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Some of the most fascinating recordings were made on the Continent of such species as the White-spotted Bluethroat (another mimic), the Ortolan, the Sprosser and a delightful Icterine Warbler that punctuated its song with cries of "ludwig . . . ludwig . . . ludwig."

The talk ended with the cries of various sea-birds made on the coasts of Britain. Cormorants and Shags must surely be among the most primitive of birds, if their coarse cries are any criterion, and at the finish we could almost feel the Manx Shearwaters and Stormy Petrels as they even settled on the recording apparatus during their amazing midnight flights.

Variation in the Karroo Robin, *Erythropygia coryphaeus*.

By Mr. J. D. MACDONALD.

It is not unusual in bird taxonomy to come across examples of dimorphic sexes, and seasonal and developmental changes in plumages, being first identified as different species. These almost inevitable errors, which have gradually been eliminated as data accumulated, are part of the interesting history of many birds. But it is unusual to come across the reverse, or nearly the reverse, namely differences originally regarded as sexual dimorphism turning out to be geographical variations of the same species. In my opinion this has happened in the case of the Karroo Robin, *Erythropygia coryphaeus*, of South Africa.

The name *Sylvia coryphaeus* was given by Lesson to Levaillant's "Le Coryphée," plate 20, figure 1. This figure is said by Levaillant to represent a male, and figure 2, which has a distinctive colour difference, is said to represent the female. It is now known that there are no obvious colour differences between the sexes of this species. In the text the "male" is described first and is stated to have russet-brown under-parts. The "female" is said to be like the "male" except for the grey-blue under-parts. Greyish rather than brownish under-parts, and also to some extent greyer upper-parts, I find to be characteristic of specimens from western coastal districts, from the Cape north to the mouth of the Orange River. Greying of the plumage in this region in species which are more reddish-brown in other parts of Cape Province has already been shown to occur in a number of cryptic species, such as the Long-bill and Karroo Larks (*Certhilauda curvirostris* (Hermann) and *C. albescens* (Lapesuaye)). What would appear to be important factors influencing the occurrence of this colour variation are the lighter coloured sands and cold fogs which are features of this coast line.

The recognition of polytypic variation in this species in Cape Province gives rise to the questions, which is the nominate race and where is its type locality? It seems clear that Levaillant's "male" or dark brown bird must represent the nominate race. He states that he found the species in mimosa woods along the Sondag (or Zontag—now Sundays) and Zwarte-kop rivers. These rivers are near Port Elizabeth, the Sundays River flowing into Algoa Bay. He must have found it elsewhere in his travels but these are the localities mentioned. Fortunately there

are in the British Museum specimens collected by Rickard at Port Elizabeth and they are quite clearly a close match with Levaillant's darker figure. According to the route shown on his map (1796) Levaillant reached the Sundays River at about the present Uitenhage, and I propose that this place should be regarded as the restricted type locality of the species. The British Museum specimens from Port Elizabeth are therefore practically topotypical. The general colours of these birds are sepia on the back and rump with a slight greyish tint on the head and nape; and wood-brown on breast and belly. These colours remain fairly constant east to the Kei River, north through Deelfontein and Bloomfontein to the Molopo River and then east to Seeheim and Kleinkaras in Great Namaqualand. There is a slight indication that birds in coastal districts, from Port Elizabeth and the Kei River, are a shade richer in colour, but a specimen from Berseba in South West Africa is practically indistinguishable from specimens from Deelfontein and Bloomfontein. This tendency to lose a little of the rich colours towards the north and west becomes established as a clearly recognisable geographical variation in the Cape Flats and Little Namaqualand. There is an appreciable greying of the plumage, both above and below: the upper-parts are mainly dark brownish drab and the under-parts about hair-brown. In the series of specimens I have examined this greying reaches its maximum development around Port Nolloth. Several specimens from the coastal flats in the vicinity of that locality have only a very slight wash of brown on otherwise grey under-parts and the upper-parts are correspondingly greyer also, the head and nape being dark grey with very little brown colour. In my opinion it is only worth while at this stage to recognise a widely distributed dark brown race and an appreciably greyer race in western coastal districts. Friedmann (1932 : 65) described a race, *E. c. abbotti*, from Berseba in Great Namaqualand. The only distinguishing characteristic he gave for it is the smaller amount of terminal white, less than half, on the outer tail feathers. In the specimens I have examined there is no group which can be distinguished in this way. Some specimens from the Cape Flats have less white and others more than birds from Great Namaqualand. I propose therefore to regard *E. c. abbotti* as synonymous with the nominate race. No name is available for the greyish race and it is described as follows:—

ERYTHROPYGIA CORYPHEUS CINEREUS, new race.

Description.—Plumage much greyer than the nominate race; upper-parts mainly drab brown, but greyer on head and nape; under-parts mainly hair-brown to ashy-brown.

Distribution.—Western coastal districts of Cape Province from Cape Flats to Little Namaqualand and lower Orange River.

