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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

LIII

by

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IS *CHARADRIUS VARIUS ALLENBYI* NICHOLL, 1921, INVALID?

Nicholl, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. xlii, 1921, p. 7, separated the Egyptian population of Kittlitz's Sandplover as new under the name *Charadrius varius allenbyi*, the *Type* from Lake Karoon=Birket Qârûn, El Faiyum, Egypt, on a single minor and entirely statistical size-difference. On the basis of a series of 5 ♂♂ and 6 ♀♀, *allenbyi*, with wings 102-112, was believed taxonomically distinguishable from nominate *C.v.varius* Vieillot, with wings in 33 ♂♂♀♀ 98-110 mm. As pointed out by Sclater, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. xlii, 1922, pp. 72, 73, *C.varius* Vieillot, 1818, is pre-occupied by *C.varius* Temminck, 1807, an alternative name for *C.pluvialis*, which = *Pluvialis apricaria* (Linnaeus), and the correct name for this sandplover is *C.pecuarius* Temminck, 1823: Cape of Good Hope, Cape. As can be appreciated from the mensural data provided by Nicholl in the original diagnosis, *allenbyi* is not taxonomically distinguishable on greater size from *C.p.pecuarius*. Nicholl's Egyptian race received recognition at the time of its description by Hartert, *Vög. pal. Fauna*, vol. iii, 1921/1922, pp. 2211, 2212, and later by Meinertzhagen, *Nicholl's Birds of Egypt*, vol. ii, 1930, pp. 538, 539, pl. xxvii, but was ultimately shown to be invalid on the characters given by Thesiger and Meynell, *Ibis*, ser. 13, vol. v, 4, 1935, pp. 784, 785. Meinertzhagen, *loc.cit.*, inadvertently misrepresented the case for *allenbyi*, stating that it was reputedly smaller, not larger, than

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nominate *pecuarius* (bottom of p. 539), and this mistake was repeated by Thesiger and Meynell (top of p. 785). In recent times it has become the practice to treat the species binomially (see for instance Vaurie, *Birds Palearctic Fauna*, vol. ii, Non Passeriformes, 1965, pp. 375, 376).

In a study of the variation exhibited by this small plover in southern, south-central and eastern Africa in *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. ix, 9, 1971, pp. 109 - 112, I demonstrated that quite apart from the size variation employed in earlier attempts to arrange the populations into recognisable races, the species in the south of its range exhibited colour variation over the upper- and under-parts. From Africa south of the Equator two races were recognised: *C.p.pecuarius* with the upper-parts dull olive-brown, the scapulars and tertials edged with reddish buff or isabelline, and ventrally with the vinaceous-buff distributed from the lower fore-throat to the medio-ventral-plane and flanks, and a localized xeric race of the saline pans of northern South West Africa and Botswana (*C.p.tephricolor* Clancey, 1971: Mumpswe, Makgadikgadi Salt Pan, north-eastern Botswana) with upper-parts greyer brown, the edges to the scapulars and tertials whitish, and with the under-parts extensively white, the buff more restricted to the upper breast; size also rather smaller than in Cape topotypes of nominate *C.pecuarius*. In this study the status of the populations present to the north of the Equator and the position of the disputed subspecies *allenbyi* were left largely undecided, though the populations concerned were treated as elements of nominate *C.pecuarius*.

Through the courtesy of Dr. H. E. Wolters of the Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, I have been able to examine a short series of Kittlitz's Sandplover from Upper Egypt, the northern Sudan and L. Chad. The wings of this series of ten ♂♂♀♀, and which comprises both adult and immature birds, measure 98 - 108 (104,8), SD 3,32. Thesiger and Meynell give the wings of ten from Egypt as 100 - 110 mm. Compared with a long series of nominate *C.pecuarius* from the Cape, Natal and Moçambique, the Nile Valley birds are seen to be darker and warmer brown above, the upper mantle more piceous and with rather more strongly isabelline fringes to the scapulars and tertials. On the underside the adults differ markedly in having the buff more ochraceous, less vinaceous, than in the nomotypical race, this restricted to the upper breast, the sides, flanks and medio-ventral plane pure white. In the restriction of the buff wash to the breast they show an approach to the xeric population of the saline pans of the South West Arid District, which likewise shows restriction of the buff to the upper breast and a wholly whiter venter.

The ventral character of the northern desertic populations of the present sandplover is rather nicely brought out in Lodge's colour-plate of *C.p.allenbyi* in Meinertzhagen's *Nicholl's Birds of Egypt*.

