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### MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

#### XI

*by*

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum, South Africa)

#### 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,

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

Similar to *T.j.convergans* 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

in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), London, shows that a much better appreciation of the somewhat complex geographical variation displayed by this plastic species is to be achieved by the recognition of five named races. The pattern of variation in *B.infuscatus* is analogous to that shown by many polytypic species of birds resident in the south-west African arid biomes: the largest and darkest populations in the Cape Province, Orange Free State and the south-western Transvaal, populations intermediate in colour and size in South-West Africa, the northern Cape Province and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and the smallest and palest populations in south-western Angola. The material used by Vaurie was comparatively limited, but that available to me shows that much of the geographical variation is quite sharply stepped, facilitating formal taxonomic treatment. This abruptly stepped variation is most marked in the occidental half of the species' distribution, but in the east racial distinction is less clearly defined, and as a result the limits of the ranges of the races, occurring for instance in the northern Cape, are still imperfectly known.

For facilities to study the material in the British Museum, London, I am grateful to Mr. J. D. Macdonald, Keeper of the Bird Room. I am also indebted to Mrs. B. P. Hall, of the Bird Room staff, for kindly placing her own Bechuanaland material at my disposal and for helping in various ways. Mrs. Hall has studied much of the material used in this revision in conjunction with me, and is in general agreement with the views expressed. In South Africa, the material preserved in the collections of the South African Museum, Cape Town, East London Museum and Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, has been made available through the kindness of the Directors. The Durban Museum series has been studied in great detail and has filled in several lacunæ in our knowledge of the characters of the various races and their respective ranges. Dr. J. M. Winterbottom has kindly helped with data on the range of the nominate race.

*Saxicola infuscata* was described in 1839 by Dr. Andrew Smith on material collected in the western Cape Province, between the Olifants and lower Orange Rivers. Of the toptotypical populations I have been able to examine twelve specimens. The western Cape birds show the marked tendency to darkness and greyness inherent in many indigenous bird forms of the region. Compared with the contiguous race of the Cape, *B.i.seimundi*, nominotypical *B.infuscatus* is seen to be darker, of a colour close to Fuscous (Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl. xlvi) on the dorsal

surfaces, and on the under-parts cold greyish Drab covers the lower throat, breast, body sides and flanks. On the lower breast the greyish drab often forms distinct streaks (one of the characters generally believed to distinguish *B.i.seimundi* from *B.i.infuscatus*). In size *B.i.infuscatus* is larger than *B.i.seimundi*, this being especially marked in the very long, powerful bill. Adult males of *B.i.infuscatus* have wings 117-124.5, culmens (from base) 24.5-28 mm. A single female from Witputs, south-western Great Namaqualand, agrees with the topotypical populations, but a series of 5 ♂♂, 1 ♀ from Brandvlei is composite, five resembling the greyer examples of the nominate race in colour, the other one approaching closely to *B.i.namaquensis*. The Brandvlei birds are also smaller than topotypes of *B.i.infuscatus*, the wings of the five males measuring 111, 115, 116.5, 116.5, 119, and the bills 20.5, 21.5, 23, 23, 24 mm., thereby agreeing with *B.i.seimundi* and *B.i.namaquensis*. This information seems to indicate that true *B.i.infuscatus* is restricted to the districts of the western Cape Province lying between the valleys of the Berg and Orange Rivers, and in the extreme south-western parts of Great Namaqualand. To the east of its stated range in the Cape Province it intergrades with *B.i.seimundi* in what appears to be a narrow zone of intergradation. The single example from Brandvlei, which somewhat resembles the South-West African race, *B.i.namaquensis*, is interesting, but the presence of such a bird at Brandvlei is understandable when it is appreciated that *B.i.namaquensis* ranges some distance to the south of the Orange River in Bushmanland and the northern Kenhardt district.

