

Three new Races of South African Birds

By

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(With 1 Plate)

1. A new race of *Turdus libonyanus* (Smith) from central Natal.

Comparison between freshly moulted specimens of the Kurrichaine Thrush from Natal and topotypical specimens of the nominate race of the western Transvaal kindly sent on loan for the purpose by the Director of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, has revealed that the Natal population — on the southern extremity of the species' wide continental range — is sufficiently distinct as to warrant separation. As no name seems to be available for the distinctive subspecies of Natal, I propose to designate it

Turdus libonyanus peripheris, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ adult. Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa. 15 June, 1951. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

Diagnosis: Closely similar to *Turdus libonyanus libonyanus* (Smith), 1836, near Kurrichaine, north-western Transvaal, but immediately separable in fresh autumn plumage by the darker, more olive-brown colouration of the breast and the darker orange-buff flanks. The flank colouration in the new race is generally more extensively distributed with a corresponding reduction in the amount of white on the abdomen. On upper-parts slightly darker, less greyish than *T. l. libonyanus*. Wings and tail darker.

Measurements of the Type: wing (flattened) 119, culmen from base 23.5, tarsus 31, tail 97.5 mm.

Distribution: Confined to the central districts of Natal, where it is a resident in small numbers. Specimens in our collection are from the following localities: - Pietermaritzburg; Umvoti, Greytown; Estcourt.

Description of the Type: Whole of upper surface greyish olive, feathers of crown with slightly darker centres; ear-coverts greyish olive streaked whitish; malar stripes and sides of neck dull white boldly striated with dark brown; throat dull white with slight buffy tinge brown, upper portion with a few dark brown spots; breast dull buffish olive, feather tips slightly paler; sides of lower breast and flanks orange-buff; centre of abdomen and under tail-coverts dull white; axillaries and under wing-coverts orange-buff; wings greyish olive, outer webs of primaries paler; tail greyish olive, outer webs of rectrices somewhat paler. Iris, dark brown; bill, orange; legs and toes, yellowish flesh.

Remarks: I can find no record in the literature of this thrush being recorded from the central districts of Natal. It is not mentioned as occurring in Natal by Stark and Sclater, 'Birds of South Africa', vol. II, 1901, p. 178, nor by Sclater in his 'Systema Avium Aethiopicarum', II, 1930, p. 438, but Roberts, 'Birds of South Africa', 1940, p. 231, includes Natal in the short list of localities for the nominate race. Which part of Natal is intended is not clear, but it should be here noted that the nominate form does occur as a winter visitor to northern Natal judging by a specimen collected by myself on the banks of the Bushman's River, near Estcourt, on 11 June, 1951. That the new race is a resident breeding form is confirmed by the collecting of a breeding pair near Pietermaritzburg on 29 December, 1950, and a single juvenile just out of the nest in the same locality on 23 December, 1950.

Material examined in the course of this study is as follows: *T. l. peripheris*, fresh autumn plumage 6, breeding 3, juv. 1; *T. l. libonyanus*, 8 (4 topotypical); *T. l. tropicalis* Peters 3. N.B. It should be noted by workers studying this species that wear and the action of strong light occasion a lightening of the breast and flank colouration, which makes identification of the races on specimens taken in the breeding season alone a task of some difficulty.

2. A new race of *Anthus lineiventris* Sundevall from central Natal.

Specimens of *Anthus lineiventris* Sundevall collected in central Natal in the Umgeni River valley, near Pietermaritzburg, were found on comparison to differ appreciably from topotypical material kindly sent to me on loan by the Director of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria. The central Natal population seems worthy of elevation to racial status, and as it is without a name I propose to designate it

Anthus lineiventris stygium, subsp. nov.

Type: ♀ adult. Umgeni River Valley, near Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa. 24 June, 1951. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

Diagnosis: Distinguishable from *Anthus lineiventris lineiventris* Sundevall, 1850: Mohapoani, Bechuanaland, by the darker colouration of the upper-parts, and in having the ground colour of the ventral surfaces whiter, much less suffused with buff; pectoral and flank striae darker; wings and tail darker.

Measurements of the Type: wing (flattened) 87, culmen from base 20, tarsus 28.5, tail 68 mm.

