

## Correct name for the Indian flying fox (Pteropodidae)

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**Abstract.** I show that the name *Pteropus giganteus* Brünnich, 1782, frequently used for the Indian flying fox following Miller (1903), was created by Brünnich as a new replacement name for *Vespertilio vampyrus* Linnaeus, 1758. *Pteropus giganteus* Brünnich, 1782 is thus a junior objective synonym of *Pteropus vampyrus* (Linnaeus, 1758). The Indian flying fox should be called *Pteropus medius* Temminck, 1825, which is the oldest name available for this species.

**Chiroptera, *Pteropus giganteus*, *Vespertilio vampyrus*, *Pteropus medius*, India, nomenclature**

The Indian flying fox was generally referred to as *Pteropus edwardsi* E. Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire (1810: 92) by authors who did not recognize the Indian flying fox to be specifically different from the Malagassy flying fox (following I. Geoffroy-Saint-Hilaire 1828: 699–700; see Andersen 1912: 330–331 for citations), or as *Pteropus medius* Temminck (1825: 176) by those authors who did recognize the Indian individuals to be different from the African ones (see Andersen 1912: 329–330 for citations). Miller (1903: 50) suggested that *Vespertilio gigantea* Brünnich (1782: 45) antedates *Pteropus medius* Temminck, 1825 and that it should be used for the Indian species. Thereafter, the Indian flying fox has been called *Pteropus giganteus* (Brünnich) by most authors (e.g. Andersen 1912: 326; Ellerman & Morrison-Scott 1951: 97, 1966: 97; Bates & Harrison 1997: 9; Simmons 2005: 337; Talmale & Pradhan 2009: 6).

My search of literature has revealed that Brünnich's *Vespertilio gigantea* cannot be applied to the Indian flying fox, because Brünnich (1782: 45) created *gigantea* as a new replacement name for *Vespertilio vampyrus* Linnaeus (1758: 31) with reference to *Vespertilio vampyrus* of “Linn. Syst. Nat. I. pag. 46. G. 4. sp. 1” [= Linnaeus 1766: 46]. The species was formally named already by Linnaeus (1758: 31), which does not influence the availability and meaning of *Vespertilio gigantea*, as the correct citation is assumed by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999; hereafter ‘the Code’). Thus, *Vespertilio gigantea* Brünnich, 1782 is a junior objective synonym of *Vespertilio vampyrus* Linnaeus, 1758 (Art. 72.7 of the Code) and cannot be applied to a different species.

The oldest available name for the Indian flying fox is *Pteropus medius* Temminck (1825: 176). The taxonomic status of this species is currently in flux (cf. Giannini et al. 2008, O'Brien et al. 2009, Chan et al. 2011). It should be called *Pteropus medius* Temminck, 1825, as it was during much of its scientific existence, if recognized as a full species. If considered a subspecies of *Pteropus vampyrus* (Linnaeus, 1758: 31), as suggested e.g. by Corbet & Hill (1992), it should be called *Pteropus vampyrus medius* Temminck, 1825.

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