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## Subspeciation in the Larklike Bunting of the southwestern Afrotropics

by P. A. Clancey

Received 4 November 1988

The present species of bunting was introduced to science as *Emberiza impetuani* by Dr Andrew Smith in the report on the results of the expedition led by him for the exploring of central Africa from the Cape of Good Hope in 1836 on material collected in 1834 in the country to the north of Kuruman in the northeastern northern Cape. The species is virtually confined to the relatively harsh South West Arid Zone with peripheral, local and largely seasonal extensions in mesic but ecologically suitable country to the east of the main range. The Larklike Bunting affects relatively arid, often stony terrain with sparse grass, low scrub and



few trees as cover, and appears to be no more than locally nomadic when not breeding. Many populations are, however, on occasion subject to major eastward movements in years when drought and protracted winter cold occur over the steppe-like plateau regions normally affected by it (see Irwin 1981).

Macdonald (1957) showed on the basis of the small series in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) (BMNH) that the species is subject to quite marked variation, but that the conclusion reached by earlier workers that the demonstrable variation is a seasonal manifestation was incorrect. He concluded that it is in fact a geographical correlate, and arranged the populations present in the Karoo system to the south of the Orange R. in a new subspecies: *E. i. sloggetti* (Macdonald) 1957: Deelfontein, southwest of De Aar, Cape, based on 14 specimens taken by Seimund in the early 1900s, in so doing confining the nominate form to north of the Orange R. At the same time he restricted the type-locality of nominate *E. i. impetuani*—given as “the country between the Nu Gariep and Tropic” by Smith (1836)—to eastern Botswana, which was in some respects an unfortunate choice, as Smith’s party scarcely penetrated the country now included in Botswana, and the original material of the present species almost certainly came from northeast of Kuruman in the northern Cape and the western Transvaal.

Macdonald separated *sloggetti* from *E. i. impetuani* on paler colouration, narrower dorsal streaking and smaller size, a conclusion reached through comparing the Deelfontein sample with one of some 15 skins collected in South West Africa/Namibia by personnel of the BMNH expedition of 1950. A recent re-assessment of the variation in this dull coloured bunting revealed that *sloggetti* is distinguishable from nominate *impetuani*, as determined on an adequate series of the latter from the Kuruman district, on the basis of paler and greyer dorsal surfaces. The other characters in the differential diagnosis are invalid, having been arrived at by comparing the Deelfontein sample with South West African rather than northeastern Cape, western Transvaal and eastern Botswana material, from which general area the species was described. *E. i. sloggetti* is larger than *impetuani* and is similarly streaked above. The South West African sample with which it was initially compared is now seen as having been drawn from an undescribed subspecies distributed to the west from the northwestern Cape, north through South West Africa to reach southwestern Angola. This form is similar in size to *sloggetti*, generally redder in coloration and has the dorsal streaking heavier than in either *sloggetti* or nominate *impetuani*. It is formally described below.

One’s interpretation of the variation in the present species is conditioned by a range of factors such as local post-breeding nomadism and major occasional, but short term, climatic-based eruptions of many populations from their breeding grounds. Others are the obscuring of sub-specifically important features through rapid colour fading and feather wear to which this semi-desertic species is highly prone; and the finding that first-year birds carrying juvenile plumage remiges are shorter winged than adults of the same population. Yet another factor is that in one race (the nominate), the sexes are closely alike, whereas in the other populations males are generally larger than females (see Table 1).



TABLE 1

The wing-length (mm) parameter in adults of the Larklike Bunting *Emberiza impetuani* of the South West Arid Zone of the Afrotropics, showing the close agreement between the sexes in the nominate race of the Kalahari system, and the larger size of males of the other 2 subspecies affecting karoooid country.

Localities	Sex	n	Range	$\bar{X}$	SD
N. Cape (Kuruman dist.) and S.W. Zimbabwe	<i>E. i. impetuani</i>				
	♂♂	8	73–75	73.9	0.86
	♀♀	12	70–75	73.2	1.37
		$\bar{X}$ of 20 ♂♀ 73.5, SD 1.22			
Cape S. of Orange R., Griqualand West and Orange Free State	<i>E. i. sloggetti</i>				
	♂♂	10	77–80.5	78.5	1.20
	♀♀	5	75–77.5	75.7	1.09
		$\bar{X}$ of 15 ♂♀ 77.5, SD 1.77			
Damaraland and Kaokoland, South West Africa	<i>E. i. eremica</i>				
	♂♂	19	75–80	77.3	1.54
	♀♀	15	72–78	75.3	1.44
		$\bar{X}$ of 34 ♂♀ 76.4, SD 1.81			

While subspecies are recognized in McLachlan & Liversidge (1970) and in the *SAOS Checklist* (Clancey 1980), Paynter, in the continuation of Peters' *Check-list* (vol. XIII, 1970), treats the species as monotypic. The research reported here is based on a larger body of material than was available to Macdonald, and confirms the desirability of recognizing 3 subspecies, defined as follows:

(a) *Emberiza impetuani impetuani* Smith

*Emberiza impetuani* A. Smith, *Rept. Exped. Expl. Centr. Afr.*, 1836, p. 48: "country between the Nu Gariep and Tropic", restricted to eastern Botswana by Macdonald, *Contr. Orn. West. S. Africa*, 1957, p. 169.

Dorsum vinaceous Tawny-Olive (Ridgway 1912), with narrow fuscous shaft-streaking. On underside with breast deep Pinkish Buff; sides buffish, and light mid-ventral surface relatively restricted. Size small, and sexes virtually alike in wing-length.

*Measurements.* Means of wings of ♂♂ 73.9 and of ♀♀ 73.2 mm (Table 1).

