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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

LII

by

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ON THE NOMINATE RACE OF THE WANDERING ALBATROSS *DIOMEDEA EXULANS* LINNAEUS, 1758

Linnaeus described *Diomedea exulans* in his *Systema Naturae*, 10th edition, i, 1758, p. 132, on an Edwards and other early references, stating, *inter alia*, "Habitat intra tropicos Pelagi & ad Cap.b.Spei." The last portion of this original citation fixes the type-locality of the nominate race as the Cape of Good Hope, Cape. Currently two subspecies of this pelagic species are admitted by most workers: a large southern form to which *D.e.exulans* Linnaeus, 1758, is attributed, and a localized, small northern subspecies, *D.e.dabbenena* Mathews, 1929: South Atlantic at 38° 30' S., 56° 0' W., breeding on islands in the Tristan da Cunha Group and on Gough Island (cf. Murphy, *Oceanic Bird South America*, vol. i, 1936, pp. 538-575; Watson, *Birds Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic*, 1975, pp. 85-88; Blake, *Manual Neotropical Birds*, vol. i, 1977, pp. 93, 94). Earlier, Peters, *Check-List Birds of the World*, vol. i, 1931, p. 42, treated *D.exulans* as a monotypic species, while in sharp contrast to this conservative view, Serventy *et al.*, *Handbook Australian Seabirds*, 1971, pp. 65-69, admitted no less than three racial groupings of populations, resuscitating *D.chionopectera* Salvin, 1896: Kerguelen, for the birds breeding on the high latitude islands of the southern Indian and southern South Atlantic Oceans, in so doing restricting the breeding range of nominate *D.exulans* to the sub-Antarctic islands of

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Ortygis lepurana on the basis of material collected in the dry western Transvaal. Later, in his *Illustr. Zool. S. Afr.*, Aves, pl. xvi, 1838 (and text), this time employing the combination *Hemipodius lepurana*, he further discusses this form, providing a coloured illustration of both sexes by the artist George Ford.

For some considerable time I have felt that Ford's coloured figure of Smith's *O. lepurana* corresponds more closely with what is currently called *Turnix sylvatica arenaria* Stresemann, 1938: plateau of the Erongo Mountains, northern South West Africa, than with the mesic populations from the southern and eastern parts of South Africa with which Smith's *lepurana* is equated by most workers interested in such matters. A similar view was evinced in my study of geographical variation in the Ethiopian African populations of this hemipode in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. lxxxvii, 7, 1967, pp. 114–117, it being decided in the interests of nomenclatural stability to accept Smith's description of the back feathers of his *lepurana* as being edged with grey rather than cream or buffy white as indicative of his having described the mesic southern and eastern rather than the dry interior and western bird.

A re-examination of Smith's *Illustrations* of 1838 now convinces me that the name *lepurana* correctly applies to the xeric elements, many of which move south and east after breeding and during the cold, dry winter months as from May, and not to the richer coloured southern and eastern breeding populations. Resulting from this change of opinion, race (b) of my revision of 1967 becomes *T. s. lepurana* (Smith), 1836, with *T. s. arenaria* Stresemann, 1938, a synonym, race (a) taking tentatively the name *Turnix sylvatica alleni* Mearns, *Smiths. Misc. Coll.*, vol. lvi, 20, 1911, p. 5: plains of the Guaso (=Uaso) Nyiro, Kenya.

THE SOUTH-CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN
POPULATIONS OF *CISTICOLA ERYTHROPS*
(HARTLAUB).

When Lynes, in his *Review of the Genus Cisticola*, *Ibis*, Suppl., 1930, pp. 374, 375, dealt with the south-central and south-eastern African populations of the Redfaced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* (Hartlaub) he had seen but forty-six specimens in various collections. On the basis of this rather limited material, which was not studied collectively, he concluded that only a single subspecies occupied this part of the species' wide range in Ethiopian Africa. In a short note, in which I dealt with the taxonomy of various species occurring in Zambia, *vide Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. viii, 9,

1967, pp. 102, 103, I demonstrated that the *C.e.nyasa* Lynes, 1930: Chiromo, lower Shiré R., southern Malawi, of the *Review* is a composite of at least three groups of populations. The dark, richly ochraceous ventralled birds of much of Zambia were tentatively relegated to *C.e.sylvia* Reichenow, 1904: Ulegga, eastern Zaïre, while the rather paler and duller population present in south-western Zambia (Machili R.), northern Botswana and north-western Rhodesia was considered as probably referable to *C.e.lepe* Lynes, 1930: Lepe Mission, Benguela, Angola. These findings, in so far as they affected the treatment of Zambian birds, were disregarded by Benson *et al.*, *Birds of Zambia*, 1971, p. 255.

