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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XL

by

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THE *HARTLAUBII* SUBSPECIES-GROUP OF *TURDOIDES LEUCOPYGIUS* (RÜPPELL), WITH THE CHARACTERS OF A NEW RACE FROM BOTSWANA

Writing in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. viii, 11, 1968, pp. 132, 133, I followed Deignan, in Peters' *Check-List*, vol. x, 1964, p. 345, in placing most of the Zambian populations of the White-rumped Babbler *Turdoides leucopygius* (Rüppell) in the subspecies *T.l. ater* Friedmann, 1927: Kamaniola, eastern Zaire, restricting *T.l. hartlaubii* (Bocage), 1868: Huila, Angola, to the far west of the territory. Benson and others, *Arnoldia Rhod.*, vol. iv, 40, 1970, pp. 26, 27, discussed this matter, but were not satisfied that *ater* could be differentiated from *hartlaubii* on the characters given by me in 1968, and in their *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, pp. 209, 210, only *hartlaubii* is recognised as occurring in Zambia. I have recently restudied the question of variation in the southern populations of this disjunctly distributed babbler, and find that quite apart from the question of the validity of *ater* a third race of the *hartlaubii* subspecies group requires to be admitted from northern Botswana. As a name is required, the new taxon may be known as

Turdoides leucopygius griseosquamatus, subsp. nov.

Type: ♀, adult. Botletle R., northern Botswana, at 20° 30' S.,

24° 30' E., at 912 m. a.s.l. 11 August, 1967. Collected by P.J.G. Ginn. Collector's No. P.G. 42 B. In the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, N. M. Reg. No. 64, 245.

Diagnosis: Differs from *T.l.hartlaubii* (Bocage), 1868: Huila, Angola, in being paler above [Olive-Brown (Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl. xl), versus Sepia (pl. xxix)], the feathers of the entire head-top, hind and sides of the neck, mantle and scapulars broadly edged with Drab-Gray (pl. xlvi) or greyish white, imparting a hoary effect (in *hartlaubii* the whitish fringing is confined to the frons and lateral crown, and the dorsal scaling is dull Grayish Olive (pl. xlvi)). Rump paler grey. Similar below.

Measurements: Wings of 10 ♂♂ 115,5–122,5, m 119,0, SD 2,79, tails 106–119, m 113,4, SD 3,98, wings of 10 ♀♀ 113–124, m 118,3, SD 3,23, tails 108,5–119, m 113,7, SD 3,55 mm.

Material examined: *T.l.griseosquamatus*, 28 (**Botswana:** 16 km W. of Maun, Maun, Shorobe, Chanokhe Drift, Sukwane, Botletle R., Kwaai R. (19° 08' S., 23° 48' E.), Serandelas, Chobe R. (17° 50' S., 25° 02' E.); **N.W. Rhodesia:** Kazungula, Nampini Ranch; **Caprivi Strip:** L. Liambezi, Linyanti; **S.W. Zambia:** Mambova). *T.l.hartlaubii*, 31; *T.l.ater*, 10.

Range: South and east of the Okavango Swamp in northern Botswana, ranging from L. Ngami, the Maun district and the Botletle R., north to the Chobe R. and extreme north-western Rhodesia at Kazungula and Nampini Ranch. Also Mambova, in extreme south-western Zambia.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 121,5, culmen from base 25, tarsus 38, tail 117,5 mm.

Remarks: This riverine species is subject to serious and rapid colour change through insolation and herbage abrasion, and much of the material in collections is unsatisfactory for subspecific work. However, it can be confirmed that the subspecies *hartlaubii* of many workers on Ethiopian African birds is in fact a composite entity, comprising three quite distinct races, the characters and ranges of which are as follows:

(a) **Turdoides leucopygius hartlaubii**

Upper-parts sepia, the crown, hind and sides of the neck, mantle and scapulars scaled with olivaceous grey, the frons and lateral

crown with whitish; rump dull chalky grey. Below, with the plastron sepia, scaled with whitish; breast densely and broadly streaked with sepia. Tail blackish brown. Wings of ♂♀ 114–124 mm.

Ranges from Angola in eastern Benguela, Huila, Cuanza Sul and Malanje, eastwards to western Zambia and Barotseland, north-eastern South-West Africa along the Okavango R., and north-western Botswana on the Okavango as far south as Gomare and Nokaneng.

