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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS

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by

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ON THE STATUS OF *PERDIX LECHOHO* SMITH, 1836

On the various occasions I have discussed in whole or in part variation in the Natal Francolin *Francolinus natalensis* Smith, 1834 (*vide Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. iv, 4, 1953, pp. 59 - 61; *Cat.Birds of S.Afr. Sub-Region*, part i, 1965, p. 267; *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. viii, 11, 1968, p. 119; and *Gamebirds of Southern Africa*, 1967, pp. 124 - 129), I inadvertently omitted to discuss or allocate the name *Perdix Lechoho* Smith, *Rep.Exped.Expl.Centr.Afr.*, 1836, p. 54: banks of the Marikwa (=Marico) and Limpopo Rivers. When he proposed *Perdix Lechoho* in 1836, Smith was fully aware of the fact that he had already collected the species in Natal and named it, in 1834, *Francolinus natalensis*. Why he should have renamed a species already described by himself is not clear from the severely restricted text.

A re-examination of the variation in the Transvaal, utilising in addition to eastern lowveld specimens others from Swartuggens, Derdepoort, Ellisras, the confl. of the Crocodile (Limpopo) and Matlabas Rivers, Rustenburg, Magaliesberg and Beestekraal, all localities over the far western plateau, shows incontrovertibly that *Lechoho* is a synonym of *F.n.natalensis*, the type-locality of which is Durban, Natal. It was at first thought that *Lechoho* might be an earlier name for *F.n.thamnobium* Clancey, 1954: near Newington, eastern Transvaal, but this proves not to be so. There is no difference of sub-

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Compared with *L.t.lucidiventris* Clancey, 1956: Mchabesi, Matopos, south-western Rhodesia, of Moçambique south of the Save R. and regions to the west, differs in its smaller size, smaller bill, Carnelian Red *versus* bright Scarlet (pl. i) over the head and throat, and more uniformly whitish venter with reduced yellow over the medial surface.

Range: Moçambique in northern Inhambane district (north from about Vilanculos), Manica, Sofala, and Zambezia, and southern Malawi on the lower Shiré R. Intergrades with *L.t.lucidiventris* to the south and west of its stated range and with *L.t.zombae* to the north.

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN RACES OF THE
REDCAPPED LARK *CALANDRELLA CINEREA* (GMELIN)
Meinertzhagen, *Proc.Zool.Soc.London*, vol. cxxi, 1, 1951, pp. 96, 97, reviewed the described races of the highly polytypic Redcapped Lark *Calandrella cinerea* (Gmelin), 1789: Cape Town, South Africa, but his findings were, unfortunately, completely negated by his insistence that the variation in southern Africa at least was polymorphic rather than polytypic. This misreading of the facts was based on the occasional finding of light and dark birds on the same substratum in northern South West Africa and probably elsewhere, and now known to result from simple post-breeding dispersal on the part of some highly vagile subspecies. The following year, Macdonald, *Ann.Transv.Mus.*, vol. xxii, 1, 1952, pp. 29 - 32, provided an eminently more satisfactory appraisal of the situation in southern Africa, and one which could be used as a basis for further research.

Macdonald's arrangement of the southern African populations, formulated twenty-five years ago entirely on the material then available in the British Museum (Nat.Hist.), London, comprising about 100 skins, was largely adopted by the S.A.O.S. List Committee in their report in *Ostrich*, vol. xxvii, 4, 1956, pp. 178, 179. None of the work on subspeciation in this lark published prior to 1956 appears to have taken into consideration (a) the extensive post-breeding movements of many of the southern African populations, (b) the widely varying breeding seasons of the different races, (c) the serious soil-staining which affects some of the populations, particularly in parts of the Cape, and (d) the marked increase in size evident in the birds breeding over the Drakensberg montane system of south-eastern Africa. In addition, since 1956 two further southern African subspecies have been proposed, these showing that the range of variation in southern Africa is much more extensive and complex than appreciated by Macdonald in his pioneer study and by his contemporaries.

