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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

LV

by

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum, Durban)

ON THE PROBLEM OF THE RACE(S) OF THE REDSHANK *TRINGA TOTANUS* (LINNAEUS) REACHING THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUB-REGION

While it is claimed that at least two subspecies of the Eurasian Redshank *Tringa totanus* (Linnaeus) reach East Africa during the course of their post-breeding southbound migrations, no attempt has hitherto been made to determine the precise subspecies reaching the South African Sub-Region. In so far as southern Africa is concerned, the Redshank is a sparse visitor, and only in the west, at Walvis Bay, has the species been recorded in any numbers. Virtually no specimens of this wader have been taken in southern Africa, but through the kind agency of Mr Bryan G. Donnelly, Ornithologist of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, I have recently been able to study a specimen taken at Namasire, some 29 km south of Shakawe, in the north-west of Botswana, on 6 September, 1971, by Mr A. L. Archer.

The Namasire skin is an adult female in advanced post-breeding moult, but still carrying some faded buffy brown breeding plumage feathering over the upper-parts, and in the coverts over the bends of the wings, while the remiges are very abraded and browned. The flattened wing is 152,5, which probably would equal *c.* 157 in fresh condition, culmen-length from the feathers 40, tarsus 51,5, and the

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Data on breeding and general biology in *C.woodwardi* are given by Holliday and Tait, *Ostrich*, vol. xxiv, 2, 1953, pp. 115 - 117.

I am grateful to Mr C. W. Benson for inviting my attention to the note by Peters and Loveridge, and to Dr Raymond A. Paynter Jnr for so readily responding to my request for the loan of a proportion of the skins from the Rondo Plateau.

A FURTHER RACE OF *PARUS RUFIVENTRIS* BOCAGE
FROM THE MIDDLE AND LOWER
OKAVANGO R. DRAINAGE

Rudebeck, *S.Afr.Anim.Life*, vol. ii, 1955, p. 513, records that a specimen of *Parus rufiventris* from Omrora in southern Angola differs from topotypical nominate *P.rufiventris* Bocage, 1877: Caconda, Huila, Angola, in being much larger. Examination of a short series of this attractive tit from the Kavango woodlands of north-eastern South West Africa taken in 1978 and 1979 by Mr M. O. E. Baddeley, and now in the collection of the Durban Museum, confirms Rudebeck's conjecture that the population occurring in southern Angola and adjacent northern South West Africa is separable from the typical race. As a name is required, it may henceforth be known as

Parus rufiventris diligens, subsp.nov.

Type: ♂, 1st year. Andara, Okavango R., north-eastern South West Africa (Namibia). 15 May, 1979. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M. Reg. No. 31 739.

Diagnosis: Compared with *P.r.rufiventris*, described from the miombo of central and northern Angola, differs in having the vertex duller and less glossy bluish black, this merging gradually into the blue-grey dorsum and not sharply demarcated as in nominate *rufiventris*. Below, the males show a gradual gradation of black to ashy grey over the plastron, while in *P.r.rufiventris* the black over the chin and fore-throat is again clearly defined from the grey of the breast. In the females, *diligens* entirely lacks black over the chin and fore-throat, the whole plastron being grey; the vertex is also particularly dull in this sex, being scarcely darker than the back. Size ranging larger, the tail much longer: in adult ♂♂ 70 - 74, versus 62 - 67 mm in the norm of *P.r.rufiventris*. The irides in *P.r.diligens* are pale yellowish white.

Measurements: *P.r.diligens*

♂♂ wings n 4	86,5 - 89 (87,8), SD 1,31
tails	70 - 73 (71,3), SD 1,60

♀ wings n 2 82, 82 (juvenal rectrices with abraded tips)

P.r.rufiventris

♂♂ wings n 30 83 - 89 (85,3), SD 1,70, SE 0,31
tails 61,5 - 69 (64,4), SD 2,11, SE 0,39

♀ wings n 13 80 - 86 (82,4), SD 2,06, SE 1,57
tails 58 - 66,5 (63,3), SD 2,87, SE 0,80

P.r.masukuensis

♂♂ wings n 12 83 - 87 (85,1), SD 1,54, SE 0,45
tails 61 - 67,5 (63,5), SD 2,58, SE 0,75

♀ wings n 12 77,5 - 83,5 (80,7), SD 2,12, SE 0,61
tails 59 - 65 (61,2), SD 1,85, SE 0,53 mm

Material examined: *P.r.diligens*, 5 (Rundu and Andara, Okavango R.); *P.r.rufiventris*, 42; *P.r.diligens* \leq *P.r.rufiventris*, 2; *P.r.masukuensis*, 30.

Range: Southern Huila and southern Cuando-Cubango, Angola, and northern South West Africa from northern Ovamboland (at Ochimbora), east to the Kavango woodlands and the Caprivi Strip. Probably also extreme south-western Zambia, as specimens from as far north as the Luachi R., in Barotseland, approach *diligens* in the long wing- and tail-lengths, and north-western Botswana.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 88 (in moult; flattened), culmen (from base) 14, tarsus 23,5, tail 70 mm.

