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SYSTEMATIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

I

by

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The following notes deal with the racial systematics of five southern African birds. For the loan of additional material to supplement that in the collection of the Durban Museum, I am indebted to the Directors of the following museums: National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo (through Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin), South African Museum, Cape Town (through Dr. J. M. Winterbottom), Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (through Mr. O. P. M. Prozesky), East London Museum, and the Coryndon Museum, Nairobi (through Mr. J. G. Williams). I am also indebted to Mr. P. A. Clancey, Director of the Durban Museum, for much valuable assistance during the preparation of these notes.

(1) GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN THE TAXON
UPUPA EPOPS AFRICANA BECHSTEIN OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA

The African Hoopoe *Upupa africana* Bechstein is usually regarded as being specifically distinct from *Upupa epops* Linnaeus of the Palaearctic, but many modern workers now treat *U. africana* as a geographical representative of *U. epops*. In *U. epops* the primaries have a white bar, whereas in *U. africana* they are wholly black, but a specimen in the Durban Museum collection from Lake Naivasha, Kenya Colony, has vestigial white barring on some

Range: Breeds to the north of the range of *U.e.minor*, as defined above, from South-West Africa, the northern Cape and Bechuanaland, eastwards to the western Orange Free State, western, northern and north-eastern Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia to southern Moçambique. North of South African zoogeographical limits extends to Angola and the Gabon, the southern Congo, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, northern P.E.A., and Tanganyika to Kenya. Intergrades to the north of its range with *U.e.waibeli*. Occasionally in Abyssinia.

(2) GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN THE FAIRY
FLYCATCHER *STENOSTIRA SCITA* (VIEILLOT)

This small aberrant flycatcher is endemic to the arid and semi-arid districts of South Africa, and was regarded as being monotypic until Clancey (1955) demonstrated the existence of geographical variation, when he introduced the name *S.s.rudebecki* Clancey: Umbeluzi River, near Lourenço Marques, southern Moçambique, for the populations occurring in Basutoland and adjacent areas of the Orange Free State, upper Natal, the Transvaal, and contiguous districts of southern Moçambique, confining the nominate race to the drier areas of the Cape Province and the contiguous districts of Great Namaqualand and the western Orange Free State.

In naming *S.s.rudebecki*, Clancey (1955) chose as his *Type* a specimen from the Umbeluzi River, near Lourenço Marques, southern Moçambique. This was unfortunate, because it has now been ascertained that this species is highly migratory in the eastern parts of its range, and the specimens collected by F. O. Noomé on the Umbeluzi River in May, 1911, were clearly visitors to the area, as the species has not been collected in Moçambique since then. It is now established that *S.s.rudebecki* is a subspecies of the montane regions of Basutoland and contiguous areas, and that it migrates north and east of its breeding range in the winter months to the Transvaal, interior regions of Natal, southern Moçambique and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It was separated from the nominate race chiefly on its larger size and in being darker dorsally.

A reappraisal of the geographical variation shown by this diminutive flycatcher has revealed that a further geographical race requires to be admitted in our formal racial arrangement of the populations, and within the populations placed as the nominate race by Clancey I now propose to admit two subspecific groupings.

Material assembled from various collections in the Durban Museum, demonstrates that the populations of the south-west Cape, Little Namaqualand, Bushmanland and the northern Cape differ in colouration from those occurring in the Karoo regions, the

southern and eastern Cape, and the western Orange Free State, and that the differences are such as to necessitate the recognition of two races within this whole area.

The question of the type-locality of the nominate race of *Stenostira scita* requires to be considered. Sclater (1930) and McLachlan and Liversidge (1957) give "lower Orange River" as the type-locality of the nominate race, a restriction based on the Levaillant reference used by Vieillot, and which was followed by the first true reviser of *Stenostira scita*, namely Clancey (1955). Macdonald (1957), without considering Clancey's work on this species, argued that the type-locality should be fixed somewhere in the eastern Cape Province, and proposed to change it to the "eastern Cape Province". No useful purpose is actually served by changing the type-locality thus at this late date, and for the purpose of stabilizing the nomenclature of the species, it seems to me that the type-locality should remain as "lower Orange River", which is that in general use in South Africa and the one used by Clancey, the first reviser.

