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Females:

Wing 331, 341, 346, 349, 354, 360, 362. M₇ 349 mm.

Tail 176, 177, 179, 181, 185, 187, 191. M₇ 182 mm.

Hence the females average larger than the males. Of course, a few specimens may be wrongly sexed (largest male and smallest female?).

The specimen collected by C. J. Andersson, sexed as a female by the collector, also carries another label of later origin with the text, "probably ♂ though marked ♀". This remark, easily understandable on the assumption that the bird belonged to "*desertorum*", has no foundations nowadays. It is my belief, therefore, that the original sexing was correct.

Finally, it should be added that pale specimens of *trizonatus* may resemble the Madagascar Buzzard *Buteo brachypterus* Hartlaub 1860 in colour on under-parts; but *brachypterus* can always be recognized by its very small dimensions, and its range of variation in colour is quite different from that of *trizonatus*.

The author is greatly indebted to Mr. Derek Goodwin and Mr. J. D. Macdonald for kind assistance at the British Museum of Natural History in London.

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Polytypic Variation in the Sparrow *Passer melanurus* (Müller)

by MR. P. A. CLANCEY

Received 15th October, 1957

The Cape Sparrow or Mossie *Passer melanurus* (Müller) is a handsome and common but somewhat unevenly distributed species of south-western Africa, ranging in the west from the Cape of Good Hope northwards to Benguela, Angola, and in the east to the border country of Southern Rhodesia and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and the northern Transvaal. Demonstrable geographical variation in the species has been on record for many years, and two races are currently recognised, these being *P. m. melanurus* (Müller), 1776: Cape of Good Hope, and *P. m. damarensis* Reichenow, 1902: Windhoek, South-West Africa (*vide* Sclater, *Systema Avium Aethiopicarum*, part ii, 1930, p. 722; Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 334; Vincent, *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, 1952, p. 113). A recent study of most of the specimen material housed in South African collections has demonstrated the necessity for recognising a third race in our systematic arrangement of the species, and this is formally described below. For the loan of material I am grateful to the Directors of the South African Museum, Cape Town (through Dr. J. M. Winterbottom); East London Museum; Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg; Transvaal Museum, Pretoria; and the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo.

Polytypic variation in *P. melanurus* appears to be strictly orthodox, the largest and darkest coloured birds occurring in southern and south-eastern high rainfall areas, the smallest and palest in the western and central desert and peripheral arid regions. Birds agreeing nomenclaturally

with the topotypical populations of *P. m. melanurus* range throughout most of the Cape Province to the south of the Orange River and into the southern Orange Free State. In this race, males in fresh plumage have the crown, cheeks, throat and breast sooty black, the nape and mantle centre dark olive-brown with an admixture of black, the scapulars lower back and rump hazel, and the sides of the body and flanks strongly washed with grey. Females are much less strikingly plumaged than the males, the head-top being about the Chaetura Drab of Ridgway (*Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl. xlvi), while the nape and mantle are similarly coloured but slightly paler, and the cheeks, throat centre and upper breast-band are dark greyish. In these populations the wings of males measure 73.5 – 82 mm., females 70 – 80 mm. In the north-western Cape (from about Port Nolloth and Springbok eastwards to Kenhardt and Prieska (intergrades), South-West Africa, south-western Angola, northern Cape Province, Bechuanaland Protectorate, parts of the western Orange Free State and the western and northern Transvaal, occur fairly uniform populations of rather smaller and lighter coloured birds, which have been given the name *P. m. damarensis* by Anton Reichenow. *P. m. damarensis* averages slightly smaller than *P. m. melanurus* (wings of males 74 – 79.5, and females 73 – 79 mm. in South-West African and Bechuanaland specimens), and males differ in having the nape and mantle centre lighter, the olive-brown without a black admixture, while the black surfaces are more brownish sooty, and the flanks are less strongly washed with grey. But the females show better subspecific differences than the males, being much lighter, less drab grey, on the head-top, nape and mantle centre than *P. m. melanurus*. The throat centre and breast-band are almost constantly more pallid, and the scapulars, lower back and rump are tawny and not hazel. In *P. m. damarensis* to a greater extent perhaps than in *P. m. melanurus*, the plumage of the upper-parts fades rapidly, and breeding birds have the scapulars, lower back and rump several degrees paler than freshly moulted examples. Towards the end of the breeding season, the surfaces concerned have often bleached to a sandy fawn.

