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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS VII

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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

Range: Known only from the type-locality at the southern end of Lake Nyasa.

Remarks: *M. a. nyikæ* Benson, 1939: Nyika Plateau, northern Nyasaland, is much larger than *M. a. isolata* and darker and more cryptically marked with black and russet dorsally. Below it is very richly coloured and boldly spotted on the breast. The two Nyasaland races cannot be confused.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RACES OF THE LONG-BILLED PIPIT *ANTHUS SIMILIS* JERDON

Roberts, "Birds of South Africa," 1940, p. 293, and Vincent, "Check List of the Birds of South Africa," 1952, pp. 61-62, recognize only two races of the widely distributed Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Jerdon as occurring within South African sub-continental limits, these being *A. s. nicholsoni* Sharpe, 1884: Sigonell, on the Vaal River, and *A. s. leucocraspedon* Reichenow, 1915: Windhoek, South-West Africa.

The Long-billed Pipit is a species of broken or hilly country, with a marked preference for terrain which consists of exposed areas of rock, loose stones, grass and an occasional shrub or stunted tree. Owing to its very close similarity to the two sibling pipits *Anthus leucophrys* Vieillot and *Anthus vaalensis* Shelley little is recorded of the species in the field, and, as a result, its status in many parts of South Africa is still by no means clear. Recently, through the kindness of the Directors of the various institutions, I have been able to study the material of *A. similis* preserved in the collections of the Transvaal, Natal, Durban and Albany (Grahamstown) Museums, with the result that I propose to recognize five races of this species for which reasonably accurate ranges have been defined.

The pattern of geographical variation in the southern African populations of *A. similis* parallels closely that of many other small terrestrial passerine birds. The darkest populations occurring within South African sub-continental limits are those described earlier in this paper as *A. s. petricolus* Clancey, 1956: Mamathe's, Basutoland. This newly described subspecies is considerably darker and more heavily striated dorsally than the birds of the populations resident at lower elevations, and it would appear to be confined as a breeding form to the great massif of Basutoland. The more widely distributed *A. s. nicholsoni* differs from the Basuto highland race in its lighter, more buffish or rufous buff upper-parts and rather more richly

coloured ventral surfaces. Birds from widely scattered localities in southern and south-eastern Africa (southern Cape Province, eastern Cape Province, East Griqualand, Natal, northern Zululand (Lebombo Mountains), Transvaal, Southern Rhodesia, etc.) all appear to be closely similar and referable to only one race (*A. s. nicholsoni*). In the arid west of southern Africa, from Little Namaqualand through Great Namaqualand and western Bechuanaland to Damaraland, rather lighter coloured and more yellowish backed populations are to be found. The birds of these populations also have rather longer bills than is so in either the widely distributed *A. s. nicholsoni* or in the localized, high montane *A. s. petricolus* (19.5–22.0 mm. as against 17.5–19.5 and 18–19.5 mm. respectively). For these populations the name *A. s. leucocraspedon* has been proposed by Anton Reichenow. North of the range of *A. s. leucocraspedon* as above defined still paler coloured populations are to be found. The populations of *A. similis* found in the mountains of the Kaokoveld, northern South-West Africa, are paler, greyer and markedly less yellowish on the upper-parts than topotypical material of *A. s. leucocraspedon*. The degree of divergence segregating these two racial groups of *A. similis* populations is equivalent to that separating *A. r. rufuloides* Roberts from the pale Ovamboland race of the same Pipit species, *A. r. bocagii* Nicholson, and it would seem desirable to elevate the Kaokoveld population of the Long-billed Pipit to full racial status. This step is taken below, the name *A. s. palliditinctus* mihi being proposed in recognition of its pale colouration when compared with the other South African races.

A single ♂ from Gemsbok Pan, Bechuanaland, collected on the Vernay-Lang Kalahari Expedition and now in the collection of the Transvaal Museum, agrees well with material in similar plumage from western Northern Rhodesia, Barotseland and Nyasaland, and is referable to the race *A. s. nyassæ* Neumann, 1906: between Sangesi and Songea, southern Province, Tanganyika Territory. It should be noted that White and Winterbottom, "Check List of the Birds of Northern Rhodesia," 1949, p. 77, suggest that the western (Barotseland) populations of *A. s. nyassæ* are deserving of further study, but currently they are authoritatively considered to belong to this race, and the material available to me supports no deviation from such an opinion.

