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The six hundred and seventy-second meeting of the Club was held at the Criterion in Piccadilly, London, S.W.1 on Tuesday, 21st September, 1971 at 7 p.m.

Chairman: Sir Hugh Elliott, Bt., O.B.E.; present: 17 members and 10 guests.

The speaker was Dr. C. H. Fry who addressed the Club on "African Ornithology by Hovercraft" and illustrated his address with coloured slides.

Variation in *Caprimulgus tristigma* Rüppell, especially in West Africa

By R. H. Parker & C. W. Benson

Received 29th April, 1971

(PART II)

Discussion

On present knowledge *pallidogriseus* is interposed geographically between *sharpei* to the west, from Togo to Guinea, and to the east, in Cameroun and the Central African Republic (incidentally, A. D. Forbes-Watson, pers. comm, did not find the species at Mt. Nimba, Liberia, during his extensive investigations in 1967-68).

The type of *pallidogriseus* is from the south-west extremity of Nigeria, about 120 miles from the coast, and the bird which was mist-netted at Oyo New Reservoir is from a little further south. However, Brown (*Ibis*, 1948: 532) records several observations of *C. tristigma* from Kabba Province and one still further south at Igarra in mid-western Nigeria (7° 18' N., 6° 07' E.). Brown's records, which come from an area about 100 miles east of the type locality, and which were all in the same month as the type's collection (May), include two breeding records and the collection of a male with "much enlarged testes". As he states, this specimen never arrived in the British Museum, nor are there any eggs therein from anywhere in West Africa. From his records Brown concluded that *C. tristigma* bred in Nigeria at the beginning of the rains (April-June). This, however, is not conclusive evidence that *pallidogriseus* is a breeding resident in Nigeria. It is possible that *sharpei* ranges through the humid southern part of the country, *pallidogriseus* occurring only as an off-season migrant. Its colour and large size suggest that it may breed in a relatively cold and dry climate, if indeed this holds good in the northern African tropics. Possibly it is a resident at Sha and Jos, at 4,000 feet or higher, and where rainfall is less than it is nearer the coast, but this is

not supported by several of the specimens of *sharpei*, collected at a considerably higher altitude (viz. Bamenda, 5,200 feet), whilst another was collected from an area with a lower annual rainfall (Mali). It is obvious that further investigation is needed before an answer can be found to the problem. Bannerman (1933: 176) writes of a migration in a dry thorn-scrub breeding population of *Scotornis climacurus* (Vieillot), spending the off-season to the southward, such birds being probably absent from the coastal countries from July to November. It is true that the Iseyin and Oyo records, being for May and December, are in accord with this. But the breeding records for May at Kabba, and the fact that, using sight records from J. H. Elgood, C. H. Fry, P. Blasdale and R. E. Sharland, in addition to the specimens already mentioned, *C. tristigma* has been recorded in Nigeria in every month of the year except February and March, point to the likelihood that the species (and therefore *pallidogriseus*, like all other races) is sedentary. If this latter theory is correct, it would appear that *pallidogriseus* is restricted in range to the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria and the inselbergs that surround it in lowland savanna. It should, however, be added that there is no evidence that any of the five specimens were near breeding condition.

The possibility has been considered that the specimens of *pallidogriseus* might be merely non-breeding examples of *granosus* from southern Africa (they could not be *lentiginosus* if only because that form differs from all the others by its buffy tones). It is true that *Caprimulgus rufigena* Smith and *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* (Gould) breed in southern Africa, and spend the off-season north of the equator; see for example White (1965: 204, 208). But we are unaware of any evidence of such a long range movement in *C. tristigma*, although Tree (*Ostrich*, 1967: 191) presents evidence of some local movement in Zambia, and H. D. Jackson (pers. comm.) suspects that this may also apply in Rhodesia. To be sure, in the British Museum there is a specimen from Legogot, eastern Transvaal, and two from Chirinda, eastern Rhodesia, which approach *pallidogriseus* in colour. But, as already pointed out, there is some variability in colour, and these three specimens seem to represent the extremity of pallor in *granosus*. Another point is that the wing-lengths of the specimens of *pallidogriseus* are at the very minimum for *granosus* (see Table, and figures in Clancey, 1965: 345).