The single example from L.Chad examined, which was collected by the late Professor G.Niethammer at Bol on 9 April, 1954, differs somewhat from the Nile Valley sample in being paler above, less washed with sepia over the mantle, and the fringes to the scapulars and tertials are both broader and more sandy in colour. The supercilia also appear to be more extensively white. Whether the birds occurring to the south of the Sahara differ subspecifically from those from the Nile will require study of a larger body of material from both the Nile and L. Chad than is available in southern Africa at the present time.

While Nicholl's proposal of a northern race of *C.pecuarius* cannot be admitted on the basis of the size criterion given in the original description, I believe a case exists for the recognition and wider application of such a taxon on the grounds of slightly darker and browner upper-parts, and reduced pectoral buff and a more extensively white underside than *C.p.pecuarius*. The name *allenbyi* cannot, however, be applied to these northern populations as it is antedated by *Charadrius isabellinus* von Müller, described in *Naumannia*, vol. i, part 4, 1851, p. 29, the type-locality of which is Sennar, Sudan. While von Müller's name has not been used in the primary zoological literature since its proposal, apart from listing in synonymy, I can see no need to have it suppressed as the later name *allenbyi* has received only limited recognition and, moreover, has been in synonymy since the mid-1930s.

As mentioned earlier in this communication, *C.p.isabellinus* shares characters with the austral xeric race, *C.p.tephricolor*, which latter differs in being wholly greyer, less brown, above, the fringing to the scapulars and tertials whitish rather than buff. There is no difference in size between the two dry country taxa, as can be gauged by comparing the wing measurements given above with those listed for various central and southern African populations in my contribution in this *Novitates* series in 1971 (as given above).

At this stage in our understanding of the geographical variation in Kittlitz's Sandplover, the following three races may be admitted:

- (a) **Charadrius pecuarius pecuarius** Temminck, 1823:
Cape of Good Hope, Cape

Dorsal surface dull earthen Olive-Brown (Ridgway (1912), pl. xl), the scapulars and tertials narrowly edged ochraceous or buff. Below, vinaceous-buff from the lower fore-throat to the medio-ventral

plane and flanks; rest white. Wings in western Cape topotypes 107 - 114 mm.

Range: The Cape, Natal and Zululand, Orange Free State, the lowlands of Lesotho, the Transvaal, Rhodesia and Moçambique, and north of the Zambesi R. to northern Moçambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, southern Zaïre and Angola. Also Madagascar.

(b) **Charadrius pecuarius tephricolor** Clancey, 1971:

Mumpswe, Makgadikgadi Salt Pan, north-eastern Botswana.

Greyer, less brownish, above than nominate *pecuarius* (mantle light Hair Brown (pl. xlvi)), the scapulars and tertials fringed with chalky white. Below, more extensively white, the buff paler and restricted to the upper breast. Averaging smaller in size. Wings 100 - 108 mm.

Range: The saline pans of northern South West Africa from Etosha Pan, east to northern Botswana (east as far as Makgadikgadi and the Nata R.).

(c) **Charadrius pecuarius isabellinus** von Müller, 1851: Sennar, Sudan.
Synonym: *Charadrius varius allenbyi* Nicholl, 1921: Birket Qârûn, El Faiyum, Egypt.

Warmer and browner above than *C.p.pecuarius* (about Saccardo's Umber (pl. xxix)), this marked over the vertex and mantle, the latter strongly overlaid with piceous; scapulars and tertials edged deeper, more rusty, buff. White areas over the sides and hind surface of the neck also more tinged buff. Below, resembles *tephricolor* in being extensively white, but pectoral buff rather more ochraceous, less vinaceous. Similar in size to *C.p.tephricolor*. Wings 98 - 108 mm.

Range: The valley of the Nile from the Delta south to the Sudan, and Ethiopian Africa from Senegal in the west, east to Danakil, Ethiopia and Somalia, and south in the east to north-eastern Zaïre, Uganda and Kenya.

Remarks: As noted in the above discussion, a single specimen from L. Chad differs from Nile Valley birds in being paler above, the mantle not washed with sepia and the scapulars and tertials broadly edged with sandy. The supercilia also appear to be more extensively white. The significance of these characters is currently uncertain, though a fourth race may well be involved.

I am grateful to Dr. H. E. Wolters of the Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, for assistance and the loan of material, and to Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin for measurements of specimens in his care.

