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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.

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greenish blue-black. The bill is given as short and thick and the frontal feathers more directed forward than in "other African Drongos". I have seen no topotypes of this proposed taxon, which is currently treated in all standard works as a synonym of *D.l. sharpei*. A British Museum (Nat.Hist.) specimen of *sharpei*: a ♂ from Yeji, Krache, Ghana, collected by Boyd Alexander, B.M. Reg. 1911.12.23.3702, bears a label with the following written on it: "This specimen compared with co-type of *D.l.elgonensis* Van Som. with which it agrees very closely, except for wing 4 mm. shorter in size (initialled, 9/5/'46)." I do not see that this skin differs in any way from the norm of *sharpei*, and therefore subscribe to the view that *elgonensis* was based in the first instance on individual variation and is correctly placed as a synonym of *D.l.sharpei*, following Vaurie, *loc.cit.* Two specimens from the far east of the range of *sharpei* examined during the course of this study: one from Lotti Forest, Mongalla, Sudan, and the second from Kakamega Forest, Kenya, are indistinguishable from West African examples, tending to confirm that Van Someren's *elgonensis* is untenable.

ON *ERYTHROPYGIA PAENA DAMARENSIS*
HARTERT, 1907

The small sandy scrub robin *Erythropygia paena* Smith of a large area of the South West Arid District of Ethiopian Africa was first demonstrated as polytypic by Hartert, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. xix, 1907, p. 96, who proposed the racial taxa *E.p.damarensis* from Omaruru, Damaraland, South West Africa, and *E.p.benguellensis* from Uchi, on the arid coast of south-western Angola. Sclater, *Syst. Av.Aethiop.*, part ii, 1930, p. 489, and Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 245 (but see also Roberts, *Ann.Transv.Mus.*, vol. xvi, 1, 1935, p. 139, for an alternative opinion), admitted the validity of *damarensis*, but in recent times the taxon has been regularly synonymised with nominate *E.paena* Smith, 1836: between Kuruman and the Tropic, northern Cape, as for instance by Ripley in *Peters' Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. x, 1964, p. 24, Clancey, following the S.A.O.S. List Committee (1962), *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. vii, 11, 1966, p. 459, the S.A.O.S. List Committee in their *Check List Birds of South Africa*, 1969, p. 213, Winterbottom, *Prelim. Check List Birds of South West Africa*, 1971, p. 188, *inter al.* Writing in *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. v, 16, 1959, pp. 203, 204, I admitted the validity of *damarensis*, which finding was supported by Traylor, *Ibis*, vol. cvii, 2, 1965, p. 172, and again in Clancey, *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. viii, 11, 1968, pp. 138-140, and *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. viii, 16, 1969, pp. 303, 304. Earlier, Macdonald, *Contr.Orn.West.South Africa*,

1957, pp. 132, 133, had expressed his belief in the discreteness of *E.p.damarensis*. As *damarensis* is still denied recognition (see Winterbottom, *loc.cit.*, and Friedmann and Northern, *Contr.Science*, No. 266, 1975, p. 29), I have again studied the fairly extensive series of this scrub robin in the Durban Museum collection in an effort to resolve the impasse. The whole of the long series in the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, was also studied in close detail in Durban in late 1967.

Seventeen specimens from the Damaraland highlands (Windhoek and Okahandja) (topotypical of *E.p.damarensis*) compared with twelve from Kuruman, Griquatown district and Riverton, Vaal R. (virtual topotypes of *E.p.paena*), are not divisible taxonomically, a trend towards pallor and redness over the mantle and scapulars in Damara birds being cancelled out by the range of individual and overlapping variation in both samples. Before Traylor commented favourably on the validity of *damarensis* he compared a series from Botswana with one from South West Africa. Comparing a series of twenty-two skins from western Rhodesia, Botswana and the dry western Transvaal with those from the northern Cape localities mentioned earlier and Damaraland, a relatively clear-cut polarisation of characters is evident, Rhodesian and Botswana birds being distinctly grey rather than light vinaceous brown over the vertex and hind neck, and the mantle and scapulars are on the whole more saturated, ochraceous and overlaid with grey, compared with western and southern examples. If one accepts that Kuruman and East Griqualand specimens represent nominate *E.paena* it would be necessary, certainly on the basis of the evidence now before me, to merge *E.p.damarensis* with *E.p.paena*, and introduce a name for the relatively well-marked populations of eastern and northern Botswana and western Rhodesia.

Smith, *Rep.Exped.Expl.Centr.Afr.*, 1836, p. 46, proposed *Erythropygia Paena* on specimens taken somewhere between Latakoo, *i.e.*, Kuruman, northern Cape, and the Tropic of Capricorn during the course of the Expedition for Exploring Central Africa in 1834–1836. In the original description he described *E.paena* as having the "Top of (the) head grey-brown", and in his *Illustr.Zool.S.Afr.*, Aves, 1840, pl. 50 (and text), defined the characters further as "head superiorly dull brown, the feathers distinctly edged and tipped with rusty grey; upper aspect of neck rusty grey; interscapulars and anterior back . . . yellowish brown . . ." Plate 50 of the *Illustrations* depicts an adult in agreement with such diagnostic features, the dorsal head and neck surfaces distinctly grey and the back light ochraceous

brown, in this agreeing in turn more or less precisely with the norm of the Botswana populations as currently understood.