*B.i.seimundi* was described in 1913 by Ogilvie-Grant on the basis of material collected mainly at Deelfontein, south of de Aar, in the east-central Karoo districts of the Cape Province. Apart from the parotypical series in the British Museum, I have examined comparatively extensive material of this subspecies in all the collections consulted. The populations covered by the name *B.i.seimundi* differ from those of nominate *B.infuscatus* in consisting of rather smaller sized birds, with the plumage colouration substantially lighter, more buffy, and less dark and greyish. Vaurie, *loc.cit.*, pp. 4 and 5, states that "It is questionable whether *seimundi*, which is apparently *poorly differentiated* (italics mine) from nominate *infuscatus*, deserves nomenclatural recognition." There need be no further doubt as to the distinctness of *B.i.seimundi*. Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, found *B.i.seimundi* to be darker above and below than *B.i.infuscatus*, the under-surface unstreaked, while Vaurie found *B.i.seimundi* to be somewhat paler than the nominate race. *B.i.seimundi* is a warmer and redder, less cold greyish fuscous

coloured bird than *B.i.infuscatus*, the upper-parts in moderately worn dress corresponding to the Mummy Brown of Ridgway, (pl. xv). On the ventral surface the greyish drab present in *B.i.infuscatus* is almost absent, and the bird is distinctly lighter and warmer, more buffish, throughout. The breast is lighter, and the streaking on the lower breast is reduced to a series of dark mesial shaft striæ. Other important distinctions are the paler, more buffy edges to the wing feathers and a more extensive pale flash over the visible bases of the primaries. In nominate *B.infuscatus* this latter feature is often vestigial. While quite adequately distinguishable from the nominate race by the colour characters just given, *B.i.seimundi* also differs significantly in its critical measurements. Males of *B.i.seimundi* have the wings ranging from 112-119 (once 122) mm., showing a slight overlap, but the bills are consistently smaller and weaker—20.5-23.5 as against 24.5-28 mm. in topotypical *B.i.infuscatus*. Vaurie's single male from Port Nolloth has a bill-measurement of 25 mm. Roberts, *loc.cit.*, also shows that the tarsi of *B.i.seimundi* are shorter than those of *B.i.infuscatus*, though the measurements given by him do not support his findings, the difference shown in the measurements being infinitesimal. The tarsal measurements given for *B.i.seimundi* by Vaurie: 24.5-26 mm., as against 29 mm. in the Port Nolloth male, and my measurements of 27-29 mm., and 29.5-31 mm., show the character more clearly. The large overlap shown in Roberts' figures is attributable to the fact that his topotypical material of *B.i.infuscatus* was extremely limited. Populations of the Chat Flycatcher agreeing with the characters as defined for *B.i.seimundi* range to the east of the limited distribution of *B.i.infuscatus* throughout the central, southern and eastern districts of the Cape Province, and to the east of the Vaal River in the northern Cape, and in the western Orange Free State and south-western Transvaal.

Along the central Orange River, notably at Prieska, and the valleys of the Vaal and Hartz Rivers a marked shift towards lighter colouration is observable in the population samples at my disposal. This transition from dark to light birds is accomplished through a somewhat restricted and well-defined zone of intergradation, but is not abruptly stepped as in the zone of contact between the occidental *B.i.infuscatus* and *B.i.namaquensis* (see below). Throughout most of the northern Cape, and to the northward in the Kalahari Desert, Bechuanaland Protectorate, occur birds which are much paler and somewhat smaller than *B.i.seimundi*, as just described. On the upper-parts such birds are about Buffy Brown/Olive Brown (Ridgway, pl. xl), and on the under-parts still lighter than in

