

Group names for some *Euplectes* and *Vidua* species

For decades, several species of long-tailed *Euplectes* (family Ploceidae) and *Vidua* (family Viduidae) species have been referred to as ‘widowbirds’ and ‘whydahs’ respectively. However, over time, the use of these two vernacular names has varied between authors.

In East and southern Africa, the long-tailed *Euplectes* (formerly *Coliuspasser*) species have long been called ‘widowbirds’ (East Africa) or simply ‘widows’ (southern Africa), while the long-tailed *Vidua* and *Steganura* species have been called ‘whydahs’, with former *Hypochoera* species ‘indigobirds’ or ‘widowfinches’.

One factor long overlooked is that the correct English name for long-tailed *Euplectes* species is ‘whydah’, based on the type locality of *E. macroura* and the type species of the sub-genus *Coliuspasser*, i.e., the Ouidah (Whidah) kingdom of Benin (which covers much more than Ouidah itself). In French, all long-tailed *Euplectes* used to be called ‘ouidah’ as used by Douaud (1955); also see Delacour and Edmond-Blanc (1933–1934), and Dowsett-Lemaire and Dowsett (2019).

In translation, *vidua* is Latin for widow, so surely it is now appropriate for all long-tailed *Vidua* species to be referred to as ‘widows’ (in line with the French *veuve*), but to retain ‘indigobird’ for all former *Hypochoera* species, and ‘whydah’ for all long-tailed *Euplectes* species. English vernacular names have long varied throughout the English-speaking world, but as the search for a unified nomenclature continues, some uniformity with French vernacular names would seem appropriate.

References

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