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Call me *Brigadier Sir Nils Olav*: Properhood in bird names and the naming of military mascots

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Call me *Brigadier Sir Nils Olav*: Properhood in bird names and the naming of military mascots

Abstract: The article discusses the onomastic dynamics suggested in a caption to a newspaper picture of the King Penguin mascot of the King of Norway's Guard. First the difference between proper names and appellatives is touched upon, in seeking to determine whether or not *King Penguin* is a proper name. The use or non-use of upper-case as a marker of properhood is also discussed.

The article continues with a discussion of the use of proper names for animals and birds, citing recent research which explains this onomastic phenomenon. An analysis of the relationship between names and titles follows.

The naming of the King Penguin *Brigadier Sir Nils Olav* is placed within the context of the naming of military mascots generally, and the article concludes with a

brief look at the etymology of the word *penguin* as well as a brief look at the anthropomorphic connotations of penguins as 'birds in uniforms'.

Keywords: King Penguin, King of Norway, properhood, military mascots, anthropomorphism.

Appelez-moi *Brigadier Sir Nils Olav* : proprialité des noms d'oiseaux et la désignation des mascottes militaires

Résumé : L'article traite de la dynamique onomastique suggérée dans une photo de journal, du manchot royal de la garde du roi de Norvège. Tout d'abord, la différence entre les noms propres et les appellatives, dans la recherche qui détermine ou non si *King Penguin* est un nom propre, est soulevée. L'utilisation ou la non utilisation de la majuscule comme marqueur de propriété est également discutée.

L'article continue avec une discussion sur l'utilisation de noms propres pour les animaux et les oiseaux, citant des recherches récentes expliquant ce phénomène onomastique. Une discussion sur la relation entre les noms et les titres suit.

Un bref aperçu de l'étymologie du mot manchot suit, puis la désignation du brigadier manchot royal *Sir Nils Olav*, se situe dans le contexte de la désignation des mascottes militaires en général.

L'article se termine par un bref aperçu de l'étymologie du mot *manchot* et sur des connotations anthropomorphes des manchots comme « oiseaux en uniforme ».

Mots-clés : Manchot royal, roi de Norvège, propriété, mascottes militaires, anthropomorphisme.

Nennt mich *Brigadegeneral Sir Nils Olav*: Proprietät bei Vogelnamen und die Benennung von militärischen Maskottchen

Zusammenfassung: Der Beitrag diskutiert die onomastische Dynamik der Bildunterschrift zu einem Pressefoto, das einen Königspinguin als Maskottchen der königlichen Garde Norwegens zeigt. Zunächst wird der Unterschied zwischen Eigennamen und Appellativa kurz thematisiert, um herauszufinden, ob *Königspinguin* den Status eines Eigennamens hat. Der Gebrauch bzw. Nichtgebrauch von Großbuchstaben im Englischen zur Kennzeichen von Proprietät wird ebenfalls erörtert.

Der Beitrag befasst sich im Anschluss daran unter Einbeziehung der aktuellen Forschung zu diesem onomastischen Phänomen mit dem Gebrauch von Eigennamen für Tiere und Vögel, gefolgt von einer Diskussion zur Beziehung zwischen Namen und Titeln.

Die Benennung des Königspinguin-*Brigadegenerals Sir Nils Olav* wird in den allgemeinen Kontext der Benennung militärischer Maskottchen eingeordnet, und der Beitrag schließt mit einer kurzen etymologischen Betrachtung des Wortes *Pinguin* und den anthropomorphischen Konnotationen von Pinguinen als ‚Vögel in Uniformen'.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Königspinguin, König von Norwegen, Proprietät, militärische Maskottchen, Anthropomorphismus.

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Call me *Brigadier Sir Nils Olav*: Properhood in bird names and the naming of military mascots

ADRIAN KOOPMAN

1. Introduction

The impetus for this article came from the caption of a photograph in a local newspaper. It was the picture of the penguin "marching" in front of a serried rank of uniformed legs that first caught my eye, followed by the head caption "Call me Brigadier Sir Nils Olav". The more detailed caption below the picture did no more than whet my appetite:

> *Call me Brigadier Sir Nils Olav*
> Soldiers of the King of Norway's Guard parade for inspection by their mascot, king penguin Nils Olav, at Edinburgh Zoo yesterday. It was announced that the penguin, who had previously been knighted, has been promoted and given the new title of 'Brigadier Sir Nils Olav'.
> (*The Witness*, 23 August 2016, page 5)

This caption, brief as it is, contains a considerable number of elements of interest to theoretical onomastics, and gives rise to a number of questions:

- Is *King Penguin* (or *king penguin*)[1] as a species name an onymic item, i.e. a "proper name" as opposed to an appellative?
- Does *king* in *king penguin* relate to *penguin* in the same way that *King* relates to *Harald* in *King Harald of Norway*?
- Is *Nils Olav* (or *Brigadier Sir Nils Olav*) uniquely the name of the bird in the photograph, or is it a name borne by previous penguin mascots of this same regiment?
- What is the etymology of *penguin*, and is it at all relevant to Brigadier Sir Nils Olav?

and perhaps more mischievously:

- What are the implications of a bird being simultaneously a king, a brigadier and a knight?

