

DURBAN MUSEUM

Novitates



ISSUED BY THE DURBAN MUSEUM, DURBAN 4001, SOUTH AFRICA

VOL. XII, PART 5

ISSUED 1st SEPTEMBER, 1979

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

[Price R1,50 nett]

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

confined to Angola, with *zambesiae* ranging much further west than hitherto understood. At the same time, the *occidentalis*-like birds of the plain of Moçambique are found to be distinct, and as no name is available for them I propose

***Chlorocichla flaviventris ortiva*, subsp. nov.**

Type: ♂, adult. Inhaminga, Manica e Sofala, southern Moçambique. 1 July, 1968. Collected by Durban Museum personnel. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M. Reg. No. 23 381.

Diagnosis: Differs from *C.f.zambesiae* in having the pileum much darker and browner, not concolorous with the rest of the dorsal surface, and with the upper-parts more saturated bronzy, less olivaceous. Otherwise similar. Compared with *C.f.occidentalis*, with the upper-parts more citrine or bronzy, less pure brown, and with the underside much more vibrant yellow. Size also smaller.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 99 - 108 (104,4), SD 3,04, SE 0,88, of 13 ♀♀ 91,5 - 99,5 (96,3), SD 2,40, SE 0,66 mm.

Material examined: 30 (all in Durban Museum collection).

Range: Southern Moçambique plain north of the Limpopo R. and back from the littoral, north-eastern Transvaal (on Limpopo R.), south-eastern Rhodesia in the lower Sabi R. valley, Malawi, and northern Moçambique in Zambezia, but limits in this sector uncertain. Rand, in the continuation of Peters' *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. ix, 1960, p. 262, takes the northern Moçambique birds to the more buffy yellow ventralled *C.f.centralis* Reichenow, 1887: Loeru, Tanzania, which is not strictly correct, as *ortiva* ranges certainly well north of the lower Zambesi R. The Lurio R. is probably the meeting place of *centralis* and *ortiva*.

Ripley and Bond, *Smiths.Contr.Zool.*, No. 111, 1971, p. 14, restrict the range of *C.f.centralis* to interior East Africa from the Mt Kenya foothills, south to east-central Tanzania, resuscitating *C.f.mombasae* Shelley, 1896; Mombasa, coastal Kenya, for the littoral birds from the Sokoke Forest, south at least to the Pugu Hills of Tanzania. They declined to place the population to the south of the Pugu.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 103, culmen from base 24, tarsus 25, tail 94 mm.

Remarks: *C.f.zambesiae* as now defined ranges from the plateau of Rhodesia to northern and north-western Botswana, the Caprivi Strip and north-eastern South West Africa along the Okavango R.,

and to south-eastern Angola and south-western and southern Zambia. The lighter pileum and greyer, or yellow, olive dorsum differentiate this race from *ortiva*.

C.f.occidentalis is larger than either *zambesiae* or *ortiva*, has the upper-parts purer and warmer, less olive, brown, and the ventral yellow is much more dilute and somewhat suffused with buff; the breast is also more buffy and less overlaid laterally with olive than in the races lying to the east. It is still uncertain if *occidentalis* ranges to within South African Sub-Region limits in the lower Cunene R. drainage, where the species was taken by Winterbottom and his party at Rua Cana and Swartboois Drift (see *Cimbebasia*, No. 19, 1966, p. 46).

ON THE VALIDITY OF *COSSYPHA NATALENSIS* *TENNENTI* WILLIAMS, 1962

Williams, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. lxxxii, 8, 1962, p. 137, proposed *C.n.tennenti* on five adults and an immature of the Natal Robinchat taken on Mt Endau, Kitui district, Kenya, during January and February of the same year. The range of *tennenti* is supposedly the forest on Mt Endau. In his description of the new subspecies, Williams makes no mention of two other races of this largely lowland species proposed from Kenya by Mearns in the early years of the present century, namely, *C.n.garguensis* Mearns, 1913: Mt Gargues (Varaguess at 0° 58' N., 37° 24' E.), Matthews Range, and *C.n.intensa* Mearns, 1913: Taveta, south-eastern Kenya. With the naming of *tennenti*, no less than three names have been proposed for Kenya populations of *C.natalensis* lying between 37° and 38° E. and 1° N. and 3° 50' S., these being *garguensis* and *intensa* of 1913 and *tennenti* of 1962. Ripley, in his treatment of the subspecies of this turdine in the continuation of Peters' *Check-List*, vol. x, 1964, pp. 53 and 54, admits all three as valid, recognising both *garguensis* and *tennenti* as montane isolates in a veritable sea of *intensa*, which latter is accorded a most unlikely range, extending from the southern Sudan and adjacent Ethiopia, south to Delagoa Bay in Moçambique. Prudently, a footnote cautions that the species is in need of further revision.

A re-examination of the variation in the Kenya populations on the basis of the material in the Durban Museum and the large East African series in the Los Angeles County Museum, the latter studied in June, 1979, reveals that only two subspecies are recognisable for Kenya and that *tennenti* and *garguensis* are one and the same subspecies, the latter name having priority. This confirms my earlier