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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

XI

by

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1. ON THE STATUS OF *GEOCOLAPTES OLIVACEUS THERESAE* MEINERTZHAGEN, 1949

Ever since the description of the form in 1949, *Geocolaptes olivaceus theresæ* Meinertzhagen, *Bull.B.O.C.*, vol. lxxix, 1949, p. 105, described from 10 miles north of Springbok, Little Namaqualand, north-western Cape Province, has been an enigma, no specimens being available in South African museums. However, in May, 1958, I had an opportunity to examine the material from the western and north-western Cape collected by the British Museum (Natural History) South West Africa Expedition, 1949-1950, and listed by Macdonald in his recent *Contribution to the Ornithology of Western South Africa*, 1957, p. 89. This series contains two specimens (1 ♂, 1 ♀) from Springbok, which are exact topotypes of *G.o.theresæ*. In my original paper on geographical variation in the Ground Woodpecker (*vide Journal of the Scientific Society of the University of Natal*, vol. viii, 1952, pp. 3-7), I tentatively admitted *G.o.theresæ* on the basis of the characters given in the original description, but in my more recent study (*The Ostrich*, vol. xxviii, 3, 1957, pp. 138-140), I stated that I believed it to be the same as the race I proposed to call *G.o.terrestris* (Burchell), 1822: interior of Cape Province. I now find, on the basis of the entire British Museum (Nat. Hist.) series,

Bechuanaland Protectorate and Caprivi Strip, as it occurs in Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia (*vide* Benson and White, *Check List of the Birds of Northern Rhodesia*, 1957, p. 70).

4. A NEW RACE OF *TURDOIDES JARDINEII* (SMITH) FROM SUL DO SAVE, SOUTHERN PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA.

It is customary to place the populations of *Turdoides jardineii* (A. Smith) occurring in the south-east African coastal lowlands as *T.j.natalensis* Roberts, 1932: Weenen, Natal. Writing in the *Annals of the Natal Museum*, vol. xii, 2, 1952, p. 249, I pointed out that a small series collected in southern Swaziland in 1951 was variable, one adult male being distinctly suffused with buffy on the upper-parts and flanks—a tendency which I then believed to reveal the influence of the small Zambesi race, *T.j.kirkii* (Sharpe), 1876: Mazaro, Zambesi River, 75 miles west of confluence with Shiré River. Collections recently formed by the Durban Museum in Swaziland, the eastern Transvaal “lowveld,” and Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa, show that the unstable series from Swaziland commented upon in 1952 is actually from transitional populations between *T.j.natalensis* and an unnamed race in Sul do Save and adjacent regions. I now find that *T.j.natalensis* is in the main a highland race, extending from the thornveld districts of the interior of Natal (Estcourt, Weenen, Colenso, etc.) north to the eastern and north-eastern Transvaal, where in the eastern lowveld it merges with the new subspecies. The Natal race is characterized by the dark grey ground colouration to the throat and breast, and darker, less buffish, lower ventral surface when compared with the four other South African races of this babbler. The Sul do Save populations lack the dark grey ground colour to the throat and breast, being more olive tinged, and the rest of the under-parts are lighter and more buffish. On the upper surfaces they are slightly paler, and they range still smaller in size than toptotypical *T.j.natalensis*, which was distinguished by Roberts, *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, vol. xv, 1, 1932, p. 29, from nominate *T.j.jardineii* entirely on a point of size. Compared with *T.j.kirkii*, Sul do Save birds are slightly larger, ventrally darker and more heavily spotted, and more olive tinged above. They may be known as

***Turdoides jardineii convergens*, subsp. nov.**

Type: ♂, adult. Manhiça, Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa. Altitude c. 100 ft. a.s.l. 18 September, 1955. Durban Museum Expedition. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: Similar to *T.j.natalensis* Roberts, of the interior of Natal and the eastern and north-eastern Transvaal, but with the ground colouration of the throat and breast about Grayish Olive (Ridgway, pl. xlvi) as against Mouse Gray (pl. li), and with the rest of the under-parts less dark greyish and more suffused with buffy or olive-buff. White lanceolate spots narrower and sharper. On upper-parts slightly paler, particularly on the head-top and nape. Averaging rather smaller in size than *T.j.natalensis* (see below).

Compared with *T.j.kirkii* (Sharpe), of the lower and middle Zambesi River valley, eastern Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, northern Portuguese East Africa, northwards in the littoral, darker and more olive, less vinaceous tinged, on the upper-parts, and with more numerous lanceolate markings on the nape and mantle; ventrally darker and more copiously marked with whitish lanceolate flecks, which extend over most of the under surface, and are not restricted to the throat and breast as in *T.j.kirkii*. This latter race has the lower breast and abdominal surface much lighter than *T.j.convergens*. Averaging larger in size.

Paratypical material: 13 specimens (12 in Durban Museum, 1 in Natal Museum).

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 107.5, culmen from base 26, tarsus 33.5 tail 105 mm.

Range: Eastern Swaziland (mainly intergrades towards *T.j.natalensis*), north Zululand from the northern shores of Lake St. Lucia, Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa, and the low-lying country of south-eastern Southern Rhodesia (Sabi-Lundi confluence, *vide* Smithers, Irwin and Paterson, *Check List of the Birds of Southern Rhodesia*, 1957, p. 100). Northern limits of range not yet determined, because in the older literature *T.j.convergens* is invariably confused with *T.j.kirkii*. Eastern Transvaal lowveld birds are best covered by the combination *T.j.natalensis* \approx *T.j.convergens*.

