

Conflicting options for the first available use of the name *Rhea pennata* d'Orbigny and the date to be used

Edward C. Dickinson

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ABSTRACT: For a century the name of this smaller species of rhea has universally been dated from 1834. Research shows that 1834 is incorrect; the name first appeared in 1837 in two publications one in February and one in April.

KEYWORDS: *Rhea pennata*, Rheidae, date of publication, Charles Davies Sherborn, Argentina.

The Lesser Rhea, a small ratite, was named by Alcide d'Orbigny in a footnote to page 67 in volume 2 of d'Orbigny's "*Voyage dans l'Amérique méridionale*". Peters (1931: 5) cited the name from page 67 with the date 1834. However, Sherborn (1929: 4835) listed *Rhea pennata* as having first appeared in the *Echo du Monde Savant*, IV, on page 133 dated 22 April 1837. This is not unlike the case of *Arara aymara* (see Dickinson, 2019) in that it was described in the itinerary in volume 2 of d'Orbigny's *magnum opus* and it seems that Sherborn cannot have checked this volume.¹ Sherborn & Woodward (1901) provided relatively little information and none related to volume 2. Sherborn (1922: xcvi) offered a little more, still based on limited evidence and again made no mention of volume 2. This lack of information continued until 1934, so the unexplained source Peters relied on for the date 1834 – which was the advertised expectation for the appearance of the first of ninety livraisons – came into use, and was reused by Mayr (1979: 7).

The title page of volume 2 of the "*Voyage dans l'Amérique méridionale*" gives the date of 1839-1845. These dates are inaccurate. Pages 1-312 were included in livraisons 21 to 29 all probably published in 1837 (although livraison 28 cannot be shown to date from so early). The remaining livraisons (pages 313-667) were published between late 1841 and June 1843 (see Sherborn & Griffin, 1934). Page 67, which was in livraison 22 – with a wrapper apparently dated 1836 – was published no later than 27 February 1837 (Dickinson, 2017). Monday 27 February was the date of a session of the Academy at which note was taken of publications received; implicitly this means received in the preceding week (February 20 to 25) and this list, which is from page 343 of issue 9 in volume IV, specifically mentions part 22 of the *Voyage dans l'Amérique Méridionale*.

The publication of livraison 22 appears to have been two months before publication of the article in the *Echo du Monde Savant*. Thus Peters was correct to cite p. 67 but three years too early.

¹ It should be noted here that in 1929 Sherborn was still largely unaware of the dates of issue and the contents of each of the 90 livraisons that made up the "*Voyage*". The details were discovered and revealed by Sherborn & Griffin (1934).

In page 67 d'Orbigny tells his readers that he set out, in the vicinity of the bay of San Blas, to chase down a bird which everyone locally considered to be a new species of "autruche" (ostrich) quite different from the American one called the Ñandu. His footnote reads "Cette espèce a les acrotarses couverts de petites plumes; c'est pourquoi je lui ai imposé le nom de *Rhea pennata*. Voyez la partie ornithologique."² This very limited description has been accepted because the comparison with the well-known larger species was clear cut."

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Address: Edward C. Dickinson, 19 Marlborough Court, Southfields Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1BT, U.K., e-mail: edward@asiaorn.org.

² Translation ECD: "This species has the front of the tarsus covered with small feathers; this is why I have given it the name *Rhea pennata*. See the ornithological part [of this work]."