (e.g. Richardson 1774: 32). The earliest example of the word **bulbul** in my Indian English records is from a translation of the Persian poetry of the seventeenth-century Indian scholar Shaikh Inayat Allah Kamboh ([Dow] 1768: I. vi). This may have been referring to the white-eared bulbul, which occurs in Pakistan and northwest India as well as the Middle East, but confusingly Dow's footnote states that it refers to the woodlark, *Lullula arborea*, which occurs in Iran but not India (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005: I. 202). Early citations of the ornithonym **bulbul** referring to specifically Indian birds are Jones (1784, cited in Shore 1835), describing a bird in Kolkata, presumably the red-vented bulbul, *Pycnonotus cafer*, or the red-whiskered bulbul, *Pycnonotus jocosus*, and Ouseley (1797), who provides an accurate picture of a red-vented bulbul he shot in Bengal. In any case, although the term **bulbul** has now been adopted for all members of the widespread Pycnonotidae family, it can be classified as an Indianism under category 3, and its significance in Indian literature places it in category 7 as well.

4. Results and discussion

The following section presents the results of a survey of the six Indian English dictionaries conducted in order to investigate the coverage of Indian bird names and to what extent this may have been systematic. While each dictionary surveyed showed a general lack of coverage, ranging from 19 to 41 ornithonyms only, the focus here is on detecting the presence or absence of a recognisable selection method for dictionary inclusion. The results are recorded in Table 1. The scientific binomens and common names used in the table are taken from Gill and Donsker (2015). The double equals sign (==) indicates that the dictionary name is the same as the IOC common name. The list is ordered alphabetically by IOC binomen.

Table 1: Ornithonyms in Indian English dictionaries

IOC Binomen	Name in dictionaries	IOC common name
<i>Accipiter badius</i>	shikra	==
<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	besra	==
<i>Acridotheres</i> spp.	mina/myna(h)	myna
<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	bank myna	==
<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	chukar/chakor/chakora/ chickore/chukor	chukar partridge
<i>Amandava amandava</i>	amadavat/avadavat	red avadavat
<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	white-breasted waterhen	==
<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	darter/snake-bird/anhinga	oriental darter
<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	kulang/cullum/kullum/colamb	demoiselle crane
<i>Ardea alba</i>	paddy-bird	great egret
<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	paddy-bird/pond heron	Indian pond heron
<i>Ardeotis nigriceps</i>	great Indian bustard	==
<i>Artamus fuscus</i>	toddy shrike	ashy woodswallow
<i>Aviceda</i> spp.	baza	==
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	cattle egret	eastern cattle egret
<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	ortolan	greater short-toed lark
<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	crow-pheasant/subaltern's pheasant	greater coucal
Cisticolidae (family)	cisticola	==
<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	shama	white-rumped shama
<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Indian roller/jay	Indian roller
<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	courser	cream-coloured courser
<i>Dendrocitta</i> spp.	treepie	==
<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	whistling teal	lesser whistling duck
Dicruridae (family)	drongo	==
<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	king-crow	black drongo
<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	dollarbird	oriental dollarbird
<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>	brain-fever bird/koel/koil/ Indian cuckoo/ kokil(a)	Asian koel
<i>Fringilla monticola</i>	black partridge	black francolin
<i>Fringilla monticola</i>	grey partridge	grey francolin
<i>Gallus sonneratii</i>	jungle-fowl	grey junglefowl
<i>Garrulax</i> spp.	laughingthrush	==
<i>Grus antigone</i>	sarus/cyrus/syras/sarus crane	sarus crane
<i>Grus grus</i>	coolung/kullum/coolen	common crane
<i>Haliastur indus</i>	brahminy kite/brahminy kite-hawk	brahminy kite
<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>	brain-fever bird/hawk-cuckoo	common hawk-cuckoo
<i>Houbaropsis bengalensis</i>	Bengal florican	==
<i>Leptoptilos dubius</i>	adjutant/adjutant stork/marabou/pelican	greater adjutant
<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	adjutant/adjutant stork/marabou/pelican	lesser adjutant
<i>Lonchura</i> spp.	munia	==
<i>Lonchura oryzivora</i>	Java sparrow	==
<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>	monal/moonaul/Impeyan pheasant	Himalayan monal
<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	college-pheasant/kaleej	kalij pheasant
<i>Loriculus vernalis</i>	love-bird	vernal hanging parrot
Lorini (tribe)	lorikeet	lorikeet

