

DURBAN MUSEUM

Novitates



ISSUED BY THE DURBAN MUSEUM, DURBAN 4001, SOUTH AFRICA

VOL. XI, PART 10

ISSUED 30th MARCH, 1977

MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XLVII

by

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THE CHARACTERS AND RANGE LIMITS OF THE NOMINATE SUBSPECIES OF *INDICATOR MINOR* STEPHENS

The northern limits of range and the diagnostic characters of the nominate subspecies of the Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* Stephens, 1815: Swartkops R., near Uitenhage, southern Cape, seem never to have been accurately determined. Most authors, including the world expert on the Indicatoridae, Dr. H. Friedmann, of the United States, in *U.S.Natn.Mus.Bull.*, No. 208, 1955, pp. 219-222, take the range of *I.m.minor* as far north as northern Angola, southern Zaïre, Kenya and Somalia, in so doing placing *I.m.erlangeri* Zedlitz, 1913: Afgoi, south-western Somalia, *I.m.teitensis* Neumann, 1900: Teita, south-eastern Kenya, and *I.m.albigularis* (Roberts), 1922: Woodbush Forest Reserve, Tzaneen, Transvaal, in the synonymy of the nominate subspecies. In my *Catalogue Birds South African Sub-Region*, 1965, p. 377, I showed that birds with clearer grey breasts and whiter throats and bellies than in *I.m.minor* occur as far south as the lower Zambesi R. valley and Sofala district in Mozambique. In Suppl. No. 2 to my *Catalogue (Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. ix, 12, 1972, p. 182), I took this matter

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winged examples in West Africa in contrast to the long-winged birds listed from the Transvaal and Natal.

I am grateful to Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin, Director of the National Museum of Rhodesia, and its Ornithologist, for kindly inviting me to study the series of Garden Warblers amassed by Mr. H. D. Jackson, Director of the Umtali Museum, and his field assistants.

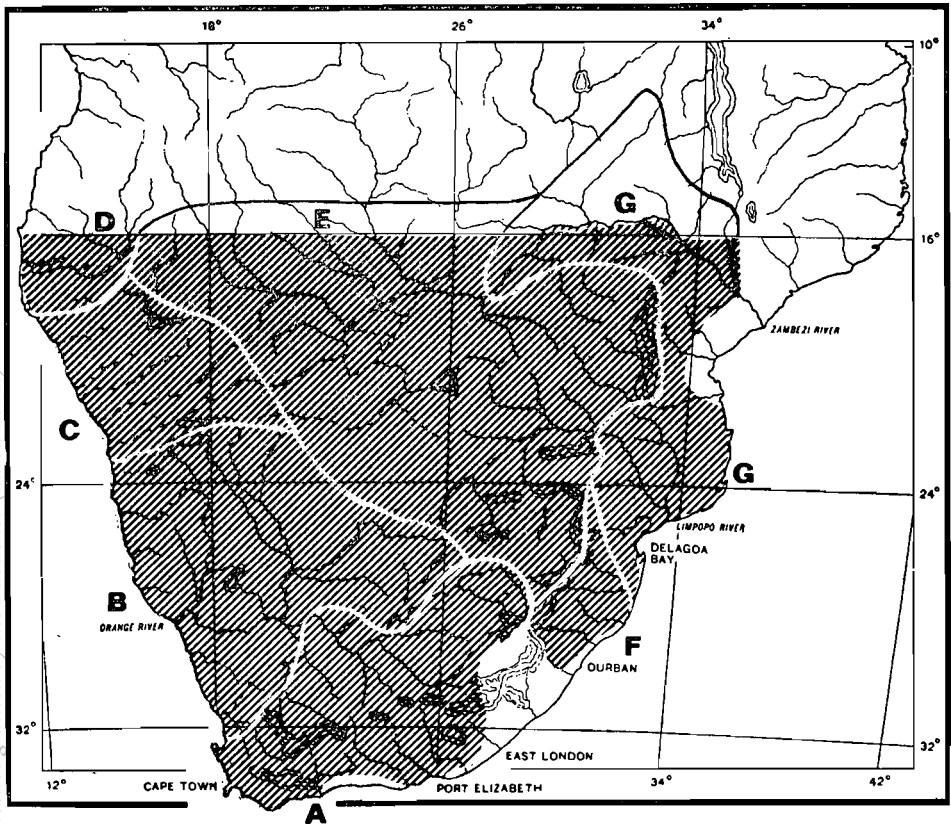
FURTHER ON THE SUBSPECIES OF THE CROMBEC *SYLVIETTA RUFESCENS* (VIEILLOT)

