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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

XII

by

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I. GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN THE NARINA TROGON

APALODERMA NARINA (STEPHENS) OF AFRICA

The colourful Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* (Stephens) of the forested parts of the Ethiopian Region is generally credited by workers with four nomenclaturally recognisable racial groups of populations, these being *A.n.narina* (Stephens), 1815: Knysna Forest, southern Cape Province, South Africa; *A.n.littorale* van Someren, 1931: Sokoke Forest, coastal Kenya Colony; *A.n.brachyurum* Chapin, 1923: Avakubi, Ituri district, eastern Belgian Congo; and *A.n.constantia* Sharpe and Ussher, 1872: Denkeria, Gold Coast (Ghana) (*vide* Peters, *Check-List of Birds of the World*, vol. v, 1945, pp. 159, 160; Chapin, *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part ii, 1939, pp. 480, 481). In a short paper dealing mainly with the geographical variation of the South African populations in the *Durban Museum Novitates*, vol. iv, 3, 1952, pp. 39-44; I recognised an additional race from equatorial Africa, restricting the range of the nominate form to the southern extremities of the continent. For this additional race I resuscitated the name *Hapaloderma rufiventre* Dubois, *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, 1896, p. 999, type-

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2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN RACES OF THE ORANGE-BREASTED BUSH-SHRIKE *MALACONOTUS SULFUREOPECTUS* (LESSON)

In the most recent revision of the geographical races of the Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike *Malaconotus sulfureopectus* (Lesson) the South African populations are referred to a single race, namely, *M.s.similis* Smith, 1836: Rustenburg, western Transvaal (*vide* Friedmann, *Occasional Papers of the Boston Society of Natural History*, vol. v, 1930, pp. 251-253). In his revision Friedmann recognises five races of this species: *M.s.sulfureopectus* (Lesson), 1831: Senegal, *M.s.similis*, *M.s.modestus* (Bocage), 1867: Benguella, Angola, *M.s.suahelicus* (Neumann), 1899: Kakoma, Tanganyika Territory, and *M.s.fricki* Friedmann, 1930: Sadi Malka, Abyssinia. Friedmann's racial arrangement of the populations has not been widely adopted by workers, though Chapin, *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part iv, 1954, pp. 30-33, has followed it closely. Dr. A. L. Rand, *in litt.*, informs me that he only recognises *M.s.sulfureopectus* and *M.s.similis* in his treatment of the species in the continuation of Peter's *Check-List*.

Through the kindness of the Directors of the East London Museum, the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, and the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, I have been able to assemble a series of just under seventy specimens of the South African populations, which shows clearly that three quite distinct races occur within our limits. Of the topotypical populations of *M.s.similis* I have had two specimens from near Pretoria and four from Blouberg. Unfortunately, none from Rustenburg is currently available in South African museums. Contrary to what has been found by other workers, my observations do not confirm that populations of *M.sulfureopectus* show any marked variability, the series before me being remarkably uniform.

Melaconotus similis Smith is a name given to the palest and least richly coloured of the three South African racial groups of populations it is now proposed to recognise, and specimens agreeing with the near topotypes at my disposal have been seen from localities on the eastern and northern periphery of the Kalahari, in western Southern Rhodesia, northern Bechuanaland Protectorate and north-eastern South-West Africa. In *M.s.similis* the upper throat is about Lemon Chrome/Lemon Yellow (*vide* Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912, pl. iv), the lower breast, abdomen, flanks, crissum and under tail-coverts Pale Lemon Yellow (same pl.), while

the lower throat and upper breast are similar but with the feathers broadly tipped with orange, forming a distinct breast-band. The inner edges and tips of the rectrices are also lemon yellow, the pale apical spots, particularly in the adult males, often with a light wash of orange. The wings in both sexes measure 90-98 mm.

North, east and south-east of the pale *M.s.similis* occur populations of distinctly more richly coloured birds. Series before me from the eastern Cape Province, Pondoland, Natal and Zululand, eastern Transvaal, southern Portuguese East Africa and Southern Rhodesia, consist of specimens with palpably broader and more richly coloured orange breast-bands and much deeper yellow underparts. Using the great *Color Atlas* of C. and J. Villalobos, Buenos Aires, 1947, the yellow centre of the lower breast in Bechuanaland Protectorate *M.s.similis* gives a reading of Y-15-11°, whereas the reading from eastern Transvaal lowveld birds is YYO-15-12°. The intensity of the colour of the breast-band results from the appreciably longer orange tips to the feathers, which, even when disarranged, obscure most of the underlying yellow. In *M.s.similis* much of the underlying yellow shows through the orange tipping of the feathers of the breast-band, even after the most careful grooming. The tips of the rectrices also reveal the overall tendency to brightness, being generally more strongly tinged with orange. On the upper-parts there is little salient difference, the frons, supercilia and fore-crown are richer coloured, while the grey of the crown, nape and upper mantle is slightly darker and bluer, and the lower mantle, rump and upper tail-coverts more yellowish, less greyish, green, but there is a more significant size difference, the richly coloured birds just discussed being smaller than *M.s.similis*, the wings measuring 83.5-93.5 mm.

