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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

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by

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ON THE STATUS OF *PERDIX LECHOHO* SMITH, 1836

On the various occasions I have discussed in whole or in part variation in the Natal Francolin *Francolinus natalensis* Smith, 1834 (*vide Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. iv, 4, 1953, pp. 59 - 61; *Cat.Birds of S.Afr. Sub-Region*, part i, 1965, p. 267; *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. viii, 11, 1968, p. 119; and *Gamebirds of Southern Africa*, 1967, pp. 124 - 129), I inadvertently omitted to discuss or allocate the name *Perdix Lechoho* Smith, *Rep.Exped.Expl.Centr.Afr.*, 1836, p. 54: banks of the Marikwa (=Marico) and Limpopo Rivers. When he proposed *Perdix Lechoho* in 1836, Smith was fully aware of the fact that he had already collected the species in Natal and named it, in 1834, *Francolinus natalensis*. Why he should have renamed a species already described by himself is not clear from the severely restricted text.

A re-examination of the variation in the Transvaal, utilising in addition to eastern lowveld specimens others from Swartruggens, Derdepoort, Ellisras, the confl. of the Crocodile (Limpopo) and Matlabas Rivers, Rustenburg, Magaliesberg and Beestekraal, all localities over the far western plateau, shows incontrovertibly that *Lechoho* is a synonym of *F.n.natalensis*, the type-locality of which is Durban, Natal. It was at first thought that *Lechoho* might be an earlier name for *F.n.thamnobium* Clancey, 1954: near Newington, eastern Transvaal, but this proves not to be so. There is no difference of sub-

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THE GENERIC STATUS OF *MUSCICAPA GABELA* RAND, 1957

The small Angolan forest robin described in the first instance as *Muscicapa gabela* Rand, 1957: 15 km S. of Gabela, Cuanza Sul, Angola, was later transferred to the genus *Sheppardia* Haagner (*Type-species*: *Sheppardia gunningi* Haagner, 1909) on the findings of Hall, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club.*, vol. lxxxii, 3, 1961, pp. 45, 46. In the continuation of Peters' *Check-List*, Ripley, vol. x, 1964, p. 34, later placed *gabela* in the genus *Erithacus* Cuvier, the *Type-species* of which is *Motacilla Rubecula* Linnaeus, 1758, the Robin of Europe. In the paper on African forest-dwelling robins by Irwin and Clancey, *Arnoldia* Rhod., vol. vi, 34, 1974, p. 16, the generic status of Rand's *M.gabela* was again discussed, and reservations were expressed as to the accuracy of its placing in the so-called Akalat genus *Sheppardia*. A careful reconsideration of the case suggests that *gabela* should be accorded separate subgeneric status in *Sheppardia* at this stage in our understanding of its affinities.

GABELATRIX, subgen.nov.

Type-species: *Muscicapa gabela* Rand, *Fieldiana*, Zool., vol. xxxix, 5, 1957, p. 41.

Diagnosis: Differs from *Sheppardia* Haagner, as understood on the basis of the *Type-species*, in being concolorous warm olive-brown above and on wings and tail, and in lacking any orange colour on the venter. Bill comparable, but rictal bristles much more numerous and longer, many distinctly down-curved, imparting a hirsute or moustached aspect to the distal head.

Subgenus restricted to Cuanza Sul, Angola, where *Type-species* occurs in evergreen forest.

ON THE VALIDITY OF *EREMOMELA BAUMGARTI* REICHENOW, 1905

Subspeciation in the Burntneck Eremomela was last dealt with by me in *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. viii, 11, 1968, pp. 142 - 143, in which communication the range of *E.m.rensi* Benson, 1943: Fort Johnston, southern Malawi, was extended south and west of that given in my *Catalogue of Birds of the South African Sub-Region*, part iv, 1966, p. 486. In the 1968 communication the range of nominate *E.usticollis*

Sundevall, 1850, was defined as eastern Zululand, southern Sul do Save, Moçambique, Swaziland, the Transvaal, south-western and western Rhodesia, west to the northern Cape, Botswana, South West Africa, and southern Angola in southern Huila.

A re-examination of the populations currently grouped in the nominate subspecies carried out in the Durban Museum suggests that it should be broken down into western and eastern forms on the basis of variation in ventral colouration. No new name is required in the revised arrangement now proposed as *E.u.usticollis*, with its type-locality Leroma, Rustenburg district at c. 25° 20' S., 27° 10' E., Transvaal, is available for the eastern representatives, and *E.baumgarti*=*baumgarti* Reichenow, 1905: Windhoek, South West Africa, can be resuscitated from synonymy for the xeric western birds.