The exact zone of contact between the races *P. m. melanurus* and *P. m. damarensis* is not easily plotted, as material from many crucial areas is not available. However, during the recent Durban Museum expedition (August – September, 1957) to the northern Cape Province and central Orange River valley, sampling of several local populations of *P. m. melanurus* was carried out. A series of 13 ♂♂, 8 ♀♀ from Riverton, near Kimberley, is almost constantly of the race *P. m. damarensis*, but in a series of 6 ♂♂, 3 ♀♀ from the Asbestos Mountains (Griquatown – Niekerkshoop road) the influence of the austral *P. m. melanurus* is clearly demonstrated in one or two specimens. At Prieska, on the central Orange River, most of the specimens collected (8 ♂♂, 3 ♀♀) are best placed with *P. m. melanurus*, but the population is clearly an intergrading one. A similar set of circumstances obtains at Van Wyks Vlei, some 90 miles to the south-west, from which locality I have a series of 6 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀, but at Kenhardt (5 ♂♂, 5 ♀♀) the birds are again lighter coloured, and attributable to *P. m. damarensis* in most instances. The data available suggest that the zone of intergradation between *P. m. melanurus* and *P. m. damarensis* is a comparatively narrow one.

South-east of the ranges of *P. m. melanurus* and *P. m. damarensis* occur populations of birds which differ significantly in size and colouration.

The populations of the south-east African highland grassland biome, in Basutoland, eastern Orange Free State, Natal, western Swaziland and the southern Transvaal, have hitherto been associated with the nominate race, but I now find them to be sufficiently well differentiated as to be placed as a new subspecies. The eastern birds under consideration are large, the wings in males 80.5 – 86, females 77 – 82 mm. The males are more strikingly contrasted in colouration than in either *P. m. melanurus* or *P. m. damarensis*, with the melanic surfaces a more glossy jet, less sooty, black, and the rest of the under-parts purer white, the flanks only lightly washed with grey. The nape and mantle centre are a darker and purer grey, while the lesser wing-coverts, scapulars, lower back and rump are a darker and more saturated vinous chestnut. The females are also darker on the upper-parts than *P. m. melanurus*, but ventrally they differ but little. For this new race of Cape Sparrow the name *P. m. vicinus* mihi, subsp. nov., is introduced below.

Three races of the sparrow *Passer melanurus* (Müller) can be conveniently recognised in our taxonomic arrangement of the species, and the nomenclature, characters and ranges of these are as follows:

1. *Passer melanurus melanurus* (Müller)

Loxia melanura P. L. S. Müller, *Des Ritter C. von Linné . . Natursystems Supplement*, 1776, p. 153: Cape of Good Hope, Cape Province, South Africa.

Male: Crown, cheeks, throat and breast-band sooty coal-black; post-ocular stripes, sides of neck and remainder of under-parts dull white, the sides of the body and flanks washed with olivaceous grey. On upper-parts, nape and mantle centre olive-brown with strong admixture of black; lesser wing-coverts, scapulars, lower back and rump hazel (about 00S-5-10°). Wings blackish, with prominent whitish median bar, a less conspicuous bar on secondary coverts, and pale margins to the tertials. *Female*: Paler coloured than the male, and with the crown, cheeks, nape and mantle centre of a colour about Chaetura Drab, darkest on the crown. On the under-parts, the throat and breast-band are dark greyish, and the white of the post-ocular stripes, neck sides and the lower ventral surfaces is more washed with buff than in the male.

Measurements: 20 ♂♂: wings (flattened) 73.5 – 82 (78.8), culmens (from base) 13 – 15.5 (14.6), tails 55 – 54 (59.1) mm. 15 ♀♀: wings 70 – 80 (75.1), culmens 13 – 16 (14.4), tails 52 – 60 (56.5) mm. Thirty-five specimens measured.

Type: None in existence.

Material: 78: South-western Cape Province (Cape Town, Dassen Island, Durbanville, Malmesbury, Stellenbosch, Hermanus, Bredasdorp, Touws River, Worcester), 21; central Cape districts (Graaff-Reinet, Van Wyks Vlei, Hanover, Prieska), 24; southern Cape (Oudtshoorn, Willowmore), 2; eastern Cape (Tarkastad, Cathcart, Committees Drift (Albany), Aliwal North, etc.), 29; Orange Free State (Glen, on Modder River), 2.

