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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS  
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by

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AN UNDESCRIBED RACE OF THE PINKBILLED LARK  
*CALANDRELLA CONIROSTRIS* (SUNDEVALL) FROM THE  
TRANSVAAL

Study of the pooled series of the Pinkbilled Lark from south-eastern South Africa in the collections of the Transvaal and Durban Museums shows that three races must be admitted for this region as against the two currently recognised. As a name is required for the undescribed taxon, it may be known as from the date of publication of this communication as

***Calandrella conirostris griseovinacea*, subsp. nov.**

*Type*: ♂, adult. Rustenburg, western Transvaal, at c.1370 m a.s.l. 30 October, 1970. Collected by E. L. Button. In the collection of the Durban Museum. D.M. Reg. No. 26 154.

*Diagnosis*: Broadly streaked with black over the upper-parts as in nominate *C. conirostris* (Sundevall), 1850: Vechtkop, north of Heilbron, northern Orange Free State, but differs in having the feather-edging pale greyish vinaceous rather than saturated rusty brown (Vinaceous-Buff (*Ridgway*, 1912, pl. xl), *versus* Sudan Brown (pl. iii)). Below more extensively and purer white over the entire fore-throat, and with the rest of the underside much paler (Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix), as against deep Cinnamon-Buff/Clay Color (same pl.)). Similar in size.

*Material examined*: 10. *Transvaal*: Pretoria, Hennops River, Rustenburg, and Groot Marico. For material of other races see below.

flanks, crissum and under tail-coverts. Size larger: wings of ♂♂ 91–96, versus 85–90,5 mm. in East African *iolaema*.

Compared with *C.c.drakensbergi*, differs in having the plastron a deeper, less yellowish, orange (dull Ochraceous-Orange, versus Ochraceous-Buff (pl. xv)), and with the flanks rather more overlaid with olive-brown in series. Size as in *drakensbergi*.

*Material examined*: *C.c.vespera*, 9. Also *C.c.iolaema*, 9; *C.c.drakensbergi*, 19; *C.c.namaquensis* Sclater, 27; *C.c.caffra*, 48.

*Range*: Eastern Highlands of Rhodesia from Chipinga north to Mt. Inyangani and beyond, adjacent highland Moçambique and Mt. Gorongosa, south to the highland forests of the northern and eastern Transvaal and the Reef.

*Measurements of the Type*: Wing (flattened) 82,5, culmen from base 18,5, tarsus 30,5, tail 77 mm.

*Remarks*: With the description of *C.c.vespera*, the range of *C.c.drakensbergi* will now be the high interior of the north-eastern Cape and East Griqualand to Lesotho, the Orange Free State east of *C.c.namaquensis*, high western and Upper Natal along the Drakensberg and their outliers, and south-eastern Transvaal (Wakkerstroom). Many individuals of *drakensbergi* winter on the coast of the eastern Cape, the Transkei and Natal and Zululand, then occurring alongside elements of the nominate race, which is smaller and has the upper-parts more olivaceous or rusty-olivaceous, less earthen, brown.

#### ON THE RANGE OF *AMBLYOSPIZA ALBIFRONS ALBIFRONS* (Vigors), 1831

Chapin, *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part iv, 1954, pp. 298, 299, follows Lynes' determination of Thickbilled Weaver material from the Luapula R., Zaire, as nominate *Amblyospiza albifrons* (Vigors), 1831: Algoa Bay, eastern Cape, and that of Schouteden in the naming of specimens from the Lualaba in extending the range of this taxon to Zaire. Mackworth-Praed and Grant, *Birds Southern Third Africa*, vol. ii, 1965, p. 592, also take the range of *A.a.albifrons* north to the south-eastern Congo (Zaire) and neighbouring regions of south-central Africa, this view being adopted by Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, pp. 315, 316, who place all the northern and north-eastern Zambian populations of this weaver as *A.a.albifrons*. Moreau, in the continuation of Peters' *Check-list Birds*

of the World, vol. xv, 1962, p. 32, on the other hand, restricts *A.a.albifrons* to the Republic of South Africa, adding the rider that "Birds from part of the south-eastern Congo region are indistinguishable".