AN OVERLOOKED RACE OF WATTLED PLOVER

Material recently received by the Durban Museum reveals the necessity of recognising two races of *Xiphidiopterus senegallus* (Linnaeus) (see Wolters, *Die Vogelarten der Erde*, lief. i, bog. 1 - 5, 1975, p. 23) from the South African Sub-Region. A name is required for one of these:

***Xiphidiopterus senegallus solitaneus*, subsp.nov.**

Type: ♂, adult. Okavango R. banks near Rundu, north-eastern South West Africa (Namibia). 27 October, 1978. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M. Reg. No. 31337.

Diagnosis: Differs from *X.s.lateralis* (Smith), 1839: Tugela R. Natal, in having the upper-parts darker and greener olive, less buffish, brown (Light Olive-Brown (Ridgway, pl. xxx), *versus* pale Saccardo's Umber (pl. xxix)), and with the streaking over the hind neck greyer. Black patch over mid-throat larger, and neck streaking both coarser and blacker, the pale interstices whiter; breast panel pale vinaceous-grey rather than light buffy (Vinaceous-Fawn (pl. xl), as against Vinaceous-Buff (same pl.)), and dark lower lateral patches slate-black or charcoal black rather than sooty brown.

Measurements: Wings of 7 ♂♂♀♀ 231,5 - 244 (238,2), SD 4,56 mm.

Material examined: 7 (South West Africa: Rundu; Caprivi Strip: Linyanti, Kabuta; Botswana: Satau (18° 05' S., 23° 22' E.); Zambia: Lochinvar, Kafue (Lusaka district)).

Range: Angola, northern South West Africa, Caprivi, northern Botswana, Zambia, southern and eastern Zaïre, ? and Uganda and western Kenya. Eastern range limits and post-breeding movements uncertain.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 240, culmen (exposed) 34,5, tarsus 86, tail 105 mm.

Remarks: Chapin, *Birds Belgian Congo*, part ii, 1939, p. 84, draws attention to variation in flank patch colouration detected in samples of this plover from eastern Zaïre. It is uncertain at this stage if the variation noted by Chapin in eastern Zaïre material is in any way correlated with one of the main characters employed in the description of *X.s.solitaneus*.

The name chosen for the new taxon is from the Latin *solitaneus*: distinct or separate.

The range of *X.s.lateralis* is from the interior of Natal and Zululand, Swaziland, southern Moçambique, the Transvaal and Rhodesia,

north to Malawi and southern Tanzania, but the northern range limits are currently tentative.

I am grateful to Mr. Bryan Donnelly of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, for the loan of relevant material.

A NAME FOR AN UNDESCRIBED SUBSPECIES OF *STERNA BERGII* LICHTENSTEIN

In *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. x, 14, 1974, pp. 191 - 206, I demonstrated that the population of the Swift Tern present in the Moçambique Channel region off south-eastern Africa appeared to constitute an undescribed race. As Moçambique is now a Marxist state, it is highly unlikely that within the foreseeable future South African workers will be able to go further into this particularly interesting problem. Rather than leave the entity indefinitely without a name, I propose

Sterna bergii *enigma*, subsp.nov.

Type: ♀, adult. Coast 32 km N. of Beira, Manica e Sofala, southern Moçambique, at 19° 40' S., 35° 05' E. 7 September, 1962. Collected by Messrs. R. W. Rankine and R. Peek. In the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo.

Description and range: As given under "*Sterna bergii* ? subsp.nov." in *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. x, 14, 1974, pp. 202, 203.

ON THE GENERIC STATUS OF THE GREEN BARBET

The Green Barbet of eastern and south-eastern Africa was originally described by Shelley in the genus *Barbatula* Lesson, 1837, which is pre-occupied, in the combination *Barbatula olivacea* Shelley, 1880. Fifteen years later this same author described the far southern isolate of the species as *Stactolaema woodwardi* Shelley, 1895, the genus *Stactolaema* being of Marshall and Marshall, 1870, the type-species of which is *Buccanodon anchietae* Bocage, 1869. The type-species of *Buccanodon* Hartlaub, 1857, is *Barbatula duchaillii* Cassin, 1855, a highly decorative species of the equatorial forest belt of the continent. In its plain green and greyish olive plumage, the Green Barbet is highly dissimilar to most of the species with which it has been or is currently associated in *Stactolaema* by various authors.

In his recent World list, Wolters, *Die Vogelarten der Erde*, lief. 2, bog. 6 - 10, 1976, p. 151, places *olivacea* in a greatly enlarged genus *Gymnobucco* Bonaparte, 1850, the type of which is *Bucco calvus* Lafresnaye, 1841, in which *Stactolaema* is accorded only sub-generic