



DURBAN MUSEUM NOVITATES

Issued by the Durban Museum, Durban, South Africa

Vol. VI

ISSUED 20TH MARCH, 1961

PART 6

MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XVI

by

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1. ON THE VALIDITY AND RANGE OF *RHINOPOMASTUS CYANOMELAS INTERMEDIUS* ROBERTS, 1914.

The south-eastern African populations of the Scimitar-bill are currently placed as *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas schalowi* Neumann, 1900: Usandawe, Tanganyika Territory (see Sclater, *Systema Avium Aethiopicarum*, part i, 1924 (appendix), p. 855; Vincent, *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, 1952, p. 45; and McLachlan and Liversidge, *Roberts' Birds of South Africa*, 1957, p. 224). In the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*, vol. iv, 1914, p. 171, Roberts separated the populations of the south-eastern parts of South Africa from *R.c.schalowi* on the basis of alleged differences in the amount of white in the tail and the length of the rectrices, introducing for such populations the name *R.c.intermedius* Roberts, 1914: Koedoes River, Zoutspansberg district, northern Transvaal. In the *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 172, the same author gives the range of his *R.c.intermedius* as "Natal to the eastern Transvaal, thence north-westwards through Matabeleland and Northern Rhodesia."

Study of the material of this species in the collection of the Durban Museum shows that *R.c.intermedius* is a perfectly valid race, distinguishable from *R.c.schalowi* on the basis of rather smaller size and markedly shorter tail-length. In fully adult ♂♂ of *R.c.schalowi* the tails measure 172-188.5 (181.2) (7 measured) as against 146.5-

165 (156.1) (7 measured) in *R.c.intermedius*. *R.c.cyanomelas* (Vieillot), 1819: Goodhouse, lower Orange River, is still shorter-tailed—122-136.5 (128.5)mm. (8 adult males). Unfortunately, most museum collections of this species contain large numbers of sub-adult and juvenile birds. It should be observed that first-year birds continue to carry the juvenile rectrices and remiges long after the completion of the body moult, and unless such specimens are eliminated from research series erroneous conclusions inevitably result, as the extremities are shorter than in adults, and much of the confusion in the literature clearly stems from the unwitting use of such material.

I can see no valid and constant difference in the amount of white in the tail of *R.c.intermedius* when compared with *R.c.schalowi*, but the much shorter tail-length is a valid criterion, and specimens of *R.c.intermedius* can be separated from those of *R.c.schalowi* when laid out on the study table without recourse to actual measuring.

The range of *R.c.intermedius* is from the thornveld districts of the interior of Natal (mainly upper Tugela drainage), Zululand, and eastern Swaziland, to the eastern and northern Transvaal, central and southern Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa, and, presumably, south-eastern Southern Rhodesia. Intergrades to the north of its stated range with *R.c.schalowi*. The range given for *R.c.intermedius* by Roberts (1940) is completely erroneous. The populations of Matabeleland and Northern Rhodesia are referable to *R.c.schalowi* and not *R.c.intermedius*.

2. POLYTYPIC VARIATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUB-CONTINENTAL POPULATIONS OF THE YELLOW-FRONTED TINKER-BARBET *POGONIULUS CHRYSOCONUS* (TEMMINCK).

Critical study of material of the Yellow-fronted Tinker-Barbet *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* (Temminck) preserved in the collections of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia and the Durban Museum shows that the South African sub-continental populations are divisible into three subspecies. At the present time only a single race is recognised as occurring within South African limits (*vide* Macdonald, *Ibis*, 1938, pp. 346-348; Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 179; Vincent, *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, 1952, p. 49; and McLachlan and Liversidge, *Roberts' Birds of South Africa*, 1957, p. 232). The taxon concerned, namely, *P.c.extoni* (Layard), 1871: Kanye, south-eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate, is now known to be a form more or less restricted to the dry interior of the sub-continent, and it has been determined as a result of this study

