

A name for the clade formed by owlet-nightjars, swifts and hummingbirds (Aves)

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Abstract

Recent phylogenetic studies of non-passerine birds provide congruent support for a clade formed by owlet-nightjars (Aegothelidae) and swifts and hummingbirds (Apodiformes). This clade is here named Daedalornithes (new clade name) based on the principles of phylogenetic taxonomy.

Key words: Daedalornithes, Aegothelidae, Apodiformes, phylogenetic taxonomy

Introduction

The relationships of the swifts and hummingbirds (Apodiformes) to other birds have been a matter of debate, although a close relationship with the nightjars and allies (Caprimulgiformes) has received support from many ornithologists (see Sibley & Ahlquist 1990). Monophyly of Apodiformes is documented by numerous studies (e.g., Cracraft 1988; Sibley & Ahlquist 1990; Bleiweiss *et al.* 1994; van Tuinen *et al.* 2000; Johansson *et al.* 2001; Livezey & Zusi 2001; Mayr 2002; Mayr *et al.* 2003; Chubb 2004). In contrast, monophyly of Caprimulgiformes has not been well-supported. Traits which have been listed as characteristic of Caprimulgiformes, such as a soft plumage, weak feet, and a broad gape (e.g. Bock 1982), may be primitive or may have evolved independently in different groups as adaptations to a similar (nocturnal, aerial and insect-feeding) life-style.

In recent years, various morphological and molecular studies have indicated that Caprimulgiformes is not monophyletic (Johansson *et al.* 2001; Livezey & Zusi 2001; Mayr 2002; Mayr & Clarke 2003; Mayr *et al.* 2003; Chubb 2004; Cracraft *et al.* 2004; Fidler *et al.* 2004). These studies suggested different hypotheses of the relationships of the various ‘caprimulgiform’ birds to other neornithine groups. However, almost all studies that included the owlet-nightjars (Aegothelidae) indicate that this group forms the sister-taxon of the swifts and hummingbirds (Apodiformes). The alliance of Aegothelidae with