In their recent valuable contribution on the birds of the Marungu Highlands of south-eastern Zaïre, Dowsett and Prigogine, *Explor. hydrob. Bass. Lac. Bangweolo . . . Luapula*, vol. xix, 1974, pp. 38, 39, demonstrate in the light of their findings in the Marungu Highlands that *lepe* is a monotypic species and not a subspecies of *C. erythrope*, occurring as it does alongside *C.e.sylvia* in the said highlands, which lie far to the east of the previously established range limits of *lepe*. In the discussions on both *C.lepe* and *C.e.sylvia*, the Shaba, Zaïre, and Zambian populations are still treated as elements of *C.e.nyasa*, described from the south-eastern lowlands, and no mention is made of the findings of the present writer published as far back as 1967.

A re-examination of the variation exhibited by the Redfaced Cisticola in south-central and south-eastern Africa carried out in the Durban Museum, utilizing a series of 217 specimens, confirms my tentative findings of eleven years ago, showing incontrovertibly that *C.e.nyasa* is a race confined to the tropical eastern African lowlands, ranging from Moçambique north of the Save R., the eastern Rhodesian lowlands and the Zambesi R. to southern and south-eastern Zambia, southern Malawi, and south-eastern Tanzania. The plateau representatives lying to the west of the range of *C.e.nyasa* show a wide variety of differences warranting their treatment as two separate races, one confined largely to plateau regions south of the Zambesi R., the other to the north of the middle reaches of the said river. Names are required for the additional subspecific taxa.

The populations of the Redfaced Cisticola grouped by Lynes in *C.e.nyasa* in 1930 are re-arranged in three subspecies hereunder:

(a) ***Cisticola erythrope elusa***, subsp.nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Zimbabwe Ruins, Rhodesia, at 20° 16' S., 30° 56' E. 9 November, 1976. Collected by Peter Wright. Collector's

number 2617. In the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, N.M.Reg.No. 85 473.

Adult male and female: non-breeding: Pileum, nape and hind neck warm Dresden Brown (Ridgway (1912), pl. xv), merging into Light Brownish Olive (pl. xxx) with variable rusty or ochraceous overlay over rest of dorsum. Face dilute Clay Color (pl. xxix), lightening over the lores and orbit. Below white, suffused across the upper breast and on the sides and flanks with light Clay Color.

Breeding: Much darker above than in non-breeding dress, entire dorsum Brownish Olive (pl. xxx) in newly assumed dress. Face darker (ear-coverts about Isabella Color (pl. xxx)). Below, buff areas a little less reddish. Bill black, the base of the lower mandible dull grey.

Measurements: As given in Table I.

Material examined: 90.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 56, culmen from base 16, tarsus 23, tail 59 (moult).

Range: The central and eastern plateau of Rhodesia, east to the high country of the Eastern Districts, south to the northern and eastern Transvaal, southern Sul do Save, Moçambique, eastern Swaziland and eastern Zululand (south to about the lower Tugela R.). One or two typical examples from the mid-Zambesi R. valley indicate some measure of cold, dry season altitudinal movement from the plateau in the Rhodesian population.

Remarks: Reddish pileum and hind neck and warm rusty or ochraceous overlay to rest of upper-parts distinguish present race from *nyasa* in non-breeding dress. In breeding dress darker and browner over dorsal surface, and with a blacker bill. Tail also longer, especially marked in the female.

(b) ***Cisticola erythrops nyasa*** Lynes.

Cisticola erythrops nyasa Lynes, *Ibis*, Suppl., 1930, p. 374: Chirromo, lower Shiré R., southern Malawi.

Adult male and female: non-breeding: Differs from *C.e.elusa* in showing little or no rufous over the lateral frons; pileum, nape and hind neck dull, pale brownish olive, appearing less red than *elusa*, and more or less concolorous with and not demarcated from the rest of the dorsum; back, rump and tail-base showing little or no ochraceous or rust suffusion. Similar ventrally.

Breeding: Similar to the non-breeding dress, but pileum, nape and hind neck still more like rest of dorsum. Tail markedly shorter.