This stumpy-tailed, highly polytypic nuthatch-like warbler of the drier savanna woodlands of the southern half of Africa was last reviewed by me in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. lxxiv, 6, 1954, pp. 64 - 70, when seven races were admitted. Since the publication of the said paper, an additional race has been proposed from Huila, southern Angola, and detected in north-western South West Africa: *S.r. mossamedes* Meise, 1957: 25km S. of Jau, Huila, Angola, with the resulting placement of *S.ansorgei* Hartert, 1907: Uchi (Huxe), Benguela, Angola, as a subspecies of *S.rufescens*. These developments, coupled with data derived from a critical study of part of the large volume of new material assembled since the early 1950's, necessitate a succinct re-appraisal of the variation in this sylviid and the ranges to be accorded the various races warranting recognition. The findings published by me in 1954 are found to be basically correct, and the races then admitted for the South African Sub-Region are confirmed, with the addition of *S.r.mossamedes*.

Variation of subspecific significance in *S.rufescens* affects the relative brownness or greyness of the dorsum, the degree of definition in the facial pattern, the amount of pinky buff suffusion to the venter, general size, and the length of the bill. The desertic and semi-desertic (xeric) populations extending from the karoo regions of the Cape, north-west to the arid coast of Angola are the most brownish dorsally and have the most powerfully developed, decurved bills. On the other hand, the populations of the central and eastern mesic savanna woodlands are on the whole lighter and more bluish grey dorsally, are in some instances deeper and brighter buff ventrally, have starker facial patterns and shorter bills than the desertic western representatives. Wear and actinic action tend to darken and dull the grey or brownish of the upper-parts and result in a loss of buffiness to the underside, and races are best appreciated on the basis of specimens taken between April and the end of July. Nine subspecific groupings of populations warrant recognition in our taxonomic arrangement of the species.

S.r.ansorgei was for long treated as a discrete species with a localised range on the arid coast of Angola, but with the description of the linking form *S.r.mossamedes* by Meise in 1957 (*vide Abhandl. Verh.Naturwiss.Ver.Hamburg, N.F., Band ii, p. 71*) it is clearly no more than a race of *S.rufescens*.

Despite its recognition by Chapin, Schouteden and other workers on the birds of Zaïre, *S.r.adelphe* Grote, 1927: Baraka, north-western



MAP III

Sketch-map showing the disposition of the South African races of the Crombec *Sylvieta rufescens* (Vieillot)

- a. *Sylvieta rufescens diverga* Clancey
- b. *Sylvieta rufescens rufescens* (Vieillot)
- c. *Sylvieta rufescens ochrocaro* Oberholser
- d. *Sylvieta rufescens mossamedes* Meise (unstable)
- e. *Sylvieta rufescens flecki* Reichenow
- f. *Sylvieta rufescens resurga* Clancey
- g. *Sylvieta rufescens pallida* Alexander.

end of L. Tanganyika, Zaïre, is generally not recognised, and was ignored in Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, p. 253. Examination of the Zambian material in the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia confirms that *adelphe* is recognisable, and the diagnostic characters of this taxon are enumerated in the treatment of the species given hereunder.

Sylvietta rufescens diverga Clancey, 1954: "Doornhoek" Farm, Cradock, eastern Cape.

Darkest race. Entire dorsum dark Drab (Ridgway (1912), pl. xlvii). Venter saturated Cream-Buffer (pl. xxx), darkening over the sides and flanks, and sides of breast washed with deep grey.

Wings of 11 ♂♂ 59 - 65 (62,1), SD 2,35, culmens from base 16,5 - 19 (17,6), SD 1,01, wings of 14 ♀♀ 56 - 60 (58,0), SD 1,18, culmens 16 - 18 (16,8), SD 0,68mm.

Range: Winter Rainfall District of the south-western Cape, the southern Cape, the Karoo and West Griqualand, east to the eastern Cape, the lowlands of Lesotho, the Orange Free State, and the Southern Transvaal highveld. Absent from high rainfall areas.

Sylvietta rufescens rufescens (Vieillot); 1817: Olifants R., western Cape.

Dorsally paler than *diverga* (near Light Drab (pl. xlvii)), this most marked over the pileum. Below, clearer Cream-Buffer, the flanks much less dark; sides of breast washed with paler grey.

