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## MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS LXIII

by  
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### ON THE RINGED PLOVER *CHARADRIUS HIATICULA* LINNAEUS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Following Salomonsen, *Dan. Biol. Medd.*, vol. xxii, 1955, pp. 1 - 62, only the Arctic race of the Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Linnaeus is currently recognised as reaching the southern parts of the Afrotropics during the course of the northern winter. Variation in the present plover has been studied since Seebohm's time by many workers with little agreement among them as to the number of subspecific taxa which justify recognition. Dementiev and Gladkov, *Syst. Av. Rossicarum*, vol. ii, 1960, p. 76, recognised no races in *C. hiaticula sens. strict.*, while Vaurie, *Birds Palearctic Fauna*, vol. ii (Non Passeriformes), 1965, pp. 371 - 373, admitted nominate *C. hiaticula* Linnaeus, 1758: Sweden, and *C. h. tundrae* (Lowe), 1915: Valley of the Yenesei, U.S.S.R., treating *C. semipalmatus* Bonaparte, 1825: Coast of New Jersey, U.S.A. as a separate species. In sharp contrast to the conclusions of Vaurie and the Russian specialists are those of Hale as laid down in his recent *Waders*, 1980, pp. 48 - 81, 126 - 145, who, following the findings reached by one of his Ph.D. students (R. C. Taylor), recognises in addition to nominate *hiaticula* and *tundrae*, *C. h. psammodyroma* Salomonsen, 1930: Faeroes, Iceland, Greenland and Cumberland Sound, Baffin Island, and *C. h. kolymensis* Buturlin, 1932: delta of the Kolyma, U.S.S.R. The conclusions reached by Hale and his co-workers are the result of studying extensive material collectively as a unit in one centre, whereas Vaurie's research was effected piecemeal by visiting individual collections, and is accordingly unsatisfactory.

Variation in *C. hiaticula* affects general size as expressed in average wing-length in adults and in the relative brownness or greyness of the upper-parts. In broad terms, sedentary, moderately migratory or

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pp. 197 - 198), is largely if not entirely sedentary. The latter's occurrence in South African waters appears unlikely.

As long ago as 1934, Peters, *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. ii, p. 310, admitted *C. a. antarctica* as reaching the South African coasts as a non-breeding visitor, yet the occurrence of this, a second subspecies of *C. antarctica* on the South African regional list, is denied by Brooke. The Durban specimen dated 20 September, 1968, and the Leven Point, Zululand, skin dated 4 March, 1975, are in their generally redder facies referable to the nominate *C. antarctica/C. chilensis* assemblage, and in the light of the existence of these specimens I submit the action of Peters in listing *C. a. antarctica* as reaching South African waters was adequately justified. Vincent, *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, 1952, p. 32, listed nominate *antarctica* as well as *intercedens* (= *madagascariensis*), while Clancey, *Catalogue of Birds of the South African Sub-Region*, 1965, p. 309, admitted both *antarctica* and *lombbergi*, with which *intercedens* was equated.

In the light of these comments, the recommendation in respect of the *Catharacta* forms to be admitted for South African water on p. 308 of Brooke's paper of 1978 should be amended to read:

(a) **Catharacta maccormicki** (Saunders), 1893

(b) **Catharacta antarctica**

*Catharacta antarctica antarctica* (Lesson), 1831

*Catharacta antarctica madagascariensis* (Bonaparte), 1857

(? = *intercedens* Mathews, 1913).

#### ON MALACONOTUS BLANCHOTI STEPHENS IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA

In the recent *S.A.O.S. Checklist of Southern African Birds*, 1980, p. 247, the single record of the Greyheaded Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* Stephens from north-western South West Africa was referred to the form *Malaconotus monteiri* (Sharpe), 1870: Donde R., Luanda, Angola. In a note added to the listing of the record of *monteiri* from Okombambi, Cunene R., dated June, 1963 (the specimen in the collection of the State Museum, Windhoek), it is stated that "Birds occurring within present limits may be distinguishable from true *monteiri*." Hall, Moreau and Galbraith, *Ibis*, vol. cviii, 2, 1966, pp. 161 - 182, distinguish *monteiri* from Angolan populations of *M. blanchoti* on the extension of the facial white to cover the entire orbit (in *blanchoti* the white is confined to the loreal surface), the greyish as opposed to yellowish irides, and the fact that it appears to be an evergreen forest and not a savanna woodland form. The taxon *monteiri* is recorded from four localities below the escarpment in Angola, and similar birds are listed from Cameroun (Buea, Mt Cameroun) (taxon *M. perspicillatus* (Reichenow), 1894), and Kenya in the Kakamega

Forest. The Kakamega specimen seems no longer to exist. Hall *et al.*, consider *monteiri* to lie closer to *M. cruentus* (Lesson) than to the savanna-dwelling *blanchoti*.