<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	jack-snipe	jack snipe
<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	coppersmith barbet	==
Meropidae (family)	bee-eater	==
<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	paddy-bird	intermediate egret
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	shite-hawk/pariah-kite	black kite
<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	mannickjore	painted stork
Nectariniidae (family)	humming-bird	sunbird
<i>Oriolus aureus</i>	Indian oriole/mango-bird	Indian golden oriole
<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	golden oriole	Eurasian golden oriole
<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	tailor bird	common tailorbird
<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	peacock/mor/morni	Indian peafowl
Pittidae (family)	pitta	==
<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	weaver-bird/baya weaver/toddy-bird?	baya weaver
<i>Psittacula</i> spp.	tota	parakeet
<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	rose-ringed parakeet	==
<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	rock-pigeon	chestnut-bellied sandgrouse
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	bulbul/Persian nightingale	common bulbul
<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	common bulbul/Indian nightingale	red-vented bulbul
<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	red-whiskered bulbul	==
<i>Rhinoptilus bitorquatus</i>	Jerdon's courser	==
<i>Strix leptogrammatica</i>	devil bird	brown wood owl
<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>	brahmyny starling/brahminy myna	brahmyny starling
<i>Sypheotides indicus</i>	florican/lesser florican	==
<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	brahmyny duck/surkhab	ruddy shelduck
<i>Terpsiphone paradise</i>	paradise fly-catcher	Asian paradise-flycatcher
<i>Tetraogallus</i> spp.	snowcock	==
<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	crested tern	greater crested tern
<i>Tragopan melanocephala</i>	argus pheasant	western tragopan
<i>Tragopan satyra</i>	argus pheasant/moonaul	satyr tragopan
<i>Treron</i> spp.	green-pigeon	==
<i>Turdoides caudate</i>	rat-bird	common babbler
<i>Turdoides striata</i>	jungle babbler/sat bhai/seven sisters	jungle babbler

Overall, 81 of the 96 bird names fell into one or more of the Indianism categories.⁴ The results for the six dictionaries combined appear below in square brackets after the category description. Note that as some ornithonyms fell into more than one category, the figures sum to more than 81 (i.e. 104).

1. the name originated in India [31]
2. the name is borrowed from an Indian language, partially or wholly [34]
3. the name is an application of a pre-existing bird name to an Indian bird [7]
4. the name has an Indian geographical epithet [7]
5. the name honours an Indian ornithologist, or other prominent Indian [2]
6. the bird is (almost) exclusively found in India (endemic or near-endemic) [20]
7. the bird has a special significance in Indian history or culture [2]
8. the bird is subject to conservation efforts and has a strong Indian media profile [1]
9. the name has greater currency in India than elsewhere [0]

The distribution over the nine categories outlined above is uneven. By far, the two most common criteria that matched the surveyed dictionaries were criterion 1, the name originated in India, and criterion 2, the name is borrowed from a native Indian language. The next most common criterion was 6, the bird is endemic or near-endemic. Together these three criteria account for approximately 82% of all cases. Criterion 3, the name is an application of a pre-existing bird name to an Indian bird, and criterion 4, the name has an Indian geographical epithet, together accounted for approximately 13% of cases. The remaining 5% of cases were accounted for by criteria 5, 7, and 8, with no examples matching criterion 9. See Appendix 1 for details of how the ornithonyms were categorised.