Writing in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. lxxviii, 6, 1958, pp. 116 - 118, I commented on some of the conclusions reached by the S.A.O.S. List Committee, proposing various modifications to their published findings. In addition, Paterson, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. lxxviii, 7, 1958, p. 126, described as new *C.c. millardi* from the Kalahari, Botswana, while later, in *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. ix, 9, 1971, pp. 120 - 122, I described a further race (*C.c. alluvia*) from the lower Limpopo flood-plain, in Moçambique. White, in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. lxxix, 4, 1959, pp. 55, 56, dealt with seasonal movements in this lark, believing some races to be nomadic rather than strictly migratory in the established sense.

In his arrangement of the South African Sub-Region populations Macdonald recognised a dark race — according to him the darkest of all — as extending from the plateau of the Transvaal (the Rhodesian population was not considered), west across the xeric interior of the sub-continent to northern South West Africa, for which dark subspecies he adopted the name *Megalophonus anderssoni* Tristram, 1869, described on a specimen collected by C. J. Andersson at Otjimbingwe on the Swakop R., in Damaraland. As now established, no such wide-ranging, homogeneous group of populations straddles southern Africa, the breeding birds of the Transvaal plateau being much longer in the wing than claimed for *C.c. anderssoni*. The Botswana breeding elements, breeding in association with a glaring white substrate on saline pans, are even paler than *C.c. spleniata* of the Namib, while the dark birds occurring in northern South West Africa are non-breeding visitors of the nominate subspecies from further south. I believe that the name *anderssoni*, used to label this and other assemblages of populations at various times, requires to be lodged in the synonymy of *C.c. cinerea*, and should drop out of use in our treatment of the subspeciation in the Redcapped Lark in southern Africa.

The pattern of geographical variation now interpreted as a result of a recent close study of the complex in the Durban Museum is in the main similar to those determined for most other highly plastic and cryptic southern African larks with comparable ranges, with the palest races occurring in regions of minimum rainfall or with a glaring white substrate, and the darkest races breeding in association with higher rainfall and a substrate with a grazed or sward-like grassy covering. Populations intermediate in colouration generally inhabit suitable terrain in semi-desert conditions, such as found in the Karoo and associated sub-deserts. While the extremes are well-marked, the intermediate forms on occasion require fine judgment and a recourse to the careful dry-cleaning of equivocal material.

I believe that eight races can be satisfactorily recognised from the South African Sub-Region, the characters of the adult males and ranges of these being as laid down hereunder:

- (a) **Calandrella cinerea cinerea** (Gmelin), 1789: Cape Town, south-western Cape.

Synonym: Megalophonus anderssoni Tristram, 1869: Otjimbingwe, Swakop R., South West Africa.

Male with crown dark Tawny (Ridgway (1912), pl. xv); dorsum with the feathers Sepia (pl. xxix), fringed greyish Buffy Brown (pl. xl) or redder. Lateral breast patches dark Tawny.

Wings of 12♂♂ 91,0 - 98 (95,2), SD 2,76, of 12♀♀ 86 - 92,5 (89,5), SD 2,12 mm.

Range: Arid coast of western Cape, and the south-western Cape, east through the Karoo and the southern Cape to about Algoa Bay, and in the north-east to Griqualand West and the south-west of the Orange Free State. In non-breeding season extends north to northern South West Africa, southern Angola and Botswana, as well as parts of Zambia if identification of material from the latter territory as *anderssoni* (=nominate *cinerea*) be correct.

Notes: Breeding Cape August - December.