Wings of 7 ♂♂ 59,5 - 64 (61,5), SD 1,63, culmens 17,5 - 19 (18,4), SD 0,73, wings of 7 ♀♀ 55,5 - 60,5 (58,1), SD 1,55, culmens 16, 17,5 (17,0), SD 0,50mm.

Range: Arid western Cape coast north from about Saldanha Bay, and north-western Cape in Little Namaqualand, Bushmanland and western Kenhardt, northern Cape (with exception of the "karoo" of West Griqualand), dry south-western Transvaal, extreme southern and south-western Botswana, and Great Namaqualand, South West Africa. Merges with *S.r.ochrocar*a about Windhoek.

Sylvietta rufescens ochrocara Oberholser, 1905: Damaraland South West Africa.

Moderately differentiated from *S.r.rufescens*. In series lighter and more silvery grey over the dorsum in newly moulted condition (about Light Drab/Light Grayish Olive (pl. xlvii)). Size ranging a little larger.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 62,5 - 67,5 (64,7), SD 1,31, culmens 17 - 19 (18,0), SD 0,67, wings of 8 ♀♀ 59 - 63 (60,6), SD 1,41, culmens 16 - 18 (17,1), SD 0,59mm.

Range: South West Africa from the highlands of Damaraland, north of the range of *S.r.rufescens*, north to the Kaokoveld and the Etosha Pan region, and extending marginally into western Botswana.

Sylvietta rufescens mossamedes Meise, 1957: 25km S. of Jau, Huila, Angola.

Dorsally similar to *S.r.ochrocar*a. Differs ventrally in having the fore-throat off white or pale buffish white, not Cream-*Buff*, and with the centre of the lower breast and medio-ventral plane white, contrasted against the deep buff of the sides and flanks. Size the same.

Range: According to Traylor, southern and western Huila, reaching the escarpment at Leba, in south-western Angola. Also presumably southern Moçamedes, as specimens showing the characters of *S.r. mossamedes* are recorded from Ohopoho, northern Kaokoveld (Macdonald and Hall, *Ann. Transv. Mus.*, vol. xxiii, 1, 1957, p. 28), and from Kaoko-Otavi (Kaokoveld) and Swartboois Drift, Cunene R. (Winterbottom, *Cimbebasia* No. 19, 1966, pp. 51, 52). The northern Kaokoveld population is an intergrading one *ochrocar*a \gtrsim *mossamedes* (or *ochrocar*a \gtrsim *ansorgei*) by all accounts.

Remarks: *S.r.mossamedes* is the link between *ochrocar*a and the well-differentiated *ansorgei*, and while currently recognised may not be stabilized enough over a wide area to warrant recognition.

The name chosen for this taxon is particularly inappropriate, because the indigenous race of Moçamedes (or most of it) is *ansorgei* and not *mossamedes*, which is centred on southern Huila.

Sylvietta rufescens ansorgei Hartert, 1907: Uchi (Huxe), Benguela, Angola.

Similar to *S.r.mossamedes*, but rather browner, less grey, over the upper-parts (Drab/Grayish Olive (pl. xlvi)). On face, supercilium whiter. Below, with the fore-throat white or creamy white, this extended caudad over the mid-breast; lateral breast isabelline, overlaid with greyish olive; medio-ventral plane white, the sides and flanks pale isabelline or Cream-*Buff*. Size rather smaller.

Wing of 1 ♂ 61, culmen 17, wing of 1 ♀ 56,5, culmen 16+mm.

Range: Central Moçamedes (*vide* Traylor, *Check-list of Angolan Birds*, 1963, p. 159), north along the coastal plain of Angola to Luanda. Recorded by Bocage from Golungo Alto, Cuanza Norte, to the east of Luanda.

Sylvietta rufescens flecki Reichenow, 1900: Machumi Pan, S. of L. Ngami, north-western Botswana.

Synonym: S.r.transvaalensis Sclater and Mackworth-Praed, 1918.

Similar to *S.r.ochrocar*a above, but averaging slightly bluer grey (about Light Grayish Olive). Eye-streak darker and supercilium broader and clearer buffy white. Below, deeper buff throughout (sides and flanks Cinnamon-Buff (pl. xxix)). Bill weaker, shorter and straighter than in *ochrocar*a.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 60 - 66,5 (63,1), SD 2,05, culmens 15+- 17 (16,1), SD 0,54, wings of 12 ♀♀ 56,5 - 61 (59,4), SD 1,43, culmens 15 - 16,5 (15,8), SD 0,39mm.