While the authors of the *S.A. O.S. Checklist* appreciated that the use of the name *monteiri* for the single Cunene R., South West Africa/Angola border, record was in all probability ill-advised, they overlooked the fact that Meise, *Zool. Beitr.*, vol. xiv, 1968, pp. 51 - 56, had already resolved the issue by proposing *M. b. citrinipectus* as a new subspecies from southern Angola.

*M. b. citrinipectus* Meise, 1968: Quipeio, Huambo (at c. 12° 27' S., 15° 33' E.), Angola, was described as resembling *M. b. interpositus* Hartert, 1911: 64 km W. of Baraka, on L. Tanganyika, Zaïre, differing in having the ventral surface pure lemon yellow with little or no raw sienna wash to the breast. Meise gives the range of his *citrinipectus* as southern and eastern Angola from Moçamedes, Huila and northern Malanje (Pungo Andongo, Duque de Bragança, Bange Angola), east to the frontier with Zambia, and south-western Zaïre in Kwango (Gungu district) and western Kasai. In the east of its range *citrinipectus* appears to interdigitate and intergrade with *interpositus*, but little information exists as to the true nature of the situation obtaining in the zone of contact and the full extent of it. A specimen from Mansa (Fort Rosebery) in Zambia at 28° 52' E. in the Durban Museum collection is, interestingly enough, *M. b. citrinipectus*, which is well east of the limits laid down for it by Meise.

To the range given for *M. b. citrinipectus* by Meise, northern South West Africa on the Cunene R. and probably further east to northern Ovamboland must be added. Still further east, in the Caprivi, *M. b. hypopyrrhus* Hartlaub, 1844: Durban, Natal, reaches the western aspects of its range. This form differs from *citrinipectus* in the lower forethroat and breast being overlaid by a moderate wash of light raw sienna.

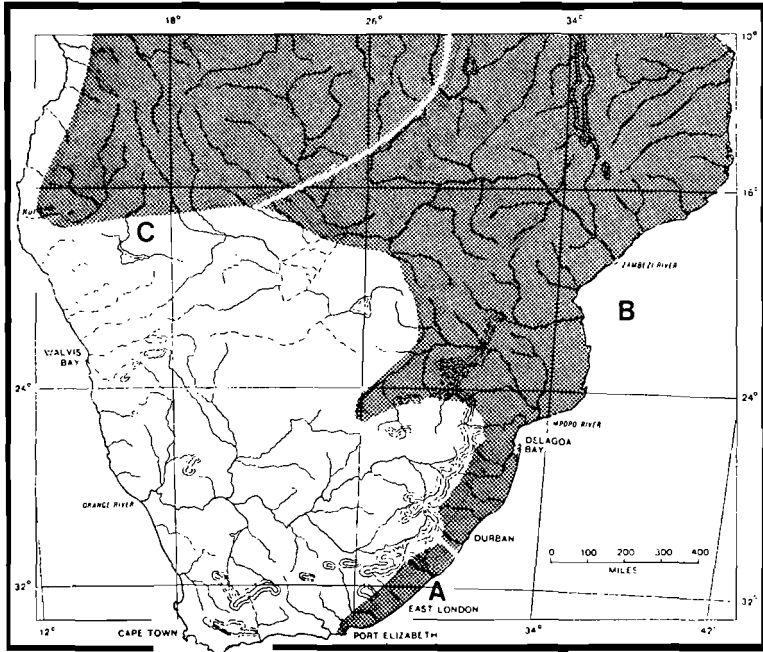
A re-examination of the series in the Durban Museum confirms the arrangement of the populations of the eastern half of southern Africa proposed by me in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. lxxvii, 1957, pp. 99 - 102. The characters and ranges of the three subspecies occurring in the South African Sub-Region are as follows:

- (a) ***Malaconotus blanchoti extremus*** Clancey, 1957: Committees Drift, Great Fish R., eastern Cape.

