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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XXXV

by

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AN UNDESCRIBED RACE OF THE PINKBILLED LARK *CALANDRELLA CONIROSTRIS* (SUNDEVALL) FROM THE TRANSVAAL

Study of the pooled series of the Pinkbilled Lark from south-eastern South Africa in the collections of the Transvaal and Durban Museums shows that three races must be admitted for this region as against the two currently recognised. As a name is required for the undescribed taxon, it may be known as from the date of publication of this communication as

***Calandrella conirostris griseovinacea*, subsp. nov.**

Type: ♂, adult. Rustenburg, western Transvaal, at c.1370 m a.s.l. 30 October, 1970. Collected by E. L. Button. In the collection of the Durban Museum. D.M. Reg. No. 26 154.

Diagnosis: Broadly streaked with black over the upper-parts as in nominate *C. conirostris* (Sundevall), 1850: Vechtkop, north of Heilbron, northern Orange Free State, but differs in having the feather-edging pale greyish vinaceous rather than saturated rusty brown (Vinaceous-Buff (*Ridgway*, 1912, pl. xl), *versus* Sudan Brown (pl. iii)). Below more extensively and purer white over the entire fore-throat, and with the rest of the underside much paler (Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix), as against deep Cinnamon-Buff/Clay Color (same pl.)). Similar in size.

Material examined: 10. *Transvaal*: Pretoria, Hennops River, Rustenburg, and Groot Marico. For material of other races see below.

Two other races occur on sparsely grassed Kalahari Sand plains in western Zambia and probably adjacent Angola, these being *C.c.harti* Benson and *C.c.makawai* Traylor.

THE STATUS OF *PARUS NIGER CARPI* MACDONALD AND HALL, 1957, AND A REGROUPING OF SOME POPULATIONS OF THE *PARUS NIGER* VIEILLOT, *SENS.STRICT.*, COMPLEX

When I studied the variation in *Parus niger* Vieillot, *sens.strict.*, in depth in 1964 (*vide Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. vii, 7, 1964, pp. 167-177), I treated *Parus niger carpi* Macdonald and Hall, 1957: Warmquelle, north-western South-West Africa, as a form of the *Parus leucomelas* Rüppell assemblage, divorcing it from the species *niger* in which it had been described. This view has not been followed in subsequent publications, and Snow, in the continuation of Peters' *Check-list Birds of the World*, vol. xii, 1967, pp. 100, 101, continued to treat *carpi* as a race of *niger*, and followed the view held prior to the appearance of my short note in *Ibis*, vol. c, 3, 1958, pp. 451, 452, that *P.n.niger* was not divisible, on the grounds that he lacked sufficient material to appraise my 1964 revision (footnote to p. 100). In connection with this last point, I may be permitted the comment that the posting of two postcards, one to Bulawayo and the other to Durban, would have furnished him with some five hundred specimens for a "critical review" of my findings, and there is just simply no excuse for northern workers not making use of such readily available material. Even more recently, Winterbottom, *Prelim.Check List Birds South West Africa*, 1971, p. 174, has gone so far as to sink *P.n.carpi* as a synonym of *P.n.niger* Vieillot, 1818: Sundays R., eastern Cape, following an earlier note inserted by him in the *S.A.O.S. Check List Birds of South Africa*, 1969, p. 186, to the effect that *carpi* was a doubtfully valid race.

I have recently re-examined the status of *carpi* on the basis of adequate material from South-West Africa and Angola, and the regions to the east (Okavango R. drainage, eastwards), concluding that *carpi* is a well-marked subspecies, better associated with *leucomelas* than with *niger*, though almost able to stand on its own as an allospecies of a superspecies *leucomelas*, while the *niger* populations lying to the immediate east of *carpi* require marginal regrouping. This regrouping results in a re-allocation of names, with the outcome that *P.n.xanthostomus* and not *P.n.ravidus* lies in juxtaposition to the eastern elements of *P.l.carpi*.

For the loan of material to augment that already available in Durban I am grateful to Mr. A. C. Kemp, Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, Mr. P. J. Buys, State Museum, Windhoek, Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin, National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo, and Dr. A. A. da Rosa Pinto, Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola, Sá da Bandeira. Just under 600 specimens were studied in furtherance of this research.

