

DURBAN MUSEUM

Novitates



ISSUED BY THE DURBAN MUSEUM, DURBAN 4001, SOUTH AFRICA

VOL. XII, PART 8

ISSUED 1st SEPTEMBER, 1979

THE RACES OF THE NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus* LINNAEUS WINTERING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

by

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum, Durban)

and

J. M. MENDELSON

(Scientific Officer (Vertebrates), Durban Museum)

The European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* Linnaeus, 1758: Sweden, ranges during the breeding season from the British Isles, western continental Europe and the Maghreb, east through the U.S.S.R. and the Middle East to Outer and Inner Mongolia and north-western India, and winters in the Afrotropical Region. Vaurie (1965), in his major text on Palaearctic birds, admits four subspecies, these based on colour and size differences, while Russian specialists such as Stegmann (1949) and Spangenberg (1951 and 1966), recognise five or even six. In so far as the South African Sub-Region is concerned, Roberts (1940) admitted only two: the dark nominate subspecies, and a rather smaller and much lighter form to which he affixed the name *C.e.unwini* Hume, 1871: Agrore Valley and the neighbourhood of Abbottabad, Hazara, Pakistan. In his *Check List*, Vincent (1952) added *C.e.meridionalis* Hartert, 1896: Mt Parnassus, Greece, to the South African list, this followed by the addition of the far eastern *C.e.plumipes* Przhevalski, 1876: north bend of the Yellow R., Inner Mongolia, by Borrett and Jackson (1970); Jackson (1970); and Clancey (1972(b)). Two fairly recent major South African lists: Clancey (1965) and the S.A.O.S. List Committee (1969), recognise nominate *europaeus*, *meridionalis* and *unwini* as reaching the

[Price R1,00 nett]

Sub-Region, with Clancey (1972(a)) later following Borrett and Jackson in also admitting *plumipes*. In this paper we endeavour to justify the recognition of a fifth subspecies as occurring in South Africa as a non-breeding visitor in *C.e.sarudnyi* Hartert, 1912: Tarbagatai, Kazakhstan, U.S.S.R. This last named is accorded recognition by Russian workers, but Vaurie, on the other hand, merges it with the dark coloured nominate race.

C.e.sarudnyi has as its *Type* a specimen collected by Prof. Dr E. Eversmann in the Tarbagatai in 1841. Hartert (1912) in his Palae-arctic work, describes it as being intermediate between nominate *C.europaeus* and *C.e.unwini*. Specimens essentially intermediate between these two colour extremes and between *euroaeus* and *C.e.plumipes* form a major portion of the material currently before us.

Of seventy-three skins critically examined, 31 (12 ♂♂, 19 ♀♀) belong to *C.e.sarudnyi*, 19 to nominate *C.europaeus*, 11 to *C.e.plumipes*, 7 to *C.e.meridionalis* and 5 to the grey *C.e.unwini*. The majority of the specimens examined by us came from south-eastern Africa (from the south-eastern Cape, north to the Transvaal), and within this region, *sarudnyi* appears to be evenly distributed during its sojourn in the south of the Afrotropical Region. For the benefit of those who subscribe to the view that the subspecies *C.e.sarudnyi* is an unstable entity, we would caution that on its wintering grounds the taxon concerned is not inordinately variable, and a short series of 4 taken at Uitenhage in January, 1898, and now in the collection of the Albany Museum, struck us as being particularly uniform in both dorsal colour and pattern facies. Twenty-one specimens determined as *sarudnyi*, for which there are adequate data, are as follows:

Cape

Uitenhage	(AM 735 ♂, 729 ♂, 782 ♀, 731 ♀)
Port Elizabeth	(DM 28185 ♀)
Grahamstown	(TM 7788 ♂)

Natal and East Griqualand

Matatiele	(TM 7792 ♂, TM 9844 ♀)
Durban	(DM 14515 ♀, DM 25950 ♀, DM 18644 ♀)
Pietermaritzburg	(TM 40437 ♂)

Lesotho

Maseru	(TM 9342 ♀)
--------	-------------

Transvaal

Pretoria	(TM 9844 ♀, TM 2865 ♂)
----------	------------------------

Hectorspruit	(TM 7789 ♂, TM 9346 ♀)
Grootvlei Station	(TM 14338 ♂)
Mokeetsi	(TM 18178 ♀)
Blouberg	(TM 29264 ♂)

Tanzania

Lukimwa R., Songea (DM 14518 ♀)
District

TM=Transvaal Museum, Pretoria

DM=Durban Museum, Durban

AM=Albany Museum, Grahamstown

C.e.sarudnyi breeds from the lower reaches of the Don and the northern and eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, east through the desertic regions of Kazakhstan and the Tarbagatai and Altai to the central Gobi Desert in Mongolia. *C.e.dementievi* Stegmann, 1949: Orok Nor (Örög Nuur), Mongolia, treated as a synonym of *C.e.plumipes* by Vaurie, *op. cit.*, is probably based on intergrades towards *C.e.sarudnyi*.

