



Bird Specimens Transferred from Overseas Museums to National Museums of Japan in the 1800s: The Tokyo Imperial Household Museum Collection

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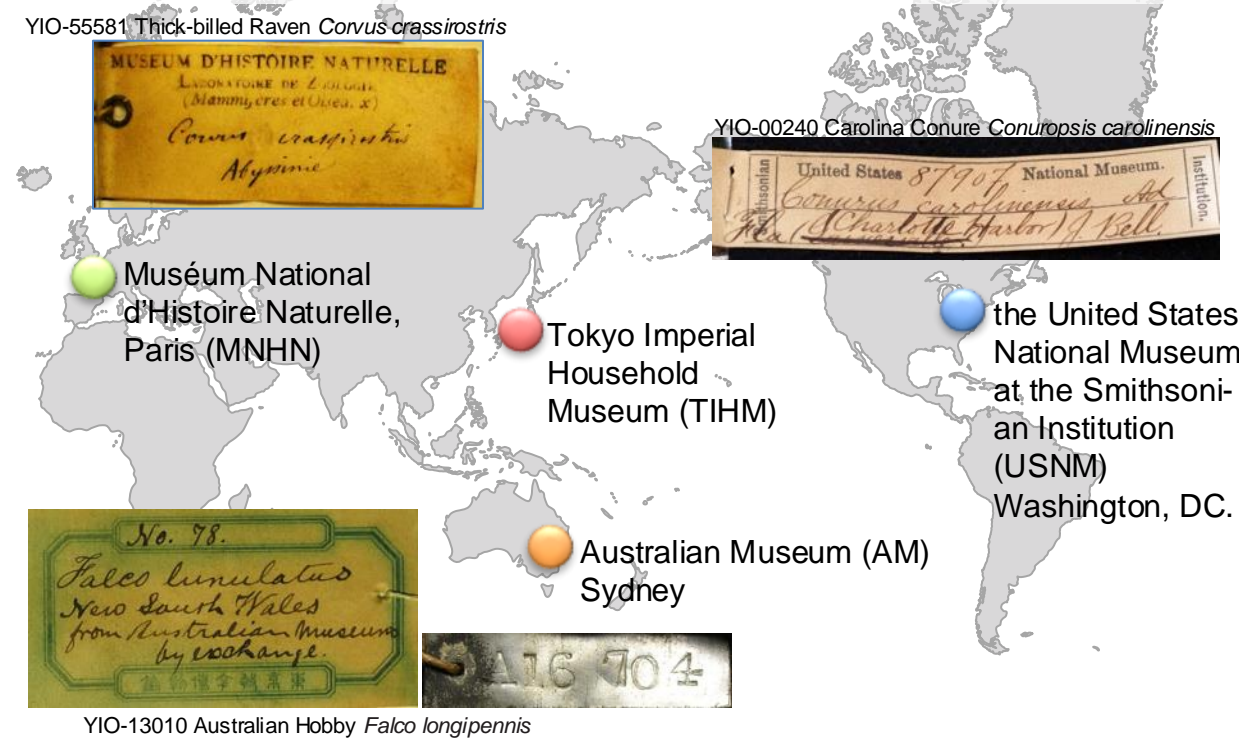
Introduction

The Tokyo Imperial Household Museum (TIHM) inherited over 5,000 bird specimens that had been acquired by two national museums between 1872–1923 (Kobayashi and Kato 2017). The collection included specimens sent from, among others, the United States National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution, the Australian Museum, and the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, in the 1800s. Today, the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology (YIO) holds approximately 3,300 specimens of this collection (Kobayashi and Kato 2017). However, most of these specimens have not effectively used for research, because their data was incomplete or not verified. My goal was to restore the collection data for these specimens. I examined various archive records associated with the above three museums to clarify details of specimen transfer history. Here, I review the history of the TIHM bird collection and the specimen transfer process originated from the three institutions abroad.

Methods

1. Estimating the year when the specimens were transferred based on the literature.
2. Searching for archival records (e.g., catalogs, invoices and letters).
3. Restoring collection data by matching each specimen to a catalog record.
4. Evaluating specimens based on restored data.

