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MISCELLANEOUS TAXONOMIC NOTES ON AFRICAN BIRDS XIX

by

P. A. CLANCEY

(Director, Durban Museum, Durban)

The following seven notes result in the main from recent revisionary studies of southern and eastern African bird species carried out in the Durban Museum, utilizing the pooled specimen resources of several museums. For the loan of comparative material I am very grateful to the following institutions and officials: South African Museum, Cape Town (Dr. J. M. Winterbottom); East London Museum (Miss M. Courtenay-Latimer); Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg (Dr. J. A. Pringle); Transvaal Museum (Dr. V. Fitz-Simons and Mr. O. P. M. Prozesky); National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo (Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin); Coryndon Museum, Nairobi (Mr. John G. Williams).

In the ensuing notes I have used the colour nomenclature of Ridgway, *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, 1912 (Washington). The relevant plate numbers in this standard work are given immediately following the first mention of a colour by name.

1. TWO NEW GEOGRAPHICAL RACES OF THE YELLOW-BILL *CEUTHMOCHARES AEREUS* (VIEILLOT)

The races of the Yellowbill *Ceuthmochares aereus* (Vieillot), whose close familial relatives are found in the Oriental Region (Sub-family Phoenicophainae), resident in East Africa are generally stated to be *C.a.aereus* (Vieillot), 1817: Malimbe, Portuguese Congo, or

6. VARIATION IN *LAGONOSTICTA NITIDULA* HARTLAUB

Chapin, *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part iv, 1954, p. 532, writes "There is some geographical variation in (*Lagonosticta nitidula*, for birds from the vicinity of Lake Tanganyika and Kasongo have smaller white spots on the chest and slightly darker underparts than those of Angola and Northern Rhodesia. I do not know where a line may be drawn between them, and the name *harterti* cannot be applied to a western race, since Shelley proposed it merely as a substitute for *Lagonosticta nitidula* Hartlaub when he transferred this species to the genus '*Hypargus*'. *L.nitidula* Hartlaub was described on material from Mpala (Pala), on the western shores of Lake Tanganyika in the eastern Congo, and the Northern Rhodesian material available to Chapin was collected at Balovale, Mwinilunga and Ndola, and was all taken by C. M. N. White, of Lusaka.

Through the kindness of Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin, Ornithologist of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, I have been able to study in great detail the series of *L.nitidula* preserved in the collection under his control. This series is mainly from Northern Rhodesia, but also includes specimens from north-western Southern Rhodesia and Ngamiland, and study of it reveals that the populations of this small finch from Ngamiland, southern Barotse-land, Northern Bechuanaland and north-western Southern Rhodesia on the Zambesi River valley are indeed different from the populations of north-eastern Northern Rhodesia (Chiengi, Kawambwa and Mporokoso), which I presume to be the same as Lake Tanganyika specimens of *L.nitidula*. I have seen no specimens from Ndola, but those from Mwinilunga and Kabompo Boma seem to be the same as those from Chiengi, Kawambwa and Mporokoso, but Balovale specimens incline to be clearer, bluer grey below, and it was this variation which was apparently noted by Chapin. Well south of Balovale, in southern Barotseland (series from Shangombo), the Caprivi Strip, Ngamiland, northern Bechuanaland and north-western Southern Rhodesia and presumably southern Angola, the characters shown by the Balovale birds become sufficiently crystallized and prominent as to warrant the splitting of *L.nitidula* into two races.

***Lagonosticta nitidula plumbaria*, subsp.nov.**

Type: ♂, adult. Sepopa, Ngamiland, north-western Bechuanaland Protectorate. Collected by R. Liversidge and party. 28 January, 1960. In the collection of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo. N.M. Reg. No. 48501.

Diagnosis: On upper-parts rather colder and greyer brown over the mantle and rump, less olive-brown than *L.n.nitidula*, and head-top and nape clearer grey. On the under-parts with the pink of the throat and mid breast rather lighter (about Corinthian Red (pl. xxvii), against Hydrangea Red (same pl.)), and with the lower breast markedly lighter and clearer, more leaden blue-grey or lavender, less brownish or buffy tinged than in *L.n.nitidula* (lower mid breast about Light Mouse Gray (same pl.)); flanks paler and greyer, not so olive-brown tinged, and abdomen, crissum and under tail-coverts white, not buffy as in *L.n.nitidula*. Similar in size.

Material examined: *L.n.nitidula*, 32; *L.n.plumbaria*, 15.

Range: Northern South-West Africa on the Okavango R. and the Caprivi Strip, adjacent southern Angola, Ngamiland and northern Bechuanaland, southern Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, and north-western Southern Rhodesia on the Zambesi R. Intergrades to the north of its range with the nominate race, as shown by series from Balovale and the Kafue R.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 51, culmen (exposed) 9, tarsus 15, tail 40 mm.

Remarks: With the recognition of a southern dry country race of *L.nitidula* (*L.n.plumbaria*), the range of the nominate race requires to be defined: *L.n.nitidula* extends from the lower Cuanza R. and northern and central Angola, eastwards to the Katanga, southern Congo, Northern Rhodesia, except for southern Barotseland and adjacent areas on the Zambesi R. to the eastward, but apparently absent south-east of the Luangwa R. valley. The eastern limits of the range are currently fixed on the south-western and southern shores of Lake Tanganyika, but the species almost certainly extends into south-western Tanganyika. The wings of 10 ♂♂ of *L.n.nitidula* measure 51-53, tails 40-44 mm. *L.n.plumbaria* is similar in size.

Mr. Melvin A. Traylor, Associate Curator of Birds, Chicago Natural History Museum, U.S.A., has kindly informed me *in litt.* that he found this finch common at Sepopa, the type-locality of the new form, and that material collected by him shows clearly the diagnostic characters of the race.

The name given to this new form is from the Latin *plumbarius*, pertaining to lead, in allusion to the clear leaden blue-grey colouration of breast.