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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS LIV

by

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum, Durban)

ON THE SUBSPECIES OF THE KNOT *CALIDRIS CANUTUS* (LINNAEUS) WINTERING IN AFRICA

In a short note in Suppl. No. 3 to my *Catalogue of Birds of the South African Sub-Region* in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. xi, 2, 1976, p. 38, I drew attention to the fact that a single Knot *Calidris canutus* (Linnaeus), 1758: Sweden, from Durban Bay, Natal, in the Durban Museum collection taken in 1964 is both colder and greyer dorsally and rather longer billed than in the case of a series of nominate *C. canutus* from western Europe (Netherlands, the specimens taken between 1 February and 6 April).

In recent years the Knot has increased considerably as a non-breeding visitor to estuaries along the south-eastern African coast, and four specimens taken in Durban Bay on 23 January, 1979, by Mr. John Mendelsohn, Scientific Officer (Vertebrates), Durban Museum, and a juvenile in transitional dress obtained in the same place in October, 1975, by R. K. Brooke now make six skins of this wader available for study from Natal.

The four specimens collected with a single shot in 1979 stand apart from all European skins in being much greyer, less brownish, above, with the bills appreciably longer in series. The upper-parts of these four Durban-taken specimens correspond to the Light Grayish Olive of Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl. xlvi, as against Drab (same pl.) in the Netherlands series of nominate *C. canutus*. The six Knot specimens from Durban have the

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or to birds occurring in South Africa, but as Dick, Pienkowski *et al.*, *loc.cit.*, show, Knots occurring on passage in Sweden, the type-locality of *C.c.canutus*, are of Siberian origin, and, therefore, the birds wintering in Africa, south to the Cape, Natal and southern Moçambique, are of the nominate subspecies. Eastern North Atlantic coastal birds, breeding in Spitzbergen, Greenland and Ellesmere Island, with the bill-length ranging shorter and the winter dress browner above, and which winter south as far as the Bay of Biscay, will now become ***Calidris canutus islandica*** (Linnaeus), *stat.nov.*, 1767: Iceland (*vide* Linnaeus, *Syst.Nat.*, 12th edition, ii, 1767, Ad-denda: "Habitat in Islandia"). Two earlier synonyms for western European-taken Knots, namely, *Tringa cinerea* Brünnich, 1764, and *Tringa Calidris* Linnaeus, 1766, are of equivocal subspecific attribution.

A FURTHER RACE OF *COSSYPHA HEUGLINI* HARTLAUB FROM THE SOUTH WEST AFRICA/ANGOLA BORDER COUNTRY

Winterbottom, in his report on Okavango birds in *Cimbebasia*, No. 15, 1966, p. 57, and in *Prelim. Check List Birds South West Africa*, 1971, p. 187, places the Okavango R. population of the Whitebrowed Robin *Cossypha heuglini* Hartlaub as *C.h.subrufescens* Bocage, 1869: Caconda, Huila Angola. Examination of a recently assembled series from the Okavango shows that this is incorrect and that the population concerned is an undescribed subspecies, which may be known as

Cossypha heuglini orphea, subsp.nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Andara, Okavango R., north-eastern South West Africa (Namibia). 10 December, 1978. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M. Reg. No. 31 478.

Diagnosis: Differs from *C.h.subrufescens* in having the pileum more greyish slate, less jet black, and the central pair of rectrices olivaceous rather than brownish black (Deep Olive, *versus* Clove Brown (both pl. xl)). Separable from *C.h.occidentalis* Reichenow, 1909: Lufuku R., Marungu, south-eastern Zaïre, in having the mantle Deep Olive, as against light Medal Bronze (pl. iv); the rump also greener, less orange, and the central tail-feathers greyer. In worn dress the mantle becomes light bluish grey (Deep Neutral Gray (pl. liii)). Similar in size.

C.h.orphea differs from the eastern lowland race *C.h.euronota* Friedmann, 1930: Lumbo, northern Moçambique, on the basis of

darker and greener dorsal colouration and larger size. *C.h.euronota* is similar in colouration to *occidentalis*, differing only in smaller size.

Measurements: Wings of 2 ♂♂ 101,5, 103, 5 ♀♀ 89 - 94 (91,6) mm.

Material examined: 15 (Okavango R., Caprivi Strip and Chobe R.).

Range: Mid-Okavango R., north-eastern South West Africa, east to Caprivi and Ngamiland, north-western Botswana, and in southern Cuando-Cubango, south-eastern Angola, and south-western Zambia. Intergrades with *C.h.occidentalis* to the east of its stated range.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 103, culmen from base 21,5, tarsus 33, tail 94,5 mm.

Remarks: Overlooking the requirements of the Law of Priority, Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, p. 229, associate the Zambian populations of the Whitebrowed Robin with *C.h.euronota* (1930) rather than with *C.h.occidentalis* (1909).

THE SUBSPECIES OF THE STRIPED PIPIT *ANTHUS LINEIVENTRIS* SUNDEVALL

An examination of the material of the Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris* Sundevall of the southern half of Africa now in southern African collections reveals that three races require to be admitted instead of the present two. Variation in this species of lightly wooded country affects general size, levels of dorsal saturation and the extent of the ventral streaking, the second of these parameters being much affected by insolation and abrasion, and its use is restricted to specimens taken between March and June.

The names, characters and ranges of the three subspecies it is now proposed to recognise will stand as follows:

(a) ***Anthus lineiventris stygium*** Clancey

Anthus lineiventris stygium Clancey, *Bonn.Zool.Beitr.*, vol. iii, heft 1/2, 1952, p. 18: Umgeni R. valley, near Pietermaritzburg, Natal.

Compared with *A.l.lineiventris*, the upper-parts in newly moulted dress with the feathers fringed more saturated greenish or yellowish, less earthen, brown or drab (Isabella Color (pl. xxx) or greener). Below, fore-throat whiter, less buffish; ground to the breast lighter and the streaking less heavy; medio-ventral plane also whiter.

Range: Coastal forested region of Transkei, Natal, Zululand, south-eastern Transvaal, eastern Swaziland, and the south of Moçambique in the Lebombo Range.