The diagnostic characters of the five subspecies of the Nightjar as determined on the basis of material taken on the southern African wintering grounds are as detailed hereunder:

C.e.europaicus: Dorsal ground Hair Brown (Ridgway (1912), pl. xlvii), pale lateral panels to scapulars Cinnamon-Buff (pl. xxix). Breast granulated Drab (pl. xlvii); rest of venter deep Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix), transversely barred with dusky. ♂♂ wings mean=198,0, SD= 5,3, n=5; ♀♀ mean=195,5, SD=4,4, n=8.

C.e.meridionalis: *Cf. europaicus* the dorsal ground is more uniform leaden grey (Mouse Grey, pl. li), the dark shaft-streaks narrower; lateral panels to scapulars paler and more vinaceous (Pinkish Buff). Below, barred surface with pale interstices lighter buff. The wings and tail are also greyer. ♂♂ 183, 194; ♀♀ mean 190,2, SD=3,8 mm, n=4.

C.e.sarudnyi: *Cf. meridionalis* the dorsal surface is warmer and more buffy, less cold grey (about Drab, or warmer). Below, with the breast warmer, less grey, and exhibiting rather more white over the lateral lower throat. The wings and tail are likewise less cold greyish. ♂♂ mean=191,3, SD=5,1, n=9; ♀♀ mean=189,8, SD=5,5 mm, n=11.

C.e.plumipes: *Cf. sarudnyi* paler, more sandy, overall. Ground colour of dorsum dilute Tawny-Olive (pl. xxix) with relatively

expansive sub-apical areas to the scapulars and tertials even paler; sides of crown much paler. Below, dark breast-band faint, and surface more extensively covered with pale vinaceous fan-shaped spots; rest of venter paler Pinkish Buff, with the barring fading out over the flanks. ♂♂ 196, 200; ♀♀ mean=183,2, SD=3,5 mm, n=6.

C.e.unwini: Cf. *plumipes* similar, but with dorsal surface much more chalky grey, less sandy or vinaceous-buff (colour about Drab-Gray (pl. xlvi)); pale scapular panels Pale Pinkish Buff (pl. xxix). Ventrally equally pallid but much less sandy or vinaceous. Wings ♀♀ mean=184,6, SD=4,2 mm, n=5.

We are grateful to the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (Dr A. C. Kemp), and Albany Museum, Grahamstown (Mr P. H. Skelton), for the loan of specimens.

REFERENCES

- BORRETT, R. P. and JACKSON, H. D. 1970. *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. xc, 1, pp. 25, 26.
 CLANCEY, P. A. 1965. *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. vii, 10, p. 343.
 CLANCEY, P. A. 1972(a). *Durban Mus.Novit.*, vol. ix, 12, p. 170.
 CLANCEY, P. A. 1972(b). *Ostrich*, vol. xliii, 1, p. 63.
 HARTERT, E. J. O. 1912. *Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna*, vol. ii, pp. 846 - 850.
 JACKSON, H. D. 1970. *Bull.Brit.Orn.Club*, vol. xc, 5, p. 135.
 RIDGWAY, R. 1912. *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*.
 ROBERTS, A. 1940. *Birds of South Africa*, p. 151.
 SOUTH AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY. 1969. *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, pp. 121, 122.
 SPANGENBERG, E. P. 1951. *Plitsy Sovetskogo Soiuza*, vol. i, (not seen).
 SPANGENBERG, E. P. 1966. *Birds of the Soviet Union*, vol. i, pp. 518 - 527. English translation.
 STEGMANN, B. 1949. *Okhrana prirody*, No. 6 (not seen).
 VAURIE, C. 1965. *Birds of the Palearctic Fauna*, vol. ii, (Non Passeriformes), pp. 639 - 642.
 VINCENT, J. 1952. *Check List of the Birds of South Africa*, pp. 46, 47.