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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XLIV

by

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MORE ON VARIATION IN *CAMPEPHAGA FLAVA* VIEILLOT

In my study of variation in the cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga flava* Vieillot, which is better treated as a full species rather than a race of the northern *Campephaga phoenicea* (Latham), in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. ix, 5, 1971, pp.48-50, I dealt in the main with the geographical incidence of colour morphs in males. Variation in adult females and in sub-adults of both sexes was commented on somewhat briefly, and then only to point out its extensive nature which at that stage seemed to have no direct geographical correlation. Re-examination of the variation in adult females of *C.flava* from the South African Sub-Region suggests that the species may be racially divisible on marked differences in the dorsal colouration. Freshly moulted material in the Durban Museum collection reveals that females from the Cape, Natal and Zululand, Swaziland, the eastern Transvaal and extreme southern Mozambique have the vertex, hind and sides of the neck and mantle saturated Medal Bronze (Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl. iv). In sharp contrast to these relatively dark birds, specimens taken during the winter months in Mozambique north of the lower Limpopo R. and in south-eastern Rhodesia are palpably paler over the upper-parts, with the head-top, neck and mantle Saccardo's Olive (pl. xvi) or greyer, the rump and upper tail-coverts with a lighter ground colour.

[*Price* R1,00 *nett*]

Ventrally such birds are often whiter than those collected further south, with reduced transverse barring and scaling, while the yellow edging to the wing-coverts and remiges may be more extensive as may be the amount of yellow in the tail.

The differences outlined above are well-marked in freshly moulted specimens, but are eventually largely eliminated by lipochrome loss through insolation and leaf abrasion (the species being largely a foliage gleaner), with the result that it has not been possible to verify if such pale birds represent the population which breeds in the eastern lowlands of Africa to the north of the lower Limpopo R. The inconclusive evidence available suggests, however, that they do not, and that they are wintering birds, probably from the interior of south-central Africa, with a relatively xeric breeding range, extending from southern Angola, northern South West Africa, east to northern Botswana, Rhodesia, western Zambia, and probably parts of southern Zaïre. Unfortunately, available female material from this sector of the Ethiopian Region is worn and sun affected and does not compare favourably with the freshly moulted specimens in our collection from the eastern low country, and I have arrived at such tentative conclusions by deduction founded on the known patterns of variation in small passerines in southern Africa and the well-established post-breeding movements of elements of the species itself (see Prigogine, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. xcii, 3 and 4, 1972, pp. 83-90). It may be that the Shaba (Katanga), Zaïre, population, which is believed to furnish the individuals involved in seasonal influxes of non-breeders into areas further north in Zaïre, is also part of the paler backed complex detected by me as wintering in Mozambique and south-eastern Rhodesia. In southern Africa *C.flava* breeds late September–February (and probably early March), with a marked eastward shift of populations taking place a month or two later, with birds (presumably both residents and winterers) numerous to abundant in the eastern lowlands of southern Africa between May and September. Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, p. 211, give the Zambian breeding season as October–January, and record an absence of the population during June–September. Prigogine, in dealing with the situation in Zaïre, found the species to be present all the year round in the Katanga (Shaba), but in the Kasai specimen records suggest it is only normally present in that region during April–September, and in the Maniema and southern Kivu between June and October. While many are believed resident, an influx of non-breeders occurs in Rwanda, on Idjwi Island, Lac Kivu, and northern Kivu during June–October, these believed to be from breeding grounds in East Africa.

None of the names in the synonymy of the species is available for the pale population which apparently breeds in the savanna woodlands of south-central Africa, and winters in the coastal lowlands to the east, ? and in the interior tropics to the north of the breeding range, and in the event of such a subspecies being erected one would require to be formally proposed.

