

and 85 for the Over forties, and the meeting proceeded to the realm of nonsense in which, it must be admitted, the seniors and their supporters made considerable headway, the final score being Under forties 112; Over forties 110.

## On the validity of *Pytilia melba damarensis* Neunzig, 1928

by P. A. CLANCEY

Received 29th April, 1961

Over thirty years ago the German systematist Rudolf Neunzig (1928) separated the Damaraland populations of the Melba Finch *Pytilia melba* (Linnaeus), 1758: China, *ex* Edwards, corrected to Angola by Zedlitz (1916), under the name *P. m. damarensis* Neunzig, 1928: Windhoek, characterized on the basis of paler general colouration and larger size. The Type is in the collection of the Zoological Museum, Berlin. *P. m. damarensis* has not been recognised by later workers (notably Sclater [1930]; Hoesch and Niethammer [1940]; and Clancey [1957]), but a re-appraisal of the question on the basis of a series 32 Damaraland specimens in the Durban Museum collection studied in conjunction with a series of twelve recently obtained examples of topotypical nominate *P. melba* from Angola (Durban Museum *ex* Chicago Natural History Museum, and on loan from the collection of the Instituto de Investigacao Cientifica de Angola, Luanda) suggests that there are valid grounds for considering *P. m. damarensis* as a recognisable race, with a range extending from southern and south-western Angola and South-West Africa, eastwards to the northern Cape Province, western Orange Free State, Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia.

Males of *P. m. damarensis* differ but slightly from those of *P. m. melba* in colour, averaging slightly darker golden olive over the mantle, but the difference is slight and not constant. However, they differ significantly in their larger overall proportions thus: wings of 22 ♂♂ of *P. m. damarensis* measuring 59–63 (61.2), 6 ♀♀ 58.5–61 (59.8), tails of ♂♂ 49–54 (51.0), ♀♀ 47.5–51 (49.1), as against wings of 56.5–58 (57.2) in 6 ♂♂ from the Luanda area of Angola, 4 ♀♀ 56–58.5 (57.2), tails of ♂♂ 43–47 (45.7), ♀♀ 44–47 (45.3) mm. In addition to being markedly larger, *P. m. damarensis* differs further in that the female has the head-top and nape slightly paler grey (Mouse Gray, *vide* Ridgway [1912] [pl. li], as against Deep Mouse Gray [same pl.] in *P. m. melba*), while the mantle colour is distinctly paler and duller, often exhibiting a strong admixture of grey (about Buffy Citrine [pl. xvi] as opposed to the deeper and unsullied Orange-Citrine [pl. iv] of the nominotypical race). Ventrally there is little in the nature of a salient difference between the females of the two taxa, although in series *P. m. melba* shows a good deal of olive wash over the sides of the breast and over the flanks, which feature is quite lacking in *P. m. damarensis*. It is interesting to note that in *P. m. melba* the sexes are exactly similar in size, whereas in *P. m. damarensis* the male is slightly larger than the female. These characters undoubtedly warrant the resuscitation of *P. m. damarensis* from synonymy.

I have not attempted to determine the range limits of *P. m. melba* with any degree of accuracy, but the race concerned is considered to range from Landana, the lower Congo, Stanley Pool and northern and central Angola,



eastwards to the southern Congo (Katanga), Northern Rhodesia and western Nyasaland.

*P. m. angolensis* Reichenow, 1919: Angola, *Type* from Malanje (Prof. Dr. E. Stresemann, *in litt.*), appears to be a straight synonym of *P. m. melba*, the *Type* having a flattened wing-length of 58 mm. Two specimens from 15 km. W. of Yau? or Jau), Angola, collected by Gerd Heinrich in 1954 and now in the Durban Museum collection (*ex* Chicago Natural History Museum), are larger than those from the Luanda district of Angola (wing of ♂ 63.5, ♀ 60 mm.) and agree in their dimensions with *P. m. damarensis*, while the dorsal colouration of the female is also in conformity with this determination. With the finding of two geographical races of the Melba Finch within the political confines of Angola, it would seem desirable to further restrict the present type-locality of *P. m. melba* ("Angola"). *Fringilla Melba* Linnaeus, believed originally to come from China, was based on an Edwards reference ("Edw. av. 128, t. 128", *vide* Linnaeus [1758]). Most of Angola was *terra incognita* and completely inaccessible at the time Edwards lived, although the coastal regions were comparatively well-known through the efforts of Portuguese explorers and navigators, and the Melba Finch was in all probability first made known to workers on the basis of captives sent back to Europe by early Portuguese colonists on board ships returning from the East. It seems that the type-locality should be in the coast region, and as this species occurs plentifully round Luanda, the capital and main seaport of the territory, I designate *Luanda, Angola*, as the restricted type-locality of *P. m. melba*.