Criterion 1 is not as straightforward as its description might suggest. The underlying assumption is that a certain variety of English can claim possession of any lexical item that originated in that variety. For example, the expression *no worries* is viewed as an Australianism even though it is now widespread throughout other parts of the English-speaking world. However, some lexical items become quickly and widely dispersed beyond their place of origin, which raises the question of how much importance should be placed on the original provenance of a term. For example, the term **cattle egret** was first used, according to my citations, to describe birds observed in India (Jerdon 1864: III. 749). However, cattle egrets have a global distribution and are a conspicuous species due to their propensity to feed beside domestic cattle. Does the fact that the earliest attestation referred to Indian birds automatically mean that the term is to be considered an Indianism in perpetuity, especially when the term is now common throughout the English-speaking world? A similar case applies to the term **tailorbird**, which was first used to describe birds of the genus *Orthotomus* from India (Pennant 1769: 7) but is now applied to a number of different birds of Southeast Asian distribution, some of which have recently been taxonomically re-assigned at both the genus and family level. Again, the term **love bird**, originally applied to the vernal hanging-parrot, *Loriculus vernalis* (Barrow 1827: I. 60), is today most commonly used to refer to African parrots of the genus *Agapornis* or to budgerigars, *Melopsittacus undulatus* (but also to other species of small parrots which engage in allopreening in captivity and are hence popular cagebirds). Further complicating this criterion is the fact that it is often difficult to determine first instances with any reasonable certainty. According to my records, the term **snake-bird**, applied to the darters (genus *Anhinga*), was recorded in American English in 1792 (Bartram: 130), Indian English in 1832 (Sykes: 171), and Australian English in 1861 ('List of Donations': 5). However, should further research uncover an Indian English use earlier than the American date of 1792, the term **snake-bird** would suddenly become, according to this criterion, an Indianism. Clearly, such a determination is only as good as the existing records, or more exactly, only as good as the existing records available to the lexicographer doing the research. Interestingly, when writing about American darters, Bartram notes that 'I think that I have seen paintings of them on Chinese screens and other India pictures' (130). The determination of original provenance, moreover, can be an immensely time-consuming and complex task. Tracking down the earliest citations for such widely used terms as **cattle egret**, **love bird**, and **tailorbird**, is no small undertaking, requiring extensive knowledge of, and easy access to, all the important ornithological works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The task also requires a familiarity with the actual species themselves, especially their structural and plumage features,

plumage variations, habits, habitats, and distributions, as well as the ability to read (or at least decipher) bird descriptions in Latin and French. These specialised ornithological research requirements are not only outside the usual skill set of lexicographers but also that of ornithologists, who are generally concerned with present-day studies, often motivated by pressing conservation issues, and who may be largely unfamiliar with the early ornithological literature.

In contrast, criterion 2 is relatively unproblematic as it is generally accepted that borrowings from indigenous languages are valid cases of localisation processes in varietal Englishes. Examples in the dataset include **baza** from Hindi बाज़ (*bāz*), **koel** from Hindi कोयल (*koyl*), **pitta** from Telugu పిట్ట (*piṭṭa*), and **shikra** from Urdu شکرہ (*śikrā*). Other terms included here are those which had an epithet which was ultimately derived from an Indian source, such as **brahminy kite**, *Haliaster indus*, so-called since its reddish plumage resembles the orange cloth typically worn by brahmins; **pariah kite**, a folk name for the black kite, *Milvus migrans*, noted as a scavenger in Indian cities and towns; and **seven sisters**, referring to the jungle babbler, *Turdoides striata*, habitually present in extended family groups, a loan translation from Hindi सात भाई (*sāt bhai*), literally ‘seven brothers,’ with the gender swapped around in English presumably for alliterative purposes.

Criterion 3, the name is an application of a pre-existing bird name to an Indian bird, otherwise known as sense extension, was the fourth most common category. All items in this category are obsolete now and only of historical significance, being essentially folk names used by Anglo-Indian colonists for Indian birds which bore a superficial resemblance to birds already known to them. Examples include, **hummingbird** for sunbird (family Nectariniidae), **ortolan** for the greater short-toed lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*), and **marabou** and **pelican**, both applied to the adjutant stork (*Leptoptilos dubius* and *L. javanicus*). In the case of the term **pelican**, the fancied resemblance was very fanciful indeed. As a rule, this type of naming process is normally restricted to the early colonial period when colonists or visitors encounter unfamiliar indigenous flora and fauna (see Winer 2010: 113; Moore 2013: 54), and so should no longer be a productive naming process. For Indian English, this category is not particularly large, as India is part of the landmass of greater Asia which is contiguous with Europe, across which a continuity of birdlife exists, with many bird families and species being Eurasian in distribution.