Remarks: Roberts, *loc.cit.*, gives the wings of *T.j.natalensis* as 96-109 (104.5). This mean figure clearly shows his taxon to consist mainly of specimens from populations here described as *T.j.convergens*. Six recently taken topotypical examples of this race available to me measure 104-111.5 (107.9) mm. The wings of the paratypical series of 13 specimens of *T.j.convergens* measure 100-107 (104.0), and the culmens and tails of the same birds measure 98-105 (100.8) and 24-27 (25.7) mm. In the rather smaller *T.j.kirkii*, the wings of 5 ♂♀ in our collections measure 95, 98.5, 100.5, 102, 103.5 mm., the tails 89, 91.5, 92, 95, 95 mm.

Five races of the Arrow-marked Babbler can be admitted from the South African sub-continent:

(a) **Turdoides jardineii jardineii** (Smith), 1836: north-western Transvaal.

Upper-parts olivaceous brown with slight vinaceous cast. On under-parts olivaceous grey with slight buffish suffusion, the feathers with lanceolate tips of ivory white. Size largest. Wings ♂♀ 107.5-118.5 mm.

Range: Eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate, western Transvaal, most of Southern Rhodesia, and in the central districts of Northern Rhodesia.

(b) **Turdoides jardineii tamalakanei** de Schauensee, 1932: Tamalakane River, Maun, Ngamiland.

Paler and greyer than the nominate race, especially on the throat and breast, which are without a brownish or buffish cast, and with whiter or greyer edges to the scale-like feathers of the forehead and fore-crown. Size about the same.

Range: Ngamiland, northern Bechuanaland Protectorate, Caprivi Strip, south-eastern Angola, and southern Barotseland (Northern Rhodesia). Some western Southern Rhodesian birds approach this grey race.

(c) **Turdoides jardineii natalensis** Roberts, 1932: Weenen, Natal.

Upper-parts slightly darker, especially the head-top and nape, than in *T.j.jardineii*, the vinaceous cast absent; also more speckled with white on nape and upper mantle. Ventrally less buffish, the ground colour of throat and breast darker and purer grey. Smaller in size. Wings ♂♀ 104-111.5 (107.9) mm.

Range: Thornveld districts of Natal interior (from 4500' a.s.l.) northwards to the eastern and north-eastern Transvaal. Intergrades in the eastern Transvaal lowveld and Swaziland with the following race.

(d) **Turdoides jardineii convergens** Clancey, 1958: Manhiça, Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa.

Slightly less dark above than *T.j.natalensis*, particularly on the head-top and nape. On under-parts more buffish, the ground colour to the throat and breast greyish olive as against mouse grey in *T.j.natalensis*. White lanceolate markings narrower. Averaging smaller in size. Wings ♂♀ 100-107 (104.0) mm.

Range: As given in the above description.

- (e) **Turdoides jardineii kirkii** (Sharpe), 1876: Mazaro, Zambesi River, Portuguese East Africa.

Similar to *T.j.convergens* but with the upper-parts less olive, and distinctly vinaceous tinged, as in *T.j.jardineii*. Nape and upper mantle usually less speckled with white. On under-parts paler, particularly over the lower breast and abdomen, and with the whitish lanceolate markings more restricted to the throat and breast. Size smaller. Wings 5 ♂♀ 95-103.5 (99.9) mm.

Range: The middle and lower reaches of the Zambesi River in the districts of Tete and Manica, southern Portuguese East Africa, and south in the district of Sofala to about Beira, northern Southern Rhodesia on the Zambesi west to the Sanyati River, eastern Northern Rhodesia (east of Lusaka and north to Mpika and Isoka), Nyasaland, northern Portuguese East Africa, Tanganyika Territory as far west as Monduli, Mpapwa and Iringa, and in the littoral of Kenya Colony as far north as Lamu.

5. A REVISION OF THE RACES OF THE CHAT FLY-CATCHER *BRADORNIS INFUSCATUS* (A. SMITH).

The sombre-coloured Chat Flycatcher *Bradornis infuscatus* (A. Smith) is restricted to the drier regions of south-western Africa, where it frequents the more open scrub-covered areas. It is a conspicuous bird, despite its drab general colouration, and is normally to be found in pairs, or small parties of three or four individuals. Geographical variation in the species has recently been discussed by Vaurie, *American Museum Novitates*, No. 1599, 1952, pp. 1-9, who recognised three races, namely, *B.i.infuscatus*, *B.i.seimundi* Ogilvie-Grant and *B.i.benguellensis* Sousa. Vaurie considered a fourth race, *B.i.ansorgii* Ogilvie-Grant, which was recognised by Sclater, *Systema Avium Æthiopicarum*, part ii, 1930, p. 407, to be a synonym of *B.i.benguellensis*. Recently, Macdonald, *Contribution to the Ornithology of Western South Africa*, 1957, pp. 118-120, following White, *Ibis*, vol. 93, 1951, pp. 464-465, described the South-West African populations as a new race under the name *B.i.namaquensis*. In describing *B.i.namaquensis*, Macdonald agreed with Vaurie in believing that the names *B.i.benguellensis* and *B.i.ansorgii* refer to one and the same racial group of populations in south-western Angola (*cf.* White, *loc.cit.*). Vaurie's arrangement of the different populations of *B.infuscatus* into three races is based on the assumption that much of the demonstrable variation is strictly clinal in character, but a recent survey of most of the material available in southern African museums and of the series