

# Protected taxonomic status for *Papilio richmondia* Gray, [1853] (Lepidoptera: Papilionidae)

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**ABSTRACT.** The well-known Richmond Birdwing butterfly, *Ornithoptera richmondia* (Gray, [1853]), is a junior subjective synonym of *Amphrissius australis* Swainson, 1851, which has not been used as a valid name after 1899. To protect the stability of the younger, but widely used name, the older and virtually unknown *Amphrissius australis* (i.e., the senior subjective synonym) is suppressed under Article 23.9.2 of the Fourth Edition of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*. By this action, *Papilio richmondia* Gray, [1853] becomes a *nomen protectum* and *Amphrissius australis* Swainson, 1851 a *nomen oblitum*.

## Introduction

The Richmond Birdwing butterfly (*Ornithoptera richmondia* (Gray, [1853])) is endemic to the subtropical rainforests of eastern Australia and is an important flagship species for the conservation of insect biodiversity of these ecosystems (Sands, 2008; Sands & New, 2013). It is currently known by the name *Ornithoptera richmondia* (Gray, [1853]) and is considered to be taxonomically distinct from its sister species *Ornithoptera euphorion* (Gray, [1853]) from the Wet Tropics in north-eastern Queensland (Common & Waterhouse, 1981; Hancock, 1991; Hancock & Orr, 1997). *Ornithoptera richmondia* was originally described by Gray ([1853]) under the name *Papilio richmondia* Gray, [1853], with the Richmond River, New South Wales (NSW) as the type locality (Edwards, 1995; Edwards *et al.*, 2001). Gray's publication is dated 1852, but in fact it was actually published on 8 January 1853 (Sherborn, 1932; Edwards, 1995).

During the compilation of the *Checklist of the Lepidoptera of Australia* (Nielsen *et al.*, 1996), Edwards (1995) discovered that there was an earlier available name for the butterfly, *Amphrissius australis* Swainson, 1851, also from the Richmond River, NSW. This senior name was published in a book review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 30 August 1851 by W. Swainson (1851), 16 months before Gray's ([1853]) publication. Swainson's review was based on examination of A. W. Scott's unpublished scientific manuscript and artwork (i.e., the magnificent water colour paintings by his two daughters, Harriet and Helena Scott) during a visit to his property on Ash Island in the Hunter River near Hexham, NSW. However, the book review was premature, and due to considerable delays Scott's manuscript was not published until 13 years later (Scott, 1864) but it did not contain the text and painting of Scott's 'new' species *Amphrissius australis*. A second volume of Scott's work (Scott 1890–1898) published in five parts after his death

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