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Address: J. R. King, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Department of Zoology, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS, U.K.

The type locality of *Halcyon coromanda rufa* Wallace

by G. F. Mees

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Halcyon rufa (now *Halcyon coromanda rufa*) was described by Wallace (1863: 338) from "Sula Islands and Celebes". Soon afterwards, Sharpe (1870: text to pl. 57) listed a specimen labelled 'Macassar', which at that time was in Wallace's private collection, as the type of *H. rufa*. On the accompanying plate, this specimen is beautifully illustrated. Wallace's private collection was acquired by the British Museum in 1873 (cf. Sharpe 1906: 258), and in the Museum catalogue this same specimen was again listed as the type (Sharpe 1892: 221). By Warren (1966: 251) it is, perhaps more correctly, referred to as syntype.

As long as birds from Celebes and birds from the Sula Islands were thought to be consubspecific, the matter of the type locality of *H. rufa* was of no practical interest. In 1939, however, Neumann described *H. c. pelingensis* from Peling Island, between Celebes and the Sula Islands. This subspecies was diagnosed as being: "Similar to *Halcyon coromanda rufa* Wallace from Celebes, but much smaller, wing 106–115 mm., as against 120–126 mm. in *H. c. rufa* Wallace. Culmen 53–56 mm., as against 62–67 mm. in *H. c. rufa*. . . . Mr. Kinnear tells me that the type of *H. c. rufa* Wallace from Macassar, Celebes, has a wing-length of 120 mm., therefore 5 mm. more than my largest specimen." Neumann commented that the distribution of *H. c. rufa* (Celebes and the Sula Islands) then seemed rather strange. That is as far as Neumann's published contribution goes.

Peters (1945: 195) unexpectedly changed the type locality of *H. rufa* with the comment: "the type in the British Museum was collected by

Allen either on Mangoli or Besi, *fide* O. Neumann, *in litt.*)". To later authors, the reasons for this change were obscure, hence unacceptable (cf. Mees 1970: 301; Hubbard & duPont 1974: 25).

The explanation of what had happened was provided by Mr S. Eck (*in litt.*, 21 June 1975), who sent me the following quote from a letter from Neumann to O. Kleinschmidt (dated 31 December 1940): "Denn der Typus von *H. c. rufa* Wallace stammt nicht, wie irrtümlich auf dem Etikett (nicht von Wallace selbst geschrieben), von Makassar, sondern von den Sula Inseln. Das ist eine viel grössere Rasse, von der ich auch Stücke von Taliaboe erhielt. Das geht ja schon aus Wallace's Orig. Beschreibung und Sharpe Cat. Birds deutlich hervor!". A short discussion of this letter was published by Eck (1976: 76–77).

Evidently, Neumann had realised later that resident birds from Celebes are smaller than he first thought. The measurements he published must have been from migrant visitors of *H. c. major*, a long-winged subspecies which breeds in Japan and winters in the Philippines and the northern peninsula of Celebes. A wing-length of 120 mm, as recorded for the type-specimen of *H. rufa*, must have seemed to him too large for a bird from Celebes, and as it agreed in this character with specimens from the Sula Islands (of which Neumann had, in the meantime, received two), he concluded that an error in labelling had been made, and that the type-specimen, labelled 'Macassar', was actually from the Sula Islands.

The letter failed to convince me, mainly because Sharpe's plate of the type shows it to be a dark bird, with a blue rump. The Sula subspecies, since described under the same of *sulana*, is a little less dark, and has an almost white rump-patch, only its margins being slightly tinged with blue. Nevertheless, an element of doubt remained at the back of my mind: the consciousness that there was some unfinished business here, which should be resolved by a personal examination of the type in question.

It was only in June 1990 that I had an opportunity to visit Tring, and could study the type. The specimen (♂) has an original Wallace label, inscribed 'Makassar, 1856'. Measurements I took from it are: wing 120, tail 70, tarsus c. $16\frac{1}{2}$, entire culmen 65.3, culmen from anterior point of nostril 51, width of bill across the nostrils 17 mm. Wing-formula: 4th primary longest, marginally (about 1 mm) longer than the 3rd and the 5th, which are equal, and 2nd primary 7 mm shorter than 3rd. The generally dark plumage, the azure blue rump, and the comparatively short tail (tail:wing index 58.3%; in *sulana* it averages over 65%) all place this bird as a large specimen from Celebes, so that there is no reason to doubt the provenance from Makassar as indicated on its label. In a series of 17 specimens from Celebes previously measured by Mees (1970), the range of variation was: wing 113–118, tail 59–$67\frac{1}{2}$ mm. The largest bird had wing 118, tail $67\frac{1}{2}$ mm. Hence, the Makassar specimen with wing 120, tail 70 mm, is certainly a large one, but hardly exceptionally so. How did Kinnear and Neumann come to make the mistake? Simply because there are no specimens of *H. coromanda* from the Sula Islands in the British Museum, and because Neumann never examined the type-specimen of *H. rufa*, relying thus exclusively on the measurements supplied by Kinnear.

Although the British Museum specimen from Makassar has been regarded as the type of *H. rufa* since 1870, and may be considered to have been made a lectotype by Sharpe (ICZN, 1985: art. 74), it would still be of interest to know what other material Wallace had when he described *H. rufa*. Judging by his title, one would assume that he had at least one specimen from the Sula Islands. To this I can only say that hitherto I have failed to trace any. The Makassar specimen is the only type of *H. c. rufa* known to me.

In conclusion: the examination of the lectotype of *Halcyon rufa* in the British Museum has confirmed its provenance Makassar, and therefore supports the nomenclature used in recent years by Eck, Hubbard & duPont, Mees, etc., with *H. c. rufa* in Celebes, *H. c. pelingensis* on Peling, and *H. c. sulana* in the Sula Islands.

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Address: G. F. Mees, Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Postbus 9517, 2300 RA Leiden, Holland.

The red-tailed buzzards of Zaïre

by M. Louette

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The Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis* breeds during the dry season in western and west-central Africa (including Uélé in Zaïre: January–March, Chapin 1932), and migrates during the rainy season towards the north (Brown 1970). In this country, contrary to Brown's map and Lippens & Wille's (1976) statement "assez commune dans presque tout le Zaïre", it is only definitely known from the extreme north and extreme west (Schouteden 1948, 1950, Snow 1978), being absent from most of Kivu and Eastern (now Upper Zaïre) provinces and the whole of Shaba and Kasai, these regions lacking to a large extent breeding buzzards (see position of regions on maps in Louette 1989, 1990). Also, P. Herroelen