[1] The use of the upper case versus the lower case in situations like this is discussed below.

Other questions arise in the course of this article, but these are the main questions I will try to answer here.

Figure 1: "Call me Brigadier Sir Nils Olav" (*The Witness*, 23 August 2016, page 5).

The structure of the article is:
1. Introduction
2. Proper names and appellatives
3. The giving of true proper names to individual animals and birds
4. The naming of military mascots
5. But why a penguin?
   - etymology of *penguin*
   - anthropomorphism
6. Conclusion

2. Proper names and appellatives

Anderson (2007: 5) rather muddies the waters in discussing whether or not bird "names" display properhood when he says that there is a

> difference between the common understanding of "dog name" vs. "bird name": a "dog name" for many English speakers would be Bonzo or Rover, for example […] but a "bird name", on the most obvious interpretation, is not Polly or Chirpie but willow warbler or snipe.

He goes on to say that "Bonzo and Chirpie are 'proper nouns', 'names' for individuals; snipe is a 'common noun' which is a low-level hyponym […]". And common nouns are not what Anderson is concerned with in his book, as he makes clear on the next page:

> I am concerned, then, with the status […] of items like Bonzo and Polly but not with those like snipe, except that insofar as this last indeed instantiates in contrast a grammatical non-name, viz. a (common) noun. (2007: 6)

Anderson's reference to bird "names" like *snipe* and *willow warbler* being "low-level hyponyms" appears to offer some hope that these are classes of onymic items like hydronyms or oronyms, but alas! the Terminology List of the International Council of Onomastic Scientists (ICOS)[2] does not recognise the word *hyponym*. Nor does the Shorter Oxford Dictionary of English, suggesting that Anderson's term *hyponym* has little if any authoritative backing.

Coates (2006) begins his article about "properhood" by referring to "[t]wo thousand years of disinformation about properhood", explaining this as

> because there are expressions that every linguist agrees to call proper, but there is no defensible agreed-upon view among linguists of what the state of being proper, PROPERHOOD, is, and, further, because understanding of properhood has been directly hindered by the persistence of assumptions made during the earliest linguistic speculations of western science. (2006: 356)

Coates reinforces this notion by citing Zilinsky's view that linguists have long been "obsess[ed] with achieving a rigid definition of names" and that "too much effort has been wasted in 'staking out that elusive boundary between proper and common nouns'" (Zilinsky 2002: 244, cited by Coates 2006: 357).

It might seem that trying to enforce either properhood or "non-properhood" on the names of bird species is a waste of time, but later in the same paper, Coates cites Strawson in suggesting that there are "intermediate categories" of names, with "names" like *The Old Pretender* and *The Old Vicarage* displaying different levels of properhood depending on their *context*, i.e. how the "names" are used (Strawson 1950 cited in Coates 2006: 369).

I would like to suggest that the designators of particular bird species, such as *King Penguin*, also display this type of "intermediacy", with levels of

[2] The author is a member of the ICOS Terminology Committee at the time of writing.

properhood depending on the context in which the names are used. In order to investigate this further, we need to turn to Van Langendonck (2007), who proposes a number of syntactic tests for establishing properhood (or lack of properhood). There is no space in this article to go through all Van Langendonck's tests, but one of the useful ones is investigating affinity for the definite or indefinite article. Consider the following set of sentences, using a prototypical toponym and a prototypical anthroponym:

1. It is an impressive mountain.
2. *It is an impressive Mount Everest.
3. She is a beautiful woman.
4. *She is a beautiful Elizabeth Taylor.

In this first set, the proper names *Mount Everest* and *Elizabeth Taylor* cannot be preceded by the indefinite article.

5. Mount Everest is impressive.
6. *Mountain is impressive.
7. Elizabeth Taylor is lovely.
8. *Woman is lovely.

This second set shows exactly the same thing. If the indefinite article is removed from *mountain* and *woman*, the resultant sentences are ungrammatical.

We can use such paradigmatic sets to test the onomastic status of *penguin*, *King Penguin*, and *Nils Olav*:

9. I can see a penguin swimming in the pond at the Edinburgh Zoo.
10. *I can see penguin swimming in the pond at Edinburgh Zoo.
11. I can see a King Penguin swimming in the pond at Edinburgh Zoo.
12. *I can see King Penguin swimming in the pond at Edinburgh Zoo.
13. I can see Nils Olav swimming in the pond at Edinburgh Zoo.
14. *I can see a Nils Olav swimming in the pond at Edinburgh.

