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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

XXII

by

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1. RACIAL VARIATION IN BENNETT'S WOODPECKER *CAMPETHERA BENNETTII* (SMITH)

Campethera bennettii (Smith), 1836: "about and beyond Kurri-chaine", i.e., western Transvaal, was first discovered by the intrepid Dr. Andrew Smith during the course of his expedition for exploring central Africa from the Cape of Good Hope, and was described in the report of that pioneering effort. In South Africa, *C. bennettii* is one of the rarer woodpeckers, and it is only in the *Brachystegia* biome of Southern Rhodesia and areas to the north of the sub-continent that the species becomes tolerably common. At the present time two and sometimes three races are admitted by workers. Of two of these there is no doubt in the minds of most workers, though the ranges accorded both *C. b. bennettii* and *C. b. capricorni* Strickland have never been adequately worked out and vary according to the authority consulted. The populations strictly attributable to nominotypical *C. bennettii* are restricted to the eastern half of zoogeographical South Africa by workers who admit a northern race,

greyish, in allusion to the greyness of the ventral parts, particularly in females.

Note

For the purpose of this revision, the forms of the *Parus leucomelas* Rüppell group of black tits are considered to be specifically discrete from those assembled in *P.niger*, *sens.strict*. In south-central and south-western Africa *P.l.insignis* Cabanis, 1880: Malanje, Angola, and *P.l.carpi* Macdonald and Hall, 1957; Warmquelle, Kaokoveld, South-West Africa, replace *P.niger* subspp. to the west and north. In the forms of the *P.leucomelas* assemblage the sexes are virtually alike, whereas in *P.niger* the female is greyer or browner over the face and entire ventral surface, which parts are glossed blue-black in female *P.leucomelas* subspp. There is also a reduction or loss of white in the tail, and in *P.l.carpi* a marked reduction in size and bill mass.

In proposing *P.l.carpi*, Macdonald and Hall, vide *Ann.Transv. Mus.*, vol. xxiii, 1, 1957, pp. 32, 33, describe it as a race of *P.niger*, though it is clearly a member of the *P.leucomelas* coterie of races, the under-parts of females being glossed black in fresh condition, though the face in two females in the Durban Museum is distinctly browner than either the upper- or under-parts. Traylor, *Check-list of Angolan Birds*, 1963, p. 126, following Hall, *loc. cit.*, continues to keep *carpi* as a race of *P.niger* and not *P.leucomelas*, though the form rightly belongs with the *P.leucomelas* group.

3. ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN RACES OF THE LONG-BILLED PIPIT *ANTHUS SIMILIS* JERDON

When I reviewed the South African races of the Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Jerdon in 1956 (*vide Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. iv, 17, 1956, pp. 284-288) limited material compelled me to follow convention in placing the Southern Rhodesian populations as *A.s.nicholsoni* Sharpe, 1884: Sigonell = Makwassie, near Wolmaransstad, south-western Transvaal (see also Smithers *et al.*, *Check List Birds Southern Rhodesia*, 1957, p. 97). In the same revision, I placed a single dark coloured specimen from Gemsbok Pan, Bechuanaland Protectorate, as representing *A.s.nyassae* Neumann, 1906: between Sangesi and Songea, Southern Province, Tanganyika, noting that White and Winterbottom, *Check List Birds Northern Rhodesia*, 1949, p. 77, had suggested that Barotseland birds were deserving of further

study. During the course of a collecting trip to Southern Rhodesia in June-August, 1964, material of *A. similis* was collected in *Brachystegia* woodland on the Charama Plateau, in the Gokwe district, where it was noted that in Southern Rhodesia *A. similis* is purely a woodland bird, and not a species of stony hillsides and grassland with outcrop rock and stunted bushes as in South Africa. A study of the material collected by the Durban Museum party at Gokwe shows that this marked difference in the biomes inhabited by the topotypical population of *A.s.nicholsoni* and those of Southern Rhodesia and, presumably, elsewhere in adjacent zoogeographical South Africa, e.g., northern Bechuanaland, is reflected in the existence of good subspecific differences. The Southern Rhodesian populations must be removed from *A.s.nicholsoni* and placed in a new race, which may be known as

***Anthus similis frondicolus*, subsp. nov.**

Type: ♂ adult. Charama Plateau, c. 15 W. of Gokwe, north-western Southern Rhodesia. 22 July, 1964. Collected by Durban Museum Expedition. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M. Reg. No. 16677.

