

collected with the same shot an adult and spotted juvenile of *Muscicapa cassini* Heine. The latter specimen could not have been more than about one month old. Another interesting record is a specimen of *Anthus c. caffer* Sundevall, collected in *Brachystegia* woodland near Kitwe, at 12° 49' S., 28° 23' E., on 4th September, 1961.

## Further comments on the taxonomy of British *Anthus pratensis* (Linnaeus)

by P. A. CLANCEY

Received 13th February, 1961

Apropos to my note on the vexed question of the name to be applied to the "Atlantic" race of the Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* (Linnaeus) and my colleague, Mr. Kenneth Williamson's comments thereon (*vide antea*, pp. 10-12), there are one or two points which require to be elaborated on or corrected.

In subspecific taxonomy names are given to populations or aggregates of populations, and the *Type* of a subspecies does not have the same standing in taxonomic theory as would the *Type* of a new species. In geographical races, which are generally based on the sum of characters to be discerned in series of skins, no single specimen can represent the gamut of the variation in any subspecific entity, especially if based on samples of an aggregate of slightly variable individual populations and not on an insular or otherwise isolated population, which would, by virtue of its insularity, be more stable. Furthermore, study of the literature reveals that many *Types* are atypical, and I recollect that it is on record that the *Type* of *Garrulus glandarius rufitergum* Hartert is a bright rufous specimen, quite unlike the norm of the British race of the Jay. Many of the older *Type*-specimens in collections no longer show the subspecific criteria characteristic of the free living populations of birds which they symbolize in our taxonomic arrangement, through the oxidation of the plumage pigments and general deterioration, and some by virtue of being atypical or in worn or juvenile plumage when collected probably never did.

In so far as the application of the name *A. p. whistleri* Clancey, 1942, to the "Atlantic" race of the Meadow Pipit is concerned, the fact remains that part of the paratypical series consists of actual breeding birds from the north of Scotland—whether one now considers such material to be "too worn and bleached for critical taxonomic assessment" or not is quite irrelevant. By the very use of such original material in the preparation of the differential diagnosis the name *whistleri* is inalterably associated with the Scottish Highland population of *A. pratensis* and no other. The name cannot be sunk into the synonymy of a Continental race just because one worker has evinced difficulty in segregating the *Type* from Swedish birds—a difficulty which I, the original describer, have not experienced on the two or three occasions I have personally investigated this matter.

Another point, if one is going to follow Williamson's tenuous reasoning, one must be prepared to accept that the *Type* of *A. p. whistleri* flew across the North Sea as a juvenile in late July or early August, *i.e.*, long before the onset of the main migration, or else flew across the same stretch of water in a state of full moult. From many years of experience in the



western Palaearctic, I do not believe that Meadow Pipits habitually migrate in juvenile plumage or in a state of advanced moult, and all examples of *A. p. pratensis* which I have collected from immigrant flocks in the British Isles had completed the autumnal moult.

Lastly, surely it is incorrect to claim that the valid racial characters of *A. p. whistleri* were not revised and adequately defined and discussed in advance of the publication of *A. p. theresae* Meinertzhagen, 1953, because such can be found in my note in *Bull. B.O.C.*, vol. lxviii, 1948, pp. 54-56.

## Birds perching on Hippopotamus

by CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

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Benson has shown me his note on this subject, to which I can add various records of observations made in Uganda.

In those parts of the Kazinga Channel (between Lakes George and Edward, in Western Uganda) where there are concentrations of waterfowl, it is commonplace and of daily occurrence to see African Darters, *Anhinga rufa* perched on hippos. Often two birds can be seen on the same animal, and once I have seen three. In Bayard Read's beautiful colour film *Birds of East and Central Africa* there is a delightful 'shot' of a hippo slowly submerging, with a Darter on its back.

Other birds seen perched on hippos in the same region include the Reed Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax africanus* and the Common Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleucos*.

In the Nile, between Lake Albert and the Murchison Falls I have often seen Darters, Reed-Cormorants and Common Sandpipers respectively perched on hippos; on several occasions the African Pied Wagtail, *Motacilla aguimp* and once a Yellow Wagtail, *Budytes flavus*; more than once the Cattle Egret, *Ardeola ibis*; occasionally the Pied Kingfisher, *Ceryle rudis*; and once a Sacred Ibis, *Threskiornis aethiopicus*.

A short way downstream of the Murchison Falls I have several times observed White-collared Pratincoles, *Glareola nuchalis* on hippos, sometimes a single bird, but more usually two.

In Lake Victoria I have occasionally seen White-winged Black Terns, *Chlidonias leucoptera*, one or more, on the almost submerged back of a hippo.

I also recollect the report of a few White-faced Tree Ducks, *Dendrocygna vidua* perched on a hippo; but the strangest record is of three Egyptian Geese, *Alopochen aegyptiacus* settled on one of these 'floating islands'.

Various waders, other than the Common Sandpiper, have from time to time been observed perched on hippos.

## Unusual nesting behaviour of the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus* (L.)

by CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

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On 10th May, 1961, at Bournemouth, I watched a House Sparrow excavating a nest hole. Such unusual behaviour is worth recording. The site chosen was a crevice between two large stones which formed part of





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