The brightly coloured birds of eastern and south-eastern South Africa are themselves readily divisible into two quite discrete groups on the basis of the extent to which the tertials, secondaries and primaries are tipped with pale yellow. The extreme austral populations resident in the eastern Cape Province, Natal and Zululand, eastern Swaziland and the eastern Transvaal (the latter actually an intergrading population), differ from those from further north, *i.e.*, southern Portuguese East Africa, eastern and northern Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and northern Portuguese East Africa northwards, in having the pale yellow tips to the tertials appreciably narrower and the apical spots of the major secondaries and primaries vestigial (see photograph). In this character they agree with *M.s.similis* of the Kalahari and adjacent arid areas. For

these populations a new name is required, and *M.s.terminus* mihi, subsp.nov., is introduced below to fill this void. For the other populations the name *M.s.suahelicus* (Neumann), described from Kakoma, Tanganyika Territory, must be used. Friedmann, *loc. cit.*, gives the southern limits of the range of *M.s.suahelicus* as "central Mozambique", but from the material available to me it is evident that its range must now be extended much further south, to include all Portuguese East Africa and most of Southern Rhodesia (except for the dry west of Matabeleland, where *M.s.similis* occurs).

The pattern of geographical variation shown by the South African populations of the Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike is conservative and strictly orthodox—a large pale race in the arid interior of the sub-continent and two smaller, richer coloured forms in the moister eastern and south-eastern biomes. The nomenclature, characters and ranges of the three subspecies concerned are detailed hereunder:

(1) ***Malaconotus sulfureopectus similis* Smith**

Melaconotus similis A. Smith, *Report of the Expedition for Exploring Central Africa*, 1836, pp. 44: north of Kurrichaine, *i.e.*, Rustenburg district, western Transvaal.

Frons and supercilia Lemon Yellow; fore-crown with a variable light wash of Pyrite Yellow (pl. iv) on a grey ground; head-top, nape sides of neck and upper mantle close to Deep Green-Blue Gray (pl. xlvi); lower mantle, rump and upper tail-coverts Mignonette Green (pl. xxxi). Lores and feathering immediately below the eyes dark slate or blackish slate; ear-coverts blue-grey shading to blackish anteriorly. Malar stripes and most of throat brilliant Lemon Chrome /Lemon Yellow; lower throat and breast yellow, the feathers broadly tipped with orange, forming a distinct breast-band; lower breast and rest of underparts Pale Lemon Yellow, the sides of the body often with a slight overlay of cadmium, and the flanks washed with olive. Wings as lower mantle and rump, the tertials, major secondaries and primaries narrowly tipped with yellowish white. Rectrices about Citrine/Warbler Green (pl. iv), broadly tipped and narrowly fringed on the inner webs with pale lemon yellow, the broad apical spots often distinctly washed with orange.

Measurements: Wings (flattened) of 10 ♂♀ 90-96.5 (92.2), tails 90-98 (92.7) mm.

Material: 17. Western and north-western Transvaal (near Pretoria, 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Blouberg, 3 ♂♂, 1 ♀). Bechuanaland Protectorate (Kasane, 2 ♂♂; Kabulabula, 1 ♀). North-eastern South-West Africa (Caprivi Strip) (Kabuta, 1 ♂; Linyanti, 1 ♂ (aberrant—lacking orange colour on breast). Western and north-western Southern Rhodesia (Dett, Wankie Game Reserve, 1 ♀; Nampini, Zambesi R., 2 ♂♂; 29 m. W. of Victoria Falls, 1 ♂; Victoria Falls, 1 ♂; Senyati R., 1 ♀).

Range: Western and northern Transvaal, central, eastern and northern Bechuanaland Protectorate, western and north-western Southern Rhodesia, north-eastern South-West Africa and Caprivi Strip. Extralimitally to parts of southern Angola and Barotseland, western Northern Rhodesia (see Remarks). Intergrades with *M.s. suahelicus* in the eastern and north-eastern sectors of its stated range.