There are several other tests for properhood, but all will show the same thing: *penguin* and *King Penguin* are not proper names; *Nils Olav* is. That seems clear enough, but in fact the issue is not so clear at all. Consider now the following three sets of words and phrases:

Set A	**Set B**	**Set C**
owl	Giant Eagle Owl	Rockhopper Penguin
lark	Rufous-naped Lark	Jackass Penguin
albatross	Wandering Albatross	Emperor Penguin
petrel	White-chinned Petrel	Macaroni Penguin
penguin	Jackass Penguin	King Penguin

Give these lists to any reasonably educated person, perhaps someone with an interest in natural history and ask that person which if any of the words are names. They may hesitate about Set A, but will have no hesitation in describing the words in sets B and C as being "the names of birds".

I could go further here, and state unequivocally that the words in set A are not names in an onomastic sense. They are appellatives or common nouns, found in sentences like "We heard an owl hooting at the bottom of the garden when we came home one night" and "There was a lark singing high above us when we set out for our picnic". What owl? What lark? it doesn't matter – the exact species of owl and lark are not important in these sentences.

The phrases in Set B are described as 'names' by all authors of bird guides, as in Gordon Maclean's *Introduction* to his 5th edition of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa* (1984: xxix, my emphasis):

> The scientific *names* of birds in this book […] English *names* are mostly those in common use in South Africa. Vernacular *names* are an eternal vexed question. The task of settling on a standard set for southern Africa was bedevilled by the variety of local *names* […].

Whether these are names in the onomastic sense or not is debatable. Most onomasticians would say "No". At an onomastic conference held in Zadar, Croatia in 2004 (see Koopman 2005), I presented a paper arguing that the scientific binomials of biological entities are proper names if they refer to a species as a whole ("*Acacia sieberiana*[3] is the dominant species of acacia in the thornscrub surrounding Pietermaritzburg" = proper name) but not if they refer to single specimens ("That is a lovely *Acacia sieberiana* you have growing there at the bottom of your garden" = appellative). Less than half the audience agreed with my argument. Nonetheless, among birders and ornithologists, and indeed all who are not theoretical onomasticians, the phrases in Set B constitute names.[4]

If we accept that, then we must accept that all the noun phrases in Set C, where the head noun is *penguin*, must be "names" as well. *Penguin* on its own is a common noun, so it must be the addition of the qualifying epithets *rockhopper*, *jackass*, *emperor*, *macaroni* and *king* that turn the appellative *penguin* into the "names" *Rockhopper Penguin*, *Jackass Penguin* and so on. I don't want to explore this any further here, but it would appear that the syntactic structure of {qualifying adjective/noun phrase + appellative[5]}

[3] Named after early botanical collector F.W. Sieber (1789–1844) (Boon 2010: 186).

[4] One may wish to suggest that expressions like *Giant Eagle Owl*, *Wandering Albatross*, *Rufous-naped Lark* and *King Penguin* are "ornithological names" (or ornithologist's names) but not "onomastic names".

[5] Always referring to a generic group of birds if we are talking about vernacular bird names.

produces a bird *name*. In other words, it is the compounding process itself, of elements which are not names, which produces names. This is worthy of a study on its own.

Let us agree, however, for the sake of this brief paper, that the onomastic status of *king penguin* is *liminal*:[6] it sits in a grey area, on the boundary between properhood and "appellativity" (if there is such a word). And let us note a caveat: the use of uppercase in noun phrases like *Giant Eagle Owl*, *Rufous-naped Lark*, *Wandering Albatross* and *King Penguin* is not of itself a marker of properhood. Rather it is the other way around: some authors or editors consider these to be proper names, and so follow the orthographic convention of writing them with uppercase initial letters. Others don't, like the writer of the caption of the picture at the head of this article who writes "king penguin Nils Olav". Jeremy Mynott, the author of the 2009 *Birdscapes*, consistently uses lowercase, as in this extract:

> I can also recognise other general groups such as cuckoos, pigeons and parrots, of course, and without too much difficulty I manage to identify […] [a few] cuckoos […] [such as the] little bronze cuckoo […] brush cuckoo […] common koel (also a cuckoo, and must be named after the call, a slow but penetrating *koeeel*), and the amazing channel-billed cuckoo […]. (2009: 230)