that the populations of eastern Matabeleland and Mashonaland, Southern Rhodesia, are distinctly richer buff over the breast and more greenish or sulphureous over the median and caudad surfaces of the ventral parts than in *P.c.extoni*, as understood on the basis of topotypical material. The richly coloured Southern Rhodesian populations just mentioned agree in all their essential characters with those of Northern Rhodesia, to which the name *P.c.rhodesiæ* C. H. B. Grant, 1915: Chambezi Valley, north-eastern Northern Rhodesia, has been given. Most recent authors have tended to synonymize *P.c.rhodesiæ* with *P.c.extoni*, and even as long ago as 1939 Chapin (*vide Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part ii, 1939, p. 499) observed that *P.c.rhodesiæ* and *P.c.extoni* were "very closely allied," presumably as a direct outcome of comparing Northern Rhodesian examples of the former race with samples of the Southern Rhodesian elements of the same taxon and not with south-eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate topotypes of the latter. I find *P.c.rhodesiæ* and *P.c.extoni* to be moderately well differentiated and fully worthy of separate nomenclatural expression. Specimens collected in September, 1955, and August-September, 1960, in southern Portuguese East Africa (Panda, Inhambane district; Manhiça) by members of the staff of the Durban Museum stand apart from both *P.c.rhodesiæ* and *P.c.extoni* on size (wings of ♂♀ 55.5-60, as against 59.5-65.5 in *P.c.rhodesiæ* and 59.5-64.5 mm. in *P.c.extoni*), and in being appreciably paler than either. Compared directly with the contiguous *P.c.rhodesiæ* of the Southern Rhodesian plateau, the eastern littoral birds are markedly different, being smaller and much whiter below. From *P.c.extoni* they are not so sharply differentiated; in size they are smaller but in colour *P.c.extoni* is intermediate between *P.c.rhodesiæ* and the littoral populations. However, the populations concerned do not occupy a geographical range which would permit of their being placed as minor localized derivatives of *P.c.extoni* unworthy of a name of their own, and in order to round off our treatment of the variation of *P.chrysoconus* in southern Africa it seems necessary to recognise them as an additional subspecies, characterized by its small size and pallid colouration.

P.c.chrysoconus and *P.pusillus* (Dumont) seem to form a super-species, though it could be argued on distributional grounds that they are actually conspecific, as the two South African races of *P.pusillus* (*P.p.pusillus* and *P.p.niethammeri* Clancey) are completely isolated from the northern representatives of the same species (*P.p.affinis* (Reichenow), *P.p.uropygialis* (Heuglin) and *P.p.lollesheid* (van Someren)) by a vast tract of country tenanted by races of *P.chrysoconus*. In the eastern littoral of south-eastern

Africa *P.pusillus* ranges north to the southern lip of Delagoa Bay, southern Portuguese East Africa, and is replaced to the north of the same bay by *P.chrysoconus*. Intergrades between the two forms appear to be unknown from Portuguese territory, but Mr. O. P. M. Prozesky, Ornithologist of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, informs me that he has some evidence of intergradation between *P.pusillus* and *P.chrysoconus* in the north-eastern Transvaal.

In *P.chrysoconus* three subspecies can be admitted from within South African sub-continental limits, and the nomenclature, characters and ranges of these are as follows:

(a) ***Pogoniulus chrysoconus rhodesiæ* Grant**

Pogoniulus chrysoconus rhodesiæ C. H. B. Grant, *Bull.Brit. Orn.Club*, vol.xxxv, 1915, p. 100: Chambezi Valley, north-eastern Northern Rhodesia.

Upper-parts, from centre of crown to lower back olivaceous black with longitudinal streaks of greenish white, those of the lower back more obviously green tinged; rump and upper tail-coverts greenish yellow (about Bright Chalcedony Yellow (*vide* Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl.xvii). On under-parts, throat Light Green-Yellow (pl.v); breast warm buff (about Deep Colonial Buff (pl.xxx)) with slight greenish admixture, shading to Primrose Yellow (pl.xxx) over the abdomen, crissum and under tail-coverts; flanks Bright Chalcedony Yellow. Ground colour of wings and tail dark brownish black.