Top of head, nape and hind neck dark Slate Gray (Ridgway (1912), pl. liii) and entire dorsum dull Warbler Green (pl. iv). Wings in adult ♂♂ to 122 mm.

*Range:* South-eastern Cape from about 25° E. to forested coastal Transkei at about 30° E.

Map I



Sketch-map showing the range of the Greyheaded Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* Stephens in southern Africa

- (a) *Malaconotus blanchoti extremus* Clancey
- (b) *Malaconotus blanchoti hypopyrrhus* Hartlaub
- (c) *Malaconotus blanchoti citrimipetus* Meise

(b) ***Malaconotus blanchoti hypopyrrhus* Hartlaub, 1844: Durban, Natal.**

As in *M. b. extremus*, but head-top, nape and hind neck paler and bluer grey (Deep Gull Gray (pl. liii)), and green of upper-parts paler and yellower in fresh condition (Serpentine Green (pl. xvi)). Wings and tail yellow green, and pale lemon spotting to tertials larger (5,5-7, versus 4-5 mm. deep). Yellow tips to rectrices larger. Wings in adult ♂♂ to 116 mm.

**Range:** Natal, Zululand, eastern Swaziland, Mozambique, the Transvaal, Zimbabwe, extreme eastern and northern Botswana, and the eastern Caprivi Strip. North of the Sub-Region extends to southern and eastern Zambia, Malawi, and southern and central Tanzania, but limits in north-west of range currently uncertain.

*Remarks:* Natal coastal birds demonstrate a shift towards *extremus* in the reduced size of the tertial and rectricial spotting, but Zululand specimens agree with the norm of the taxon *hypopyrrhus* in this character.

- (c) ***Malaconotus blanchoti citrinipectus*** Meise, 1968: Quipeio, Huambo, Angola.

As in *M.b.hypopyrrhus*, but with the lower forethroat and breast Lemon Chrome (pl. iv) with at the most only a faint overlay of cadmium. Size as in the stated race.

*Range:* As defined above.

*Remarks:* *Type* collected by Gerd Heinrich in 1955, and in the Zoologischen Museum, Hamburg.

THE IMPENETRABLE FOREST, UGANDA,  
POPULATION OF *PLOCEUS*  
(*PHORMOPLECTES*) *INSIGNIS*  
(SHARPE), 1891

Three specimens of the Browncapped Weaver from the Impenetrable Forest, Kigezi, Uganda, in the collection of the Durban Museum stand apart from a sample of both *P.(P.) i.insignis* Sharpe, 1891: Mt Elgon, north-western Kenya, and *P.(P.) i.ornatus* Granvik, 1922: Kyambu, Kenya, on the basis of rather smaller size and reduced black over the upper forethroat. Two adult ♂♂ and an adult ♀, one of the males marked as having enlarged testes, differ from Kenyan specimens of the two races mentioned earlier in having the black over the upper forethroat reduced to a few black feathers over the apex of the chin. In the case of the female, the ventral black is again seen to be reduced, with the yellow extending up towards the chin apex. The Impenetrable Forest birds are also rather shorter winged than Kenyan examples from Mt Elgon and the Nairobi district, with flattened wings only 82 and 82,5, *versus* 83 - 87. In the single female the wing is only 78 against 81 - 83 mm. Ventrally, both sexes in the Impenetrable Forest specimens appear to lie closer to Granvik's *ornatus* in the rather more saturated nature of the yellow than they do to material from west of the Rift (n nominate *insignis*).

While the material is admittedly limited, it does support belief that a population of shorter winged birds, the adults with greatly reduced black over the upper forethroat, occurs to the south of the species' range in the eastern half of equatorial Africa. The name *Ploceus insignis frater* Neumann, as proposed in *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. xxiii, 1908, p. 12: 90 km west of Lake Edward, eastern Zaïre, is available for this apparently discrete population. Van Someren, *Novit.Zool.*, vol. xxix, 1922, p. 136, discusses *frater*, which he states was described from Kivu, and attributes the yellower chin of the *Type* to either immaturity