*Range.* Breeds from Gordonia and the northern Cape to the north of Griqualand West, western, southern and eastern Botswana, adjacent South West Africa/Namibia, the western Transvaal, and locally in the Limpopo R. drainage of southern Zimbabwe, east to the lower Bulye R. In west of range apparently extends southwest to Bushmanland (at Pofadder). Subject to local post-breeding nomadism and occasional eastward eruptive movements (as outlined above), these latter taking elements to north of the Zambezi in south-central Africa. Centred on the Kalahari system of the arid interior of the Southern African Subregion.

*Remarks.* Two moderately worn specimens taken at Orupembe, Kaokoland, northwestern South West Africa, on 20 May 1963, by P. J. Buys and in the State Museum, Windhoek, are of the nominate race. This



locality lies well west of the breeding range. Carp Expedition material from the same locality, but taken in a different year, are *E. i. eremica* (Transvaal Museum collection).

(b) *Emberiza impetuani sloggetti* (Macdonald)

*F. (ringilla)* (sic) *i. (mpetuani) sloggetti* Macdonald, *Contr. Orn. West. S. Africa*, 1957, p. 170: Deelfontein, southwest of De Aar, Cape.

Compared with nominate *impetuani* greyer above (feather edging near Wood Brown), and shaft-streaking tending to be heavier. Below with breast ranging lighter, and white mid-venter more extensive with flanks paler. When fresh, with white edges to tertials and adjacent wing-coverts. Size larger, and sexes largely disparate in wing-length, with male longer winged than female. Juvenile also paler.

*Measurements.* Means of wings of ♂♂ 78.5 and of ♀♀ 75.7 mm (Table 1).

*Range.* Karooid regions of the interior of the southwestern and western Cape, east through the interior to the Fish R. drainage, Griqualand West in northern Cape, western Orange Free State and adjacent southern Transvaal. Less vagile than in case of the nominate subspecies.

*Remarks.* The type-specimen of *sloggetti* is a January 1901 bird taken by Seimund for Col. A. T. Sloggett, OC of a British military medical facility established at Deelfontein, in the BMNH. A specimen collected in January would be in faded and worn condition. Macdonald's mistaken use of the genus *Fringilla* in describing *sloggetti* was due to an oversight, as he clearly intended to employ *Fringillaria*, a Swainson genus of 1837. The type-species of *Fringillaria* is *Emberiza capensis* Linnaeus, 1766.

(c) *Emberiza impetuani eremica*, subsp., nov.

*Type.* ♂, adult. Klipkop farm, 18 miles south of Otjiwarongo, northern South West Africa/Namibia. 25 May 1959. Collected by Durban Museum personnel. In the collection of the Durban Natural History Museum, DM Reg. No. 9477.

*Description.* Compared with *sloggetti* redder or more vinaceous above (feather edging Sayal Brown), with heavier and blacker shaft-streaking. Ventrally, with yellower throat when fresh; breast darker (near Clay Color), and lateral surfaces and flanks deeper coloured with the pale mid-venter constricted (as in nominate *impetuani*). In wings, tertials and other remiges redder. Size about the same as *sloggetti*, and sexes again disparate in wing-length.

*Measurements.* Means of wings of ♂♂ 77.3 and of ♀♀ 75.3 mm (Table 1).

*Material examined.* 114 specimens (*main localities*: Rosh Pina, Kochena, NE of Grunau at c. 27°00'S, 18°50'E (38 specimens), Bethanie, Keetmanshoop, Mt Brukaros, Gorob Mine (23°34'S, 15°24'E on Kuiseb R. in Namib), Windhoek, Okahandja, Usakos, Otjiwarongo, Sanitatas, Ohopoho, Orupembe, 50 miles E of Torra Bay and Brandberg).

*Range.* Northwestern Cape on the Orange R. and in rubble desert and karoid country of South West Africa/Namibia from Great Namaqualand, north to Damaraland and Kaokoland, and in southwestern Angola. Penetrates the interior edge of the Namib. Movement pattern, if any, uncertain.



*Measurements of the type-specimen* (mm): wing (flattened) 77.25, culmen from base 13, tarsus 18.5, tail 57. Contour plumage moult virtually complete.

*Remarks.* The breeding season of *E. i. eremica* is later than that of *sloggetti*, being more influenced by uncertain rainfall, and many birds of the topotypical population and of Kaokoland examined were still in bleached and worn dress or in the early stages of moult in mid-June. An unsexed specimen taken on the Maxohue R., in the Matopos Hills of southwestern Mazohwe Zimbabwe, during a major influx of migrants in late July 1964, with a wing 78.5 mm, and in the collection of the Durban Natural History Museum, would seem attributable to *eremica*.

#### Acknowledgements

For access to collections and research facilities, during which 189 skins were examined, I am grateful to Dr J. M. Mendelsohn, State Museum, Windhoek, and to Dr Aldo Berruti, Durban Natural History Museum. Dr A. C. Kemp, Ornithologist of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, kindly lent all their South West African material. To those named I tender my thanks.

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## The southern isolate of *Parus rufiventris pallidiventris* Reichenow, 1885

by P. A. Clancey

Received 4 November 1988

The Rufous-bellied Tit *Parus rufiventris* Bocage, 1877, of south-central Africa, and an endemic of *Brachystegia* (Miombo) woodland savanna, is broadly divisible into 2 major population complexes on the basis of ventral plumage and iris colouration. The western group consists of 3 subspecies with the lower venter Cinnamon (Ridgway 1912) and the eye colour pale yellow. A fourth, the eastern subspecies, in contrast has the underside a dilute greyish vinaceous and the eyes dark brown. This latter



1989. "Subspeciation in the larklike bunting of the southern Afrotropics."  
*Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 109, 130–134.

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