Uppercase is in any case an inconsistent maker of properhood: English marks all proper names with a capital (the girls Daisy, Iris, Poppy, Ruby and Pearl) but not common nouns (the flowers *daisy* and *poppy*, and the jewels *ruby* and *pearl*. German, on the other hand, capitalises *all* nouns, as in *Ganseblümchen* ('daisy'), *Mohn* ('poppy'), *Rubin* ('ruby') and *Perle* ('pearl'). English uses uppercase for the days of the week and the months of year, as in *Tuesday*, *Saturday*, *February* and *August*. French on the other hand, prefers lower case for these words, as in *mardi* ('Tuesday') *samedi* ('Saturday'), *février* ('February') and *août* ('August'). Similar differences in the use of uppercase and lowercase can be seen in the way these languages treat ethnonyms. Koopman (2016: 251) quotes from the terminology list on the website of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS):

> NOTE: Ethnonyms are not treated as proper names in some languages and by some scholars, e.g. *ingleses* in Spanish. According to some theories, ethnonyms are proper names both in plural and singular, in other theories, ethnonyms in the plural are proper names, in the singular appellatives.

As it is, it appears it is a matter of personal choice whether one writes "King Penguin" or "king penguin". Fortunately, surely there can only ever be

[6] Or "intermediate", to use Strawson's notion, as cited by Coates (2006).

one 'King Penguin/king penguin Brigadier Sir Nils Olav'[7], so it is not necessary to worry about what effect either singularity or plurality have on the use of upper case (*King Penguin*) or lower case (*king penguin*).

The onomastic status of the phrase *king penguin* (with or without upper case) is thus debatable, with arguments being made for it being a proper name when referring to a species but not when referring to an individual bird. In the caption of the photograph at the top of this article, clearly it is an individual bird that is being discussed, and the caption writer has sensibly steered clear of the use of capitals.

On the other hand, the onomastic status of the phrase *King of Norway* is, to my mind *not* debatable: it is *not* a proper name. It does indeed *contain* a proper name – the toponym *Norway*, but the phrase as a whole is not a name. One might then say the caption writer has erred in using uppercase with *King*, but perhaps this is because the whole phrase is *King of Norway's Guard*, and without knowing any further detail about the nomenclature of military units serving the Norwegian king, I must leave this to speculation.[8]

Once a personal name has been added to the word *king*, the whole picture changes, and we will find that *king* in *King Penguin* functions completely differently to *king* in the phrases *King Henry the Eighth*, *King James I*, and *King Harald V*, the current king of Norway.

On their own, titles are not proper names. See the following sentences:

15. I spoke to the *sergeant* to the local police station about what I had seen.
16. The *prince* bent down and kissed Sleeping Beauty on the forehead…
17. But if you go to staff HQ, you will find it packed with *colonels*, *brigadiers* and *generals*.
18. The *king* was in his counting house, counting out his money; the *queen* was in the parlour, eating bread and honey.

However, once titles like *sergeant*, *prince*, *king*, etc. are linked to proper names they form an onomastic partnership in which title and name together form another level of name, as in *General George S. Patton*, *Prince Charles*, *Queen Elizabeth I*, *Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother*, and *King Alphonso XIII of Spain*.[9] The caption of the photograph above talks of the

[7] To be more specific, only ever one so-named penguin at any one time. As we will see below, once we look at the diachronic use of the names *Nils Olav*, we will see that more than one penguin is involved.

[8] *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Majestet_Kongens_Garde, accessed 2019-03-14) gives the official name of this battalion of the Norwegian Army as *Hans Majestet Kongens Garde* which translates as 'His Majesty the King's Guard'.

[9] King Alphonso XIII (1886–1941) becomes an onomastician's delight when his full identity is revealed. His full names are *Alfonso León Fernando María Jaime Isidro Pascual Antonio de Borbón y Habsburgo-Lorena*.

"King of Norway". The current holder of this title is King Harald V. He is the current king of Norway, as was his father King Olav V of Norway, the inspiration for the naming of Nils Olav, the current king of the penguins serving as a mascot to the King of Norway's Guard. King Harald V's son, Crown Prince Haakon, will become the King of Norway when Harald V dies. Later, under the heading "The naming of military mascots" where I discuss the history of the King Penguin mascot of the King of Norway's Guard in more detail, we will see that is likely that the current penguin, when it retires or dies, will be replaced by another from the Edinburgh Zoo. In other words, to introduce a note of anthropomorphism, the zoo houses a "Crown Prince Penguin" ready to step into the shoes of the current King Penguin.

Figure 2: King Harald V
(see *Wikipedia*, "Harald V of Norway")

Figure 3: King Penguin
(see *Wikipedia*, "King penguin")

But how did the king penguin seen marching (shuffling? swaggering?) alongside the feet of the King of Norway's Guard get given the personal names Nils Olav?