Diagnosis: Similar to *A.s.nicholsoni* of south-central South Africa but differs in having the upper-parts distinctly darker and colder (somewhat resembling *A.s.petricolus* Clancey of the mountains of the southern and eastern Cape and Basutoland), the feather centres of the mantle being about Sepia (pl. xxix), the pallid edges Isabella Color (pl. xxx), and with the rump and upper tail-coverts much less ochraceous or reddish, being about Light Brownish Olive (pl. xxx), as against Tawny-Olive (pl. xxix) in *A.s.nicholsoni*. Face and throat whiter, less buffy, the dark streak from the lores to the upper auriculars darker, and the supercilium distinctly whitish. On underparts generally lighter and less buffish or ochraceous washed from below the zone of spotting across the breast to the crissum. In the tail, the buffy white wedge-shaped mark on the inner web on the outer two pairs of rectrices is much more extensive, and in the wings, the pallid edging and tipping to the coverts and remiges is lighter, less deeply ochraceous. Bill-length distinctly shorter, thus: bills from skull in 4 ♂♂ 17-18 (17.4), 2 ♀♀ 17, 17.5, as against 19-21 (20.2) in 12 ♂♂ of *A.s.nicholsoni*, 6 ♀♀ 18-20 (19.4) mm.

A.s. nyassae, described from southern Tanganyika, is redder and more saturated throughout than *A.s.frondicolus*, redder than even *A.s.nicholsoni*, but is similarly short-billed. *A.s.leucocraspedon*

Reichenow, 1915: Windhoek, South-West Africa, is much paler and more vinaceous or ochraceous tinged above than *A.s.frondicolus*. but is long-billed like *A.s.nicholsoni*; the breast spotting is vestigial,

Measurements: Wings of 4 ♂♂ 92-99 (96.2), culmens 17-18 (17.4), tails 71-77.5 (73.9), wings of 2 ♀♀ 89.5, 91, culmens 17, 17.5, tails 68.5, 70.5 mm.

Material examined: *A.s.frondicolus*, 8; *A.s.nicholsoni*, 20; *A.s.petricolus*, 25; *A.s.leucocraspedon*, 20; *A.s.nyassae*, 2. *A.s.palliditinctus* Clancey not examined in present study.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 97, culmen 17.5, tarsus .26, tail 71 mm.

Range: A woodland form, found characteristically in *Brachystegia* associations, of the plateau of Southern Rhodesia and northern Bechuanaland, presumably extending further to the north-west in the Caprivi Strip, South-West Africa, and adjacent territories. Replaced to the south of its range by *A.s.nicholsoni*, to the north by *A.s.schoutedeni* and *A.s.nyassae*, and to the west by *A.s.leucocraspedon*. The ecological requirements of *A.s.frondicolus* are so dissimilar to those of the first and last named that intergradation between them may not exist.

Remarks: The paratypical series of *A.s.frondicolus* was taken in a patch of cleared land in *Brachystegia* woodland on Kalahari sand, where it was common, occurring freely alongside *Anthus vaalensis chobiensis* Roberts.

The name chosen for the new taxon is descriptive of its predilection for the leafy cover of woods.

In the light of the above description, our racial arrangement of the populations of the Long-billed Pipit in zoogeographical South Africa requires to be somewhat modified. The extensive new material gathered since 1956 has also shown the necessity of adjustment being made to the ranges of some of the forms admitted in my original paper. The characters and ranges of the South African subspecies of *A.similis* may now stand as hereunder given:

(a) ***Anthus similis petricolus*** Clancey, 1956: Mamathe's, near Teyateyaneng, Basutoland.

Darkest race. Upper-parts with feather centres deep Sepia, the paler fringes Saccardo's Umber (pl. xxix). Under-parts Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix), the lower throat and breast heavily streaked with blackish brown spots. Wings of ♂♂ 95-101, ♀♀ 91.5-97.5, culmens of ♂♀ 18.5-21 mm.

Range: The western and south-western Cape, eastwards through the southern mountains of the province to East Griqualand, Eastern Cape, Basutoland, the interior and upper districts of Natal and adjacent districts of the Orange Free State and south-eastern Transvaal.

(b) ***Anthus similis nicholsoni*** Sharpe, 1884: Sigonell=Makwassi, near Wolmaransstad, south-western Transvaal.

Lighter and more ochraceous tinged on the upper-parts than *A.s.petricolus*, the feather centres lighter sepia, the fringes about Tawny-Olive, which colour overlies the whole rump and upper tail-coverts. On under-parts deeper and more ochraceous-buff in series, this suffusion extending over the face. Wings and tail lighter. Size similar. Wings of ♂♂ 94-102, ♀♀ 92-97.5, culmens of ♂♀ 18-21 mm.

Range: Extends from Bushmanland and the northern Karoo districts of the Cape (south to about De Aar) to the northern Cape in parts of Gordonia, the Asbestos Mountains and Kuruman district east to the Vaal, dry western and northern Orange Free State (intergrading with *A.s.petricolus* near Glen and Bloemfontein), the Transvaal and western Bechuanaland Protectorate. Perhaps ranging to parts of southern Matabeleland in the middle Limpopo R. drainage, and reaching Griqualand East (Mt. Currie, Kokstad, and Matatiele) in winter as a non-breeding visitor. Intergrades to the south of its range with *A.s.petricolus*, and to the north-west with *A.s.leucocraspedon* (intergrading series from Kuruman).

(c) ***Anthus similis leucocraspedon*** Reichenow, 1915: Windhoek, Damaraland, South-West Africa.