Kirby, *Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith*, vol. ii, 1940, map, shows that after finally leaving Kuruman Smith and his party proceeded in a north-easterly direction, reaching the Mafeking district of the northern Cape in late May, and the Tropic of Capricorn in eastern Botswana on 4 September, 1835. As the locality Kurrichane (near Zeerust) is not mentioned in either of Smith's writings on *E.p.aena*, the paratypical material of the scrub robin clearly came from south of this locality at 25° 21' S., 26° 11' E., and almost certainly from somewhere along the route followed by Smith across the north-eastern parts of what is now the northern Cape. On the characters laid down in the original diagnosis, the coloured figure in the *Illustrations*, and our knowledge of the route taken by Smith on the Central African Expedition, when the original material was taken, *E.p.aena* can safely be construed as having been founded on material from the extreme southern population of what is seen as essentially a western Rhodesia and Botswana race. In order to place the issue on a more satisfactory footing than that presently obtaining I here formally restrict the type-locality of *E.p.aena* to

Mafeking district, north-eastern northern Cape.

This action accords with all existing evidence, and, moreover, has the corollary of preserving Hartert's *damarensis*, which is confirmed as a valid subspecies and seen as ranging from southern Angola, western Botswana and South West Africa to the Orange R. and the northern Cape in Gordonia, Kuruman and Griqualand West, thereby obviating the necessity of proposing an additional name. The present case is one of those textbook examples where a taxon (in this instance nominate *paena*), proposed in the first place from a zone of intergradation between two or more groups of stable populations, gives rise to almost interminable debate in the literature on the validity or otherwise of one or more of the parental forms.

The two races under discussion may, therefore, be differentiated on the following characters:

- (a) *E.p.aena*: Vertex and hind neck light olivaceous grey, sharply demarcated from the dull tawny-olive mantle, which is variably overlaid with greyish.
- (b) *E.p.damarensis*: Top of head and neck pale vinaceous brown, not sharply demarcated from the rather paler and more sandy reddish mantle.

Resulting from the present recasting of the central southern African populations, the ranges of the four subspecies of *E. paena* will stand as follows:

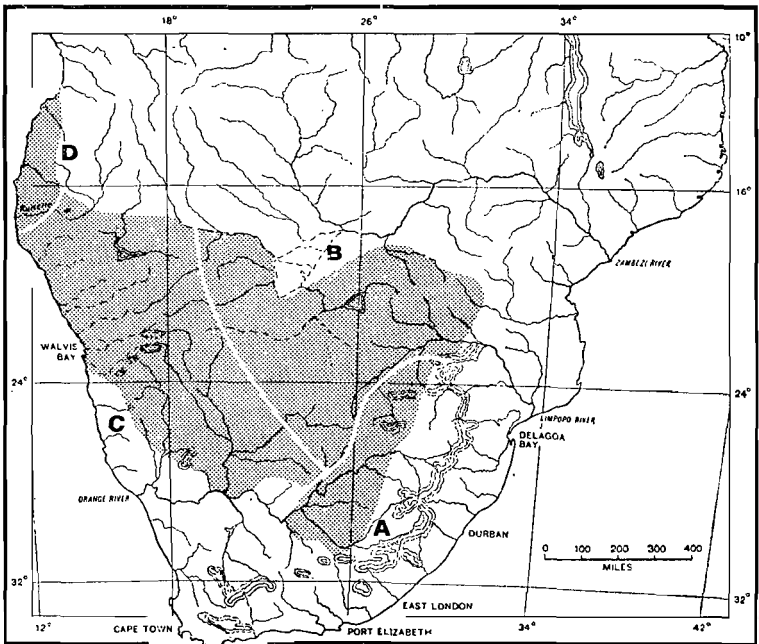
- (i) ***Erythropygia paena oriens*** Clancey, 1957: Glen, Modder R., Orange Free State.

North-eastern Cape, western half of the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal highveld.

- (ii) ***Erythropygia paena paena*** Smith, 1836: Mafeking district, north-eastern northern Cape.

Bechuanaland district, northern Cape, most of Botswana north to about 19° S., north-eastern South West Africa, and Rhodesia in western and south-western Matabeleland, and the dry western frontier districts of the Transvaal.

- (iii) ***Erythropygia paena damarensis*** Hartert, 1907: Omaruru, Damaraland, South West Africa.



MAP II

Sketch-map showing the disposition of the four subspecies of the Kalahari Scrub Robin.

- (a) *Erythropygia paena oriens* Clancey.
 (b) *Erythropygia paena paena* Smith.
 (c) *Erythropygia paena damarensis* Hartert.
 (d) *Erythropygia paena benguellensis* Hartert.

Northern Cape in West Griqualand, Kuruman and Gordonia, south-western and western Botswana, South West Africa, and Angola in southern Huila and south-western Bié-Cuando Cubango (along the Okavango R.).

- (iv) **Erythropygia paena benguellensis** Hartert, 1907: Uchi (Huxe), Benguela, Angola.

Coastal Angola from Benguela, south to the Cunene R.