Range: Ovamboland, in northern South West Africa, and southern Angola in Cuando-Cubango, east to the Caprivi Strip, northern, north-eastern and eastern Botswana, the bushveld regions of the plateau of the Transvaal, Rhodesia (except mid-Zambesi R. valley and extreme south-east), and Zambia south-west of *S.r.adelphe*.

Sylvietta rufescens resurga Clancey, 1953: Weenen, Natal.

Similar to *S.r.flecki* but darker dorsally, with a distinct overlay of olivaceous when newly moulted, appearing less pallid and blue (Grayish Olive). Ventrally, a little deeper, more ochraceous, Cinnamon-Buff in pristine condition. Size and bill-length similar.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 59 - 65,5 (62,5), SD 1,98, culmens 15 - 17 (16,1), SD 0,54, wings of 12 ♀♀ 55 - 60 (57,7), SD 1,53, culmens 15 - 16,5 (15,6), SD 0,58mm.

Range: Natal (local and largely absent from coast), Zululand (except north-eastern littoral), Swaziland, and south-eastern Transvaal along the eastern versant of the Drakensberg.

Sylvietta rufescens pallida Alexander, 1899: between Tete and Chikowa, Zambesi R., Mozambique.

Upper-parts as in *S.r.flecki*. Face with a slightly more contrasted pattern with darker stripe through eye, paler ear-coverts and broader and whiter supercilium. Below, paler, more whitish, buff over the fore-throat, mid-breast and medio-ventral plane (Cartridge Buff (pl. xxx)), the lateral ventral surfaces also paler. Ranging smaller in size.

Paler and bluer grey above than *resurga*. Below, whiter over the fore-throat, mid-breast and belly, the sides and flanks much paler and less saturated Cinnamon-Buff. Size ranging smaller.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 58 - 62 (60,3), SD 1,40, culmens 14,5 - 17 (15,5), SD 0,70, wings of 12 ♀♀ 54,5 - 58 (56,8), SD 1,40, culmens 14 - 15,5 (14,9), SD 0,40mm.

Range: Littoral flats of north-eastern Zululand, southern Mozambique, north-eastern Transvaal, south-eastern Rhodesia lowveld, southern lowland Malawi, and Zambesi R. basin of northern Rhodesia, Tete district, Mozambique, and adjacent Zambia, north to the lower Luangwa Valley. Intergrades with *S.r.resurga* in eastern Swaziland and in the eastern Transvaal lowveld, as well as with *flecki* and *adelphe* further north.

Sylvietta rufescens adelphe Grote, 1927: Baraka, north-western end of L. Tanganyika, Zaïre.

Rather paler olivaceous grey above than *S.r.flecki*, with a buff overlay when fresh, this marked over the pileum. Face with more strongly golden buffy supercilium and ear-coverts, the eye-streak paler, greyer and less well-developed. Below, more saturated when newly moulted than *S.r.flecki*, the flanks distinctly redder Cinnamon-Buff. Size much as in *S.r.pallida*, that is rather smaller than *S.r.flecki*.

Wings of 14 ♂♂ 60 - 64 (61,9), SD 1,33, culmens 14,5 - 16 (15,3), SD 0,48, wings of 14 ♀♀ 56,5 - 60 (58,2), SD 1,14, culmens 14 - 15,5 (14,5), SD 0,48mm.

Range: Southern and south-eastern Zaïre (north in east to Ruzizi Valley), south-western Tanzania, north-eastern Angola, Zambia, except in south-west and in the mid-Zambesi and lower Luangwa Valleys, and Malawi north of the range of *S.r.pallida*.

Remarks: This race lies very close to *S.r.flecki*, but differs at above the subspecific level of discrimination on the basis of the plainer and more golden buffy face.

THE SOUTH-EASTERN BROWN-BACKED SUBSPECIES OF THE FOREST WEAVER *PLOCEUS BICOLOR* VIEILLOT

The brown-backed populations of the Forest Weaver *Ploceus bicolor* Vieillot of Ethiopian Africa range from south-eastern Tanzania, south to southern Malawi, eastern and northern Rhodesia, Mozambique, Swaziland, the eastern Transvaal, Natal and Zululand, and the Cape as far south as Alexandria Forest, where they inhabit mid-level and lowland forest and riverine woodland. Moreau, in his treatment of the species in the continuation of Peters' *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. xv, 1962, pp. 54, 55, recognised nine races, four of