As noted in the above discussion, *Megalophonus anderssoni* Tristram, *Ibis*, 1869, p. 434, despite wide currency and the attachment of a variety of completely nonsensical ranges in many reports on the races of the Redcapped Lark since the end of the Second World War, is based on a non-breeding example of the nominate race, which extends after breeding as far north as the Etosha Pan region, in South West Africa, and beyond, when it occurs alongside the xeric races *witputzi*, *spleniata* and *ongumaensis* (see Winterbottom, *Cimbebasia*, No. 9, 1964, pp. 48, 49). Records of *anderssoni* = *cinerea* from Zambia require to be re-assessed in the light of this recasting of the western southern African races. The *Type* of *anderssoni* in the Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool, is now affected by cabinet colour-change and, probably, fugitive grease discolouration. It is a ♀ in well advanced post-nuptial moult, taken at Otjimbingwe on 13 March, 1865. The nest and eggs which accompanied this *Type* are presumably those of *C.c.spleniata*.

- (b) **Calandrella cinerea witputzi** (Macdonald), 1952: Witputs, southern Great Namaqualand, South West Africa.

Crown slightly paler than in nominate *cinerea* (pale bright Tawny (pl. xv)); dorsum warmer and more sandy or pinkish sandy, this most

marked over the hind neck and upper mantle (feather fringes about pale Sayal Brown (pl. xxix) or pinker). Lateral breast patches also paler. Size the same.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 92 - 98 (95,9), SD 2,21, of 10 ♀♀ 87 - 93,5 (89,5), SD 1,99 mm.

Range: Little Namaqualand on the plateau, and interior of north-western Cape (north-west of a line Calvinia-Brandvlei-Kenhardt), northern Cape in Gordonia, and, perhaps, Bechuanaland, and South West Africa, north on the plateau to *c.* 22° N., but northern breeding limits uncertain. Apparently largely sedentary.

Note: Breeding season as for nominate *cinerea*.

(c) ***Calandrella cinerea niveni*** (Macdonald), 1952: Gezabuzo, near Pietermaritzburg, Natal.

Crown darker than in nominate *cinerea*, more vinous brown (Russet (pl. xv)); dorsum more ochraceous and saturated, less vinaceous, brown (feather fringes Dresden Brown (pl. xv)), with some light tawny admixture and darker sepia centres. Lateral breast patches darker (Russet). Size much larger, especially in the male.

Wings of 12 ♂♂ 98,5 - 103,5 (100,4), SD 1,50, of 8 ♀♀ 92 - 97 (94,6), SD 2,28 mm.

Range: Grasslands of the eastern Cape from about east of the Great Fish R. to Natal (interior) and western Zululand, the lowlands of Lesotho, the eastern Orange Free State, and the south-eastern Transvaal and adjacent upland Swaziland. No evidence of marked post-breeding movement.

Note: Breeds in Natal August — November (Dean).

(d) ***Calandrella cinerea vagilans***, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Kinross, Transvaal, at 26° 23' S., 29° 05' E. 7 January, 1971. Collected by N. Davidson. In the collection of the Durban Museum, D.M.Reg.No. 27 816.

Differs from *niveni* in having the crown duller, less saturated, vinous brown; rest of upper-parts paler and more greyish vinaceous, being about Wood Brown (pl. xl) when fresh, without tawny admixture, but dark streaking about the same. Below, with lateral breast patches paler, and flanks less washed with rufous. In wings, lesser-coverts duller and browner, less tawny. Comparable in size.

Differs from nominate *cinerea* in having the crown darker (vinous brown, *versus* dark Tawny) and dorsum more greyish vinaceous, less

warm brown, the dark streaking on average heavier. Below, lateral breast patches rather more vinous brown. Differs taxonomically in its much larger size.

Wings of 8 ♂♂ 98,5 - 105,5 (100,3), SD 2,30, of 8 ♀♀ 93 - 98 (94,7), SD 2,04 mm.

Material examined: 26. Transvaal paratypes are from the following localities: Swartruggens, Kinross, Bethal and Lake Chrissie.

Range: Breeds north-eastern northern Cape, western and northern Orange Free State, the Transvaal (except south-east), and eastern Botswana. Post-breeding movements not ascertained.

(e) **Calandrella cinerea saturator** Reichenow, 1904: Kondeland, N. of L. Malawi, Tanzania.

