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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS LX

by

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VARIATION IN THE AFROTROPICAL POPULATIONS OF *CHARADRIUS TRICOLLARIS* VIEILLOT

The present sandplover is an endemic of much of the Afrotropical Region and the Malagasy Sub-Region, where it inhabits the shingle and muddy banks of rivers, lakes and even ponds. At the present time two subspecies are recognised: nominate *C. tricollaris* Vieillot, 1818: Cape Town, Cape, of the Afrotropics, and *C. t. bifrontatus* Cabanis, 1882: Madagascar, of the said island. While on occasion considered to be conspecific with *tricollaris*, the allied *C. forbesi* (Shelley), 1883: Shonga, Niger R., Nigeria, is better treated as a separate monotypic species on account of its larger size, darker dorsal colouration, greyish brown, not white, forehead, heavier ventral banding, and very different breeding habits. *C. forbesi* is largely allopatric to *tricollaris* which it replaces in West and parts of central Africa.

While only the nominate race of this small banded sandplover is currently recognised from the African continent, it has been evident for some time that the said populations exhibit a measure of variation, this affecting the colouration of the pileum and dorsum, the width of the lower of the two black pectoral bands and general size. Many populations are also subject to marked movements in association with the rains and seasonal unsuitability of certain regions which have tended to obscure any part of this variation as being of subspecific relevance.

In a recent contribution on this species of plover, Tree, *Honeyguide*, No. 102, May, 1980, p. 19, writes as follows: "The Treble-banded Plover *C. tricollaris*, which is able to adapt to several varying habitats during the wet season, is subject to rather obscure movements. An

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ON THE STATUS AND RANGES OF TWO
SOUTH AFRICAN SUB-REGION RACES OF
COSSYPHA HEUGLINI HARTLAUB

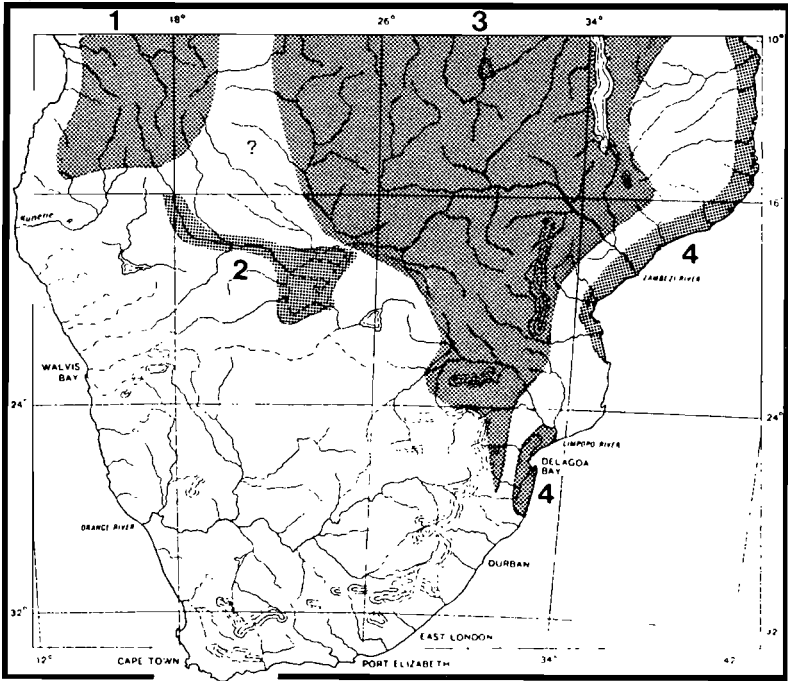
The subspecies of the Whitebrowed Robin *Cossypha heuglini* Hartlaub were last reviewed by me in *Occ. Papers Nat. Mus. S. Rhod.*, vol. iv, No. 27B, 1964, pp. 5 - 15, when five racial taxa were admitted. Unfortunately, the description of the Chari R., Chad, population as *C.h. pallidior* by Berlioz and Gillet in *Oiseau Rev. Franc. Orn.*, vol. xxvi, 1956, p. 137: Fort Lamy, Chad, was overlooked, so that six races should have been recognised at that time. Ripley, in the continuation of Peters' *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. x, 1964, p. 55, admitted five races for the species. The two 1964 statements on the races differ in two salient points: Ripley recognised *pallidior*, which I inadvertently omitted, and synonymized *C.h. occidentalis* Reichenow, 1909: Lufuku, Marungu, south-eastern Zaïre, with nominate *C.heuglini* Hartlaub, 1866, described from Bahr el Ghazal, southern Sudan, which taxon I upheld following Chapin. Recently, a further race has been proposed in *C.h. orphea* Clancey, 1979: Andara, Okavango R., north-eastern South West Africa. In the recent *S.A.O.S. Checklist of Southern African Birds*, 1980, p. 184, only two subspecies were listed for the Sub-Region: *C.h. orphea* and *C.h. euromota* Friedmann, 1930: Lumbo, northern Mozambique.

