

## The dating of Vieillot's "*Analyse d'une nouvelle ornithologie élémentaire*"

Jiří Mlíkovský

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ABSTRACT: Although it is generally accepted that Vieillot's *Analyse* appeared in 1816, evidence for the rebuttal of the date of 1817 suggested by Lesson some ten years later does not seem to have been provided. A search of contemporaneous literature demonstrates that the book was published before 20 April 1816. Thus, the date 19 April 1816 is recommended as the official date for the purposes of zoological nomenclature.

KEYWORDS: Vieillot, 19th century, France, ornithological works, dating.

### INTRODUCTION

Early in the 19th century Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot (1747-1831), French zoologist, published an *Analyse d'une nouvelle ornithologie élémentaire*, an influential work, which contains a number of new names for ornithological taxa (Oehser 1948)<sup>1</sup>. The date given on the title-page of Vieillot's *Analyse* is 1816 and it is almost universally dated from that year. However, Lesson<sup>2</sup> (1828: 50, footnote) expressly said that "L'analyse d'ornithologie élémentaire qui porte la date 1816, n'a réellement paru qu'en 1817", i.e. "The *Analyse d'ornithologie élémentaire* which bears the date 1816, was in fact not published until 1817". Were that so, some other works, e.g. the first volumes of Deterville's *Nouveau dictionnaire d'histoire naturelle*<sup>3</sup> to which Vieillot contributed, would compete for priority with the *Analyse*, and this in turn might influence ornithological nomenclature.

Mathews (1925: 140) suggested that Vieillot tried to publish his *Analyse* in Italy and in England in 1814, but the data available do not support his suggestion. First, "les commissaires Buniva et Bonelli" [= Michele Francesco Buniva (1761-1834) and Franco Andrea Bonelli (1784-1830), Italian naturalists] presented on the Meeting of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Turin on 10 January 1814 Vieillot's manuscript entitled "Essai d'une nouvelle classification des oiseaux", presumably written in French (Anonymous 1816c: xxviii). The Academy agreed to publish the manuscript together with Buniva's and Bonelli's critical comments (Anonymous 1816c: xxviii), but this work was never published. There is no evidence that Vieillot's *Essai* submitted to the Turin Academy was the same as his *Analyse*; instead this might have been just an outline of the *Analyse* or some other text altogether. Second, a Vieillot manuscript entitled "Novi systematis ornithologici prolusio" (Anonymous

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<sup>1</sup> Vieillot's *Analyse* was reprinted by Saunders (1883).

<sup>2</sup> René Primevère Lesson (1794-1849) was a French physician, zoologist and travelling research naturalist.

<sup>3</sup> See Dickinson (2011b) for its dating.

1815b: 229, 1815c: 309) was read at a series of meetings of the Linnean Society of London held on 15 November 1814 (Anonymous 1814: 449), 6 December 1814 (Anonymous 1815a: 70), 20 December 1814 (Anonymous 1815a: 70), 16 February 1815 (Anonymous 1815b: 229), and 21 March 1815 (Anonymous 1815c: 309). Although Vieillot's work was presented at the meetings of the Linnean Society of London (see also Leach 1815: 45, Shaw 1815: 42), it is not clear that the Society intended to publish the work in its *Transactions*. However these records do show that Vieillot worked on a classification of birds as early as 1813 and that he propagated his thoughts outside of France, at least in Italy and in England, about two years before his *Analyse* was published in France.

### THE DATING

The most relevant literature of the period confirms that Vieillot's *Analyse* was published in 1816. The evidence, in chronological order, is as follows:

1. The *Bibliographie de la France*, a weekly, recorded the *Analyse* in its issue of 20 April 1816 (Anonymous 1816a: 171, record Nr. 1146)<sup>4</sup>.
2. The *Magasin Encyclopédique*, a monthly, in its issue for April 1816 carried a detailed anonymous review of Vieillot's *Analyse* (Anonymous, 1816b: 406-427).
3. Cuvier (1816: xxiii, footnote) in the preface to his *Le Règne animal distribué d'après son organisation* mentioned Vieillot's *Analyse* as published in 1816. Cuvier signed the preface to his book in October 1816 and it was published prior to 2 December 1816 (Roux 1976, Dickinson 2011a)<sup>5</sup>.

This evidence sufficiently confirms that Vieillot's *Analyse* was published in 1816. The record in the *Bibliographie de la France* from 20 April 1816 is the earliest date demonstrating that the work was then in existence and is recommended to use for the purposes of the zoological nomenclature (ICZN 1999). The reason why Lesson (1828) claimed that Vieillot's *Analyse* was published only in 1817 is unclear.

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<sup>4</sup> Vaurie (1962: 138) used the date April 14 but did not make his source for this clear.

<sup>5</sup> In addition, Coenraad Jacob Temminck (1778-1858), a Dutch zoologist, published in 1817 a lengthy critique of Vieillot's *Analyse*, which he signed on 15 January 1817 (Temminck 1817: 60). It is less probable that he would write this text in the two weeks which elapsed from 1-15 January 1817, which supports the observation that the *Analyse* was published before 1817, but this record is not quite conclusive, because Temminck might have had proof sheets of the *Analyse* at his disposal. For a closer look at the Vieillot *vs.* Temminck debate see Gassó Miracle (2011).

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Address: Jiří Mlíkovský, Department of Zoology, National Museum, Václavské náměstí 68, CZ-115 79 Praha 1, Czech Republic; e-mail: jiri\_mlikovsky@nm.cz

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