3. The giving of personal names (true proper names) to animals and birds

The mascot of the King of Norway's Guards carries two types of names. As a member of the species *Aptenodytes patagonicus* in the Family *Spheniscidae*, he is a King Penguin. But there are several hundreds of thousands of other King Penguins, so he is not unique in bearing this name. But he *is* unique in bearing the names Nils Olav, and while there may well be other King Penguins carrying a personal name (or names) like this, they will be comparatively few in number.

Personal names like this are usually given to domestic animals: animals seen as pets and animals used in husbandry. The naming of cats and dogs,

and cows and horses is well-known. The study of these constitutes a specific branch of onomastics known as *zoonymy*. In his 2014 article "The naming imperative: Naming wild animals", Koopman lists a number of scholars who over the last twenty years or so who have studied the names of animals that interact on a daily basis with humans. He also notes that many zoo animals are named as well, especially if they become celebrities like Knut the polar bear cub in the Berlin Zoo, or Max the gorilla in the Johannesburg Zoo (Koopman 2014: 22–23). He even notes the two penguins born at the UShaka Marine World in Durban in May 2012, and immediately named *Kola* and *Kelp*, although he does not say what species they are.

But Koopman also hypothesises that when "wild" animals (which for the sake of his paper are those not normally kept as pets or used in husbandry) leave "wild space" and come into contact with humans, especially as individuals, they are likely to get names. The examples he gives, mostly culled from local newspapers over a period of several years, show that in a majority of cases where wild animals are named, there is a strong anthropomorphic element involved. This is particularly clear in the case where rhino conservationist Lawrence Anthony is handed an orphaned baby baboon by a group of battle-hardened Ugandan soldiers:

> Where is its mother [I said]
> We don't know.
> What do you feed it?
> We give it water and berries.
> It needs milk.
> There is no milk here
> Does it have a name?
> No.
> Everything must have a name. We will name it Mfeni, I said, giving it the Zulu name for baboon. (2014: 31)

Anthony's choice of name is interesting here, because although his newly adopted baby baboon will be one of the few of its species carrying a personal name like this, to all Zulu speakers, every one of the hundreds of thousands of members of the species *Papia ursinus* is known as an *imfene*.

How does our king penguin mascot fit into this picture? Well, clearly he is not one of the estimated 2.23 million breeding pairs found on sub-Antarctic islands like the Kerguelen and Prince Edward Islands (see *Wikipedia*, "King penguin"). Brigadier Sir Nils Olav appears to be based in the more salubrious climate of the Edinburgh Zoo. There can be no question of whether he interacts with humans or not: the picture above, showing him swaggering along in front of a serried rank of white-striped black trousers, makes it clear that he does. Is he now an individual singled out from the crowd? Surely he is – there can be

no other penguins which have been knighted, and promoted to the rank of brigadier. So Brigadier Sir Nils Olav, the King Penguin of the King's Guard, the namesake of the late King Olav of Norway, is clearly a classic example of the wild creature that has been named. Named in an onomastic sense, that is, and not just identified as a member of a species.

4. The naming of military mascots

The names *Nils* and *Olav* and the titles *Brigadier* and *Sir* become more clear when we look at them in the context of the naming of military mascots generally. The *Wikipedia* website on this topic ("Military mascot") has a wealth of onomastic data relating to military mascots. Although the emphasis is on British regiments, a number of other regiments are mentioned from around the world, and details are given for naming traditions relating to horses, ponies, dogs, goats, sheep, and a variety of non-domestic animals such as bears, kangaroos and antelope.[10]

A distinct pattern emerges from the narratives of the mascots of these various regiments:

- In most cases, the regimental traditions go back for a considerable length of time. The tradition of a drum horse (carrying two kettledrums) as a mascot of the Queen's Royal Hussars dates back to 1743, and the use of Kashmir goats for the Royal Welsh Regiment dates back to 1775.
- In most cases the name given to the original mascot is retained for each of its successors, with a roman numeral added to indicate each current one. The Mercian regiment first adopted a Swaledam Ram in 1858 when in service at the Indian Mutiny, naming it Private Derby. The current mascot, in service since 2008, is Private Derby XXIX.
- The name does not always remain the same for each 'incarnation' of the mascots. The mascot of the Irish Guards is and has always been an Irish Wolfhound since the first one in 1902, named *Brian Boru*. Since then each of this dog's 15 successors has been named after a legendary chieftain or High King of Ireland. The current mascot is Domhnall, in service since 2013.
- All such military mascots are regarded as full members of each regiment, and as such have a military rank. Invariably each pony, dog or goat starts at the bottom of the ranks, as a private or a fusilier, and if it fulfils its function properly as a military mascot, is liable for

[10] The mascot of the 5th battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment is a Sumatran tiger, named *Quintus*.

promotion, in most cases to lance corporal. Some make it to the rank of full corporal or even sergeant before retirement or death brings an end to their service. Replacement mascots start again at the bottom.