*B.i.seimundi*, the buffish white of the throat extending further down, and the dark mesial shaft striæ to the lower breast usually absent. The pallid edges of the wing-coverts, tertials and remiges are on the whole broader and paler, and the light flash over the visible bases of the primaries is clearer, less reddish, and therefore still more prominent. Males of the northern Cape populations have wings 111.5-118 mm., while southern Bechuanaland birds are statistically smaller: 102.5-110.5 mm. in six males. As most of the pale northern Cape birds before me are from the southern and eastern districts of Griqualand West, I believe them to be in the main mensural intergrades between what I shall call *B.i.placidus* mihi, subsp. nov., and *B.i.seimundi*. Compared with the recently described *B.i.namaquensis* of South-West Africa, *B.i.placidus* differs in being greyer or more olivaceous on the upper-parts, less vinaceous tinged, the colour in the former race being about between Snuff Brown and Sepia (Ridgway, pl. xxix). On the under-parts *B.i.placidus* is lighter, less strongly washed with Light Pinkish Cinnamon (Ridgway, pl. xxix) on the lower throat, breast, body sides and flanks, and the toptypical birds of the Kalahari Desert are smaller than *B.i.namaquensis*. The complete distribution of *B.i.placidus* is still not known, but I place under this name all the populations occurring in the Bechuanaland district of the northern Cape Province (Griqualand West birds: *B.i.placidus*  $\supseteq$  *B.i.seimundi*) northwards through the southern Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Kalahari Desert to extreme southern Ngamiland. It also occurs in the Western Transvaal. In the western parts of the Bechuanaland Protectorate my specimens reveal a shift towards a more vinaceous tinged plumage both above and below, and such examples correspond with Macdonald's recently described *B.i.namaquensis*. It is interesting to note that *B.i.placidus* most closely resembles *B.i.benguellensis* in colouration and size, differing only in being less whitish below. The latter race is restricted to the arid littoral of south-western Angola and the Kaokoveld of north-western South-West Africa, and as far as is known is separated from *B.i.placidus* by intrusive populations of *B.i.namaquensis*.

The recommendations of Vaurie are negatived by the striking differences and apparent lack of intergradation between *B.i.infuscatu*s and *B.i.namaquensis*. *B.i.namaquensis* is a much lighter and more vinaceous buff coloured bird than *B.i.infuscatu*s, with a much whiter throat, paler edges to the wing feathers, prominent wing flash, smaller general dimensions and weaker bill and feet. As noted earlier in this paper a single example from Witputs, south-western Great Namaqualand, studied by me is attributable to

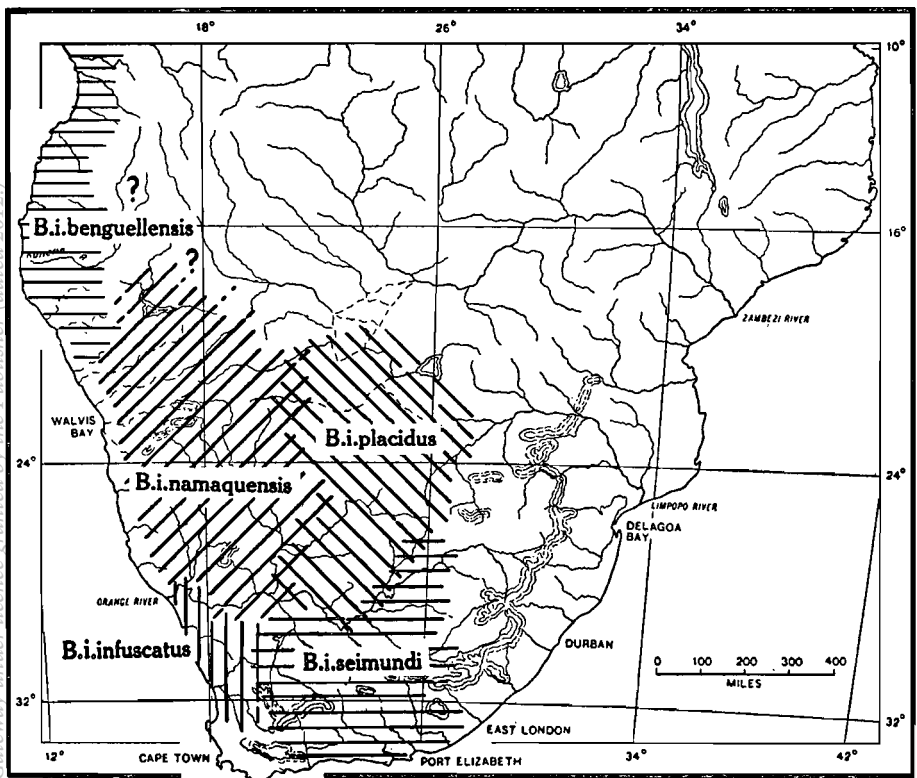
*B.i.infuscatus*, but further to the south-east in the north-western Cape (Springbok—Pofadder road; Aughrabies Falls, etc.) *B.i.namaquensis* is now known to thrust its range to the south of the Orange River. Apart from the single example from Brandvlei discussed earlier, I have not examined any material which reveals intergradation between the two forms under discussion, and it may well be that they are ecologically and reproductively isolated from one another. Further study of the two forms in the field in the north-western Cape and in the southern parts of South-West Africa is clearly needed.

