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night to feed (Jubb *in litt.*). On several nights at Txaquie a splash was heard suggestive of a catch by the owls. Here too, however, there was no indication whatever that they were other than entirely nocturnal. They were never heard calling or seen on the move before dark, though they called more in Botswana than along the Mwi in Ethiopia; and were never seen at dawn, when we were frequently about ourselves.

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Subspeciation in the Marico Flycatcher

Melaenornis mariquensis (Smith) of Southwestern Africa

by P. A. Clancey

Received 15 January 1976

The Marico Flycatcher *Melaenornis mariquensis* (Smith), 1847: Marico R., western Transvaal, of a large segment of the South West Arid District and some adjacent parts of Ethiopian Africa, was first shown to exhibit sub-specifically significant variation by Irwin (1957), when he proposed *M. m. acaciae* from Ohopoho in the Kaokoveld of northwestern South West Africa. Later, the species was reviewed by Lawson (1963), who recognised three subspecies, proposing *M. m. vinaceus* from Tshane, in the Kalahari, western Botswana, as a third race. I drew attention (Clancey 1968) to the peculiar characters of some Marico Flycatcher specimens from "Mkien" Farm, near Bulawayo, Rhodesia, taken by Durban Museum personnel, suggesting that these perhaps indicated a shift in western Rhodesian populations from nominate *M. mariquensis* to an as yet undescribed form in the northeastern sector of the species' range. I have recently pursued this latter line of enquiry, marshalling for the purpose a series of 402 specimens drawn from the collections of the Durban, East London and Transvaal Museums and the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo. To the responsible officials of sister institutions for assistance in organising the loan of material I tender my thanks.

In the Marico Flycatcher variation affects the hue of the brown upper-parts and the lengths of the wings and tail, and overall follows a closely comparable pattern to that of many similarly distributed polytypic species of birds. In the main, the largest and palest birds are those in the west of the range from Angola, south to the northern Cape, with darker coloured populations in the mesic east. In freshly moulted examples the upper-parts are distinctly more pink or vinaceous tinged than those taken later in the year, a colour change which takes place in a relatively short period of time.

The large material available to me reveals incontrovertibly that both Irwin and Lawson failed to appreciate the measure of individual variation and the nature, extent and variability of the habitat-induced differences evident in most comprehensive museum series. Irwin believed his *acaciae* to be restricted to the Kaokoveld of northwestern South West Africa, taking the range of the nominate subspecies as far north in South West Africa as Windhoek and to Ghanzi in northwestern Botswana. Lawson, in admitting the validity of *acaciae*, extended its range south as far as Rehoboth, in northern Great Namaqualand, at 23° 18' S., 17° 03' E., at the same time placing the populations of "the interior plateau of South West Africa" in his new race, *vinaceus*. Lawson examined twenty specimens of *vinaceus* from South West Africa, most of these collected in the Windhoek district during May 1959 by personnel engaged in the joint Durban/East London Museums expedition of that year. Examination of the Windhoek series, perhaps the best available in freshly moulted condition from a single locality, reveals that there is a considerable range of individual variation in the relative yellowness or redness of the dorsal surfaces in far western populations of this flycatcher. Even allowing for this, specimens collected at Neudamm, Windhoek, in October 1941, by Austin Roberts are very decidedly yellower above than the yellowest 1959 birds from the same area and agree with paratypes of *acaciae* from the Kaokoveld. In the case of a pair from the Rehoboth district, a ♀ from Valencia Ranch, taken on 13 May 1965, shows the characters attributed to *vinaceus*, while an example from Kobos, in the same district, taken two months later (in mid-July) matches parotypical skins of *acaciae*. Moving still further south in the arid west of the South African Sub-Region, freshly moulted birds from the Gemsbok National Park in the northern Cape are seen which are every bit as pallid as the palest northern South West African examples. Again, further southeast, most specimens in the Durban Museum collection from the Kuruman district of the northern Cape more closely resemble the Kaokoveld representation—after making allowance for a slight difference in the relative freshness of the samples—than they do fresher birds from the Kalahari immediately to the north.

