



## DURBAN MUSEUM NOVITATES

*Issued by the Museum and Art Gallery, Durban*

---

Vol. IV

ISSUED 30th JUNE 1956

Part XVII

---

### MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS VII

*by*

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum and Art Gallery)

#### THE SOUTH AFRICAN RACES OF THE BLACK-COLLARED BARBET *LYBIUS TORQUATUS* (DUMONT)

The Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* (Dumont) is one of the most widely distributed and abundant member of the Capitonidae found within South African sub-continental limits. The present writer, in his recent review of the geographical variation exhibited by the South African populations, Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club, vol. 73, 9, 1953, pp. 102-104, admits three subspecies, namely, *L. t. torquatus* (Dumont), 1816: south-eastern Cape Province, *L. t. congicus* (Reichenow), 1898: Malanje, Angola, and *L. t. zombæ* (Shelley), 1893: Zomba, southern Nyasaland, while expressing doubt as to the accuracy of using the name *L. t. congicus* for the populations occurring as far south as Southern Rhodesia and southern Mozambique.

Through the kindness of the Directors of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria; the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg; the Kaffrarian Museum, King William's Town; the Museu Dr. Alvaro de Castro, Lourenço Marques, and the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, I have recently been able to study the actual skins or statistics of over four hundred examples of this barbet now preserved

(5) ***Anthus similis nyassæ*** Neumann

*Anthus nicholsoni nyassæ* Neumann, "Journal für Ornithologie," 1906, p. 233: between Sangesi and Songea, Southern Province, Targanyika Territory.

*Characters:* Closely similar to *A. s. nicholsoni* but darker and more saturated dorsally, the feather centres blacker and more fully developed. On under-parts more intensely coloured and breast spots blacker. Similar in size. Compared with the dark *A. s. petricolus*, *A. s. nyassæ* is redder and more saturated on the upper-parts and much deeper rufous buff on the ventral surfaces.

Wings ♂♂ 95–97, culmens from base ♂♀ 16.5–19.5 (18.3) mm. 7 measured.

*Material:* 7.

*Type:* In the Zoological Museum, Berlin.

*Range:* Occurs south of the range of *A. s. neumannianus* Collin and Hartert in most of western and southern Tanganyika Territory, northern Portuguese East Africa, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and the upper Katanga, southern Belgian Congo, ? and eastern Angola. Occurring within South African sub-continental limits in northern Bechuanaland, and presumably at other points to the eastward in the Zambesi Valley area.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RACES OF THE  
GROUND-SCRAPER THRUSH *TURDUS LITSIPSIRUPA*  
(SMITH)

The Ground-scraper Thrush *Turdus litsipsirupa* (Smith) is a widely distributed resident of the lightly wooded savanna country of the southern parts of Africa and of Abyssinia, three or four races being currently recognized.

Originally described by Sir Andrew Smith in 1836 from material collected in the country lying between the Orange River and the Tropic of Capricorn, the nominate race of *T. litsipsirupa* is supposed to range without variation from northern Great Namaqualand, Damaraland, the Kaokoveld and Ovamboland in the west of the South African sub-continent to Portuguese East Africa, Zululand

and Natal in the east. Immediately north of our limits occurs the shorter-billed, more densely spotted and darker *T. l. stierlingi* (Reichenow) 1900: Iringa, south-central Tanganyika Territory, which ranges from the western and southern parts of Tanganyika Territory, northern Portuguese East Africa and Nyasaland westwards to the Katanga, Belgian Congo, and Northern Rhodesia. The populations of northern Angola have been differentiated as an additional race—*T. l. kösteri* (Neumann), 1929: Chipepe, Bailundo, Angola (12° 02' S., 14° 55' E.), but judging from Chapin's observations, "Birds of the Belgian Congo," part iii, 1953, p. 574, this proposed form is not satisfactorily distinguishable from *T. l. stierlingi*, being separated on slender mensural grounds. The only example of *T. l. kösteri* available to me for study could not be separated from *T. l. stierlingi* on any colour character, but the tail-length (73 mm.) is rather greater than in the *T. l. stierlingi* specimens at my disposal, though equalled by many South African examples of the nominate race. The bill measures 26 mm. In Abyssinia, completely isolated from the populations just considered, resides the only other described race of the species. *T. l. simensis* (Rüppell), 1840: Angethat, northern Abyssinia, differs from the southern races in being browner, not so greyish, dorsally, and in having the ground colouration of the under-parts more strongly suffused with buff. This completes the sketch of the geographical variation of *T. litijsirupa* as at present understood.