Labels derived from 3 museums found in the TIHM collection



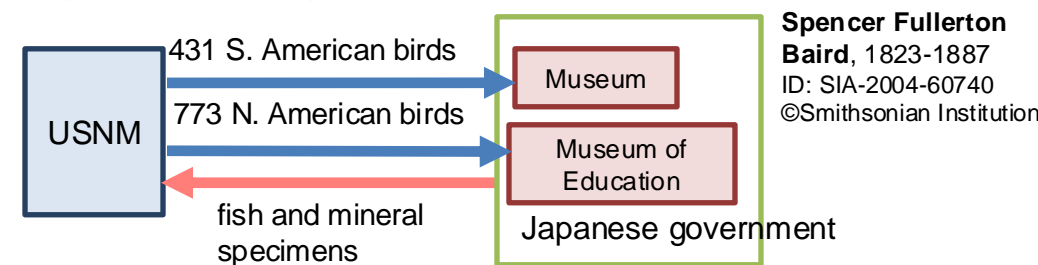
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References
 Kobayashi & Kato (2017) https://doi.org/10.19004/taxa.43_0_42
 Kobayashi & Kato (2020a) https://doi.org/10.19004/taxa.49_0_45
 Kobayashi & Kato (2020b) <https://doi.org/10.3838/jo.69.209>
 Deignan (1961) <https://doi.org/10.5479/si.03629236.221>
 OZCAM: AM B.9397 <https://ozcam.ala.org.au/occurrences/e00e97c5-6c34-4e68-90c1-c00e666f746a>
 YIO specimen database <https://decochan.net/>

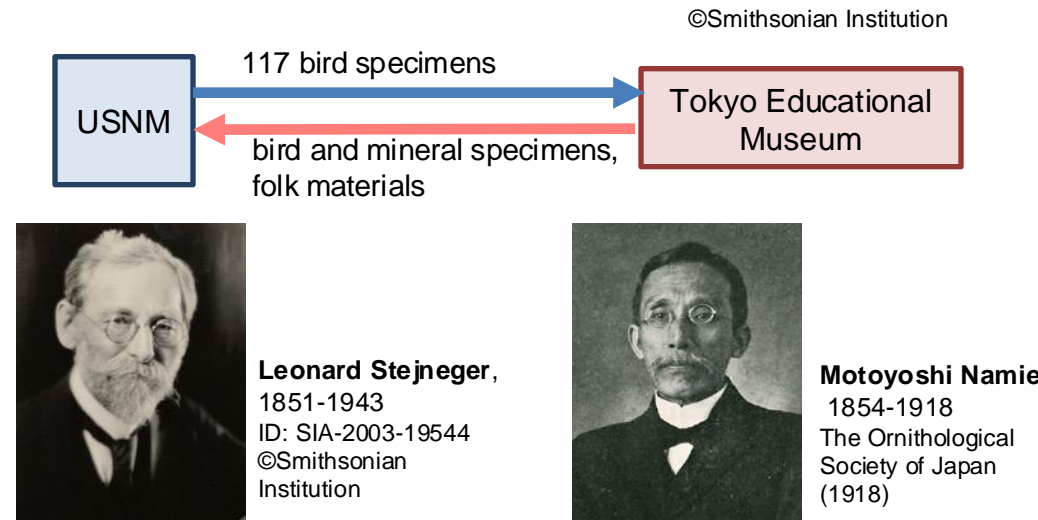
Background on the Specimen Transfer

◆From the United States National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution (USNM)

[Exchange of 1877]
 The Japanese government's participation in the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia on 1876 led to an exchange of natural history specimens between the USNM and the Japanese government in 1877. Spencer Fullerton Baird, the first curator of USNM, took charge of this exchange.



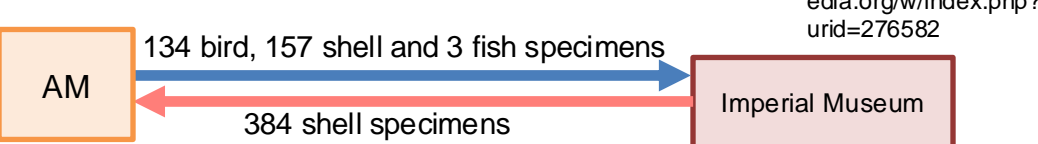
[Exchange of 1887]
 Leonard Stejneger, assistant curator in the Department of Birds of the USNM, described *Turdus celaenops* collected by Motoyoshi Namie, the Tokyo Educational museum worker, as a new species. Namie and Stejneger probably performed this exchange.