The pale South-West African race of the Chat Flycatcher has been recognised by workers for many years as *B.i.benguellensis*, which name is actually applicable to the smaller and still paler race of south-western Angola and the Kaokoveld (the *B.i.ansorgii* of some authors). The nomenclature of the Angola and South-West African populations is complicated and has given rise to much discussion in the literature, largely hinging on the subspecific identity of a ragged and elongated skin in the British Museum collected by Anchieta somewhere in southern Angola, which does not agree with the coastal material collected by Ansonge in the same collection. In view of Macdonald's findings, *loc.cit.*, I consider the matter to be resolved, and I accept his ruling.

Macdonald, *loc.cit.*, gives the wings of adult males of *B.i.namaquensis* as 109-118 mm. The size of the South-West African birds is important because Macdonald claims that *B.i.namaquensis* is substantially larger than *B.i.benguellensis*, the wings of males of which he gives as 101-107 mm. My measurements confirm the findings of Macdonald, the wings of 8 ♂♂ of the former race measuring 113-121.5 mm., as against 101-110.5 mm. It is also larger than the eastern *B.i.placidus*, as recorded earlier.

*B.i.benguellensis*, described by the Portuguese worker, Sousa, in 1886, on material collected by Anchieta, is the smallest and palest of the races of the Chat Flycatcher. In colouration and size it comes close to *B.i.placidus*, but is whiter on the under-parts, the breast slightly sullied, but lacking almost entirely the buffish suffusion exhibited by that race. On the dorsal surface the two races are remarkably alike, though *B.i.benguellensis* is on the whole greyer than *B.i.placidus*. In size they are not statistically distinct. *B.i.benguellensis* enjoys a somewhat-restricted range; described from coastal Benguela, it is now known to range south to the Kaokoveld. The wings of Kaokoveld specimens are 4 ♂♂ 105-111, 2 ♀♀ 98, 104 mm. (after Macdonald and Hall, *loc.cit.*). As already recorded for *B.i.infuscatus* and *B.i.namaquensis*, intergradation between the

latter race and *B.i.benguellensis* appears, certainly on the basis of the literature and available specimens, to be virtually non-existent. It is interesting to note that from north to south in the western sectors of the species' distribution the geographical variation is virtually discontinuous, intergradation between the races vestigial or absent, whereas to the eastward quite well-defined zones of intergradation occur wherever the races are in contact. As indicated earlier, this interesting pattern of variation is obscured when the clinal concept is applied, and I believe the scientific facts to be much better represented in our formal classification by the recognition of five named geographical races. The nomenclature, characters and ranges of these are as follows:



*BRADORNIS INFUSCATUS* (Smith)

Sketch map showing the approximate ranges of the five geographical races of the Chat Flycatcher *Bradornis infuscatus*.



### 1. *Bradornis infuscatus infuscatus* (Smith)

*Saxicola infuscata* A. Smith, *Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa*, Aves, 1839, pl. 28: between the Olifants and Orange Rivers, western Cape Province, South Africa.

Upper-parts about Fuscous (Ridgway, pl. xlvi), the feather-tips greyer, slightly lighter on rump and upper tail-coverts. Underparts dull whitish stone colour, the breast, body sides and flanks strongly washed and usually markedly streaked with greyish Drab (Ridgway, pl. xlvi). Wings usually with a buffish or rusty white speculum over the visible bases of the primaries. Size largest; bill and tarsi longest (29.5-31 mm.).

*Measurements*: 4 ♂♂ wings (flattened) 117-124.5 (120.5), culmens from base 24.5-28 (25.7), tails 87-93 (88.6) mm. 8 ♀♀ 110-121.5 (113.9), 24-26.5 (24.7), 82.5-90 (86.5) mm. (12 Namaqualand specimens measured.)

*Type*: Not traced.