(b) ***Turdoides leucopygius ater***

Upper-parts light brownish olive, tinged with fulvous over the crown, nape and hind neck, the crown to mantle feathers scaled with warm olive-grey, the frons and lateral crown feathers with whitish; rump more olive tinged. Below, with the plastron buffy brown, heavily scaled with paler, and breast with streaking much finer and paler brown than in *hartlaubii* on a more buffy white ground; flanks washed with fulvous. Tail dark brown, not almost black. Ranging a little smaller in size. Wings of ♂♀ 110–120 mm.

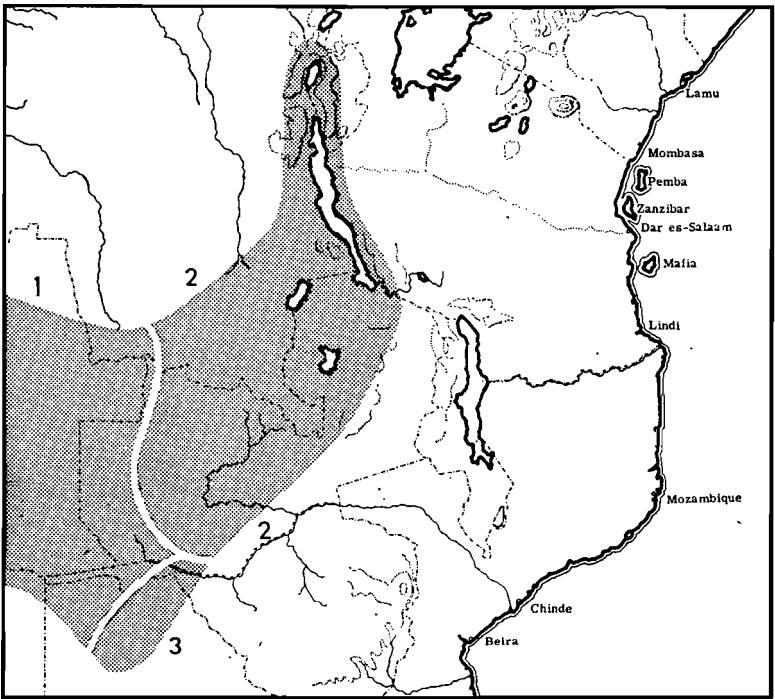
Ranges from Zambia to the east of the Zambesi R., northwards to south-eastern and eastern Zaire, north to Kivu, Rwanda, Burundi, and south-western Tanzania. In Zambia not in the Luangwa Valley and eastern districts.

Note: *T.l.ater* was based on smaller size compared with *hartlaubii*. Whether the Zambian populations, upon which the above descriptive notes are based, agree with toptotypical elements of *ater* is uncertain, and I have followed Deignan in referring the said Zambian populations to this race. Deignan, *loc.cit.*, gives no indication of the criteria he found useful in maintaining *ater* and extending its range to include the Zambian populations. Most authors have found *ater* indistinguishable, except on average smaller size, from *hartlaubii*. Chapin, *Birds Belgian Congo*, part 3, 1953, pp. 238–240, gives the wings of 5 ♂♀ of *ater* as 105–111, tails 97–106, while Benson and others (1970) give the wings of 3 ♂♀ from Baraka as 110–115 mm. These latter measurements overlap those taken by me of *hartlaubii* and *griseosquamatus*. The small size character used in the description of *ater* seems equivocal and unsatisfactory, but the colour differences advanced above merit the recognition of the taxon.

(c) ***Turdoides leucopygius griseosquamatus***

Compared with *hartlaubii* much paler above with hoary whitish fringing to the feathers of the entire head-top, hind and sides of the neck, mantle and scapulars. Rump paler grey.

Ranges from south and east of the Okavango Swamp, Botswana, north to the Chobe R., north-western Rhodesia and adjacent Zambia.



MAP 1

Sketch-map of central and eastern Africa showing the disposition of the three southern races of *Turdoides leucopygius* (Rüppell).

1. *T.l.hartlaubii* 2. *T.l.ater* 3. *T.l.griseosquamatus*

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