◆From the Australian Museum (AM)

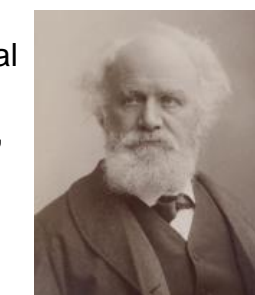
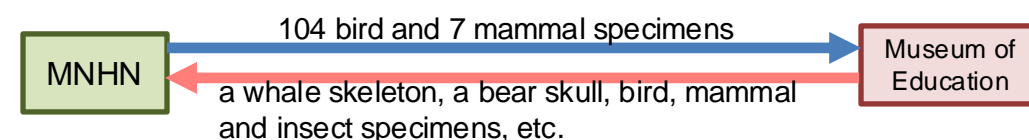
[Exchange of 1888]
 AM → 195 bird and mineral specimens
 Tokyo Educational Museum → fish specimens

[Exchange of 1893]
 Finding a letter by Edward Pierson Ramsay, curator of the AM, it was clarified that Ramsay took charge of this exchange.

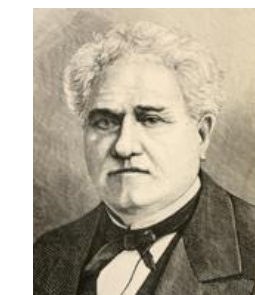


◆From the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, Paris (MNHN)

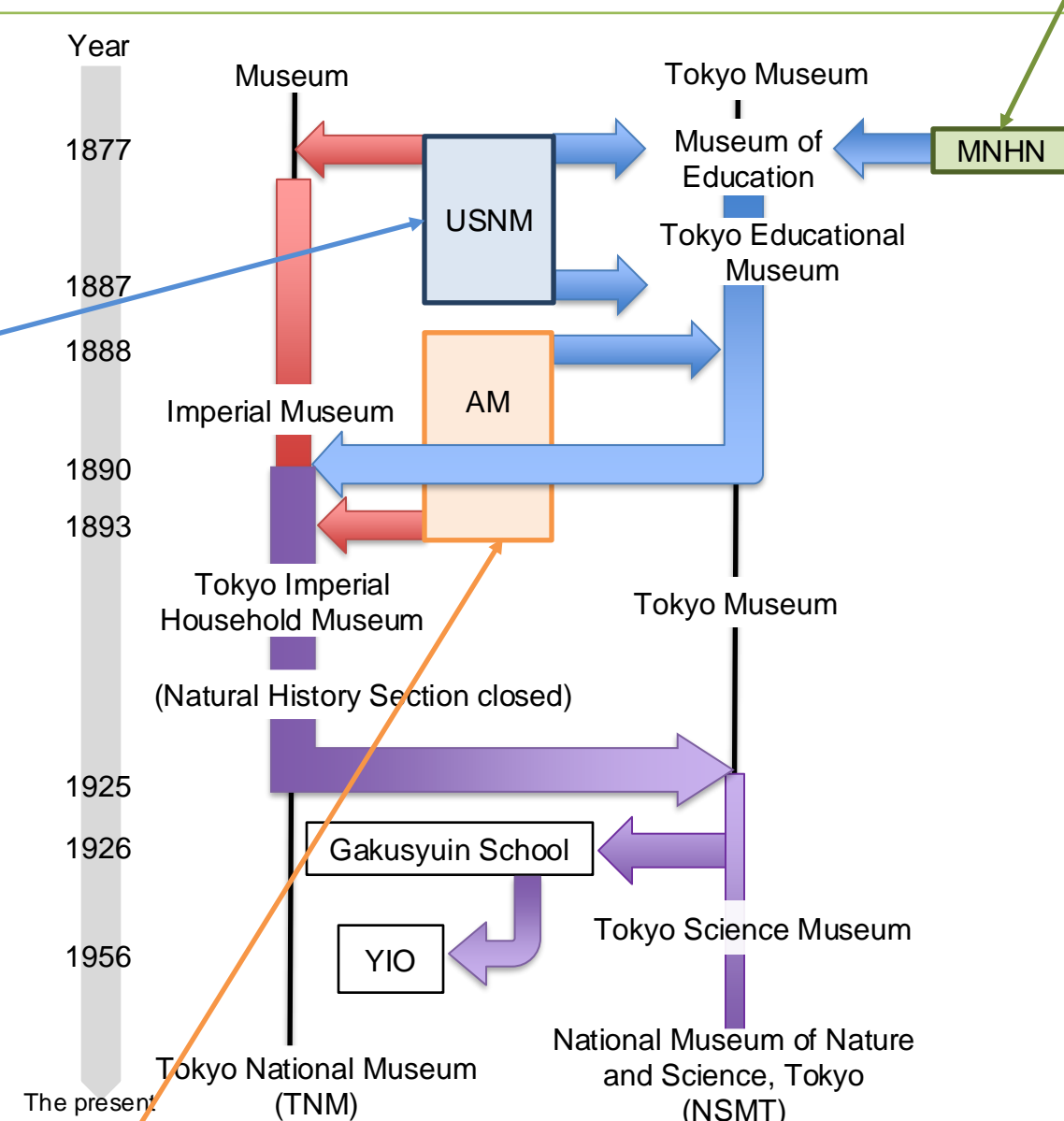
[Exchange of 1877]
 In 1876, Pierre Jules César Janssen, a French astronomer, came to Japan to observe the transit of Venus, and requested the Ministry of Education to send natural history specimens to the MNHN. The ministry accepted his request and entrusted this operation to the Tokyo Museum. This museum sent specimens to Paul Gervais, the chair of comparative anatomy at the MNHN.



