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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XXXV

by

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AN UNDESCRIBED RACE OF THE PINKBILLED LARK *CALANDRELLA CONIROSTRIS* (SUNDEVALL) FROM THE TRANSVAAL

Study of the pooled series of the Pinkbilled Lark from south-eastern South Africa in the collections of the Transvaal and Durban Museums shows that three races must be admitted for this region as against the two currently recognised. As a name is required for the undescribed taxon, it may be known as from the date of publication of this communication as

***Calandrella conirostris griseovinacea*, subsp. nov.**

Type: ♂, adult. Rustenburg, western Transvaal, at c.1370 m a.s.l. 30 October, 1970. Collected by E. L. Button. In the collection of the Durban Museum. D.M. Reg. No. 26 154.

Diagnosis: Broadly streaked with black over the upper-parts as in nominate *C. conirostris* (Sundevall), 1850: Vechtkop, north of Heilbron, northern Orange Free State, but differs in having the feather-edging pale greyish vinaceous rather than saturated rusty brown (Vinaceous-Buff (*Ridgway*, 1912, pl. xl), *versus* Sudan Brown (pl. iii)). Below more extensively and purer white over the entire fore-throat, and with the rest of the underside much paler (Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix), as against deep Cinnamon-Buff/Clay Color (same pl.)). Similar in size.

Material examined: 10. *Transvaal*: Pretoria, Hennops River, Rustenburg, and Groot Marico. For material of other races see below.

A RE-ARRANGEMENT OF THE NORTHERN *P.NIGER*
POPULATIONS

In my 1964 revision of the southern African populations of *P.niger* I placed the northern populations which range from north-eastern South-West Africa, east to the littoral of Moçambique in two subspecies: an eastern one, *P.n.xanthostomus* Shelley, and a western one, *P.n.ravidus* mihi. These taxa were separated from *P.n.niger* on the basis of the more extensive white in the wings of adults, and from one another in the greyness of the ventral surfaces, especially in females, size, etc. Since 1964 Winterbottom, *Cimbebasia*, Windhoek, No. 15, 1966, pp. 51, 52, has pointed out that birds of the Okavango R. region are not readily separable from nominate *P.niger*. A re-examination of the status of these far north-western elements of *P.niger*, *sens.strict.*, shows that they are indeed not so extensively white over the wings as populations occurring certainly from the Rhodesian plateau east to the Moçambique littoral plain, and south to the eastern Transvaal and adjacent Swaziland. Birds agreeing exactly with the Okavango R. populations range as far east as the xeric north-western corner and low rainfall regions of extreme western Matabeleland, Rhodesia, and the dry western fringe of the Transvaal. East of this the populations become much whiter over the wings, the width of the white on the tips and outer vanes of the secondary-coverts increases markedly, and the remiges have broader whiter edging to the outer vanes, in this duplicating exactly what we find in the wings of *P.l.carpi* in the far west. A critical study of the size trends within these northern *P.niger* populations and of the relative greyness of the ventral surfaces in both sexes, now suggests that these variables do not assist as materially as at first thought in arranging the northern populations into meaningful subspecies, and that we should group the said populations into west and east subspecies on the degree of whiteness in the wings of adult birds alone. Working on this basis, one arrives at closely similar conclusions to those reached by me in 1964 with only marginal range adjustments, though there will now have to be a complete switch round of names. *P.n.xanthostomus*, with its type-locality the Victoria Falls, Rhodesia, requires to be applied to the western elements of the northern *P.niger* coterie of populations, this taxon agreeing fairly closely with *P.n.niger* in the amount of white in the wings of adults, but differing in the duller black and greyer sides and flanks in males, greyer underside in females, and larger size. Eastern birds must now become *P.n.ravidus*, with the type-locality near Bulawayo, Rhodesia, this differing from the western

xanthostomus on the basis of the wings being more extensively white. The type-locality of *ravidus* leaves much to be desired in the light of this further study of the variation, being as it is in a zone of intergradation between the two forms, but on the basis of the whiteness of the secondary-coverts and remiges in the *Type*, the name *ravidus* can be utilized for eastern birds, obviating the necessity of introducing a further name into an already difficult and rather complex situation. I may also remark here that the type-locality of *P.n.xanthostomus* is equally poorly positioned on the far eastern rim of the range of what is now seen as an essentially xeric race.

A REVISED ARRANGEMENT OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN BLACK TITS

Parus leucomelas Rüppell

- (a) ***Parus leucomelas insignis*** Cabanis, 1880:
Malange, Angola.

Male, adult, blue-black above and below, with the under tail-coverts immaculate blue-black. In closed wing, median and secondary-coverts are concolorous, forming an unbroken white panel, and remiges with broad white margining to outer vanes. Size large and bill long.

Female as in the ♂, but slightly browner blue-black on the ventral surface; otherwise similar. Juvenal sooty black on underside.

Wings of ♂♂ 93–97, of ♀♀ 86–91, tails of ♂♂ 71–80,5, of ♀♀ 71–76, culmens from base of ♂♂ 14–15, of ♀♀ 14–14,5 mm.

Material examined: Angola, 19; Zambia, 15.

Range: Central and northern Huila, northwards in Angola, thence north in the west to Gabon, eastwards south of the main Congo forest through Zaire and northern Zambia to western Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi (except south), and Niassa, northern Moçambique.

- (b) ***Parus leucomelas carpi*** Macdonald and Hall, 1957:

Warmquelle, north-western South-West Africa.

Male similar to that of *P.insignis*, but rather more violet blue-black above. In wings, secondary-coverts reveal rather more mesial