Distribution: Apparently confined to Natal. N. E. Zululand and Swaziland birds appear to be intermediate between *A. l. lineiventris* and *A. l. stygium*.

Description of the Type: Whole of upper surface dark buffish olive, feather centres dark brownish forming striations; superciliary stripes dull white; lores and post-ocular regions dark brownish; ear-coverts dull white streaked brown; whole of ventral surface dull white suffused with pale stone buff on breast and flanks; breast and flanks boldly striated with dark olivaceous brown; axillaries pale lemon yellow; under wing-coverts dull yellowish white, feather centres dark slate; wings dark olivaceous brown, feathers with yellowish olive fringes to outer webs; tail dark brown; three outermost pairs of rectrices with white wedge-shaped markings on inner webs, the markings largest in first pair; first pair of rectrices with much dull white on outer webs; all other rectrices with outer webs narrowly fringed olivaceous brown. Iris, dark brown; bill, blackish horn, base pale flesh pink; legs and toes, pale flesh colour.

Remarks: The population of Natal here described as a new race is the most southerly in the distribution of this mainly tropical species.

Material examined in this study is as follows: *A. l. stygium* (fresh autumn plumage) 3; *A. l. lineiventris* \leq *A. l. stygium* 2; *A. l. lineiventris* (topotypical) 6.

3. A new race of *Poliospiza gularis* (Smith) from central Natal.

Sclater, 'Systema Avium Aethiopicarum', 1930, p. 819, gives the range of the nominate race of the Streaky-headed Seedeater *Poliospiza gularis* (Smith), 1836: Latakoo, as 'Great Namaqualand and Bechuanaland to Southern Rhodesia, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State Province, 'and the range of the southern race, *Poliospiza gularis humilis* (Bonaparte), 1850: Africa, ex Lichtenstein, Mus. Berol., as 'Cape Province along its southern borders, east to Natal'.

Roberts in his more recent 'Birds of South Africa', 1940, p. 370, simply states that two races, namely *P. g. gularis* and *P. g. humilis*, occur within South African limits, the latter race restricted to the south. Recently, I have examined material from the midlands of Natal taken at elevations of 2500' — 3000' a. s. l., which does not appear attributable to either of the two races recognised by workers from the South African subcontinent, and I propose to characterise this distinctive population as a new race under the name

Poliospiza gularis endemion, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ adult. Town Bush, near Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa. Altitude 3000' a. s. l. 7 April, 1951. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg.