With the recent receipt by the Durban Museum of the extremely useful collection of Afrotropical robins formed by Mr T.B. Oatley, now at the University of Cape Town, I have taken the opportunity to re-examine the variation displayed by this species in Africa south of the Equator, and have determined that certain adjustments to the subspecies to be recognised and their ranges as laid down for the southern taxa in the recent *S.A.O.S. Checklist* require to be effected.

A study of the populations grouped in *C.h. heuglini* by Ripley, *op. cit.*, or in *C.h. heuglini* and *C.h. occidentalis* by Chapin, Clancey and others, confirms that the latter is maintainable, *contra* Ripley, as a moderately distinguishable subspecies. It differs from nominate *heuglini* solely in the colouration of the mantle, which is lighter and more brownish olivaceous (Brownish Olive, pl. xxx) with reduced slaty grey tipping to the feathers. In the ventral colouration (Mars Yellow, pl. iii) and size the two taxa are alike. The range of *occidentalis* is from south-eastern and southern Zaïre, adjacent Angola, and the

Southern Highlands of Tanzania, south to Zambia, Malawi, western northern Mozambique, Zimbabwe, extreme eastern Botswana, northern and eastern Transvaal and Swaziland. This taxon was inadvertently not included in the treatment of the species in the recent *S.A.O.S Checklist*.

MAP I



COSSYPHA HEUGLINI HARTLAUB

Sketch-map showing the disposition of the four subspecies occurring in or abutting on the South African Sub-Region

1. *Cossypha heuglini subrufescens* Bocage
2. *Cossypha heuglini orphea* Clancey
3. *Cossypha heuglini occidentalis* Reichenow
4. *Cossypha heuglini intermedia* (Cabanis)

Note: The range of the species may be more continuous than present records suggest.

Freshly moulted specimens from north-eastern Zululand in the Oatley collection agree with similar skins from coastal Tanzania (Kilwa Masoka) in the Dresden Brown (pl. iii) of the mantle, the deep orange-rufous of the breast (Sanford's Brown (pl. ii)), and the short wing- and tail-lengths. Birds from both stated segments of the eastern lowlands of the Afrotropics taken rather later in the year exhibit a

marked reduction in the level of saturation over the upper-parts, moderately worn and insolated specimens having faded over the mantle from Dresden Brown to about Citrine Drab (pl. x1). This colour modification resulting from environmental and climatic factors is, of course, equally true of all populations of this robin. A satisfactory division of *C. h. intermedia* (Cabanis), 1868, coastal district, East Africa = coastal Tanzania, of East Africa, from birds from as far south as the coast of southern Mozambique and north-eastern Zululand (*C. h. euronota*) seems impracticable. Topotypical *intermedia* are exactly matched in both freshly moulted and moderately worn birds in the colouration of the mantle, the deep rufous of the breast and small size, and in the face of these findings I submit that Friedmann's *euronota*, described in the first place on a singleton from Lumbo on the northern Mozambique littoral, should be merged with *intermedia*, the range of *C. h. intermedia* now being from south-eastern Somalia and the coast of Kenya to the littoral of Tanzania (including the off-shore islands), and that of Mozambique and of north-eastern Zululand.

The following are wing- and tail-measurements of northern and southern elements of *C. h. intermedia*:

	<i>Wings</i>	<i>Tails</i>
Coastal Kenya and	♂♂ 88 - 95,5 (93,5)	78 - 87,5 (80) mm
Tanzania	♀♀ 84,89 (87,2)	72 - 77,5 (74,7) mm
North-eastern	♂♂ 90 - 95 (93,2)	78 - 85 (81,1) mm
Zululand	♀♀ 87,5, 89	74,5, 79 mm

Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, p. 229, take the Zambian population of the present robin to *euronota*, overlooking the fact that Zambian specimens are too large to be associated with a taxon based on small birds occurring on the eastern Afrotropical littoral, and are furthermore less strongly reddish below. It is, of course, of *occidentalis*, which also has date priority over *euronota*. South of the range of nominate *C. heuglini* four races are admissible: *C. h. subrufescens* Bocage, 1869: Caconda, Huila, Angola, *C. h. orphea*, *C. h. occidentalis* and *C. h. intermedia* (syn. *euronota*). Six races in all can be recognised in the present species of *Cossypha*.