Figure 4: The Kashmir goat mascot of the 1st Battalion Welch [sic] Regiment, with Sergeant-Drummer McKelvey, taken in the 1890s (Warner 1975: 87). The original caption makes it clear that this goat is a newcomer, having taken the place of its predecessor which died the previous year.

Brigadier Sir Nils Olav fits well into this onomastic paradigm. He is not the first King Penguin to serve as military mascot of the King of Norway's Guard, and all his predecessors have been called *Nils Olav*. Where Brigadier Sir Nils Olav differs from almost every other military mascot in the world is in his knighthood, and in his exalted military rank, and to find out how that happened, we need to delve into a much more detailed history of the mascots of the King of Norway's Guard, courtesy of the *Wikipedia* website ("Nils Olav").

The history of military mascots for the King of Norway's Guard is a comparatively recent one, beginning only in 1961 when soldiers of this regiment visited Edinburgh to take part in one of the famous Edinburgh Military Tattoos. A lieutenant from this regiment, named *Nils Egelien*, visited the Edinburgh Zoo on this occasion, was fascinated by the penguins there, and on the return of the regiment to Norway, persuaded the powers-that-be to adopt one of the Edinburgh penguins as a military mascot. This was done, and the first such King Penguin, named *Nils* after Lieutenant Nils Egelian and Olav after the reigning Norwegian king of the time, took up service with

the rank of *visekorporal* (‘lance corporal’). Before his death in 1987, Nils Olav I had been promoted to sergeant, and instead of his successor, Nils Olav II starting at the bottom of the ranks as has been the case with most other military mascots, the penguin number two started its military service as a sergeant. On each subsequent visit of the regiment to Edinburgh to take part in the military tattoo, the penguin was promoted again, attaining in 1993 the rank of regimental sergeant major and finally in 2005 Nils Olav II was promoted to colonel-in-chief of the regiment. In 2008 a knighthood was approved by King Harald V, the penguin being the first to receive such an honour in the Norwegian Army:

> During the ceremony a crowd of several hundred people joined the 130 guardsmen on parade at the zoo, to hear a citation from the King read out, which described Nils as a penguin “in every way qualified to receive the honour and dignity of knighthood”. (*Wikipedia*, “Nils Olav”)

Nils Olav III took over at some point between 2008 and 2016, inheriting his predecessor’s knighthood and rank of colonel-in-chief. On 22 August 2016 he was promoted to Brigadier in a ceremony attended by over 50 members of the King’s Guard. As we have seen at the beginning of this article, a photograph taken at this event made its way into the pages of the South African newspaper *The Witness* a day later.

4.1. Onomastic implications of the naming of military mascots

Are these names the names of individual animals or birds? Or are they names of “positions”? In the picture shown above a “sergeant-drummer” of the Royal Welsh Regiment is shown next to the regimental mascot. Ever since the first such goat mascot was obtained by this regiment in 1775, every one has been called *William Windsor*, or less formally, *Billy* (i.e. ‘billy-goat’). Over more than two hundred years, that is a lot of goats. So I ask: is the name *William Windsor* the name of the “notional mascot”, a “slot” as it were, into which Kashmir goats are put to serve until their death or retirement? Or are *William Windsor I*, *William Windsor II*, *William Windsor III* (and so on, *ad infinitum*) the names of each actual individual living goat?

The situation is certainly not clear, and it becomes less clear with the King Penguin of the King of Norway’s Guard. As we have seen immediately above, the current incumbent took over both the rank of colonel and the knighthood of his predecessor, and only differs from the penguin which went before him in his new rank of brigadier. So although the newspaper caption “Call me Brigadier Sir Nils Olav” suggests that this is the unique name of the penguin shown in the picture, it might be more correct to say that the penguin in the picture is the current incumbent “inhabiting” the notional position ‘X-rank Sir Nils Olav’.

5. But why a penguin?

Why a penguin when other regiments around the world are happy with domestic mammals and the occasional exotic species? Granted, there *are* regiments with avian military mascots: the 2nd Cavalry Regiment of Australia has a Wedge-tailed Eagle named *Courage*; the 1st Aviation Regiment, also in Australia, has a Peregrine Falcon named *Penny Alert*; and *Old Abe*, a Bald Eagle, was for 20 years the famous mascot of the 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment in the American Civil War. Note that all three of these mascots are powerful raptors, not flightless birds removed from their marine environment.

I have two suggestions to make about why the King of Norway's Guard might have chosen a penguin as their mascot, one based on the etymology of the word *penguin* itself, the other on anthropomorphic attitudes towards penguins.