Range: South-western and western Cape Province to the south of Little Namaqualand, eastwards through the arid central and southern districts to the eastern Cape and southern Orange Free State. In the Cape Province reaching as far north as Prieska and, perhaps, Hopetown on the Orange River.

Note: Some examples with rather long wings, *i.e.*, in excess of 82 mm. in adults males, and of dark colouration, occur in the populations of the winter rainfall areas of the south-western Cape Province, but the majority is similar in these respects to the birds of the other populations of this race, and I do not feel that further subdivision of *P. m. melanurus* is warranted.

2. *Passer melanurus damarensis* Reichenow

Passer arcuatus damarensis Reichenow, *Ornithologische Monatsberichte*, vol. x, 1902, p. 77: Windhoek, Damaraland, South-West Africa.

Similar to the nominate race, but male with black surfaces more sooty, less coal-black; nape and mantle centre paler olive-brown, which is without blackish admixture; lesser wing-coverts, scapulars, lower back and rump slightly paler, and flanks only lightly washed with greyish. Female more sharply differentiated, having the crown, nape and mantle centre olivaceous wearing to light grey, not Chaetura Drab, and with the scapulars, lower back and rump tawny and not hazel. On the under-parts, the throat and breast-band paler, often quite creamy, and distinctly less dark grey. Averaging slightly smaller in size.

Measurements: 20 ♂♂: wings (flattened) 74 – 79.5 (76.4), culmens 13.5 – 15 (14.2), tails 54 – 62 (57.5) mm. 14 ♀♀: wings 73 – 79 (75.7), culmens 13.5 – 15 (14.4), tails 53 – 59 (56.7) mm. Thirty-four specimens measured.

Type: In the Zoological Museum, Berlin.

Material: 69: South-West Africa (Seeheim, Helmeringhausen, Windhoek, Swakopmund). 10; Bechuanaland Protectorate (Tsane, Tsabong, Lehututu, Francistown, 55 miles W. of Kanye), 7; northern Cape Province, (Kuruman, Riverton, Kimberley, Griquatown-Niekerkshoop road), 32; north-western Cape Province (Bladgrond, Kenhardt), 11; western Transvaal (Bloemhof, Marico, near Pretoria), 9.

Range: South-western Angola, South-West Africa and Little Namaqualand eastwards to the Southern Rhodesia – Bechuanaland border country, the western and northern Transvaal, and some districts of the western Orange Free State. Intergrades with the former race to the south of its stated range, and with *P. m. vicinus* to the south-east.

3. *Passer melanurus vicinus*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Bethlehem, eastern Orange Free State, South Africa. Altitude 5500' a.s.l. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley, 28th July, 1955. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