Pierre Jules César Janssen, 1824-1907
 By Atelier Nadar.
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/CC0>, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=87219760>



Paul Gervais, 1816-1879
 Popular Science Monthly (August, 1887).



The routes up to the present of specimens transferred from the three institutions abroad to national museums of Japan in the 1800s.

(Illustrated with reference to Kobayashi & Kato 2017, 2020ab)

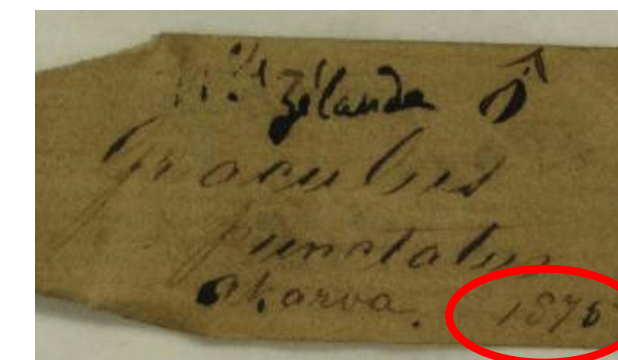
Outcomes of Restored Data

The archival records implying the process of specimen transfer clarified the followings:

- (1) from which museum each specimen came from; and
- (2) an original specimen ID number, which could facilitate cross-referencing the specimen.

Ex. 1: The year of collection discrepant with the transfer history (from the MNHN)

The YIO had misread an incorrect date of collection on the MNHN label of YIO-01732 as "1895", and reflected it in the YIO specimen database. This specimen was actually collected in 1875, because the record shows the MNHN sent it to Japan in 1877.



Label of YIO-01732 Spotted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax punctatus*
 ©Yamashina Institute for Ornithology

Ex. 2: Misidentification on the original catalog (from the AM)

The AM catalog and the Online Zoological Collections of Australian Museum (OZCAM) recorded AM B.9397 as *Platalea regia* (Royal Spoonbill). This specimen matched YIO-08757 held in the YIO, recorded as was collected in New South Wales, Australia. It was re-identified as Australian white ibis *Threskiornis moluccus* on the real specimen.

YIO-01732 (AM B.9397) Australian white ibis
 ©Yamashina Institute for Ornithology



OZCAM Search Specimens
 Occurrence record: Ornithology:B.9397
 Preserved specimen of *Platalea (Platalea) regia* Gould, 1838 | Royal Spoonbill
 AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

Ex. 3: Discovery of Type specimens (from the USNM)

Six syntype specimens which were reported to have been lost since they were shipped from the USNM to Japan by Deignan (1961) were re-discovered in the YIO collection.



Type of extinct Guadalupe caracara
 YIO-09803 (USNM 69991) *Polyborus lutosus* Ridgway, 1876
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