In 1957 I reviewed the races of *P. melba* occurring within the South African sub-continent. In the light of the new findings this paper requires to be adjusted somewhat, mainly by the elimination of the nominotypical race from the South African list and its substitution by *P. m. damarensis* (as defined above). The small *P. m. grotei* Reichenow, 1919: Kionga, lower Rovuma R., southern Tanganyika Territory, in which the red on the throat of the male extends as a wash over the golden olive breast-band, and the female is darker than *P. m. melba*, particularly greener backed, comes within South African limits in the lower Zambesi R. valley, perhaps ranging as far south as Beira in the Portuguese East African littoral. *P. m. thamnophila* Clancey, 1957: Big Bend, Swaziland, has a more restricted range than formerly believed, being confined to Natal and Zululand, eastern Swaziland and the littoral of southern Portuguese East Africa (south of the Limpopo R.). In this race, the male has the red of the chin and throat peach-coloured, not scarlet, and the breast-band is dull green (about Olive Lake [pl. xvi]) not golden olive (Aniline Yellow [pl. iv]), while there are other minor differences (see original description). The female of *P. m. thamnophila* is still darker on the upper-parts than *P. m. grotei*, with which the former taxon agrees fairly well on size, though averaging larger. A series from the eastern Transvaal (Newington) is intermediate in colour between *P. m. thamnophila* and *P. m. damarensis*, but mensurally like the former. It may be that *P. m. thamnophila* and *P. m. grotei* are not in contact, being segregated from one another by intrusive populations of *P. m. damarensis*, thrusting eastwards with other xeric Kalahari elements from the dry interior through the "Limpopo Gap"



almost to the Mozambique littoral, but much work still remains to be done on the distributions of the races of *P. melba* occurring within Portuguese East African limits.

### Acknowledgements

For the loan of material I am grateful to Dr. A. A. da Rosa Pinto, Ornithologist on the Staff of the Instituto de Investigacao Cientifica de Angola, Luanda. To Herr H. E. Wolters, Bonn, I am indebted for the great trouble he has gone to in helping me with the literature, and to Prof. Dr. Erwin Stresemann, Berlin, I extend thanks for details of the Type of *P. m. angolensis*.

### Literature cited:

- Clancey, P. A. 1957. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, vol. 77, 3, pp. 49–52.  
 Hoesch, W. and Niethammer, G. 1940. *Die Vogelwelt Deutsch-Südwestafrikas*, pp. 356–357.  
 Linnaeus, C. von. 1758. *Systema Naturae*, 10th edition, i, p. 180. Facsimile reprint. London.  
 Neunzig, R. 1928. *Zoologischer Anzeiger*, vol. lxxvii, pp. 9–10.  
 Ridgway, R. 1912. *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*. Washington.  
 Sclater, W. L. 1930. *Systema Avium Aethiopicarum*, part ii, p. 787.  
 Zedlitz, O. von. 1916. *Journ. für Ornith.*, vol. lxiv p. 31.

## On the geographical variation of the Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus* (Vieillot)

by P. A. CLANCEY

Received 29th April, 1961

Gyldenstolpe (1924) was the first worker to demonstrate the existence of geographical variation in the populations of the wide-ranging Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus* (Vieillot) of the savannas of Africa. Friedmann (1930), following on Gyldenstolpe's original observations, arranged the populations of *M. croceus* in two races: *M. c. croceus* (Vieillot), 1816: Senegal, and *M. c. vulturinus* Friedmann, 1930: coastal parts of Natal in the vicinity of Durban, the latter, introduced as a new race restricted to the extreme austral parts of the species' range, being separated from *M. c. croceus* solely on the basis of longer culmen length. While Friedmann's findings have been very largely followed by subsequent workers (see Roberts [1940], Vincent [1952], McLachlan and Liversidge [1957], *inter alia*), White (in Peters [1960]; 1961) has recently tried, without presenting nearly sufficient evidence, to convince other workers that the variation in this species is either seasonal or of such irregularity as to preclude its satisfactory nomenclatural recognition.

Some years ago, I showed (Clancey, 1952A) that the population of *M. croceus* occurring in north-eastern Zululand consisted of birds with rather shorter bills than in Natal topotypes of *M. c. vulturinus*, and in a fuller exposition (Clancey, 1952B) I arranged the populations of the South African sub-continent in two races (*M. c. vulturinus* and *M. c. croceus*), restricting the range of *M. c. vulturinus* to Pondoland, Natal and Zululand, the rest of the South African populations being referred to the nominotypical race. In a still later study (1958) I distinguished the populations of *M. croceus* of east-central and eastern Africa from both *M. c. vulturinus* and *M. c. croceus* on colour and mensural characters under the name *M. c. tertius* Clancey, 1958: Hartley, Matabeleland, Southern





Clancey, P. A. 1962. "On the validity of *Pytilia melba damarensis* Neunzig, 1928." *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 82, 3-5.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/126998>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/77865>

**Holding Institution**

Natural History Museum Library, London

**Sponsored by**

Natural History Museum Library, London

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: British Ornithologists' Club

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.