The relatively wide spectrum of individual variation in a population and the marked colour change to the dorsum correlated with insolation and the wearing of the plumage, dictate that no useful subdivision of the arid western populations of the Marico Flycatcher into northern and southern taxa can be sustained and that only two races in the species are admissible. The genetically based colour and size variation is, generally speaking, relatively slight. Resulting from these findings I place Lawson's *vinaceus* as a synonym of *M. m. acaciae*, the range of which is now seen as extending from Angola, south to the Kalahari of Botswana and the northern Cape.

Apropos my suggestion that the northeastern populations might constitute a fourth subspecies, a freshly moulted sample from the Makgadikgadi Pan area of Botswana reveals that the population of this region is not separable taxonomically from that of the Transvaal (topotypical of *M. m. mariquensis*), though greying more than others through the action of the sun and wear in this particularly harsh, glaring environment.

The revised characters and ranges of the two acceptable races of the Marico Flycatcher will now stand as follows:

(a) *Melaenornis mariquensis mariquensis* (Smith), 1847: Marico R., western Transvaal.



Sketch-map showing the revised ranges of the two recognisable races of the Marico Flycatcher in southern Africa.

- A. *Melaenornis mariquensis acaciae* Irwin
 B. *Melaenornis mariquensis mariquensis* (Smith)
 ● Extra-limital records of *acaciae*.

Dorsum in freshly moulted condition dark Saccardo's Umber (Ridgway 1912, pl. xxix) with vinous-grey bloom. Venter white, the upper breast with faint buff wash.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ from the Transvaal 81–87.5, mean 84.7, SD 2.15, SE 0.62, culmens 16–18, mean 17.0, SD 0.67, SE 0.19, tails 71–75.5, mean 73.1, SD 1.64, SE 0.47 mm.

Wings of 12 ♀♀ 82–87, mean 84.7, SD 1.52, SE 0.44, culmens 16.5–18, mean 17.1, SD 0.47, SE 0.14, tails 69–74, mean 72.6, SD 1.83, SE 0.53 mm.

Material examined. 280.

Range. Eastern northern Cape, extreme western Orange Free State, bushveld regions of the Transvaal highveld (east as far as Leydsdorp), Rhodesia in the dry west and locally over the midlands to Salisbury, Marandellas, Umvuma and Fort Victoria, southwestern Zambia, southwestern, western and northern Botswana (generally north of a line Ghanzi–Damara Pan–Molepolole), and Caprivi and adjacent southeastern Angola.

Remarks. The birds of the Makgadikgadi Salt Pan complex of Botswana and adjacent areas tend to become greyer through insolation and wear than in the case of populations of the same taxon occurring to the east (in Rhodesia and the Transvaal).

(b) *Melaenornis mariquensis acaciae* (Irwin), 1957: Ohopoho, Kaokoveld, northern South West Africa.

Synonym. *Bradornis mariquensis vinaceus* Lawson, 1963: Tshane (Tsane), Kalahari, western Botswana.

Differs from the nominate subspecies in being paler and more vinaceous sandy red, or more ochraceous, over the dorsum, and markedly redder over the rump and upper tail-coverts (dorsum in fresh dress vinaceous Buffy Brown (pl. xl)). Wings and tail paler. Size larger.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ from South West Africa 85–91, mean 88.5, SD 1.74, SE 0.50, culmens 17–18.5, mean 17.7, SD 0.50, SE 0.14, tails 73–78.5, mean 76.3, SD 1.98, SE 0.57 mm.

Wings of 12 ♀♀ 85.5–90, mean 87.9, SD 1.62, SE 0.47, culmens 17–19, mean 17.6, SD 0.61, SE 0.18, tails 75–81, mean 77.2, SD 1.88, SE 0.54 mm.

Material examined. 122.

Range. Southwestern Angola in south-central and southern Huila and parts of southern Cubango, South West Africa (except Namib and much of Great Namaqualand), northern Cape in Gordonia and Kuruman districts (south to Olifantshoek, Sishen and Kuruman, west to Vryburg), and Botswana south of a line Ghanzi–Damara Pan–Molepolole. Intergrades with the nominate race in the east of its range.