Ornithonyms corresponding to criterion 4, the name has an Indian geographical epithet, were not well represented, with only seven examples across the surveyed dictionaries. Examples included **Bengal florican**, **Indian roller**, and **great Indian bustard**. Criterion 5, the name honours an Indian ornithologist, or other prominent person, corresponded to only two examples in the dictionaries, the **Impeyan pheasant**, an obsolete term for the Himalayan monal, *Lophophorus impejanus*, named in honour of Lady Impey, who attempted to bring living specimens of the bird to England in the eighteenth century (Latham 1787: 208), and **Jerdon’s courser**, a rare and critically endangered bird, *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*, that was last seen in 1900 before its rediscovery in 1986, named after British ornithologist and zoologist Thomas Jerdon (Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp 1999: 11).

Criterion 6, the bird is an endemic or near-endemic applied to 20 ornithonyms for 12 species (bank myna, brahminy starling, common babbler, great Indian bustard, grey junglefowl,

Himalayan monal, Indian peafowl, Jerdon's courser, jungle babbler, lesser florican, satyr tragopan, and western tragopan). This is a low number when compared to actual bird distributions. According to Rasmussen and Anderton (2005), there are 213 endemic avian species in South Asia, and a further 43 near-endemics. No mention of endemism was made in any of the definitions, and it appears that this criterion did not inform the selection process very strongly, if at all.

Criteria 7, 8, and 9 do not seem to have informed the selection process in the dictionaries surveyed. The only two ornithonyms that correlated to criterion 7, the bird has a special significance in Indian history or culture, were **bulbul** (discussed below) and **peacock**, referring to the Indian peafowl, *Pavo cristatus*, which was only recorded in one dictionary (*Macmillan* 2006) despite its significance in Indian literature and culture, and despite the fact that it is an endemic species. Even less common were ornithonyms corresponding to criterion 8, the bird is subject to conservation efforts and has a strong Indian media profile, with **Jerdon's courser** the only example in this category, and criterion 9, the name has greater currency in India than elsewhere, which scored zero. Criterion 9 was included in the study based on the criteria used by other dictionaries of regional varieties (e.g. Orsman (1997) which includes words 'having in New Zealand [...] a wider or more frequent common or everyday use' (vii)). Greater frequency of an ornithonym might suggest some special significance of the bird in Indian history or culture (criterion 7), but this is not a necessity of frequency, especially in cases where more than one ornithonym exists for a bird (e.g. *leafbird* and *chloropsis*, or *lammergeyer* and *bearded vulture*). Selection based on criterion 9 would require access to large corpora of a range of varieties of English. The lack of access to such corpora made assessment difficult, and so the figure of zero for this category is unverifiable.

Of the total 96 ornithonyms in the surveyed dictionaries, 15 did not seem to have any special connection to India. These included the terms **anhinga**, **dollarbird**, **drongo**, **jack snipe**, **lorikeet**, and **weaver**. The word **anhinga**, from the Brazilian language Tupi, was originally applied to the principally South American bird, *Anhinga anhinga*. The name was later transferred to all birds of the family Anhingidae, of which there are African, Asian and Australian representatives. The other common name for these birds is **darter**, but this ornithonym satisfies category 1 (the name originated in India), as the earliest application of the term **darter** is to the Indian species, *Anhinga melanogaster* (Pennant 1773: 63), though, in this case, even this categorisation is relatively weak in that Pennant classified the American, African and Asian/Indian species together as one single species. The term **drongo** is originally a Malagasy word (i.e. from Madagascar), and drongos range throughout Africa, eastwards through Asia, and southwards to Australia. Drongos are common throughout this global range and are not more prominent in India than elsewhere. The term **lorikeet** (included in Sengupta 1996: 1457) is originally an eighteenth-century blend of Malay *lory* with the second part of the word *parakeet* (a sixteenth-century term of disputed origin), but this term is of little relevance to India as there are no lorikeets native to India, and, although Yule, Burnell & Crooke note that lorikeets have been imported to south India since the fourteenth century (1903: 521), there is no indication that they were termed lorikeets in India; moreover, they are widely imported elsewhere as pet birds. The term **dollarbird** originated in Australia (Vigors and Horsfield 1827: 202; Ramson 1988), and even though the bird does occur in India, it is also commonly known