Still lighter coloured than *A.s.nicholsoni*, in fresh dress often quite vinaceous or sandy tinged on the upper-parts, the feather centres less dark (mantle feathers about umber, edged with Ochraceous-Buff (pl. xv)). On under-parts lighter, less saturated buff, than *A.s.nicholsoni*, and with the speckling over the breast greatly reduced

and usually vestigial. Size about the same, but bill often a little longer. Wings of ♂♂ 94-99, ♀♀ 92-96, culmens of ♂♀ 19.5-22 mm.

Range: The mountains of Damaraland, South-West Africa, south through Great Namaqualand and western Bechuanaland to the lower Orange River and north-western Cape, and in the northern Cape in northern Gordonia east to about Kuruman, where it meets *A.s.nicholsoni*.

(d) ***Anthus similis palliditinctus*** Clancey, 1956: Zesfontein, Kaokoveld, north-western South-West Africa.

Still lighter and rather greyer above than *A.s.leucocraspedon*, the mantle without the sandy or vinaceous suffusion. Wings of 2 ♂♂ 96, 97, culmens of ♂♀ 19.5-20.5 mm.

Range: Known at present only from the Kaokoveld, South-West Africa. Almost certainly extends northwards into south-western Angola and parts of Ovamboland.

(e) ***Anthus similis frondicolus*** Clancey, 1964: Charama Plateau, W. of Gokwe, north-western Southern Rhodesia.

Darker and colder in colour above than *A.s.nicholsoni*, the rump greyish umber, not Tawny-Olive. Face and throat whiter, the dark streak from the lores to the auriculars more prominent and supercilium whiter. On underside whiter from below breast streaking to crissum. Wings and tail less ochraceous tinged, and the outer two pairs of tail-feathers with more extensive buffy white over the inner webs. Size similar to *A.s.nicholsoni*, but bill distinctly shorter. Wings of ♂♂ 92-99, ♀♀ 89.5, 91, culmens of ♂♀ 17-18 mm.

Range: A woodland form currently known to extend from the plateau of Southern Rhodesia (above 3,000 ft. a.s.l., *vide* Smithers *et al.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 97) to northern Bechuanaland, and may be expected to range into all adjacent territories. North of its range replaced by *A.s.nyassae* and *A.s.schoutedeni* Chapin, 1937: Kwamouth, on the middle reaches of the Congo River, Congo.

Note

The ranges of *A.s.nyassae* and *A.s.schoutedeni* are by no means clear from the literature, which is largely contradictory insofar as the subspecific status of the Northern Rhodesian populations is concerned, and White, in Peters' *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. ix, 1960, p. 155, places the latter in the synonymy of the

former, which reflects the view followed in Benson and White, *Check List Birds Northern Rhodesia*, 1957, p. 70. On the other hand, both Chapin *Birds Belgian Congo*, part iii, 1953, pp. 77-80, and Traylor, *Check-list of Angolan Birds*, 1963, p. 172, uphold *A.s. schoutedeni* as being distinct from *A.s.nyassae*, the latter and more recent author giving its general range as "Middle Congo to Angola and northwest Northern Rhodesia".

I have not access to sufficient series to review this matter, but the populations grouped in *A.s.nyassae* and *A.s.schoutedeni* by the aforementioned workers are all redder and more saturated in general colouration than *A.s.fronnicolus*, being forms of high rainfall areas, the latter less strongly buffish below than the former, though some of the characters attributed to *A.s.schoutedeni* are likewise found in *A.s.fronnicolus*, e.g., short bill, whiter ventral parts and long wedge-shaped whitish area to the inner web of the penultimate rectrix. Topotypical *A.s.schoutedeni* is, judging by the wing-measurements given by Chapin, *loc. cit.*, namely 83-92 mm., distinctly smaller than *A.s.fronnicolus*, which in males has wings 92-99 mm.

Traylor, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. lxxxii, 4, 1962, p. 77, has recently proposed *Anthus moco* from Mt. Moco, Angola, which is closely allied to forms of *A.similis*, and is confined to the summit of Mt. Moco. Apparently not a woodland form, occurring on bare, short-grass slopes.

4. RACIAL VARIATION IN THE FOREST CANARY *SERINUS SCOTOPS* (SUNDEVALL)

Following Roberts, *Ann.Transv.Mus.*, vol. x, 3, 1924, p. 186, it is customary to admit two racial divisions of the Forest Canary, a species of fringillid peculiar to the forested districts of southern and south-eastern Africa, these being *S.s.scotops* (Sundevall), 1850: Pietermaritzburg, Natal, and *S.s.transvaalensis* Roberts, 1940: Woodbush Forest Reserve, Zoutpansberg, northern Transvaal, the last named never really formally described. In his pioneer work, Roberts believed the heavily spotted north-eastern populations to represent the nominate race, and described the southern birds as new under the name *S.s.pondoensis* Roberts, 1924: "Natal and to Knysna", but *Type* from Port St. Johns, Pondoland. Sclater, in *Syst.Av.Aethiop.*, part ii, 1930, p. 816, treats the species binominally, denying the racial divisions of Roberts, and places *S.s.pondoensis*