Remarks: Of the short series of nominate *P.rufiventris* in the collection of the British Museum (Nat.Hist.), Tring, from Angola, southern Zaïre and Zambia, all but one have the tail-length values 63 - 67, the exception being one statedly from Caconda, Huila, collected by Anchieta and dated December, 1877. This skin has a tail of 72, in which it agrees with *diligens* from the south of the same Province, which has tails 70 - 74 in ♂♂. The specimen concerned is that used by J. G. Keulemans for the figure of *P.r.rufiventris* on pl. x of Bocage's *Ornithologie d'Angola*, 1881. A second topotype from Caconda in the British Museum (Nat.Hist.) collection has both the wing at 85 and the tail at 66 typical of the norm of *P.r.rufiventris*. The long tail-length in the first British Museum topotype may indicate a shift in this population towards the larger *diligens*, or else may have resulted from poor preparation by which the rectrices became partially dislodged. On the other hand, Anchieta may have collected this particular example well south of Caconda.

A careful examination of the nice series of over seventy specimens of this tit from Zambia in the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, suggests that both Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, p. 260, and Snow, in the continuation of Peters' *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. xii, 1967, pp. 103, 104, should not have given the Zambian range as being confined to the extreme west of that state. In the north, *P.r.rufiventris* certainly extends as far east as the Copper Belt, and further south, east to at least 28° E., where at both points adequate material shows it intergrades with *P.r.masukuensis* Shelley, 1900: Masuku Mts, northern Malawi. Nominate *P.rufiventris* differs from *masukuensis* in having the dorsum rather darker and purer neutral grey, the breast also clearer, less olivaceous, grey, and the lower venter Cinnamon (pl. xxix), *versus* the paler and yellower Cinnamon-Buff (same pl.). In the nominotypical subspecies the sexes are also more similar in size.

For kindly examining and measuring the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) material of *P.r.rufiventris* for me, I am indebted to both Mr and Mrs C. W. Benson of Cambridge, England. For the loan of the series in the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, I am grateful both to the Director, Mr M. P. Stuart Irwin, and the Ornithologist, Mr Bryan G. Donnelly.

A SECOND SOUTHERN RACE OF *TURDOIDES MELANOPS* (HARTLAUB) OF THE AFROTROPICAL REGION

Hoesch and Niethammer, *Die Vogelwelt Deutsch-Südwestafrikas*, 1940, p. 257, draw attention to variation existing in the present nominate race of *Turdoides melanops*, described from Damaraland, South West Africa. A short series from Andara on the Okavango R., in north-eastern South West Africa, recently received by the Durban Museum, when compared from material from southern Angola further to the west confirms that the present nominate subspecies is composite, necessitating the recognition of a second austral subspecies of this babbler. This latter innominate taxon will now take the name of

***Turdoides melanops querulus*, subsp. nov.**

Type: ♀, adult. Andara, Okavango R., north-eastern South West Africa (Namibia). 2 December, 1978. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M. Reg. No. 31 706.

Diagnosis: Differs from the more western *T.m.melanops* (Hartlaub), 1867: Damaraland, in having the pileum greyer, with more

prominent and evenly distributed cinereous tipping to the feathers; dorsum much darker and colder, less buffish, brown (greyish olive-brown). Orbits more extensively black and cheeks purer grey. Below, with the fore-throat clearer grey, and rest of venter somewhat darker or duller, less buffish, brown, with well-marked leaden shaft striae. Size smaller: wing of 1 ♂ 118,5, and 5 ♀♀ 109 - 116,5, versus 122, 122, 123 in 3 ♂♂ and 118, 119 mm in 2 ♀♀ of *T.m.melanops*. Bill also markedly shorter and somewhat less decurved: 6 ♂♂ 26 - 28, against 29,5 - 31 mm in nominate *melanops* (as measured from the base).

Material examined: 6 (all from Andara, Okavango R.).

Range: Lower Okavango R. drainage of north-eastern South West Africa, the western Caprivi Strip, adjacent Cuando-Cubango, Angola, and the swamp region of north-western Botswana.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 115, culmen from base 27, tail 121,5 mm.

Remarks: The geographical variation now determined in *T.melanops* in the South West Africa-Angola-north-western Botswana region of southern Africa parallels very closely that determined earlier in the sympatric babbler *Turdoides leucopygius* (Rüppell) populations (see Clancey, *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. x, 11, 1975, pp. 147 - 150) occurring in the same general area, with a form occurring in the Okavango Swamp region which is both colder and more extensively grey than that present to the west and north.

As in the case of *T.leucopygius*, the colour characters of *T.m.querulus* appear to be rapidly modified by plant abrasion and solar bleaching. Old dorsal feathers are much lighter and browner than is the case of newly moulted plumage, and worn examples of *T.m.melanops* and *T.m.querulus* are probably not separable on colour on its own.

AN ADJUSTMENT TO THE SOUTHERN RACES OF *CHLOROCICHLA FLAVIVENTRIS* (SMITH)

In *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. viii, 11, 1968, pp. 133, 134, I showed that the *Chlorocichla flaviventris occidentalis* of authors was composite, and re-arranged it in two races: *C.f.occidentalis* Sharpe, 1881: Angola, in the dry west of southern Africa, and *C.f.zambesiae* Shelley, 1896: Victoria Falls, Rhodesia, in the more mesic east. Resulting from a critical examination of a series of this bulbul from the Okavango R. taken in 1978, it is now found that *occidentalis* is