*Material examined*: 12. South-West Cape (Mamre, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Holgat River, 1 ♀; Vredensdaal, 1 ♀). Little Namaqualand (Klaver, 1 ♀; Klipfontein, 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Port Nolloth, 1 ♂, 2 ♀♀). Great Namaqualand (Witputs, 1 ♀). *B.i.infuscatus*  $\approx$  *B.i.seimundi*: 6. Western Cape Province, 6 (Brandvlei, 5 ♂♂, 1 ♀).

*Range*: Western Cape Province from about the Berg River to the lower reaches of the Orange River valley, and in south-western Great Namaqualand (Witputs). Intergrades to the east of its stated range with *B.i.seimundi* (Brandvlei).

*Note*: This race is characterized by its large size, long, heavy bill, dark fuscous dorsal colouration, dark coloured breast, body sides and flanks, and streaked lower breast and upper abdominal surface.

### 2. *Bradornis infuscatus seimundi* Ogilvie-Grant

*Bradyornis infuscatus seimundi* Ogilvie-Grant, *The Ibis*, 1913, p. 636: Deelfontein, south of de Aar, east-central Cape Province, South Africa.

Similar to *B.i.infuscatus* but richer and browner, less dark fuscous coloured, above, being about Mummy Brown (Ridgway, pl. xv). Ventrally browner and warmer, less greyish drab, on the breast, body sides and flanks; the brown usually distinctly vinaceous tinged. Streaking on breast and upper abdomen less pronounced, consisting of suppressed, often vestigial, dark, mesial striæ. Wings showing

more buffish edges to feathers, and more prominent pallid flash over the primaries. Ranging somewhat smaller in size, and with a much shorter bill. Tarsi shorter (27-29 mm.).

*Measurements:* 18 ♂♂ wings 112-119 (122) (115.6), culmens 20.5-23.5 (21.8), tails 83.5-88.5 (93.5) (85.6) mm. 6 ♀♀ 102.5-111 (107.5), 21-23 (21.9), 78-85 (81.6) mm. (24 Cape Province specimens measured.)

*Type:* In the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), South Kensington, London. Brit. Mus. Reg. No. 1903.3.9.292.

*Material examined:* 38. Central Cape (Beaufort West, 2 ♂♂, Victoria West, 1 ♂; Fraserburg, 1 ♂; Williston, 1 ♂; Murraysburg, 5 ♂♂; Deelfontein, 3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀; Britstown, 1 ♀; Kenhardt, 1 ♂, 2 ♀♀; Van Wyks Vlei, 1 ♀; Prieska, 2 ♂♂; Colesberg, 1 ♀). Southern Cape (Willowmore, 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Mount Stewart, 1 ♂). Eastern Cape (Teviot, 1 ♂; Hanover, 1 ♂; Cradock, 3 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Hofmeyer, 1 ♂; Uitenhage, 1 ♂; Middelburg, 1 ♀). Northern Cape (Riverton, Kimberley, 1 ♂, 1 ♀). *B.i.seimundi*  $\approx$  *B.i.placidus*: 7. Northern Cape (Schmidtsdrift, 1 ♂; near Niekerkshoop, 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Riverton, Kimberley, 2 ♂♂; Fourteen Streams, 1 ♂).

*Range:* East of the range of *B.i.infuscatus* in the central, southern and eastern districts of the Cape Province, western Orange Free State and the south-western Transvaal. Intergrades with *B.i.placidus* along the central Orange River valley, and in the valleys of the lower Vaal and Hartz Rivers.

*Note:* *B.i.seimundi* is characterized by its richer, browner, colouration, lighter coloured breast, more buffish under-parts, reduced ventral streaking, markedly shorter bill and average smaller general dimensions, when compared with the nominate race. It also has a more prominent wing flash.

### 3. *Bradornis infuscatus namaquensis* Macdonald

*Bradornis infuscatus namaquensis* Macdonald, *Contribution to the Ornithology of Western South Africa*, 1957, p. 119: Aamhoup (i.e. Amhub), Maltahöhe district, Great Namaqualand, South-West Africa (25° 20' S. 16° 50' E.).