Measurements: Wings of 12 ♂♂ 59.5-65.5 (62.2), culmens from base 13-14.5 (13.5), tails 32-35 (33.1), wings of 10 ♀♀ 60-64 (61.7), culmens 13-14.5 (13.5), tails 32-35 (33.0) mm.

Material examined: 34. Northern Rhodesia (Balovale; Kabompo; Serenje; Mpika, etc.), 9; Nyasaland (Livingstonia; Port Herald), 2; southern Tanganyika Territory, 1; Southern Rhodesia (Rusape; Inyanga; Birchenough Bridge; Chirundu; Selukwe; Kana R.; Gwaai; Bulawayo, etc.), 22.

Range: Within South African limits occurs on the plateau of Southern Rhodesia, throughout Mashonaland and most of Matabeleland, intergrading in southern and western parts with *P.c.extoni* (the population near Bulawayo is mainly composed of *P.c.extoni*, but further east, at Selukwe, the majority is applicable to *P.c.†rhodesiæ*). Extralimitally to Angola, Northern Rhodesia, the southern and eastern Belgian Congo (north in the west to the Kasai district (noted as

probably possessing populations worthy of racial segregation by Chapin, *loc.cit.*) and the Ruzizi Valley and Lake Tanganyika in the east), southern and western Tanganyika Territory, Nyasaland and (?) parts of northern Portuguese East Africa, but limits in the north-east still by no means clear.

(b) **Pogoniulus chrysoconus extoni** (Layard)

Barbatula extoni Layard, *Ibis*, 1871, p. 226: Kanye, south-eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate.

Similar to *P.c.rhodesiae* as defined above but with the longitudinal dorsal striae whiter, less greenish tinged, and with the rump and upper tail-coverts more glaucous, less greenish yellow. On under-parts, slightly paler on the throat (Pale Green-Yellow (pl.v)), the breast less strongly suffused with buff (greener and lighter than Colonial Buff (pl.xxx)), and with the abdomen, crissum and under tail-coverts whiter, less greenish or sulphureous (Marguerite Yellow (pl.xxx)). The flanks are also paler (Chalcedony Yellow (pl.xvii)). Similar in size.

Measurements: Wings of 12 ♂♂ 59.5-64 (61.9), culmens 13-14.5 (13.8), tails 31.5-34.5 (32.6), wings of 10 ♀♀ 60-64.5 (61.8), culmens 13-14 (13.6), tails 31-33 (32.1) mm.

Material examined: 32. Bechuanaland Protectorate (Kanye), 1; north-eastern South-West Africa (Kabuta, Caprivi Strip), 1; Northern Rhodesia (Livingstone), 1; Southern Rhodesia (mainly from Matöpos Hills, but also from near Bulawayo; Umuza Forest Reserve; Kana R.; and 25-29 miles W. of Victoria Falls, etc.), 29.

Range: From northern Damaraland, Ovamboland and the Caprivi Strip of northern and north-eastern South-West Africa, eastwards to the northern and eastern Bechuanaland Protectorate (in the east south to the Molopo R.), adjacent northern Cape Province, western and northern Transvaal and western and southern Matabeleland, Southern Rhodesia. Extralimitally to parts of southern Angola, ? southern Barotseland (? intergrades), and the neighbourhood of Livingstone, south-western Northern Rhodesia.

- (c) **Pogoniulus chrysoconus dryas** Clancey and Lawson, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Panda, Inhambane district, Sul do Save, southern Portuguese East Africa (24° 02' S., 34° 45' E.). 14 September, 1960. Durban Museum Expedition. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: Similar to *P.c.extoni* from which it differs in having the striæ of the upper-parts still purer white, and with rump and upper tail-coverts more greyish glaucous. On under-parts, with the throat still paler, the breast palpably whiter, lacking almost entirely any suffusion of buffish, being about Marguerite Yellow; and with the abdomen, crissum and under tail-coverts off-white, with little or no greenish tinge. Smaller in size.