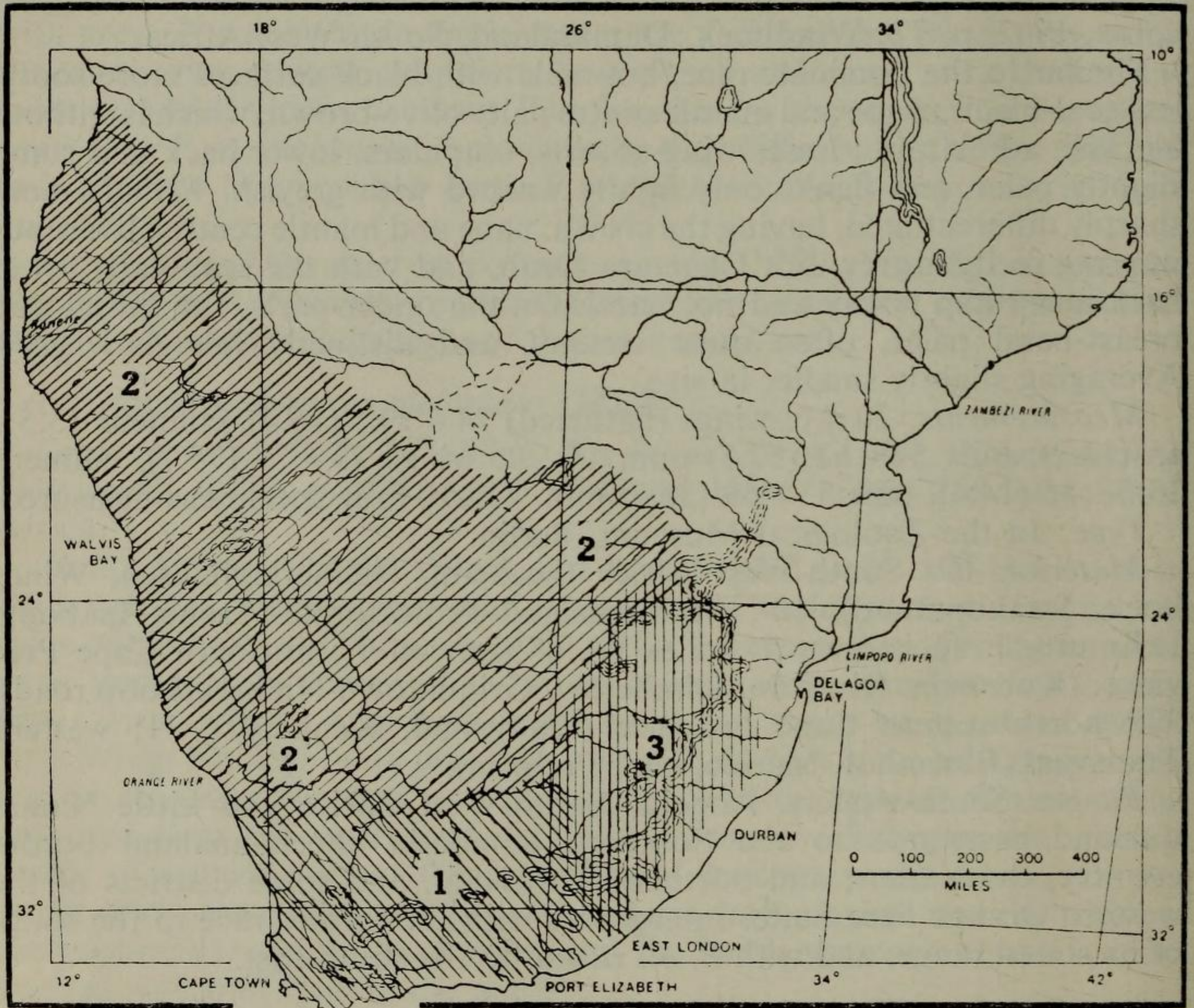
Diagnosis: Male similar to but more strikingly coloured than that of the nominate race, the crown, cheeks, throat and breast-band a more glossy jet, less coal, black, and under-parts purer white; the sides of the body and flanks less washed with olivaceous grey; and the lesser wing-coverts, scapulars, lower back and rump a darker and more saturated vinous red-brown (about 00S-5-7°). Ranging larger in size – wings of ♂♂ 80.5 – 86 mm. as against 73.5 – 82 mm. in *P. m. melanurus*. Females are also darker on the upper-parts, and larger in size, thus: wings 79 – 82 mm., as against 70 – 80 mm. in *P. m. melanurus*.

Measurements: 16 ♂♂: wings 80.5 – 86 (83.2), culmens 14.5 – 16 (15.2), tails 61 – 65 (62.5) mm. 4 ♀♀: wings 77 – 82 (79.7), culmens 14.5 – 15.5 (15.1), tails 59 – 63.5 (61.1) mm. Twenty specimens measured.

Material: 26. Eastern Orange Free State (Bethlehem), 3 ; Basutoland (Mamathe's, near Teyateyaneng), 4 ; southern Transvaal (Pretoria, Johannesburg, Henley-on-Klip, Kendal), 12 ; Natal (Bergville, near Pietermaritzburg), 7.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 84.5, culmen 14.5, tail 61.5 mm.

Range: The eastern half of the Orange Free State, the highveld districts of the southern Transvaal, western Swaziland, Basutoland, Natal (absent from the coastal districts), and East Griqualand, eastern Cape Province.



Passer melanurus (Müller)

Sketch map showing the approximate ranges of the three races of the Cape Sparrow or Mossie.

1. *Passer melanurus melanurus* (Müller)
2. *Passer melanurus damarensis* Reichenow
3. *Passer melanurus vicinus* Clancey

Ornithological Nomenclature and Nomenclatorial Procedure

At the time of his death Captain Claude Grant had just completed a comprehensive treatise on this subject on which he was a great authority. It will be published by some of his friends and notice of this is being given so that anyone who wishes may be enabled to subscribe towards it.



PURCHASED
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