



## DURBAN MUSEUM NOVITATES

*Issued by the Durban Museum, Durban, South Africa*

---

Vol. VI

ISSUED 31ST AUGUST, 1962

Part 15

---

### MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XIX

*by*

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum, Durban)

The following seven notes result in the main from recent revisionary studies of southern and eastern African bird species carried out in the Durban Museum, utilizing the pooled specimen resources of several museums. For the loan of comparative material I am very grateful to the following institutions and officials: South African Museum, Cape Town (Dr. J. M. Winterbottom); East London Museum (Miss M. Courtenay-Latimer); Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg (Dr. J. A. Pringle); Transvaal Museum (Dr. V. Fitz-Simons and Mr. O. P. M. Prozesky); National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo (Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin); Coryndon Museum, Nairobi (Mr. John G. Williams).

In the ensuing notes I have used the colour nomenclature of Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912 (Washington). The relevant plate numbers in this standard work are given immediately following the first mention of a colour by name.

#### 1. TWO NEW GEOGRAPHICAL RACES OF THE YELLOW-BILL *CEUTHMOCHARES AEREUS* (VIEILLOT)

The races of the Yellowbill *Ceuthmochares aereus* (Vieillot), whose close familial relatives are found in the Oriental Region (Sub-family Phoenicophainae), resident in East Africa are generally stated to be *C.a.aereus* (Vieillot), 1817: Malimbe, Portuguese Congo, or

pro *Chersomanes albofasciata barlowi* White, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. 81, 2, 1961, p. 33, not *Pseudammomanes barlowi* Roberts, *Ostrich*, vol. viii, 2, 1937, p. 95 (= *Certhilauda albescens barlowi* (Roberts)).

### 3. A NEW SUBSPECIES OF *CERCOMELA TRACTRAC* (WILKES) FROM THE ARID COAST OF LITTLE NAMAQUALAND

A series of thirty-eight adult specimens of the Tractrac Chat from the white coastal sand-dune zone of Little Namaqualand proves to represent a well-defined new race, which may be known as

#### ***Cercomela tractrac nebulosa*, subsp.nov.**

*Type*: ♂, adult. White coastal sand-dunes at McDougall Bay, south of Port Nolloth, Little Namaqualand, north-western Cape Province. 31 May, 1962. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

*Diagnosis*: When compared with *C.t.tractrac* (Wilkes), 1817: Uniondale, southern Cape Province, found to be much paler and greyer on the upper-parts, being greyish Drab (pl. xlvi) on the mantle, as against Olive-Brown (pl. xl); rump paler (Light Pinkish Cinnamon (pl. xxix); in *C.t.tractrac* Cinnamon (same pl.)). On under-parts markedly whiter, less vinaceous brown tinged over the breast, which is only lightly washed with grey.

From *C.t.barlowi* (Roberts), 1937: Aus, Great Namaqualand, differs in being distinctly colder and greyer, less buffish on the upper-parts (greyish Drab, as compared with Avellaneous (pl. xl) in *C.t.barlowi*. On under-parts markedly whiter.

*C.t.albicans* (Wahlberg), 1855: Walvis Bay, Damaraland, is more whitish, less cold and grey, on the dorsal surface (mantle Vinaceous-Buff (pl. xl), as against greyish Drab in *C.t.nebulosa*), and is pure white below.

*Measurements*: Wings (flattened) of 9 ♂♂ 81.5-89 (85.5), 7 ♀♀ 79.5-83.5 (80.3) mm. Wing-tips all abraded.

*Material examined*: *C.t.nebulosa*, 39; *C.t.tractrac*, 39; *C.t.barlowi*, 14; *C.t.albicans*, 4. *C.t.hoeschi* (Niethammer), not examined.

*Range*: Known only from the white coastal sand-dunes of the arid coast of Little Namaqualand, from some miles to the south of Port Nolloth to the mouth of the lower Orange River, and on the white coastal dunes of south-western Great Namaqualand. Birds

taken only a few miles back from the coast near Port Nolloth, but on red soils and not white sand are referable to the nominotypical race. On the white dunes at McDougall Bay, south of Port Nolloth, this new race was common and often remarkably tame, allowing approach to within a few feet.

*Measurements of the Type:* Wing 83.5, culmen from base 19, tarsus 30.5, tail 52 mm.

*Remarks:* *C.t.nebulosa* is most closely allied to *C.t.barlowi*, which is a race of reddish and gravelly soils, not white coastal sand-dunes. *C.t.barlowi* ranges south to the northern fringe of Little Namaqualand and Bushmanland, where it meets and intergrades with the darker *C.t.tractrac*, as shown by good series from both areas.

The discovery of *C.t.nebulosa* was quite unexpected, because the birdlife of the Port Nolloth district has been investigated by many competent workers ever since the late Claude Grant worked there in the early years of the present century. The new taxon is a notable addition to the growing list of endemic avian races known to be more or less confined to the white sand-dune zone of the arid coast of Little Namaqualand, and it occurs alongside such well-marked forms as *Certhilauda curvirostris falcistrostris* Reichenow, *Certhilauda albescens codea* (Smith), *Saxicola torquata clanceyi* Courtenay-Latimer and *Erythropygia coryphaeus cinerea* Macdonald. The new form inhabits a narrow biome, of, perhaps, not more than three miles across at its widest, and with a rainfall of less than one inch per year.

Following Meinertzhagen, several recent authors incorrectly place *tractrac* and its races in the genus *Enanthe*, but it is quite clearly a *Cercomela*, showing incipient attenuation of the first primary, linking it with *C.sinuata* (Sundevall) and *C.schlegelii* (Wahlberg), and general structural and biological characters which reveal its extremely close affinity with those species and the so-called Familiar Chats. Despite its white rump, it is certainly not a Wheatear.

#### 4. ON THE STATUS OF THE TAXON *NECTARINIA AFRA AFRA* (LINNAEUS)

Study of material of the austral populations of the Greater Double-collared Sunbird all attributed at the present time to the subspecies *Nectarinia afra afra* (Linnaeus), 1766: Cape of Good Hope, Cape Province, South Africa, reveals that the populations concerned are not homogeneous and show a closely analogous range of geographical variation to that already described for the sympatric *Nectarinia chalybea* (Linnaeus) in the races *N.c.chalybea* and *N.c.*