by this ornithonym throughout eastern Asia, Australia and the southwest Pacific. The term **weaver**, currently applied to more than 60 species of the widespread genus *Ploceus*, was originally applied to African birds (Latham 1782: 435). In India there are four species of weaver, including two endemic species. However, the two endemic species (*P. benghalensis* and *P. megarhynchus*) are not listed in any of the dictionaries surveyed, which only include the **baya weaver**, *Ploceus philippinus* (which qualifies as an Indianism as the epithet *baya* comes from Hindi बया (*bayā*) (McGregor 1993), although the bird is widespread elsewhere in Southeast Asia).

The overall unevenness of selection criteria categories is mirrored in each individual dictionary assessed. Table 2 provides the figures for each category according to dictionary.

Table 2: Selection criteria correspondence by dictionary

Dictionary	Criteria									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	non-IE
Whitworth (1885)	4	6	3	3	-	-	1	-	-	2
Yule, Burnell & Crooke (1903)	16	16	6	3	-	8	1	-	-	1
Hawkins (1984)	8	19	-	1	-	4	-	-	-	3
Sengupta (1996)	13	14	1	-	-	5	1	-	-	5
Hankin (2003)	4	10	1	2	1	7	1	-	-	1
Macmillan (2006)	8	14	1	1	1	5	2	1	-	8

As Table 2 reveals, each dictionary records only a small number of ornithonyms from a range of categories, without concentrating on any particular category, and without covering any particular category well in comparison to the total number of possible inclusions. When compared against the ornithonyms used for Indian avifauna, the categories least represented in the surveyed dictionaries are categories 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8, all of which, based on my own records, have a large number of ornithonyms not present in any of the dictionaries surveyed. The following list presents, for each criterion, six representative common names not found in any of the dictionaries surveyed (though many more could be added to those presented here):

- 1 brown fish-owl, crag martin, hanging parrot, leiothrix, pompadour pigeon, scimitar-babbler
- 2 fulvetta, koklass pheasant, malkoha, mesia, sirkeer malkoha, yuhina
- 4 Himalayan griffon, Indian pitta, Kashmir nuthatch, Malabar hornbill, Nilgiri pipit, Sind sparrow
- 5 Blyth's pipit, Hume's wheatear, Mrs Gould's sunbird, Salim Ali's swift, Sykes's lark, Tickell's thrush
- 6 brown rock-chat, jungle prinia, Kashmir flycatcher, Malabar parakeet, mottled wood owl, red spurfowl
- 8 Indian spotted eagle, Himalayan quail, laggar falcon, pink-headed duck, scaly-bellied woodpecker, white-rumped vulture

The above ornithonyms are common names rather than folk names, the latter of which are more likely to occur in non-ornithological literature. The dictionaries surveyed covered a number of folk names that are not official common names (e.g. **brain-fever bird**, **devil bird**, **paddy bird**, **rat-bird**, **seven sisters**, and **shite-hawk**). However, coverage of folk names was also sparse and inconsistent. For example, although the folk name **brain-fever bird** is given in a number of dictionaries as a designation of the koel, *Eudynamys scolopaceus*, no dictionary records the bird's other folk name, **hot-weather bird**, for which there is ample evidence (Buckland 1891: 109; *Eclectic Magazine* 1893: 640; Hudson 1899: 118; Harington 1909: 52; Trevaskis 1931: 347; *Letters of an Indian Judge* 1934: 37; Hockly 1935: 32). Similarly, the folk name **seven sisters**, for the jungle babbler, was given in four different dictionaries (Yule, Burnell & Crooke 1903; Sengupta 1996; Hankin 2003; *Macmillan* 2006), but no dictionary recorded the synonymous **seven brothers**, a more exact translation of the Hindi, again for which there is good citational evidence (Blyth 1849: 140; Jerdon 1863: II. 59; [Aitken] c.1900: 56; Dewar 1912: 217; Mackintosh 1915: 101; Finn 1917: 19; Gosse 1934: 209; Wilson 1974: 110; Tully 1991: 53).