· A study of the variation in the populations of *A.albifrons* in eastern and southern Africa recently carried out in the Durban Museum supports the conclusions of Moreau in so far as the recognition of races and their ranges are concerned, as defined in his treatment of the species in *Peters'*. Variation in males of all populations is considerable, some of it being of subspecific import, but much of it individual and seasonal, or a manifestation of age, while the desiccating and colour leaching effect of daily exposure to the intense rays of the African sun has added immeasurably to the range of variation in the coloration of specimens before one. In contrast to the males, females show little variation of moment within populations.

Careful appraisal of material from northern and north-eastern Zambia suggests that the populations which have given rise to the extension of the range of *A.a.albifrons* to south-eastern Zaire must be associated with *A.a.montana* van Someren, 1921: Fort Hall, Kenya, this finding also coinciding with Moreau's arrangement, as he extends the range of *montana* south to Malawi and the "Rhodesias", which = Zambia and Rhodesia. In so far as the last named territory is concerned, the few birds I have seen from it are better referred to *A.a.woltersi*.

The following are revised characters and ranges of the seven subspecies occurring in southern and eastern Africa:

· (a) ***Amblyospiza albifrons albifrons*** (Vigors), 1831:

Algoa Bay, eastern Cape.

· Male in newly moulted condition with ground to fore-throat and upper breast warm Mummy Brown (*Ridgway*, 1912, pl. xv); ground to rest of underside Deep Mouse Gray (pl. li).

Female with edging to feathers of upper-parts vinaceous Saccardo's Umber (pl. xxix).

· Wings of ♂♂ 96-100, of ♀♀ 86-91 mm. (adults only).

· *Range*: Eastern Cape from the Gamtoos R. to coastal Natal, where intergrading with *woltersi*.

· *Note*: A very variable race in the males, judging by the rather limited material of adults seen.

(b) **Amblyospiza albifrons woltersi** Clancey, 1956:

Manhiça, Sul do Save, Moçambique.

Male with ground to fore-throat and upper breast much as in *unicolor*, that is blacker brown than nominate *albifrons*, but with the ground to the breast and rest of underside distinctly grey, and in this like the latter.

Female and sub-adult (pre-basic) male with upper-parts yellower or more ochraceous than in *albifrons*, the feather edges about Dresden Brown (pl. xv). Size ranging smaller, and bill in both sexes slightly less robust, especially in female when bill is viewed ventrally.

Wings of ♂♂ 94–98.5, of ♀♀ 84–89 mm.

*Range*: Eastern Zululand, eastern Transvaal, eastern Rhodesia, and southern Moçambique.

(c) **Amblyospiza albifrons unicolor** (Fischer and Reichenow), 1878:  
Zanzibar.

Male rather blacker brown over fore-throat and upper breast than in nominate *albifrons*, and with less contrast between the plastron and the rest of the underside, which is also a blacker mouse grey. In birds in breeding dress there is little or no contrast between the dorsal surface of the head and neck and the mantle and scapulars, the former surfaces blacker brown than in nominate *albifrons* in comparable plumage.

Female and sub-adult male as in *A.a.woltersi*. Size in both sexes distinctly smaller, but bill mass about the same as in *woltersi*.

Wings of ♂♂ 91–94, of ♀♀ 80–83 mm.

*Range*: Southern Malawi (Shiré R.) and the lower Zambesi R. valley, northwards in the lowlands of northern Moçambique to eastern Tanzania and coastal Kenya.

(d) **Amblyospiza albifrons montana** van Someren, 1921:  
Fort Hall, Kenya.

Male and female as in *unicolor*, but with the wing distinctly longer.

Wings of ♂♂ 95–100, of ♀♀ 84–90 mm.

*Range*: Northern and north-eastern Zambia, Malawi except in extreme south, Niassa in northern Moçambique, southern and

south-eastern Zaire, Southern Highlands and western Tanzania, north to Rwanda and Burundi, parts of Uganda and the highlands of Kenya.