The populations of the south-west Cape, Little Namaqualand, Bushmanland, the northern Cape and South-West Africa belong to the nominate race, and the populations of the rest of the Cape Province and western Orange Free State require to be named, and I propose the name *Stenostira scita saturatior* mihi, subsp. nov., for these populations.

Males of the nominate race are a cold slate-grey above and lack any olive suffusion to the mantle, which is present in *S.s.saturatior* and *S.s.rudebecki*, both of which have the upper-parts also generally darker and more saturated. On the under-parts the breast is clearer blue-grey, not so smoky as in *S.s.saturatior*, with the pink of the throat and abdomen rose, as opposed to orange or deep salmon pink.

The females of the nominate race are also grey-backed, in which respect they differ from the other races, which have the upper-parts distinctly washed with olive or olive-brown. Both sexes in *S.s.rudebecki* are much larger in size than either of the other two races, and on this character are readily separable from them.

As a result of this research, which is based on the pooled specimen resources of all southern African museums, it is proposed that three races of the Fairy Flycatcher should now be admitted in preference to the two recognised by Clancey in his review of 1955. The nomenclature, characters and ranges of the races are as follows:

(a) *Stenostira scita scita* (Vieillot)

Muscicapa scita Vieillot, *Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat.*, vol. 21, 1818, p. 474: lower Orange River.

Males with the mantle a cold slate-grey, lacking the olive suffusion present in the other two subspecies, and appreciably pale in general colouration. On the under-parts clear blue-grey over the breast, and with the concealed pink of the throat and abdomen rose.

Females have the upper-parts grey, with little or no olive overlay, in which respect they differ from the females of *S.s.rudebecki* and *S.s.saturation*, which have the upper-parts strongly tinged with olive or olive-brown. Similar in size to *S.s.saturation*, but smaller than *S.s.rudebecki*.

Measurements: 10 ♂♂ wings 50.0-52.5 (51.2), tail 52.0-55.0 (53.7), culmen 13.0-15.0 (13.9); 5 ♀♀ wing 48.5-51.0 (50.4), tail 50.5-55.0 (52.1), culmen 13.0-13.5 (13.1) mm.

Material: 21 (south-western Cape Province 4, Little Namaqualand 1, Bushmanland 5, northern Cape Province 9, Karoo 2).

Range: The south-western Cape Province, northwards through Little Namaqualand to Bushmanland, southern South-West Africa and the northern Cape Province, intergrading with *S.s.saturation* in the west and south-west of its established range. Subject to a certain amount of movement in the Karoo regions in the non-breeding season, as revealed by a typical specimen from De Aar.

(b) *Stenostira scita saturation*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. Lelykpoortjie, Tarkastad, eastern Cape Province. 21 October, 1960. Collected by Miss M. Courtenay-Latimer. In the collection of the East London Museum, Reg. No. 8719.

Diagnosis: Males differ from those of the nominate race (which is cold bluish slate-grey on the mantle) in having an olive wash to the mantle, and in being considerably darker dorsally, though not as dark as in *S.s.rudebecki*. The breast is smoky grey, with the hidden pink of the throat and abdomen more orange than in *S.s.scita*.

The female differs from that of the nominate race in being brownish olive over the dorsal surface, but neither so dark nor as brown as the female of *S.s.rudebecki*. Similar in size to the nominate race, but smaller than *S.s.rudebecki*.