Compared with *P.c.rhodesiæ* markedly whiter streaked on the upper-parts, and greyer green, less yellowish over the rump and upper tail-coverts. On the under-parts much whiter, lacking the Deep Colonial Buff suffusion to the breast and the strongly greenish or sulphureous colouration of the median and caudad surfaces of the ventral parts. Ground colour of wings and tail more slate, less brownish, black. Smaller in size.

Measurements: Wings of 4 ♂♂ 55.5-60 (57.0), culmens 12.5-13 (12.7), tails 28-32 (30.2), wings of 4 ♀♀ 56.5-59.5 (58.3), culmens 13-14 (13.5), tails 29-32 (30.5) mm.

Material examined: 8.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 55.5, culmen 13, tail 31.5 mm.

Range: Southern Portuguese East Africa from the district of Manhiça, immediately north of Delagoa Bay, and the lower Limpopo River drainage, northwards through the Inhambane district to the lower valley of the Zambesi River (Tambara).

Remarks: In naming this new race of the Yellow-fronted Tinker-Barbet I am joined by Mr. W. J. Lawson, Scientific Officer of the Durban Museum, who was an active member of our party during the course of our recent ornithological explorations in Sul do Save.

A female from 16 miles E. of Tambara Fort, Zambesi River, taken on the 11th of September, 1952, and now in the collection of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia (N.M.Reg.No.11242), seems to be an abnormally pale example of *P.c.dryas*. On the under-parts is it almost entirely off-

white from the chin to the under tail-coverts, but new feathers which are appearing as a result of moult on the throat and over the body appear to be coloured as in the norm of *P.c.dryas*, with which race I provisionally place it.

3. A NEW RACE OF ANT CHAT *MYRMECOCICHLA FORMICIVORA* (VIEILLOT) FROM THE SOUTH-EAST AFRICAN HIGHLANDS.

During the course of a study of the geographical variation exhibited by the Ant Chat *Myrmecocichla formicivora* (Vieillot), 1818: Sundays River, eastern Cape Province, it became apparent that the populations of the highlands of south-eastern Africa differed sufficiently from both *M.f.formicivora* and *M.f.minor* Roberts, 1932: Gemsbok Pan, western Bechuanaland Protectorate, as to warrant their characterization as an additional subspecies. Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 240, appreciated that such populations were rather different to the two taxa he admitted in his treatment of the variation in *M.formicivora*, but left the question of their classification open, dismissing them as "somewhat intermediate" between *M.f.formicivora* and *M.f.minor*. Samples of the Ant Chat from the high interior of Natal, eastern Orange Free State and the Transvaal highveld stand apart from those taken from the topotypical populations of the nominate race and of *M.f.minor* on account of the slightly greyer upper-parts (particularly marked on head-top and nape) and markedly paler and greyer fringes to the feathers of the entire ventral surface.

***Myrmecocichla formicivora orestes*, subsp.nov.**

Type: ♀, adult. Wakkerstroom, south-eastern Transvaal/Natal boundary. Altitude c. 6,500 ft. a.s.l. 9 July, 1960. Collected by M. O. E. Baddeley. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: Differs from *M.f.formicivora* of the Cape Province in having the upper-parts slightly paler and greyer, the pallor most marked over the head and nape, which appear distinctly greyer, less brown, than in Cape birds. Distinctions better marked on the under-parts. Pale scale-shaped fringes to the feathers of the ventral surfaces markedly paler, less reddish tinged (about Vinaceous Buff (*vide* Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, p. xl), as against Buffy Brown in newly moulted *M.f.formicivora*). Abdomen paler and less dark chocolate brown. Averaging slightly smaller, but not as small as *M.f.minor*.