Nearest to *C.c.niveni*, but crown and lateral breast patches brighter (saturated Tawny). Dorsum still more saturated and heavily invaded with Ochraceous-Tawny, imparting a redder and more diced facies. Size much smaller.

Wings of 13 ♂♂ 90,5 - 98 (93,8), SD 2,47, of 10 ♀♀ 85,5 - 90,5 (87,3), SD 1,67.

Range: Within South African Sub-Region limits breeds locally over the plateau of Rhodesia and adjacent upland Moçambique in Manica district. Extra-limittally to Malawi, northern Moçambique, Zambia, Angola, southern and eastern Zaïre, Rwanda and Burundi, southern Uganda, and much of Tanzania.

Note: Breeds Rhodesia April - October (Smithers). Stated to be mainly a dry season breeding visitor to Rhodesia.

(f) **Calandrella cinerea alluvia** Clancey, 1971: near Chicumbane, Sul do Save, Moçambique.

Darkest race. Similar to *saturator* but with crown and breast patches darker and more vinous, and dorsum more broadly streaked with deeper black, the ground invaded with Russet rather than Ochraceous-Tawny. Size the same.

In the case of the female, *alluvia* is plainer, less patterned, over the mantle with blackish brown than in *saturator*.

Wings of 5 ♂♂ 91 - 95,5 (92,9), SD 1,85, of 5 ♀♀ 85,5 - 89 (87,7), SD 1,48 mm.

Range: Major alluvial flood-plains of southern Moçambique.

Note: Breeding June. Perhaps largely sedentary, but one or two Rhodesian specimens agreeing with *alluvia* suggest there may be some movement after breeding on to the plateau.

(g) ***Calandrella cinerea spleniata*** (Strickland), 1852: Walvis Bay, South West Africa.

Compared with *witputzi* distinctly paler throughout. Crown and lateral breast patches about pale Cinnamon (pl. xxix); dark streaking over dorsum less intense, and feather fringes much lighter (about dull Pinkish Buff (same pl.)). Whiter below.

Wings of 4 ♂♂ 92 - 93,5 (92,3 mm.)

Range: Namib edge from about the Lower Kuiseb R., South West Africa, north to the coastal desert of Angola, in Moçamedes and Benguela. Huila records may apply to the following subspecies.

(h) ***Calandrella cinerea ongumaensis*** Grant and Mackworth-Praed, 1955: Onguma, east of Etosha Pan, northern South West Africa.

Synonym: *Calandrella cinerea millardi* Paterson, 1958: Chawe Pan, N.E. of Tshane, Botswana.