On upper-parts much lighter and redder than *B.i.infuscatus*, being of a colour between Snuff Brown and Sepia (Ridgway, pl. xxix). On the ventral surfaces, whiter over the throat, and with the breast, body sides and flanks vinaceous buff, not greyish drab; the streaking absent. Wings with broader and paler fringes to the

coverts and flight feathers, and with a more prominent flash over the visible bases of the primaries. Smaller in size, and with a smaller and weaker bill. Tarsi as in *B.i.seimundi*.

*Measurements:* 8 ♂♂ wings 113-121.5 (114.7), culmens 20-22 (21.0), tails 79-82.5 (81.1) mm. 6 ♀♀ 101-109 (107.5), 20-23.5 (21.6), 77-80.5 (78.8) mm. (14 South-West African and western Bechuanaland specimens measured.)

*Type:* In the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), South Kensington, London. Brit. Mus. Reg. No. 1887.12.1.1332. The *Type* is a faded old Andersson skin, which is badly warped and unlike recent material from Great Namaqualand. Such a specimen should not have been made the *Type* of a new race described in 1957.

*Material examined:* 17. North-western Cape Province (Springbok—Pofadder road, 1 ♂; Aughrabies Falls, 1 ♀). Great Namaqualand (Kleinkaras, 2 ♂♂; Aamhoup (Amhub), 2 ♀♀; Nauchas, 1 ♀). Damaraland ("Damaraland", 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Otjimbingwe, 3 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Erongo Mts. 1 ♀; Okombahe, 1 ♀). Western Bechuanaland (Gemsbok Pan, 1 ♂; Lehutitung, 1 ♂).

*Range:* From some districts of the north-western (Pofadder, Aughrabies Falls, etc.) and northern Cape (western Gordonia district), northwards through Great Namaqualand to Damaraland and, perhaps, Ovamboland and extreme southern Angola (? intermediate towards *B.i.benguellensis*). Ranges eastwards into some western districts of the Bechuanaland Protectorate (Gemsbok Pan, west of Ghanzi, Lehututu (Lehutitung), etc.), where it merges with *B.i.placidus*.

*Note:* Paler and more reddish upper-parts, whiter throat, paler and more vinaceous buff under-parts, absence of ventral striæ, more salient wing flash, smaller size and shorter, weaker bill distinguish *B.i.namaquensis* from *B.i.infuscatu*s.

#### 4. *Bradornis infuscatu placidus*, subsp. nov.

*Type:* ♂, adult. Kakia, southern Bechuanaland Protectorate (24° 45' S. 23° 25' E.). 12 June, 1957. Barlow 1957 Expedition. In the collection of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), South Kensington, London. Collector's number H.127. Brit. Mus. Reg. No. 1957.36.1.

*Diagnosis:* Rather darker and more greyish olivaceous above (about Buffy Brown or Olive Brown, Ridgway, pl.xl), less vinaceous or rufous tinged than *B.i.namaquensis*; on under-parts purer

buffish white, the breast, body sides and flanks greyer, less strongly vinaceous than in *B.i.namaquensis*. Wings about the same. Smaller in size and with a weaker and shorter bill.

Compared with *B.i.benguellensis*, rather similar on the upper-parts, but usually not quite so greyish. On the ventral surfaces less white, more buffish tinged, especially on the breast, body sides and flanks. Similar in size, but the bill averaging a trifle smaller.

*Measurements:* 6 ♂♂ wings 102.5-110.5 (108.1), culmens 19.5-21.5 (20.2), tails 74-82 (78.5) mm. 1 ♀ 104, 21.5, 76.5 mm. (7 Bechuanaland specimens measured.)

*Measurements of the Type:* Wing 110, culmen 21, tail 82 mm.

*Material examined:* 9. Central Bechuanaland Protectorate (E. of Ghanzi, 1 ♂). Southern Bechuanaland Protectorate (Lehututu, 1 ♂; Kikomudi-Kai, 1 ♂; Kakia, 2 ♂♂; 4 miles S. of Tsabong, 1 ♀). Northern Cape (Klipput, near Posmasburg, 1 ♂, 1 ♀).