5.1. Little fat oily birds: The etymology of *penguin*

An intriguing paper by Ephraim Nissan & Ghil'ad Zuckermann[11] describes the way in which the famous Hebrew and Yiddish novelist Mendele Mokher Sfarim, in the earlier years of his life, wrote about natural history, in the course of which he had to coin Hebrew names for certain species of bird. To do this, he either relied on biblical Hebrew references to birds, or translated or rephonologised German names for 'birds' found in an early publication. The relevance of Nissan & Zuckermann's article to this present article about Brigadier Sir Nils Olav lies in various names given to the now extinct Great Auk. Mokher Sfarim gave the name *alqum*[12], based on a word from *Proverbs* 30:3 meaning 'no rising up'. Mokher Sfarim found this a suitable name for the Great Auk because firstly, it was a flightless bird, like the penguin, and so could not rise up in the air as other birds, and also, secondly, because by the time that Mokher Sfarim was writing about birds, the Great Auk had become extinct, that is to say never able to appear as a bird species again.

The word *penguin*, suggest Nissan & Zuckermann (and taken up by Cocker as well – 2013: 95) was first applied to the Great Auk, long known by Iberian mariners as a fat and oily bird well able to provide needed dietary boosts in cold wintery weather. Great Auks were hunted by their thousands

[11] Nissan & Zuckermann (2013). It is noteworthy that Nissan & Zuckermann refer to 'zoonyms' in their title and in their paper, even though the paper has nothing to do with naming pet birds *Polly* or *Chirpie*. The zoonyms, or bird names they talk about, are the English, German, Hebrew and Latin names for species of auks. Oliviu Felecan, the editor of the conference proceedings where this article has been published, has likewise placed their article in a section headed "Zoonymy". Clearly it is not only ornithologists who see the identificatory labels of discreet species of birds as "names".

[12] I will not give the equivalent of this or any other Hebrew name in Hebrew characters, as do Nissan & Zuckermann.

for their feathers and for their fat, oily flesh; hunted, indeed, to such an extent that they became extinct in the mid-1800s. The Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking mariners called the Great Auk *pengüen*, derived from Latin *pinguis* 'fat', 'oily', with the diminutive form *pinguinus*.[13]

Once the Great Auks ('penguins') in the northern hemisphere ocean had been hunted to extinction, the hunters turned to the southern oceans where another flightless fat, oily bird, of several species, still lived in their millions: the birds which are known today as *penguins*. Cocker (2013: 95) says that slaughter of southern Atlantic penguins reached its peak in the 1860s[14] during which time operations in the Falkland Islands killed well over two million birds, most of them the Rockhopper Penguin.[15] When the Falkland Island penguin population was no longer viable, attention was turned toward the millions-strong colonies of the King Penguin on Macquarie Island south-west of New Zealand, where in a six-week period during 1891, about 150 000 King Penguins were killed.

Seen in the light of Great Auk extinction and the transfer of the name *penguin* to little fat oily flightless birds in the cold pelagic environments of the southern oceans, the phenomenon of a penguin "colony" living in Edinburgh, with members acting as mascots to a regiment based in Norway, we could say that in a symbolic sense at least, the name *penguin* has returned to northern climes.

I have already quoted above the extract from *Wikipedia* on the penguin mascot of the King of Norway's Guard, noting that on the visit of this regiment to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 1961 a certain Lieutenant Nils Egelien visited the Edinburgh Zoo, and was fascinated by the penguins there. I dare say that Lt Egelien was unaware of the transfer of the name *penguin* from the extinct Great Auk of northern waters to this similar flightless bird of the southern hemisphere. More likely Lt Egelien was attracted by the qualities of this bird enumerated directly below.

[13] The name lives on: Nissan & Zuckerman point out that the modern French name for the Great Auk is *grand pingouin.* Incidentally, both Cocker (2013) and Nissan & Zuckermann (2013) mention the oft-repeated suggestion that *penguin* is derived from the Welsh *pen gwynn* ('white head') as first applied to the Great Auk. As this bird did *not* have a white head, however, this theory has not carried much weight.

[14] The last known Great Auk was killed in 1844, so it was not long afterwards that hunters turned their attention to the southern hemisphere penguins.

[15] But also significant numbers of Gentoo and Magellanic Penguins.

5.2. Anthropomorphic attitudes towards penguins

Cocker (2013: 92) has this to say about the connotations of penguins:

> Penguin images are frequently used to stress low temperatures. Ice cream or frozen desserts are perennial favourites. Quite what links these flightless birds might have with commercial aviation or the Arabian desert is more difficult to fathom, but nonetheless an Emperor Penguin[16] appeared in an Emirates Airline advertisement in *The Times*, 6 October 2009.