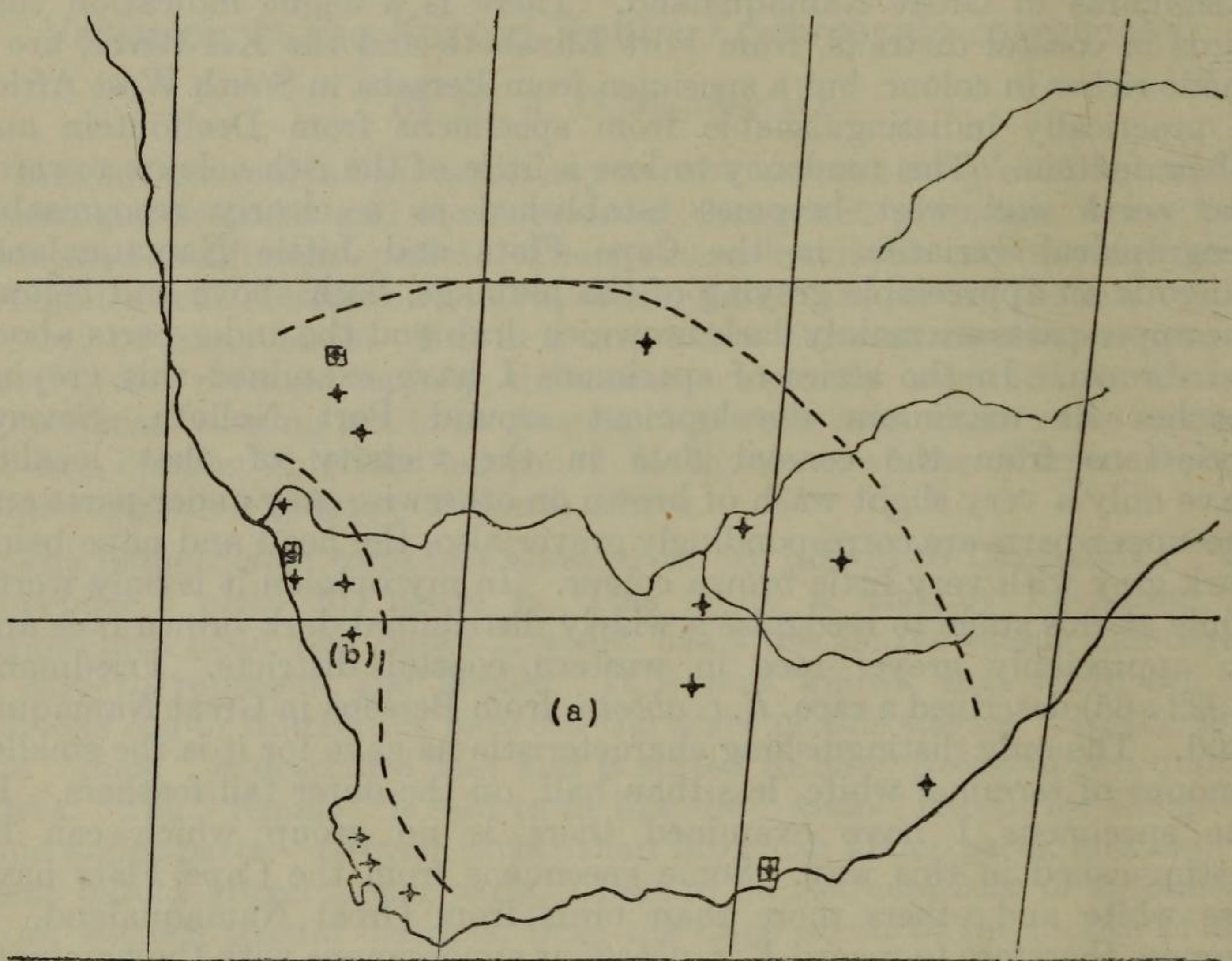
Type.—An adult female nearing completion of post-breeding moult, from 16 miles north of Port Nolloth, Little Namaqualand. Collected by the British Museum South West Africa Expedition on 19th December, 1949. Brit.Mus.Reg. No. 1950 : 50 : 355. Measurements of type : Wing 70, tail 68, bill 16 mm.

Remarks.—The distribution of this species is indicated on the accompanying map. The racial nomenclature may be summarised as follows :—

- (1) *Erythropygia coryphaeus coryphaeus* (Lesson).

Sylvia coryphaeus Lesson, Traite d'Orn. 1831 (419) : ex Levaillant, Ois d'Afr. pl. 120, fig. 1 : Uitenhage, C.P.
Erythropygia coryphaea abbotti Friedmann, Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, 45, 1932 (65) : near Berseba, S.W.A.

- (2) *Erythropygia coryphaeus cinereus* Macdonald, (herewith).



Races and distribution of *Erythropygia coryphaeus* in South Africa.

(a) *E.c. coryphaeus* ; (b) *E.c. cinereus*. Type localities shown in square dots.

Distribution of the Noisy Robin.

By Mr. J. D. MACDONALD.

It is frequently stated in literature, for example recently by Sclater in the "Systema Avium Æthiopicarum" part 2, 1930, and by Hoesch and Niethammer in "Die Vogelwelt Deutsch-Sudwestafrikas," 1940, that the Noisy Robin, *Cossypha dichroa* (Gmelin) occurs in South West Africa,