**Amblyospiza albifrons maxima** Roberts, 1932:

Kasane, Chobe R., Botswana.

Male very much as in *montana* and *unicolor* in colour, but when freshly moulted usually with broader white fringing to feathers of the breast and medio-ventral plane. White wing speculum usually larger.

Female as in *montana* and *unicolor*. Both sexes much larger than in other races, with the bill correspondingly more massive.

Wings of ♂♂ 104–107, of ♀♀ 93–98 mm.

*Range*: Northern and north-western Botswana in the Okavango Swamp and Chobe R. regions, the Caprivi Strip, probably extreme north-western Rhodesia, southern Cuando-Cubango in Angola, and adjacent south-western Zambia.

(e) **Amblyospiza albifrons melanota** (Heuglin), 1863:

Shambe district, White Nile, Sudan.

Male compared with that of *montana* redder, less sooty blackish, brown (Snuff Brown, pl. xxix), over head all round. Size ranging smaller.

Female not different, but averaging smaller.

Wings of 2 ♂♂ 93, 95, of 1 ♀ 85 mm. (Kibale Forest, Uganda).

*Range*: Locally in eastern Zaire north from the Equator, Uganda, north-western Kenya, Equatoria, Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile, southern Sudan, and Ethiopia.

(f) **Amblyospiza albifrons saturata** Sharpe, 1908:

Bitye, R. Ja, Cameroon.

Male with entire head all round, upper mantle and plastron deep tawny (Antique Brown, pl. iii), and underside below rufous plastron rather more olivaceous grey than in either *melanota* or *montana*. Size small.

Female not seen.

Wing of 1 ♂ 90,5 mm.

*Range:* Ranges from Ilorin, Nigeria, through Cameroon, Gabon and the Lower Congo, eastwards to the eastern Ituri, Zaire, and parts of adjacent Uganda. Taken Bwamba Forest, western Uganda (Durban Museum).

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#### VARIATION IN NOMINATE *EUPLECTES ALBONOTATUS* (CASSIN)

*Euplectes albonotatus* (Cassin), 1848, was described in the first instance from Durban, Natal. It has an extensive but local range in west-central and eastern Africa, extending from the Sudan and Ethiopia, south to Natal in the east, three races being admitted at the present time, though others have been proposed by Neunzig. The three races are based on the colour of the lesser wing-coverts, which are yellow in two (nominate *E.albonotatus* and *E.a.asymmetrurus*) and light cinnamon brown in the third (*E.a.eques*). The yellow epauletted complex is subdivided on the basis of variation in the length of the tail in males in breeding dress, *E.a.asymmetrurus* being markedly longer tailed than in *albonotatus*.

A recent study of the material of this widowbird from Natal and the Transvaal in the collection of the Durban Museum revealed that the specimens of breeding males could be readily sorted out by eye into two groups, one with short tails (*i.e.*, 70–80+), the other with the tail-length appreciably longer (81–92 mm and above). Of a series of 25 ♂♂ in breeding dress from Natal and the south-eastern Transvaal (Pongola), twenty-two have tails 75–80,5, three with tails 82,5–89 mm. In the sample from the western Transvaal highveld (Hartebeestpoort, Rustenburg), seven are small-sized, with tails 70,5–80,5, ten large, with tails 81–91 mm. Study of the series in the National Museum of Rhodesia shows that Rhodesian plateau birds are like those of the Transvaal highveld, with long-tailed birds slightly in excess of short-tailed ones in the populations. Of twenty-one Rhodesian breeding males, ten fall neatly into the small or short-tailed grouping with tails 72,5–79,5, eleven in the long-tailed grouping with tails 81–99 mm. In Zambia the situation obtaining in Natal and south-eastern Transvaal is completely reversed, with only four males out of a series of twenty-four having tails 76–78, the balance long-tailed with rectrices 81–90 mm. The small samples from Botswana and Malawi