Cocker goes on to say (ibid.) that

> A further bizarre anomaly is the use of penguins to conjure Arctic associations. There are even boats called "Arctic penguins".

Clearly the association between penguins and low temperature is sufficient to support the role Brigadier Sir Nils Olav plays as the mascot of a regimental unit based in Norway. As Cocker points out, the anomaly of a bird species only found in the southernmost waters of the world being used in association with the frigid temperatures of the northernmost areas of the world is not a problem. The anthropomorphic appeal of the bird (Cocker 2013: 92) and its association with cold is sufficient to overcome this.

Regimental mascots are common. As we have seen above, dogs are firm favourites, but goats, mules, horses, elephants and a variety of wildlife can also be found. My search of the limited literature on this topic has only turned up one penguin, and despite the link described above, I cannot help but feel that there must be something more than just an association with cold climes, which has caused the men of the King of Norway's Guard to bestow the titles *Brigadier* and *Sir* and the names *Nils* and *Olav* on successive specimens of the species *Aptenodytes patagonicus*.

And so I come back to the question "Why a penguin?" I think Cocker has an answer here too. In talking about the anthropomorphic appeal of this bird, and its upright and bipedal character, Cocker also mentions the plumage:

> Their plumages, a mixture of dark black or blue above, white below, often with colour detail that evokes a sash, headdress or bowtie, famously suggested to the Antarctic explorer Edward Wilson the dress tail coat and white waistcoat of formal costume. The idea of penguins as birds in evening wear is now the stuff of cliché. (2013: 92)

The key concept here is of a bird in *uniform*. And that is what I suggest

[16] Cocker, unlike Mynott (2009), uses upper case for the names of bird species, even when, as in this case, he is talking about an individual bird.

is what makes this bird so suitable as a regimental mascot, where the soldiers themselves are equally men in uniform. And here I think I need to return to the photograph of Brigadier Sir Nils Olav which sparked my interest in the first place. The picture shows only the legs of the King's Guard, clad in black trousers with a white stripe down each side. And the picture of Brigadier Sir Nils Olav shows his back view, so although we cannot see the white waistcoat that so impressed Edward Wilson, what we can see is a straight black back with white stripes running down each side. Visually at least, this penguin is a perfect match for the King of Norway's Guard.

6. Conclusion

Most of this article has been about the linguistic and onomastic status of the names and titles of the penguin serving as a mascot to the King of Norway's Guard. I have talked about properhood, the giving of individual names to individual "wild" animals, the naming of military mascots and the etymology of the word *penguin*. It is now time to talk about this penguin simply as a bird. And so, in this conclusion, let us look briefly what might happen to Brigadier Sir Nils Olav when he retires from his soldierly rank and goes back to being a "mere" bird again.

To do so properly, I think, requires me now to change my style of discourse to that of a "birder". Up until now I have used a discourse style which I would hope has been suitable for a discussion of onomastic issues: the sometimes fine line between proper names and appellatives, whether bird "names" are really names, the partnership between names and titles, the etymology of *penguin*, and so on. Now I change my style to that of that proportion of the population who spend much of their waking hours peering through binoculars at distant birds and ticking them off on lists.

Inevitably, to use the discourse style of a select group of people is to use their own particular jargon and in footnote 20 below I explain certain items like *bins*, *Flock-at-Sea* and *megatick*.

I pick up the narrative from an earlier part of the article when I talked about what would happen when the current Brigadier Sir Nils Olav retires: I can imagine the excitement if Sir Nils were to be released into the southernmost waters of the Atlantic when his feet have worn too thin to pound the parade-ground any more, and he has grown too old to inspect the troops: –

A crowd of balaclava'd birders, packed at the taff-rails of the *MSS Concordia* and clutching their bins in their mittened hands, is scanning the

cold, grey waters ahead of them at a Flock-at-Sea event.[17] A number of penguin-like heads are bobbing up in the distance. One of the birds comes closer. "Look!" shouts one of the birders, "An Emperor Penguin!" "No!" shouts another, "It's a Jackass Penguin!" "You're wrong," shouts a third, "It's a King Penguin! Yes, definitely, a King Penguin, and Omigod Omigod, I don't believe it – look at that little metal tag on its right flipper… it's… it's… it's Brigadier Sir Nils Olav!!!!!"

What a megatick!

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[17] A *Flock-at-Sea* is a mass bird-watching event in pelagic waters organised by BirdLife South Africa (the "official" South African parent birding body). The cruise ship *MSS Concordia* has been used more than once for these events. *Bins* is birders' slang for 'binoculars'. Birders frequently tick bird species off in various lists: their life list, their African list, their 2018 list and so on. A *mega-tick* is a major sighting, often a "lifer" – the first time this particular birder has ever come across this particular species.

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