Study of the extensive material of this thrush preserved in the collections of the Transvaal and Durban Museums now shows that the present race *T. l. litijsirupa* is an unsatisfactory combination of variable populations, and that actually two well-marked subspecies occur within South African sub-continental limits. As a result of this study, it has been ascertained that the populations of the Ground-scraper Thrush resident in the dry west, *i.e.* northern Great Namaqualand, Damaraland, the Kaokoveld, Ovamboland and north-western Bechuanaland are appreciably less heavily spotted on the under-parts and have rather longer bills than is so in the birds of the populations of the moister eastern and south-eastern districts.

The nomenclature, characters and ranges of the two races of *T. litijsirupa* which it is proposed to recognize from the South African sub-continent are as follows:

(1) ***Turdus litsipsirupa litsipsirupa*** (Smith)

*Merula litsipsirupa* A. Smith, "Report of the Expedition for Exploring Central Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope," 1836, p. 45: between the Orange River and the Tropic.

*Characters:* In fresh plumage pale slate grey on upper-parts. Ventral surfaces with whitish ground-colour strongly suffused with buff on lower throat, breast and flanks, which parts are also densely covered with deep black, pyramidal spots.

Wings ♂♀ 125–133 (129.0), culmens from base 26.5–30.5 (28.3), tails 65–73 (68.3) mm. 20 measured.

*Material:* 64. North-eastern Cape Province (topotypical), 1; Orange Free State, 1; Transvaal (Zeerust, Rustenburg, Pretoria, etc., to Barberton and the eastern "lowveld"), 42; Swaziland, 6; southern Mozambique, 4; Southern Rhodesia, 4. Intergrades *T. l. litsipsirupa*  $\geq$  *T. l. pauciguttatus*: northern Bechuanaland, 3; Barotseland, 3.

*Type:* Not traced.

*Range:* From about Colesberg and the north-eastern districts of the Cape Province, the Orange Free State, Natal and Zululand to the eastern parts of Bechuanaland, the Transvaal, Southern Rhodesia, Swaziland and southern Portuguese East Africa. Intergrading with the next race to the west of its stated range.

(2) ***Turdus litsipsirupa pauciguttatus***, subsp. nov.

*Characters:* Slightly paler grey dorsally than *T. l. litsipsirupa*. On under-parts whiter and with the spots markedly sparser and less concentrated on the lower throat and breast. Bill averaging longer, thus: 29.5–32.5 mm., as against 26.5–30.5 mm. in the nominate race.

Wings ♂♀ (122) 127–139 (131.0), culmens from base 29.5–32.5 (30.5), tails 68–74 (71.1) mm. 15 measured.

*Material:* 32. Damaraland (Windhoek, Okahandja, Okanjande, etc.), 20; Kaokoveld (Ohopo, Kaoko-Otavi, Zesfontein, Swartbooi's (Zwartboi) Drift (Cunene River), etc.), 10; Ovamboland (Ondonga), 2.

*Type:* ♀, adult. Okahandja, Damaraland, South-West Africa. 5 May, 1955. Collected by W. Hoesch. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

*Measurements of the Type:* Wing (flattened) 122; culmen from base 31.5, tarsus 37, tail 68 mm.

*Range:* South-West Africa in the northern districts of Great Namaqualand, Damaraland, the Kaokoveld and Ovamboland, and in the north-western districts of Bechuanaland. Presumably ranging to the northward in the drier southern parts of Angola.