

13. ON THE VALIDITY OF *TURDOIDES CAUDATUS ECLIPES* (HUME)

In 1877, Hume (*Stray Feathers* 5, p. 337) described a new species of Babbler from north-western India as *Chatorhea* (now *Turdoides*) *eclipses* "Like *C. caudata*, but much larger, the upper surface darker and more strongly striated, tail more strongly banded, feathers of breast and sides dark shafted". He also referred to its being as large as *huttoni* (Blyth, type Kandahar, Afghanistan) from Khelat and Persia, but much darker and warmer coloured than *huttoni* which is paler and greyer, and said the ear-coverts were darker than in *caudatus* in India.

Oates 1889, *Fauna* 1, p. 106, included both *huttoni* and *eclipses* as synonyms of *caudata*. Baker 1922, *Fauna* 1, pp. 198/9, accepted *huttoni* from Afghanistan, Baluchistan and S.E. Persia, as also a specimen from "the Jay River Hills" in Sind as very typical, but said he could not separate *eclipses*. Later, 1926, Ticehurst *JBNHS* 31, p. 491, corrected his earlier (*Ibis* 1922, p. 540) statement that *eclipses* was the same as nominate *caudata*. On p. 694 of the same Journal he re-confirms its distinctness as an interesting form from Rawalpindi, Peshawar (type locality), Campbellpur (south to Kohat?). In *Indian Handbook* (1971) 6, p. 215, it is again synonymised with *caudatus*, while *huttoni* is accepted in West Pakistan.

While cataloguing the Bombay collection it was evident that the birds from the north-west were strikingly different from *caudata* and the characters referred to in the original description were very constant and perhaps justified Hume's statement that it "was far more entitled to specific (now subspecific) distinction than *C. huttoni* Blyth.

The bars on the tail are visible in some *caudatus*, but not in any of the larger races,

	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Tail
♂ ♂ <i>eclipses</i> (5)	82-87 av. 84.6	18.2-20.4 av. 19.6	25.2-27.2 av. 26.4	115-130 av. 120
<i>caudatus</i> (27)	76-83 av. 79	17-20.6 av. 18.7	22.5-28.5 av. 25.9	95-112 av. 108
	76-85	from skull 20-23 over 25	26-29	113-130)
<i>huttoni</i> (4)	84-91 av. 87.5	20.5-22.6 av. 21.6	26.5-30 av. 28.9	104-129 av. 119
♀ ♀	85-94	from skull 21-25	28-30	112-128)
<i>eclipses</i> (5)	78-84 av. 80	18-20.6 av. 19.7	21.2-26.5 av. 24.7	94-123 av. 110.4
<i>caudatus</i> (10)	74-81 av. 76.8	18.4-19.5 av. 19	24-29.5 av. 26.3	87-110 av. 102.5
	72-82	from skull 20-22	27-29	101)
<i>huttoni</i> (3)	81, 85, 87	21, 21.6, 21.8	26.6, 27.5, 28.5	102, 106, 107

huttoni and *salvadori* (De Filippi, Shiraz, Fars) from the north and west.

The 11 (5♂♂ 5 ♀♀ 1 o?) available from Peshawar (2), Rawalpindi (5), Campbellpur (1), Jholar, Kala Chitta Hills, Salt Range (1), South Waziristan (1) and Damdil, Waziristan (1) may be said to be of this form, the eastern distributional limit being the Jhelum and not the Indus.

75, ABDUL REHMAN STREET,
BOMBAY-400 003.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT,
BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
SHAHID BHAGAT SINGH ROAD,
BOMBAY-400 023,
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One of us (H.A.) has a note to the effect that Gaston (1975) said that the birds in the Salt Range were larger than those in Delhi, but the source cannot be traced. *Eclipses* is accepted in Peters Checklist vol. X, p. 333 (1964).

The evidence appears to be sufficient to establish the validity of the race *eclipses*.

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

ERIC D'CUNHA

14. DESTRUCTION OF PEARL MILLET NURSERY BY SPARROWS *PASSER DOMESTICUS* (LINNAEUS) AND ITS AVOIDANCE

Damage due to bird pests is always taken for granted and is not paid due attention. Birds cause losses to almost all the millet crops throughout the cultivation range and the damage is severe in some places (Jotwani *et al.* 1967). They deserve attention in arid areas where the damage commences from sowing stage and needs protection with suitable pesticide treatment (Bhatnagar 1976).

Sparrows, hitherto considered as the major pest problem in this region for ripening fields of pearl millet, sorghum, sunflower and paddy etc., are now causing concern by widespread destruction of pearl millet crop at the nursery stage. It was observed this year in Kharif 1980, that the pearl millet experimental downy mildew sick plot nursery of about one acre at the College Farm of Andhra Pradesh Agri-

cultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, was damaged to an extent of 100 per cent. The birds damage the crop before there is evidence for the need to control. The present investigation deals with the attack and nature of damage caused by sparrows, and the effective method employed for its avoidance.

Sparrows visit the field in small or large congregations or even singly and feed on the seed grains. Their colour being similar to that of soil, they are not noticed.

Sparrows expose with their beaks pre-germinated and germinated seeds and pull out the just sprouted seedlings before they establish and also feed on the individual ripening grains. The seedlings which escape and reach vegetative phase have their tiny stems stripped off by the sparrows, and in course of time wither



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