Three races as opposed to the two presently recognised require to be admitted for *E.usticollis*, as follows:

- (a) ***Eremomela usticollis usticollis*** Sundevall, 1850: Leroma, Rustenburg, western Transvaal.

Dorsum about Deep Grayish Olive (Ridgway, pl. xlvii); venter light Cream Color (pl. xvi), with a variable rusty buff bar across the lower fore-throat.

Range: South-western and southern Rhodesia, the Transvaal, Sul do Save, Moçambique, Swaziland, and eastern Zululand.

- (b) ***Eremomela usticollis baumgarti*** Reichenow, 1905: Windhoek, South West Africa.

Dorsally as last or a trifle paler. Differs subspecifically in having the venter deep Cream-Buff (pl. xxx), often with a cinnamon overlay, the lower fore-throat bar darker and more fully developed, less laterally constricted, and the cheeks more strongly suffused with rusty. In the juvenile dress the venter is deeper, less yellowish, buff, and the fore-throat bar is well-marked, not vestigial as in *E.u.usticollis*.

Range: Southern Angola in Huila, and, presumably, Cuando-Cubango, South West Africa, northern Cape, Botswana, extreme western Rhodesia, and dry western edge of the Transvaal.

- (c) ***Eremomela usticollis rensi*** Benson, 1943: Fort Johnston, southern Malawi.

Similar to *E.u.usticollis*, differing in being more leaden or bluish grey over the dorsum (Mouse Gray (pl. li)). Ventrally, inclined to be still paler from the lower fore-throat to the crissum.

Range: Moçambique north of the Save R., Rhodesia north of nominate *usticolis*, southern Malawi, and Zambian range of species.

ON THE SOUTHERN LIMITS OF
ANTHUS NOVAESEELANDIAE LICHENYA VINCENT, 1933

In my first arrangement of the southern African populations of Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (Gmelin) in generally recognisable and acceptable races in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. iv, 9, 1954, pp. 101 - 115, I associated the high elevation populations of Rhodesia with the subspecies *A.n.lichenya* Vincent, 1933: Mlanje Mtn, southern Malawi, at 1980 m. a.s.l. The ascription of the high country populations to *lichenya* was not followed by Rhodesian workers, and in my second revision of the southern subspecies of this pipit in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. viii, 12, 1968, pp. 153 - 156, I bowed to their views and placed the disputed Rhodesian birds with *A.n.rufuloides* Roberts, 1936: Grahamstown, Cape, treating *lichenya* as extralimital. *A.n.lichenya* was also left out of the arrangement of the austral African subspecies in my *Catalogue of Birds of the South African Sub-Region*, part iv, 1966, pp. 520, 521, the Rhodesian populations in question being on that occasion allocated to *A.n.spurium* Clancey, 1951: Zimbiti, near Beira, Moçambique.

A re-examination of the subspecific status of the contentious Rhodesian populations of Richard's Pipit, using personally collected material taken at Revue, Manica district, southern Moçambique, in 1968, and at Mt. Selinda, Chipinga district, Rhodesia, in 1973, shows that the action taken in 1954 was correct and that the populations, certainly those breeding in the Eastern Districts and along the Rhodesia/Moçambique frontier, are referable neither to *A.n.rufuloides* nor *A.n.spurium* but to *A.n.lichenya*. The last named taxon differs from *rufuloides* in having the upper-parts in newly moulted condition darker and redder (fringes of mantle feathers Buckthorn Brown (Ridgway (1912), pl. xv), *versus* greyish Tawny-Olive (pl. xxix) in *rufuloides*), the ground to the breast also redder, being Ochraceous-Buff (pl. xv), against Warm Buff (same pl.). A further distinction, and one not noted during the course of my earlier researches, is that the white over the penultimate rectrices in *lichenya* is largely vestigial or absent (in c. 77,8% of cases examined). In size *lichenya* is similar to *rufuloides*, the ♂♂ with wings 90 - 95,5, ♀♀ 83 - 89. In *A.n.spurium* the wings are shorter: ♂♂ 84 - 90,5, ♀♀ 80 - 85 mm.

The allocation of satisfactory ranges to subspecies in this pipit is invariably difficult because of two major factors: (a) the loss of the subspecifically significant colour characters due to environmental and radiation factors by the time the birds start breeding, and (b) the