THE STATUS OF *PARUS NIGER CARPI*

Macdonald and Hall, *Ann. Transv. Mus.*, vol. xxiii, 1, 1957, pp. 32, 33, separated the populations of the Black Tit occurring in the Kaokoveld of South-West Africa from *P.l.insignis* Cabanis, described from Malange, Angola, as *P.n.carpi* on the basis of smaller size. They also compared it with the West African *P.l.guineensis* Shelley from which it differed in not having the sheen so purplish, the outer tail-feathers commonly edged with white (as in *insignis*), and in having the irides dark brown and not pale yellow as in *guineensis*. They gave the wings of ♂♂ as 80–82, ♀♀ 79–81, and tails of ♂♂ 66–70, of ♀♀ 62–70 mm on the basis of seven specimens examined. The range given was the Kaokoveld and possibly southern Angola, south-west to the Waterberg, in South-West Africa.

The material of *carpi* available to me for this research project has been many times greater than that employed by Macdonald and Hall in their pioneer study of 1957, comprising no less than forty-two skins from South-West Africa and twenty-six from Angola, a series of *sixty-eight* specimens in all.

At the outset I may state that Macdonald and Hall's *P.n.carpi* is not a synonym of *P.n.niger*, nor of *P.n.xanthostomus* or *P.n.ravidus*, and its affinity is clearly with *P.leucomelas* and its component forms. Compared with all the *P.niger*, *sens. strict.*, forms it differs in its deeper black and more lustrous contour plumage and in that the sexes are virtually alike, the female differing only in being dark brown as opposed to bluish black over the face and chin. The under tail-coverts lack or exhibit only vestigial white fringing, and the size is significantly smaller in comparison with contiguous populations of *niger* (*P.n.xanthostomus*), the tail being very much shorter: ♂♂ of *carpi* 62–69, of ♀♀ 61,6–68,5, *versus* ♂♂ 72,5–78, ♀♀ 70–77 mm in *P.n.xanthostomus*. Continuing the comparison with *P.n.xanthostomus*, *carpi* is seen to have broader

white fringing and tipping to the secondary-coverts and broader white edging to the remiges, though in this development it is equalled by the eastern populations of *niger* (*P.n.ravidus*), which have a comparable amount of white in the wing.

In the general region South-West Africa — Caprivi Strip — Botswana — southern Angola *carpi* and *P.n.xanthostomus* are completely allopatric forms with no evidence of contact, and appear to be geographically segregated from one another.

On comparison with *P.l.insignis* of the miombo biome of Angola to the north-east of the range of *carpi*, the latter is seen as very much smaller, the wings of ♂♂ 80–85, of ♀♀ 74,5–83, versus 93–97 in ♂♂ of *insignis*, ♀♀ 86–91, and with a shorter bill: 12–12,5, against 14–15 mm in *insignis*. The sheen to the upper- and underparts is rather more violet blue-black (? a trend towards *guineensis*), and in the closed wing the secondary-coverts exhibit more mesial black, so that the median- and secondary-coverts do not appear as an unbroken white panel as in the case of *insignis*. While exhibiting rather less white in the wing, *carpi* shows more extensive white in the tail than *insignis*, having the outer vanes of the outer tail-feathers with a markedly broader white stripe and tip. In so far as the under tail-coverts are concerned, *carpi* is variable, most showing vestigial white fringing to the said coverts, while others are plain blue-black as in *insignis*, or broadly fringed as in *P.niger* and its races. The female of *carpi* further differs in having the face browner than in *insignis* and the chin more hoary, less black, while juvenal examples are likewise less sooty and blackish facially and ventrally.

In the Angolan samples available there is no evidence of intergradation between the taxa *carpi* and *insignis* in the said territory, and a comparable situation appears to obtain in Angola as in northern South-West Africa, in which latter state *carpi* and the representative of *P.niger* (*xanthostomus*) are allopatric and spatially remote. As already stated, the taxon *carpi* belongs to the *leucomelas* assemblage of races, though I believe a good case could be advanced for its erection as a full species in its own right, though such a radical departure from current taxonomic treatment is unlikely to receive support now or in the future from other systematists. I therefore formally recommend that *carpi* be placed as a subspecies of *P.leucomelas* Rüppell, its combination now becoming

***Parus leucomelas carpi*, stat. nov.**