The status of *Scotornis trimaculatus* Swainson

Sclater (*Syst. Av. Ethiop.* 1, 1924: 251) uses the specific name *trimaculatus* Swainson for this nightjar, though (*op. cit.* 2, 1930: 856) considers it indeterminate, as does Bannerman (1933: 156). The majority of Swainson's bird specimens were received by the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, in 1840, and C. W. B. has found the specimen which Swainson (*Birds W. Afr.* 2, 1837: 70) seems to have had before him in describing *Scotornis trimaculatus*. The name on the original label, in Swainson's handwriting, is the same. The locality is given as Senegambia, but there is no date. The specimen, which is in excellent condition, shows no marked discrepancy from the description. It is in fact a male of *Caprimulgus r. ruficollis* Temminck (1820), of which *trimaculatus* is accordingly a synonym.

Incidentally, Bannerman (1933: 152) gives a West African record of *C. r. desertorum* Erlanger. The supporting specimen is in the British Museum, and there can be no question but that it was collected in West Africa (at Gambaga, Ghana). But there must be reservations in regard to the Swainson specimen of *C. r. ruficollis*. It is true that many specimens in his collection were almost

certainly correctly labelled "Senegal", "Senegambia", "Sierra Leone", etc. On the other hand, it is to C. W. B.'s knowledge, since he is curating the University Museum collections, that a leaven of Swainson's specimens were incorrectly labelled. One particularly flagrant instance is the apparent type of the woodpecker *Hemicircus rubiginosus* Swainson, which is also in Cambridge. Swainson supposed that it came from "western Africa", but in fact it came from Malacca, in south-eastern Asia (Peters, *Check list birds world* 6, 1948: 225). Thus there cannot be absolute certainty that Swainson's specimen of *C. r. ruficollis* came from West Africa, and there is apparently no other record of this form therefrom.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Dr. D. W. Snow and his staff for allowing examination of the 68 specimens of *C. tristigma* in the British Museum (Natural History); to Dr. H. Schouteden and the late Dr. A. De Roo for the loan of 19 in the Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika, Tervuren; and to Dr. F. Roux for the loan of one from Guinea in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle Paris. Two specimens in the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, from South-West Africa and the eastern Transvaal, were also used; also two from the latter area in the City of Liverpool Museums. C. W. B. is also grateful to Mrs. B. P. Hall for examining material with him. Dr. C. H. Fry has kindly commented on a draft of this paper.

References:

- Bannerman, D. A. 1933. *The birds of tropical West Africa*. Vol. 3. London: Crown Agents for the Colonies.
Clancey, P. A. 1965. A catalogue of birds of the South African sub-region. Part 10. *Durban Mus. Novit.* 7(10): 305-388.
White, C. M. N. 1965. *A revised check-list of African non-passerine birds*. Lusaka: Govt. Printer.

[Postscript: Mackworth-Praed & Grant, *Afr. handbook birds*, Ser. III, Vol. 1, 1970, record *C. tristigma* in breeding condition in Nigeria in February. We do not know the source of this information.]

Euplectes diadematus Fischer and Reichenow; courtship, nest and eggs

by G. R. Cunningham-van Someren

Received 2nd June, 1971

According to modern standard works (see most recently Hall & Moreau 1970), *Euplectes diadematus* is restricted in distribution to north-eastern Tanzania and coastal Kenya. However, this can now be extended to a point considerably further inland to the westward, some 45 km south-west of Nairobi, on the road to Magadi, at ca. 1° 34' S., 36° 29' E.

To my knowledge *E. diadematus* has been resident for over thirty years in temporary rainwater swamps and areas of tall grass around this point on the Nairobi-Magadi road, at altitudes between 900 and 1000 m above sea-level. Although many attempts have been made to locate nests, I was not successful until 1971. In March/April 1970 a male was observed during three week-ends, once carrying grass, possibly part of courtship, territorial or nesting behaviour, but no nest was found.

On 23rd May 1971 (some six weeks later than in 1970, since production of



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