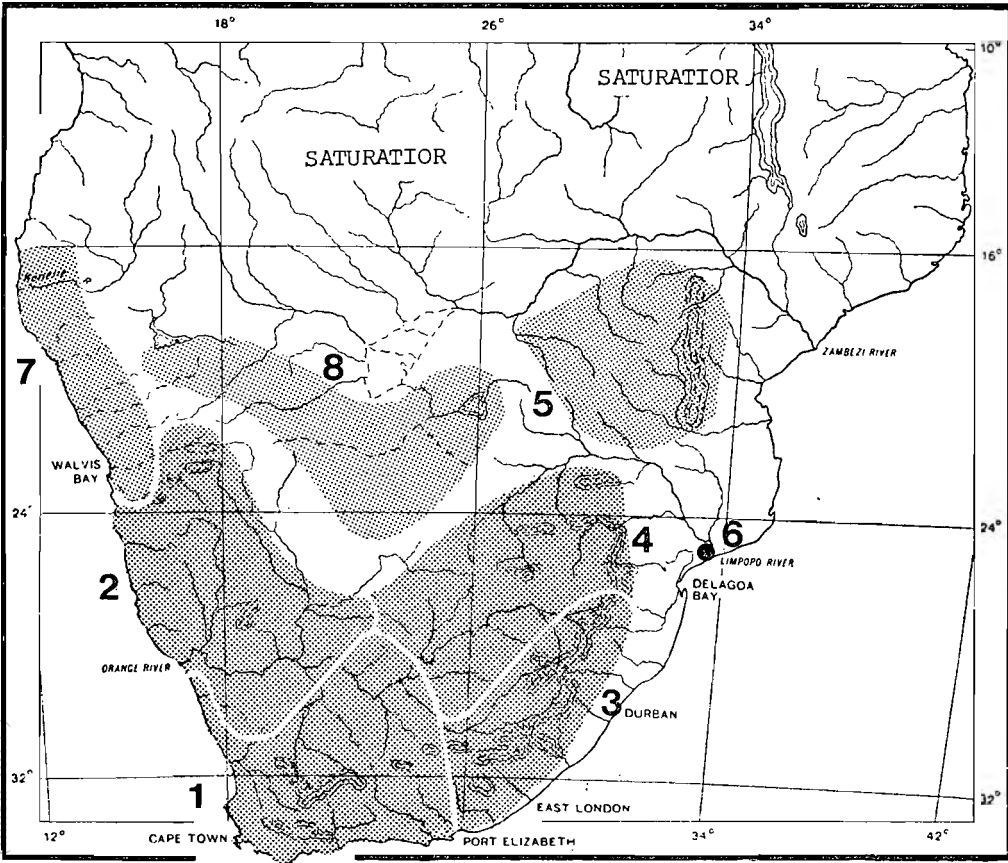
Poorly differentiated from last. In fresh dress, crown near pale Sayal Brown, and dorsum somewhat colder and greyer than in *spleniata*, the feather fringes about Tilleul-Buff (pl. xl). Size the same.

Range: Breeds locally in association with a saline substratum generally north of the 400 mm isohyet from the Etosha Pan region of northern South West Africa, south-east to the Kalahari (Chawe Pan, Sekhuma Pan and Murwamusa Pan), and east to Makarikari and L. Dow, Botswana. Locally beyond these limits when not breeding.

Notes: Recorded breeding in Botswana January and February.

White, Winterbottom and others claim that *ongumaensis* is a synonym of *spleniata*. This is an issue necessitating recourse to the *Type*. If the *Type* of *ongumaensis* is inseparable from the Namib race, *C.c.spleniata*, the present taxon of the saline pans will assume the name *C.c.millardi*, and *ongumaensis* will require to be considered as having been based on migrant *spleniata* from the coast and placed in the synonymy of the said subspecies. White earlier (*loc.cit.*, 1959) had considered the paratypical series of *ongumaensis* to be an inconstant and worn series of *anderssoni*=*cinerea*-like birds.

Paterson, *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. lxxviii, 7, 1958, p. 126, gives wings of 12 ♂♂ as 90 - 97 (93,5), 12 ♀♀ 86 - 90 (88,7mm) (for paratypical *millardi*).



MAP I

Sketch-map of the mosaic of the breeding ranges of the southern African races of the Redcapped Lark

1. *Calandrella cinerea cinerea* (Gmelin)
2. *Calandrella cinerea witputzi* (Macdonald)
3. *Calandrella cinerea niveni* (Macdonald)
4. *Calandrella cinerea vagilans* Clancey
5. *Calandrella cinerea saturator* Reichenow
6. *Calandrella cinerea alluvia* Clancey
7. *Calandrella cinerea spleniata* (Strickland)
8. *Calandrella cinerea ongumaensis* Grant and Mackworth-Praed

The breeding ranges of *C.c.saturator* and *C.c.spleniata* north of 16°S. are not indicated.

ON THE VALIDITY OF *PARUS AFER PARVIROSTRIS* SHELLEY, 1900

In his treatment of the small-billed populations of the species *Parus afer* Gmelin as understood at that time, Sclater, *Syst. Av. Aethiop.*, part ii, 1930, p. 640, admitted two racial groupings of such birds,