*Range:* From southern Ngamiland and the central Kalahari to the southern and south-eastern parts of the (Bechuanaland) Protectorate, western Transvaal, and throughout most of the northern Cape Province. Intergrades in the southern parts of its range with *B.i.seimundi*, and in the west with *B.i.namaquensis*.

*Note:* Smaller size; darker, less vinaceous tinged upper-parts, and purer, less vinaceous, buff under surface distinguish *B.i.placidus* from *B.i.namaquensis*. Very similar to *B.i.benguellensis*, but not so white below.

##### 5. *Bradornis infuscatus benguellensis* Sousa

*Bradyornis benguellensis* Sousa, *Jornal de Ciencias Mathematicas, Physicas e Naturæs. Lisboa*, vol. xi, 1886, p. 160: Benguela (town), western Angola.

*Synonym:* *Bradyornis infuscatus ansorgii* Ogilvie-Grant, *The Ibis*, 1913, p. 636: Catumbella and Huxe, Benguela Province, western Angola.

Differs from *B.i.namaquensis* in its duller and greyer, less vinaceous tinged, upper-parts. Below much whiter, lacking almost entirely the vinaceous buff suffusions present in unworn *B.i.namaquensis*, the breast only being slightly washed with drab. Male smaller in size, the female less markedly so. Bill about the same.

*Measurements:* 6 ♂♂ wings 101-110.5 (107.6), culmens 20-22.5 (21.3), tails 73-81.5 (78.5) mm. 5 ♀♀ 98-104 (100.8), 21.5-22 (21.8), 74-79 (75.7) mm. (11 western Angola specimens measured.)

*Type:* In the Museo Bocage, Lisbon.

The *Type* of *B.i.ansorgii* is in the collection of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), South Kensington, London.

*Material examined*: 11. Western Angola (Catumbella, 2 ♀♀; Huxe, 4 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Benguela, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; 35 m. S.E. of Benguela, 1 ♂; 30 m. E. of Benguela, 1 ♀).

*Range*: The arid littoral of Benguela and Moçamedes in western and south-western Angola, and in the Kaokoveld, north-western South-West Africa (*vide* Macdonald and Hall, *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, vol. xxiii, 1, 1957, pp. 23-24).

*Note*: Dull, greyish upper-parts, very whitish under surface, and small size distinguish *B.i.benguellensis*.

## 6. THE GENERIC STATUS OF THE SUPERB STARLING *SPREO SUPERBUS* (RÜPPELL) AND ITS ALLIES.

The resplendent, metallic starlings *Spreo superbus* (Rüppell), *Spreo hildebrandti* (Cabanis), *Spreo shelleyi* Sharpe and *Spreo pulcher* (Müller) of northern tropical and eastern Africa have for long been generically associated with the rather dull coloured *Spreo bicolor* (Gmelin) of South Africa, and its East African congeners *Spreo albicapillus* (Blyth) and *Spreo fischeri* (Reichenow), and Amadon, in his recent work on starlings, *American Museum Novitates*, No. 1803, 1956, pp. 1-41, continues to do so without question. The reason for this is by no means clear. A study of skins of *S.superbus* and *S.hildebrandti*, in addition to considerable field experience with the two species in British Somaliland and Kenya Colony, convinces me that the two forms are actually congeneric with the usually wholly metallic-glossed starlings of the genus *Lamprotornis* Temminck (including *Lamprocolius* Sundevall and other sub-genera), and not with the three dull coloured species which rightfully constitute the genus *Spreo* Lesson, the *Type-species* of which is *S.bicolor*. I have personally studied and collected *S.bicolor* in many parts of South Africa, *S.albicapillus* in British Somaliland, and *S.fischeri* in Kenya Colony. The three species of the restricted genus *Spreo* form a small compact group, which are not far removed generically from *Acridotheres* Vieillot, and, perhaps, *Creatophora* Lesson.

I now formally propose that the species *L.superbus*, *L.hildebrandti*, *L.shelleyi* and *L.pulcher* be removed from the genus *Spreo* and placed in *Lamprotornis*.

To return to the Superb Starling and its allies, I have had no firsthand experience with *L.shelleyi* and *L.pulcher*, but the former is perhaps no more than a well-marked race of *L.hildebrandti*,