Five valid races of *Anthus similis* can be accorded nomenclatural recognition from the South African sub-continent, their nomenclature, characters and ranges being as here detailed:

(1) ***Anthus similis nicholsoni*** Sharpe

Anthus nicholsoni Sharpe, in Layard's "Birds of South Africa," part ii, 1884, p. 536: Sigonell, on the Vaal River, South Africa.

Characters: Upper-parts buff or rufous buff, the darker feather centres forming nebulous striae. Under-parts pinkish to deep buff, the breast lightly spotted.

Wings ♂♂ 95–102, culmens from base ♂♀ 17.5–19.5 (18.6) mm. 15 measured.

Material: 67.

Type: In the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), London.

Range: South-western, southern and eastern Cape Province to Natal, Zululand and southern Portuguese East Africa (Lebombo Mountains and Buzi River) in the eastern low country, and in the interior to north-eastern Cape Province, Orange Free State, Transvaal, Upper Natal, ? eastern Bechuanaland, and Southern Rhodesia. Intergrading to the west of its stated range with *A. s. leucocraspedon*.

(2) ***Anthus similis petricolus*** Clancey

Anthus similis petricolus Clancey, "Durban Museum Novitates," vol. iv, 17, 1956, p. 280: Mamathe's, Basutoland.

Characters: Darker, less warm buff or rufous buff, and more heavily striated above than *A. s. nicholsoni* and rather paler below. Breast spots rather darker and larger.

Wings ♂♂ 95–101, culmens from base ♂♀ 18.0–19.5 (18.6) mm. 9 measured.

Material: 11.

Type: In the Durban Museum, Durban, South Africa.

Range: Restricted as a breeding bird to the great massif of Basutoland. Winter-quarters not known.

(3) ***Anthus similis leucocraspedon*** Reichenow

Anthus leucocraspedon Reichenow, "Ornithologische Monatsberichte," vol. xxiii, 1915, p. 155: Windhoek, Damaraland, South-West Africa.

Characters: Rather paler and more yellowish sandy above than *A. s. nicholsoni* and more lightly coloured on the ventral surfaces. Bill length greater.

Wings ♂♂ 94–98.5 mm., culmens from base ♂♀ 19.5–22 (20.3) mm. 15 measured.

Material: 15.

Type: In the Zoological Museum, Berlin.

Range: Arid west of southern Africa from Little Namaqualand and Bushmanland, north-western Cape Province, western parts of Bechuanaland and Great Namaqualand to Damaraland. Replaced to the north of its recorded range by the following race.

(4) ***Anthus similis palliditinctus***, subsp. nov.

Characters: Paler and somewhat greyer on the upper-parts than *A. s. leucocraspedon*, and lacking entirely the distinctive yellowish sandy suffusion to the dorsal surfaces present in that race. Bill-length similar.

Wings ♂♂ 96, 97, culmens from base ♂♀ 19.5–20.5 (20.1) mm. 3 measured.

Material: 3.

Type: ♂. Zesfontein, Kaokoveld, northern South-West Africa. 5 July, 1951. Bernard Carp Expedition. In the collection of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria. Specimen not yet registered.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 97, culmen from base 20, tail 79 mm.

Range: The Kaokoveld, northern South-West Africa. Perhaps also in Ovamboland and the adjacent arid regions of southern Angola.

Remarks: The parotypical series of three specimens now in the Transvaal Museum was taken at Ohopo and Zesfontein in the Kaokoveld. There are no further specimens of this new race in South African collections. It is noteworthy that the species is not listed for the Kaokoveld by Niethammer in his recent valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Ornis of this little-known corner of southern Africa (*vide* "Bonner Zoologische Beiträge," Heft 3–4, 1955, pp. 173–195).

(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