These examples raise the question of why some ornithonyms are included and others not. Why are the **shikra** and **besra** recorded by Indian English lexicography, but not the **fulvetta** or **yuhina**? Why the **great Indian bustard**, but not the **Himalayan griffon**? Why **seven sisters** but not **seven brothers**? One answer might be that the lexicographers were basing their selections on frequency of occurrence. Moore (2013: 54) notes that 'the reasons for inclusion or exclusion often have to do with the weight of the evidence,' in other words, a paucity of evidence would suggest excluding a term, and a reasonable weight of evidence would support inclusion. Certainly many of the ornithonyms covered in the dictionaries are not low-frequency terms, but they do not seem to be any more frequent than the many ornithonyms omitted from the dictionaries. Moreover, some ornithonyms included are in fact not very well attested. A case in point is **subaltern's pheasant**, a name for the greater coucal, *Centropus sinensis*, recorded in Hankin (2003: 471). I have been able to locate very little supporting evidence for this term. It is first mentioned in Casserly (1925: 314), with an adjoining explanation that the folk name arose because the bird was sometimes mistaken for a game bird and shot by newly-arrived junior officers. I have only located two other references to this term, Smythies (1953: 330) and Burton (1973: 34), both of which give the term as an alternate name and present the identical explanation, suggesting rather strongly that Casserly is the source of their information, and ultimately Hankin's entry.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the surveyed dictionaries appear to have made little effort to systematically treat ornithonyms of Indian avifauna. All dictionaries surveyed recorded a number of Indian bird names, and these were mostly Indianisms of one type or another, according to the assessment criteria. However, each dictionary contained one or more terms that could not reasonably be classed as an Indianism, even though, with the exception of the *Macmillan Comprehensive Dictionary*, they were dictionaries restricted to recording Indianisms. Overall coverage was particularly minimal for names that had Indian geographical epithets, names that honoured

Indian ornithologists, names of endemic and near-endemic species, and folk names. A great many ornithonyms that are legitimate Indianisms were not recorded in any of the dictionaries surveyed. The result is that each dictionary displays an incomplete and inconsistent selection of lexical items in terms of recording avifauna. High quality literature on the birds of India has been in ample supply over the range of years that the surveyed dictionaries were produced (e.g. Latham 1821-1824, Jerdon 1862-1864; Jerdon 1864; Gould 1883; Murray 1888-1890; Hume 1889-1890; Dewar 1920; Baker 1922-1930; Whistler 1928; Ali 1941; Ali 1964; Ali and Futehally 1967; Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp 1999). It is clear that none of the standard ornithological texts of India were systematically checked (or perhaps even consulted).

Although the abundance or paucity of evidence may be viewed as a sensible deciding factor in selecting which lexis to include in a dictionary, when it comes to common names of flora and fauna abundant evidence is readily available. In today's world of electronic information, the amount of accessible ornithological literature is extensive. This applies not only to current ornithonyms but also to colonial-era names, as many early ornithological texts on the avifauna of the subcontinent are freely available in machine-readable format from such sites as the Internet Archive and Google Books. For lexicographers working on dictionaries of localised varieties, selection criteria such as those discussed in this paper will help determine if a certain ornithonym is a valid entry, and if followed rigorously, bring systematisation and consistency to the lexis selected. It is, of course, up to the individual lexicographer (or lexicographical committee) to decide which selection criteria to use, and ultimately which lexical items to include and exclude. However, following a clear set of selection criteria will make the task more manageable and produce a more consistent and coherent set of dictionary entries. This is especially so for common names, but is also true for folk names and aviculture names, though the frequency criterion may be more relevant with the latter two types of ornithonyms.