Compared with *elusa* in similar dress paler over the upper-parts, often greyer, less brown. Bill lighter, the base of the lower mandible flesh. Sun-induced fading results in worn breeders becoming still greyer above, over the wings and on the tail, and whiter below.

Measurements: As given in Table I, these based on Malawi and Moçambique specimens.

Material examined: 68.

Range: South-eastern lowland Rhodesia, Moçambique north of the Save, the Zambesi R. valley in northern Rhodesia and southern Zambia, west to the Caprivi and northern Botswana, the lower Luangwa R. valley in Zambia, southern Malawi, and south-eastern Tanzania.

Remarks: Duller, more olivaceous and paler upper-parts with little or no rusty or ochraceous overlay distinguish *nyasa* from *elusa* in non-breeding dress. Paler and somewhat greyer upper-parts separate the former from the latter in breeding dress. The tail in the breeding dress also ranges much shorter than in either *elusa* or *arcana*, especially in the female.

The few specimens available from northern Botswana and contiguous north-western Rhodesia are all in non-breeding dress. In size this far interior population seems to correspond better with *elusa* than *nyasa*, but on its colour characters must be associated with the eastern lowland race, *nyasa*.

(c) ***Cisticola erythrops arcana***, subsp.nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Kabompo Boma, North Western Province, Zambia. 14 June, 1958. Collected by W. F. H. Ansell. Benson Reg. No. NR 7458. In the collection of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, N.M.Reg. No. 37 144.

Adult male and female: non-breeding: Differs from *C.e.elusa* in having the pileum and hind neck darker and browner (Raw UMBER (pl. ii)), and the dorsum more saturated brownish, less light rusty or ochraceous. Differs taxonomically below in having the fore-throat pale buff, not white, and with the white of the medio-ventral plane buffier and much reduced in extent, the buff over the breast, sides and flanks correspondingly more extensive and a little darker.

Breeding: Similar to *elusa*, but more olivaceous brown above. Differs subspecifically below in having the fore-throat and medio-ventral plane buffy white rather than pure white, and with more extensive areas of buff over the breast, sides and flanks.

Compared with *nyasa*, darker and browner above and buffier over entire venter. Tail longer in breeding dress.

C.e.sylvia is more saturated ochraceous rusty over the face, darker, more greyish, olive-brown above than *arcana*, and less strongly buff below, and is larger in size and does not assume a special breeding dress. Wings of 4 ♂♂ 59–62, of 3 ♀♀ 53–55 mm.

Measurements: As given in Table I.

Material examined: 50.

Measurements of the Type: Wing 59,5, culmen 17, tarsus 23,5, tail 60,5 mm.

Range: North-eastern Angola, Shaba, Zaïre, Zambia except for the mid-Zambesi R. valley, the lower Luangwa Valley and districts immediately to the east, south-western Tanzania (Lake Rukwa), and northern Malawi.