Remarks. Environmental factors result in the fairly rapid loss of the pinkish tinge to the upper-parts and the assumption of a duller and yellower facies to the dorsum in the present taxon. As shown in the discussion above, the race *vinaceus*, proposed in the first instance on Kalahari birds in freshly assumed dress, is based on such phenotypic change, the paratypical material of *acaciae* available to its describer being in moderately abraded plumage, as revealed by the wear shown over the tips of the remiges and tails in specimens re-examined during the course of the present study.

Some populations of *acaciae* are apparently subject to an eastward or north-eastward shift in the cold, dry winter months, judging by well-marked examples of it taken within the limits of the nominate subspecies in Rhodesia. Even making allowance for their age, three skins taken at Bulawayo in May 1908, in the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, agree with fairly recent skins of *acaciae* from both southwestern Botswana and South West Africa. A ♀ dated 8 September 1957, from Grassland, Felixburg, Rhodesia, matches many toponotypical examples of *acaciae*, while a further example from Hillside, Bulawayo, dated (probably incorrectly) 6 January 1948, likewise agrees with the same taxon in the redness of the upper-parts.

A juvenile ♀ taken at O’Kiep, northern Little Namaqualand, northwestern Cape, on 21 April 1960, is in the collection of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (T.M.Reg.No.31, 689). The collecting locality is well to the southwest of the range of the species. The specimen is probably referable to *acaciae*, and, judging by the date, almost certainly a wanderer from the north. Winterbottom (1968) lists the species from the Aughrabies Falls on the Orange R., to the east of O’Kiep, which is also well southwest of the species’ established range.

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Additional Migrant Records from Seychelles

by D. A. Turner & A. D. Forbes-Watson

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Feare (1973, 1975) recorded a number of migrant birds new to the Seychelles and the Malagasy region. These notes add further records, and may serve as a reminder to all visitors to Seychelles between October and April to be on the alert for additional migratory records.

Pernis apivorus. A Honey Buzzard was observed circling over Felicité Island on 1 October 1975. As it flew low past us, the tail with two black bands near the base and one at the tip were clearly visible. The "pigeon-like" appearance of the head, and long wings, plus the heavily barred under wing pattern, clearly distinguished it from any *Buteo* species. The flight feathers were noticeably ragged, obviously due to heavy moult.

This is the first record in both the Seychelles and Malagasy region; a very early record from Madagascar is rejected by Rand (1936: 498, 496), despite Delacour (1932). It is likely however, that some of the birds of prey from Seychelles, recorded as *Buteo* sp. by Loustau-Lalanne (1962) and by Penny (1974: 153) may refer to Honey Buzzards.

Tringa ochropus. A Green Sandpiper observed at a small freshwater inland pond on Silhouette Island on 8 October 1975 is the first record for Seychelles.

Glareola maldivarum. Benson & Roux (1967) distinguished two adult pratincoles collected on Mahe in October and November 1877 as *G. maldivarum*. Feare (1975) recorded pratincoles from Bird Island in September and October 1972 but states that comparison of photographs with specimens at Cambridge suggest his birds were *G. pratincola*.

We observed three pratincoles on Praslin on 3 October 1975, and one we saw on Bird Island on 13 and 14 October 1975 had been present there since 1 October (Mrs. Savy, pers. comm.) Photographs of the Bird Island bird taken by D. A. Bullock have been seen by C. W. Benson, who agrees that probably the species was *G. maldivarum*, not *pratincola*. The tails of all birds were noticeably less forked than in *G. pratincola*, of which we know the resident race in East Africa. Since *G. pratincola* is only migratory in small numbers to northern Africa (Vaurie 1965) and *G. maldivarum* is strongly migratory in winter, it seems more likely that all Seychelles records of pratincoles are of *G. maldivarum*. As far as we know *G. pratincola* has not been recorded further south than the Sudan and Ethiopia*, and is therefore unlikely to have been recorded during September and October in Seychelles some 2,000 miles further to the southeast.

* Mr. C. W. Benson states (*in litt.*) that *G. maldivarum* has been recorded as far south as Mauritius (Benson, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 1971: 1-2) and that there is a record from Bird Island for 4 November 1963 (Bailey, *Ibis* 1967: 439), which is most likely referable to *G. maldivarum*.—ED.

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