Remarks: I have not been able to study any topotypical material of *M.s. modestus*, described from northern Angola, but judging by the characters enumerated for this form by Friedmann, *loc. cit.*, it is extremely doubtfully separable from *M.s. similis* as here defined. Friedmann described *M.s. modestus* as "Like *similis* but with the breast much less suffused with orange; the forehead and the inner margins of the rectrices yellow, not orange-yellow; no black beneath the eyes; auriculars grayish, paler than in any of the other races". These characters are essentially those separating *M.s. similis* from *M.s. suahelicus* and *M.s. terminus*. While Friedmann gives no details of the South African material available to him, most of it appears to have been from localities within the ranges of *M.s. terminus* and *M.s. suahelicus*. Practically all material of the South African populations available to workers is representative of these two forms and not *M.s. similis*.

(2) ***Malaconotus sulfureopectus terminus***, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Committees Drift, Albany district, eastern Cape Province. 24 October, 1953. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: Similar to *M.s. similis* but slightly darker and purer blue-grey on head-top, nape, sides of neck and upper mantle; frons and supercilia Lemon Chrome as against Lemon Yellow, and the fore-crown with a richer and more extensive amount of Pyrite Yellow; lower mantle, rump and upper tail-coverts slightly darker and greener. Loes and feathering under eyes deeper black, and ear-coverts slightly darker. Much richer coloured below, being an

intensely brilliant yellow, nearest to the Lemon Chrome of Ridgway, and with the breast-band broader and of a more fiery orange. In this race the feathers of the breast-band have longer orange tips than in *M.s.similis*, so that little or none of the underlying yellow shows through the orange, in contradistinction to one of the major subspecific criteria of *M.s.similis*. Wings as in *M.s.similis*, but rectrices with rather broader lemon yellow fringes to the inner-webs and apical spots larger and more orange tinged. Rather smaller in size.

Measurements: Wings of 10 ♂♂ 87-93.5 (89.1), tails 84-90.5 (87.5) mm.

Material: 36. Eastern Cape Province (Committees Drift, Albany 1 ♂, 1 ♀; East London, 1 ♂, 2 ♀♀; Kei Bridge, 3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀, 1 0 juv.). Pondoland (Port St. Johns, 1 ♂; Embotyi, Lusikisiki, 1 ♀). Natal (Pietermaritzburg, 4 ♂♂, 1 ♀; Hillcrest, 1 ♀; Ixopo, 1 ♀). Zululand (Kosi Bay, 1 ♂; Ingwavuma R., 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Shimula's Pont, Pongola R., 1 ♂, 1 ♀; Gwaliweni Forest, Lebombo Mts., 1 ♀. (All northern Zululand specimens slightly intermediate towards *M.s.suahelicus*. See also Clancey, *Annals of the Natal Museum*, vol. xii, 2, 1952, p. 265)). Eastern Transvaal (Game Farm "Malamala", Newington, 5 ♂♂, 5 ♀♀).

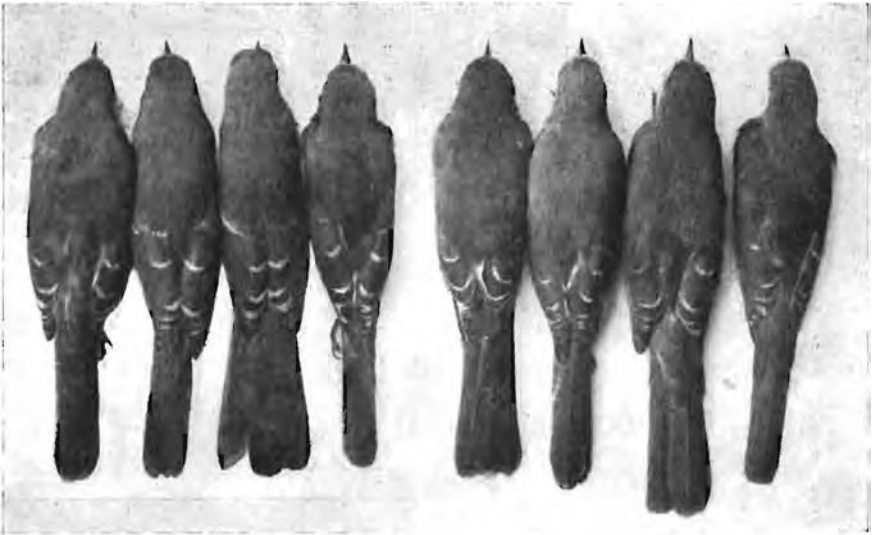
Measurements of the Type: Wing 89.5, culmen from base 18, tarsus 17, tail 85.5 mm.