The selection criteria presented in this paper, while restricted to Indian English, can be easily adopted for or adapted to other varieties of English. Similarly, while this paper focussed on ornithonyms, many of the issues discussed here can be extended to lexical items for all flora and fauna, and further to other vocabulary domains, for instance, agriculture, administration, cuisine, education, geography, manufacturing, medicine, music, mythology, religion, politics, traditional arts and crafts, and so on. Examples of inconsistent coverage in other semantic fields were apparent in the surveyed dictionaries. For instance, with geographical names, the *Terai* and the *Doab* are recorded in eight dictionaries (Whitworth 1885; Yule, Burnell & Crooke 1903; Hawkins 1984; Sengupta 1996; Hankin 2003; *Macmillan* 2006), while the *Rann of Kutch*, the most extensive salt pan in the world, is recorded in only four (Whitworth 1885; Yule, Burnell & Crooke 1903; Hankin 2003; *Macmillan* 2006), and the *Sundarbans*, the most extensive mangrove forest in the world, is only listed in two (Whitworth 1885; Yule, Burnell & Crooke 1903). Hence, other vocabulary domains may also profit from similar investigations into selection criteria.

Notes

1. To *get a guernsey* is Australian slang for 'be included.'

2. This paper does not deal with colloquial names used within the bird-watching community, such as *phyllosc* (a warbler of the genus *Phylloscopus*), or scientific ornithonyms referring to birds of a particular order, family, tribe, etc., such as *muscapid* (any bird of the family Muscicapidae). These ornithonyms are unlikely to be included in any dictionary other than a specialist ornithological dictionary.
3. Other terms commonly used are *vernacular name*, used to mean either ‘common name’ or ‘folk name,’ and *book name*, used to refer to common names that are restricted to ornithological literature. These two terms have not been used in this paper.
4. Omitted from the calculations was the term **oriole** defined by Sengupta as ‘any of several types of brightly coloured birds’ (1996: 1462), as this could not be assigned to any particular taxon.

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Appendix I: Ornithonyms matching selection criteria categories

Criterion 1 adjutant (stork), black partridge, brain-fever bird, cattle egret, common babbler, crow-pheasant, darter, devil bird, florican, green-pigeon, grey partridge, hawk cuckoo, jungle babbler, king-crow, laughingthrush, lesser florican, love-bird, mango-bird, paddy-bird, pond heron, rat-bird, red-whiskered bulbul, rock-pigeon, rose-ringed parakeet, shite-hawk, snowcock, subaltern's pheasant, tailor bird, treepie, whistling teal, white-breasted waterhen [31]

Criterion 2 amadavat/avadavat, bank myna, baya (weaver), baza, besra, brahminy duck, brahminy kite(-hawk), brahminy myna, brahminy starling, chukar, college-pheasant, coolung, coppersmith, kaleej, koel, kokil(a), kullum, mannickjore, myna(h), monal, mor, morni, munia, pariah-kite, pitta, sarus (crane), sat bhai, seven sisters, shama, shikra, surkhab, toddy-bird, toddy-shrike, tota [34]

Criterion 3 argus pheasant, bulbul, humming-bird, jay, marabou, ortolan, pelican [7]

Criterion 4 amadavat/avadavat, Bengal florican, great Indian bustard, Indian cuckoo, Indian nightingale, Indian oriole, Indian roller [7]

Criterion 5 Impeyan pheasant, Jerdon's courser [2]

Criterion 6 argus pheasant (= satyr tragopan), argus pheasant (= western tragopan), bank myna, brahminy starling, florican (= lesser florican), great Indian bustard, grey partridge, Impeyan pheasant, Jerdon's courser, jungle babbler, jungle-fowl (= grey junglefowl), lesser florican, monal/moonaul (= Himalayan monal), monal/moonaul (= satyr tragopan), mor, morni, peacock, rat-bird, sat bhai, seven sisters [20]

Criterion 7 bulbul, peacock [2]

Criterion 8 Jerdon's courser [1]

Assessed as non-Indian anhinga, bee-eater, cisticola, courser, crested tern, dollarbird, drongo, golden oriole, jack-snipe, Java sparrow, lorikeet, paradise fly-catcher, Persian nightingale, snake-bird, weaver-bird [15]