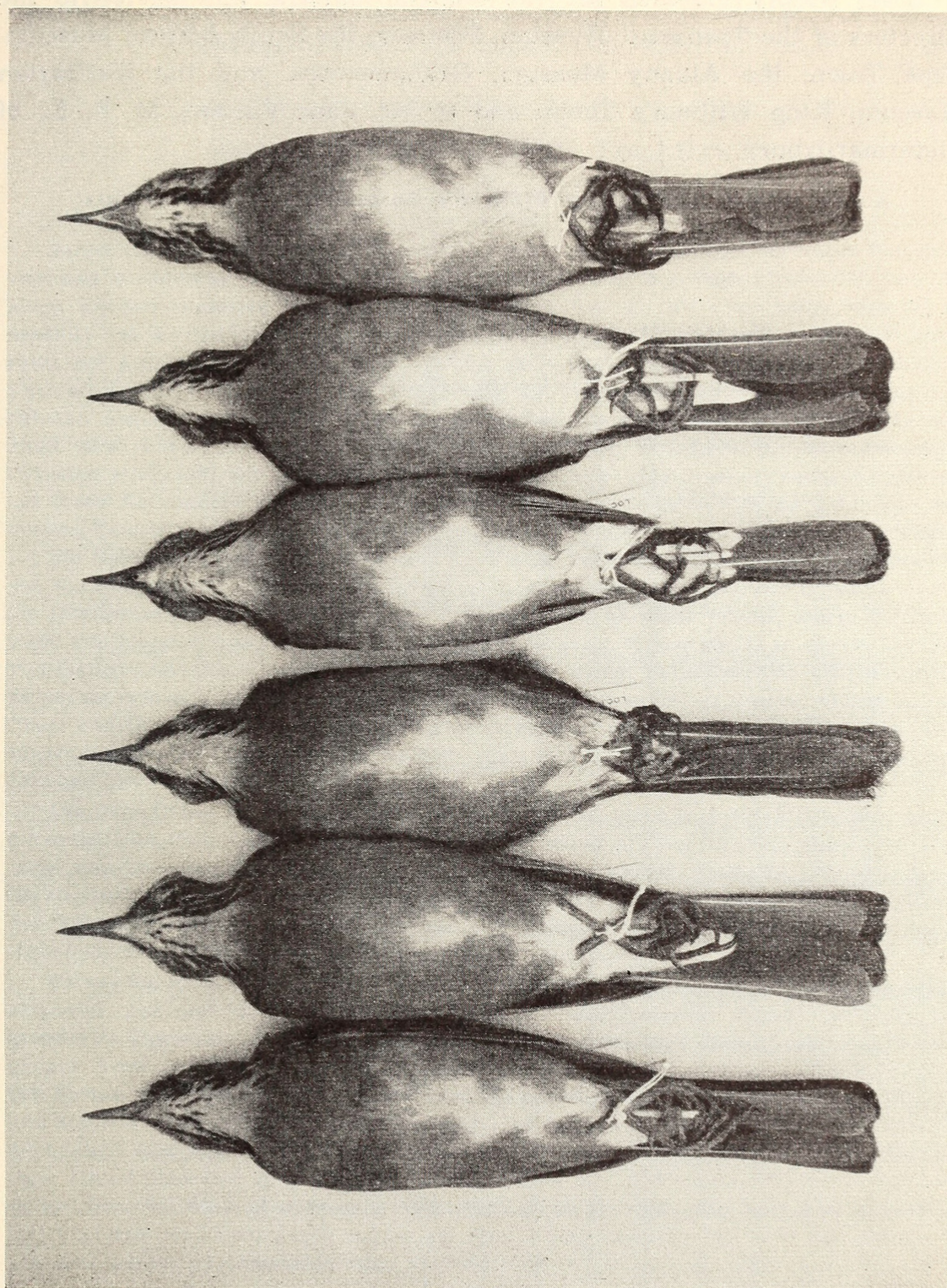
Diagnosis: Similar to *P. g. gularis* but differs on account of its decidedly darker and greyer upper-parts, with the striae of the crown and nape more accentuated, the centres of the mantle feathers blacker, and the rump without a buffy tinge. Under-parts similar. A smaller race — wing 76—79 mm., as against 79—84 mm. in *P. g. gularis*. Compared with *P. g. humilis* of the southern Cape Province, the new race is immediately distinguishable by the complete lack of clear buff colour on the under-parts, the whiter throat, the reduced spotting of the 'chin', and the darker and greyer colouration of the more heavily marked upper-parts. Similar in size.

Measurements of the Type: wing (flattened) 79, culmen from base 16, tarsus 16.5, tail 61.5 mm.

Distribution: Confined to the midlands of Natal, where it is thinly distributed.

Description of the Type: Forehead, crown and nape dull white, feathers with blackish centres forming striations; mantle greyish brown, feather centres darker; rump and upper tail-coverts greyish brown; superciliary stripes dull white; ear-coverts greyish brown; throat dull white, a few brownish spots on malar regions and 'chin'; rest of under-parts pale greyish buff, rather darker on breast and flanks; axillaries and under wing-coverts dull buff-white; wings dark greyish brown, feathers with paler edges to outer webs; tail dark greyish brown, outer webs of rectrices edged paler. Iris, dark brown; bill, flesh horn shaded darker on the culmen; legs and toes, flesh brown.

Remarks: The detailed distributions given by Sclater, loc. cit., remain practically unaltered as a result of this study, the only adjustment being the removal of the Natal population from the range of *P. g. humilis* as an additional subspecies, as here proposed. Material examined is as follows: *P. g. endemion* (paratypical) 5 (3 Natal Museum; 2 U.S. National Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.); *P. g. gularis* (topotypical) 4; *P. g. humilis* (southern Cape Province from Oudtshoorn to King William's Town) 16. *P. g. reichardi* Reichenow and other northern races were not consulted.



b

a

- a) *Turdus libonyanus peripheris* Clancey. (Type on left)
 b) *Turdus libonyanus libonyanus* (Smith). N. E. Zululand and Swaziland.
 Note the darker breast and flank colouration in *T. l. peripheris*.

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