The limited material in suitable freshly moulted condition at hand from East Africa: from Kenya, south to Malawi, indicates that the East African breeding population is probably significantly different in the adult female dress from those breeding further south or west in the continent. Eastern tropical adult females are relatively saturated — as in the case of the Cape–southern Mozambique population — but differ in the markedly yellower, more citrine-coloured, dorsal surface. Here again delimitation of a putative breeding range is made difficult at this stage in our understanding of the phenomena, due to the elimination of the lipochrome based colour differences by environmental factors before the birds return to their breeding grounds. As far as can be determined, adult females of all the populations of the species are indistinguishable when breeding, when they are invariably colour leached, abraded and food and vegetable stained.

To summarise, adult females in fresh plumage from South Africa group readily into two subspecies on the basis of variation in dorsal colouration. The paler backed of the two, which is known mainly from specimens collected in the non-breeding season in Mozambique and south-eastern Rhodesia, is believed on circumstantial evidence to nidificate from southern Angola, east to southern Zaïre, Zambia and Rhodesia, and is in the main absent from the same region during the period May–September. On the basis of my findings on adult males in 1971, the incidence of yellow-shouldered morphs in this latter population complex appears to be greatly reduced, all males then examined lacking yellow epaulettes. On the other hand, the darker (in females) of the two South African forms, which breeds in the coastlands from the Cape to southern Mozambique, has the upper-parts in adult females saturated, and the incidence of yellow-shouldered morphs in adult males high at *ca* 70 per cent. It is also significant that in adult males from southern Mozambique (in which region the south-central African plateau birds winter) only one out of eleven specimens in the Durban Museum collection exhibits yellow epaulettes. Limited material in suitable condition from East Africa suggests that such eastern tropical populations are also distinguishable at the conventional level for subspecies on the basis of a more yellowish citrine dorsal surface in freshly moulted females. No name

in synonymy is available for any such East African subspecies of the Black Cuckoo-Shrike.

It seems desirable to defer making formal proposals in respect of a breakdown of *C.flava* until much more is known of its complex post-breeding movements and the breeding and hibernal areas of the three population groups which appear recognisable.

FURTHER ON THE NOMINATE SUBSPECIES OF *DICRURUS ADSIMILIS* (BECHSTEIN), 1794: DUIWENHOK R., SWELLENDAM, SOUTH-WESTERN CAPE

In his revision of the Dicruridae in *Bull.Amer.Mus.Nat.Hist.*, vol. xciii, 4, 1949, pp. 222-231, Vaurie admitted five races of the African Forktailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*, the nominate race considered to range over the whole of Africa south of the rain forest, *i.e.*, the Congo or Lower Guinea Forest, extending in the east to Uganda and Kenya "outside the forests". The proposed breakdown of *D.a.adsimilis* into two minor subspecies on the basis of differences in wing-length advocated by some workers, in which *D.a.fugax* Peters, 1868: Tete and Inhambane, Mozambique, is utilized for eastern low country birds, was, following Friedmann, *Bull.U.S.Nat.Mus.*, No. cliii, 1937, pp. 61-65, rejected. Variation within the populations comprising Vaurie's nominate race of *D.adsimilis* was again explored at some depth in my paper in *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club.*, vol. lxxvi, 5, 1956, pp. 79-85, the opinion being expressed that *fugax* is a distinguishable subspecies on the basis of smaller size, deeper black general colouration in adult birds, and paler inner webs to the primaries. In denying acceptance to *fugax*, both Friedmann and Vaurie were influenced in their decisions by the finding that short-winged birds are not restricted to the humid coast of East Africa, but extend as far inland as high western Kenya and Uganda, while both stated authors make no mention of differences other than in wing-length. Indeed, Vaurie seems to have completely overlooked the fact that there is marked and taxonomically significant variation in the colouration of the inner webs of the primaries in what he interprets as the nominate race of *D.adsimilis*. As *fugax* is still more often rejected than recognised by workers, I recently re-examined the variation in the nominate *adsimilis* and *fugax* populations on the basis of the large series in the Durban Museum in an effort to find a more generally acceptable arrangement of the southern populations of the present drongo, and in so doing define the actual limits of the nominate race.

In southern and eastern Cape and Natal specimens of the Forktailed Drongo, the former being topotypical of nominate *D.adsimilis*,