Range: Eastern Cape Province from the country between the valleys of the Sundays and Great Fish Rivers, north-eastwards through Pondoland and East Griqualand to Natal and Zululand, eastern Swaziland and the eastern Transvaal. Intergrades to the north of its stated range with *M.s.suahelicus*, which extends in the littoral almost to the Zululand border with Portuguese East Africa.

(3) *Malaconotus sulfureopectus suahelicus* (Neumann)

Cosmophoneus sulfureopectus suahelicus Neumann, *Journal für Ornithologie*, 1899, p. 395: Kakoma, Tanganyika Territory.

Similar to *M.s.terminus* but differs in being slightly more yellowish green on the lower mantle, rump and upper tail-coverts, and with the tertials, major secondaries and primaries more broadly tipped with yellowish white on a paler ground (see accompanying photograph). In *M.s.terminus* the pale tips of the tertials are prominent but much narrower than in *M.s.suahelicus*, while the tips of the major secondaries and primaries are usually vestigial. Pale wing-bar



MALACONOTUS SULFUREOPECTUS (Lesson)

Dorsal view of specimens of two south-eastern African races of Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike

Left: *Malaconotus sulfureopectus suahelicus* (Neumann)

Right: *Malaconotus sulfureopectus terminus* Clancey

Note the narrower pale yellowish tips to the tertials, major secondaries and primaries in *M.s.terminus*

(Photo: A. L. Bevis)

on secondary-coverts also more evident. Similar on the under-parts, but rectrices with rather more extensive lemon yellow fringes to the inner webs and the apical spots larger and more suffused with orange. Averaging very slightly smaller than *M.s.terminus* and significantly so compared with *M.s.similis*.

Measurements: Wings of 10 ♂♀ 83.5-91 (88.2), tails 84-90 (87.3) mm.

Material: 16. Eastern Transvaal (Game Farm "Malamala", Newington, 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀). Southern Portuguese East Africa (Vila Luiza (Marracuene), 1 ♀; Manhiça, 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀). Southern Rhodesia (Kariba, 1 ♂). Northern Bechuanaland (Kabulabula, 1 ♂; Sepopa, 1 ♂). Nyasaland (Chiromo, 3 ♂♂). Kenya Colony, 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀.

Range: Southern Portuguese East Africa, and eastern and northern Southern Rhodesia, extending up the valley of the Zambesi to about its confluence with the Chobe River. Extralimitally to northern Portuguese East Africa, Nyasaland, eastern Northern

Rhodesia, Tanganyika Territory, extreme eastern Belgian Congo (Lake Kivu, eastern Ruanda, and Ruzizi Valley (*vide* Chapin, *loc. cit.*, p. 31)), Kenya Colony and Somalia. Intergrades with the nominate race and *M.s.fricki* to the north and north-west of its stated range.

Remarks: *M.s.fricki* Friedmann, described from southern Abyssinia, may not be separable from *M.s.suahelicus*, judging by the comments of other workers recorded in the literature. I have seen no material of the race concerned.

3. ON THE RACES OF THE MASKED WEAVER *PLOCEUS VELATUS* VIEILLOT OCCURRING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUB-CONTINENT

Authoritative opinion is divided on the number of races of the Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* Vieillot to be admitted from South Africa. Shelley, *Birds of Africa*, vol. iv, 1905, pp. 404-411, Sclater, *Systema Avium Aethiopicarum*, part ii, 1930, p. 739, and Roberts, *Birds of South Africa*, 1940, p. 343, recognise three racial divisions. Vincent, *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, 1952, p. 104, recognises four races, and this unqualified opinion is followed by McLachlan and Liversidge in their recent *Roberts' Birds of South Africa*, 1957, p. 433. A study of series of breeding males and other specimens in the collections of the Durban, East London and South African Museums indicates that four races can be admitted in our formal arrangement of the South African sub-continental populations. This study also shows that no less than seven names have been given by workers since the time of Vieillot (1819) to a single taxon, and reveals the necessity for describing as new the *P.v.velatus* of authors (not of Vieillot) and an entirely new race from the western, south-western and Karoo districts of the Cape Province.

P.v.velatus Vieillot, 1819: Namaqualand, *i.e.*, lower Orange River valley, is usually believed by workers to be a pale form of the Masked Weaver resident in the arid west, ranging from the north-western Cape Province and lower Orange River drainage northwards to Damaraland, Ovamboland and south-western Angola. On the basis of the very adequate series of breeding males now available from the north-western Cape and lower Orange River (Upington) it is evident that Vieillot's name *velatus* rightly belongs to richly coloured birds subspecifically identical with the populations occurring further east and north-east generally called either *P.v.arundinarius* (Burchell), 1822: Klaarwater, Griqualand West, or *P.v.tahatali* Smith, 1836: between the Orange River and the Tropic.