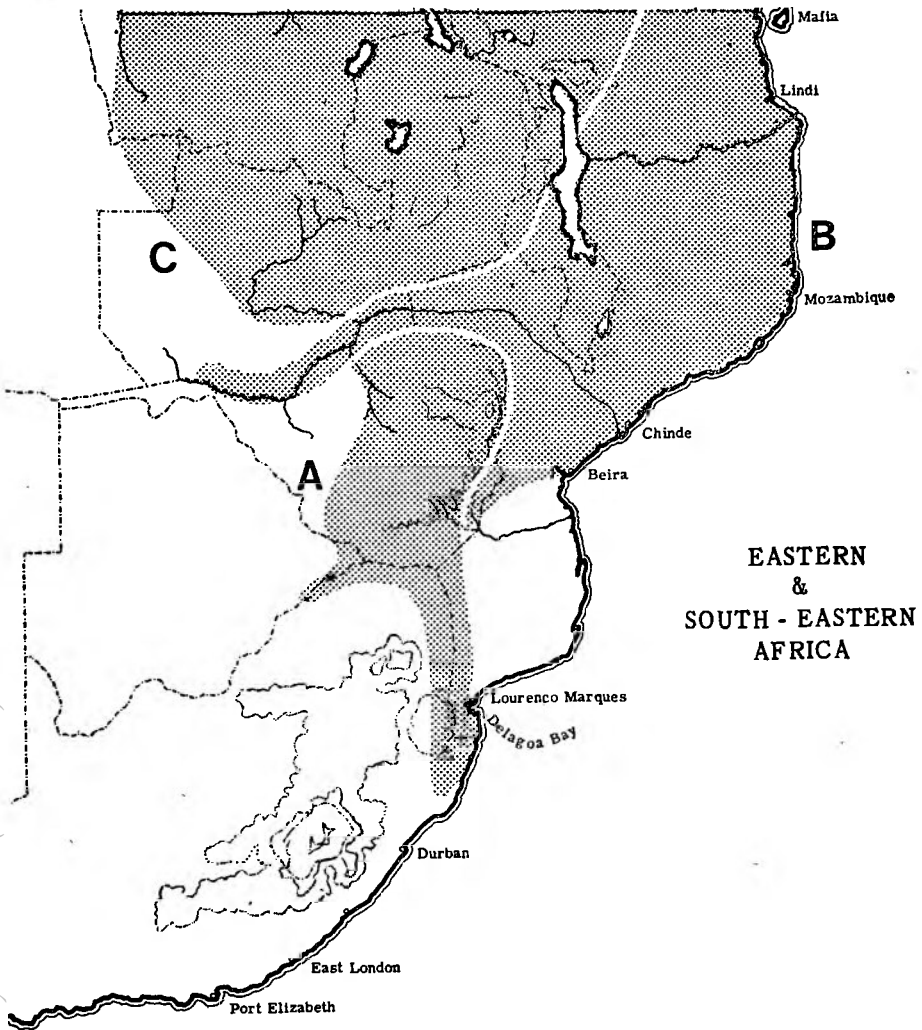
Remarks: Darker, more saturated brown upper-parts distinguish *arcana* from *elusa* in non-breeding dress; below, with whitish areas tinged buff, and with more extensive buff over the breast and lateral surfaces in both breeding and non-breeding dresses.

TABLE I

Plumage	No.	Wings		Tails	
<i>Cisticola erythrope elusa</i> Clancey					
Non-br.	12 ♂♂	53–59	(56,7), SD 1,48	55–62,5	(58,2), SD 2,27
Non-br.	10 ♀♀	50–53,5	(51,3), SD 1,44	51–55	(52,3), SD 1,72
Breeding	12 ♂♂	55–60	(57,0), SD 1,77	47–57	(51,5), SD 3,31
Breeding	6 ♀♀	50–54	(51,8), SD 1,68	47–52	(49,2), SD 1,95
<i>Cisticola erythrope nyasa</i> Lynes					
Non-br.	12 ♂♂	52–57	(54,2), SD 1,62	48,5–54	(50,8), SD 1,85
Non-br.	8 ♀♀	48,5–54	(50,8), SD 1,85	43–52	(46,8), SD 3,19
Breeding	10 ♂♂	52–55,5	(53,9), SD 1,26	44,5–51	(47,3), SD 2,61
Breeding	11 ♀♀	48–53	(50,5), SD 1,70	38,5–47	(43,5), SD 2,77
<i>Cisticola erythrope arcana</i> Clancey					
Non-br.	6 ♂♂	56,5–60	(58,0), SD 1,30	52–60	(57,1), SD 3,06
Non-br.	9 ♀♀	50–56	(52,8), SD 2,13	50–55	(52,9), SD 1,59
Breeding	12 ♂♂	56–58	(57,1), SD 0,77	49–56	(52,8), SD 2,16
Breeding	8 ♀♀	51–56	(53,0), SD 1,58	44–51	(48,0), SD 2,34

The wing- and tail-length variables in three south-central and southern African races of *Cisticola erythrope*. Note shorter tail in breeding dress in *C.e.nyasa*, this especially marked in the female.

For the loan of material to augment that already available in Durban I am grateful to Dr. A. C. Kemp, Ornithologist, Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, and Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin, Director of the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo.



MAP I

Sketch-map showing the disposition of the three races of the Redfaced Cisticola occurring in the southern third of Africa.

- a) *Cisticola erythropus elusa* Clancey.
- b) *Cisticola erythropus nyasa* Lynes.
- c) *Cisticola erythropus arcana* Clancey.

ON THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN RACES OF
NECTARINIA OLIVACEA (SMITH), 1840.

The sombre Olive Sunbird *Nectarinia olivacea* ranges from the coast of the Transkei and Natal, north in the east to Ethiopia, thence to far West Africa, where it inhabits both lowland and mid-level