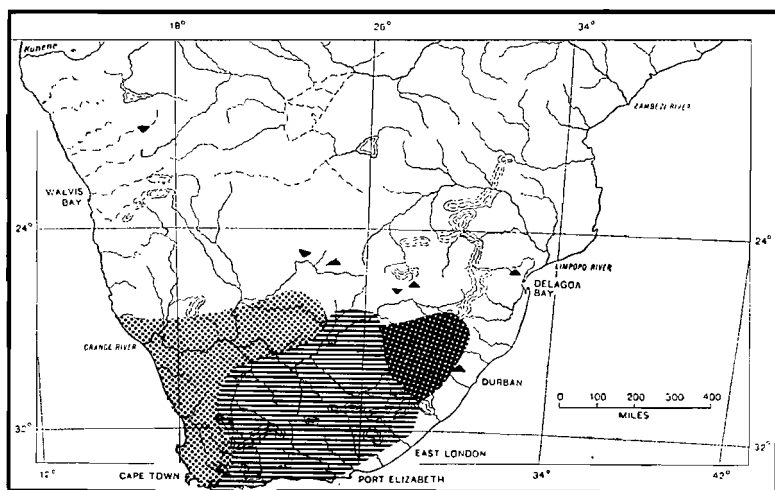
Measurements: 10 ♂♂ wing 49.0-52.5 (50.9), tail 50.0-54.0 (52.4), culmen 12.5-13.5 (13.1); 10 ♀♀ wing 49.5-52.0 (50.5), tail 48.0-53.5 (51.8), culmen 12.0-13.5 (12.8) mm.

Material: 58 (Cape Province 51, western Orange Free State 3, Transvaal 3, South-West Africa 1).

Measurements of Type: wing 52.5, tail 54.0, culmen 13.5 mm.

Range: The southern, central and eastern districts of the Cape Province. Determined as intergrading with *S.s.scita* in the western Orange Free State and contiguous areas, and migrating in the non-breeding season to the Transvaal and South-West Africa (Otjiwarongo, in the collection of the Durban Museum, and Oukongo, Kaokoveld, where it was recorded by Watt (1943)).

Sketch-map showing approximate breeding ranges of the geographical races of *Stenostira scita* (Vieillot)



breeding range of *S.s.scita* (Vieillot)

breeding range of *S.s.saturation* Lawson

breeding range of *S.s.rudebecki* Clancey



winter records of *S.s.saturation* Lawson



winter records of *S.s.rudebecki* Clancey

(c) *Stenostira scita rudebecki* Clancey

Stenostira scita rudebecki Clancey, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, vol. 75, 1, 1955, p. 3: Umbeluzi River, near Lourenço Marques, southern Moçambique.

Male separable from the nominate race and *S.s.saturator* in being considerably larger in size. The mantle is washed with deep olive and the whole dorsal surface is darker than in *S.s.saturator*, and is unlike the nominate race which is clear grey over the mantle and markedly pale by comparison. On under-parts, the breast has a deep olive suffusion in which respect it differs from the nominate race, and is deeper coloured than in *S.s.saturator*.

Female differs from those of *S.s.scita* and *S.s.saturator* in the larger overall size, and in being a deeper olive, almost brown, on the mantle and darker on the breast.

Measurements: 7 ♂♂ wing 52.0-56.0 (53.9), tail 51.0-55.5 (54.0), culmen 14.0-14.5 (14.3); 6 ♀♀ wing 53.0-55.0 (54.5), tail 54.0-56.0 (54.7), culmen 13.0-14.0 (13.5) mm.

Material: 13 (Basutoland 3, eastern Orange Free State 1, Natal 1, Transvaal 8).

Range: The highland areas of Basutoland and contiguous Orange Free State, migrating in the non-breeding season to Natal, Transvaal, Moçambique, and probably also Bechuanaland (*vide* Paterson 1962).

(3) GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN WOODWARD'S
BATIS BATIS FRATRUM (SHELLEY)

The range of this *Batis* is given by Sclater (1930) as "Zululand, north to the Beira district," and by Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955) as northern Portuguese East Africa to Nyasaland and Zululand, and current views are that the species is monotypic.

As a result of a request for the loan of various species of the genus *Batis* addressed to the Coryndon Museum, six specimens from coastal Kenya attributable to *Batis fratrurn* were sent, constituting a considerable northward extension of the known range of the species. Four of the specimens are females, two sub-adult males. Three of the specimens were collected for Dr. V. G. L. van Someren as long ago as July, 1939, in the Shimba Hills, and appear to have been unnoticed since that time. The others were collected in the Sokoke Forest, near Kilifi, in May, 1954, May, 1958, and March, 1959, the first two by J. G. Williams, the third by a collector whose name is not stated on the original label (? Ian Parker).