

- Voous, K. H., The geographical variation of the Jay *Garrulus glandarius* in Europe: a study on individual and clinal variation. *Beaufortia* 2 (30) 1953: 1-41.
- Voous, K. H. and J. G. van Marle, The distributional history of the Nuthatch, *Sitta europaea* L. *Ardea* 41 (extra number) 1953: 1-68.

A Recent Example of Symmetrical Albinism in the Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos* Linnaeus

By MR. BRYAN L. SAGE.

Received 20th January, 1954

An adult female Mallard, *A. platyrhynchos* seen on Wilstone Reservoir, Tring, Herts, by Mrs. S. Cowdy on 8th January, 1954, in a flock of other birds of the same species was obviously an example of this form of albinism.

From the observer's detailed description it appears that the primaries and secondaries of each wing were pure white, most of the flanks on each side were also white and there was a prominent white line running down the back of the neck from the head to the mantle. There was no sign of the usual purplish speculum. The legs and bill were normal in colouring.

I have a record of another female of this species shot at Ulceby, Lincolnshire, on 15th December, 1871, this bird was pure white with the exception of the shoulders and wing coverts which were the normal colour (*The Zoologist*, 1872, p.2932).

Comments on Geographical Variation in the Tit-Babbler *Parisoma subcaeruleum* (Vieillot) and the Description of a New Race from the High Interior of Natal, South Africa

By MR. P. A. CLANCEY.

Received 22nd January, 1954

Parisoma subcaeruleum (Vieillot) is a locally common species of Tit-Babbler confined to Africa south of the Zambesi in suitable thornveld and scrubby areas, three races being generally recognized, namely, *P. s. subcaeruleum*, described from the Cape Province, and *P. s. cinerascens* Reichenow, described from Hereroland, i.e., Damaraland, South-West Africa, and *P. s. ansorgei* Zedlitz of southern Angola. The differences separating the two southern races are known to be rather subtle and resulting therefrom the distributions in the literature are both nebulous and contradictory. For instance, specimens stated to resemble in all essential details those from Damaraland are recorded from as far to the south-east as Natal (*vide* Roberts, "Birds of South Africa", 1940, p.278), from which territory the species is not listed by Sclater, "Systema Avium Aethiopicarum," 2, 1930, p.402, nor by Zedlitz, "Ornithologische Monatsberichte," vol. 29, 5/6, 1921, pp. 51-52. Indeed, Roberts goes so far as to suggest that the nominotypical subspecies is confined to the southern parts of the Cape Province, all the other populations of the species found south of Angola being referable to the race *P. s. cinerascens*,

but Vincent, in his recently published "Check List of the Birds of South Africa," 1952, p.66, restricts *P. s. cinerascens* to the South-West Africa—Matabeleland area, placing the other populations, even those of Bechuanaland (!), as *P. s. subcæruleum*. Neither arrangement is in accordance with the normal pattern of geographical variation to be expected in small sedentary South African polytypic species of birds occupying such regions of the sub-continent, and on theoretical grounds alone both arrangements are unsatisfactory, and a critical examination of material recently collected and assembled confirms such a supposition.

The populations which constitute the race *P. s. subcæruleum* are apparently mainly confined to the Cape Province in areas to the south of the Orange River, and are characterized by the dark greyish suffusion to the breast and flanks, reduced quantity or absence of white on abdominal surfaces, and broadly striated throat. In the drier areas to the north of the Orange River, *i.e.*, in South-West Africa, Bechuanaland, eastwards to parts of Southern Rhodesia, etc., the populations differ slightly from those from the Cape Province just dealt with in having the upper-parts a trifle lighter and rather less smoky grey-brown in series, and on the ventral surfaces they are found to be paler on the breast, sides of the body and flanks, and to have the white on the abdomen more extensive and prominent, while the striæ of the throat are generally finer and of a less intense black than in the nominate form of the south. These populations represent the race *P. s. cinerascens*. In the littoral of south-western Angola the birds are still paler and greyer than *P. s. cinerascens* and have much white abdominally, while structurally they are small, wings generally (♂♀) 60–65mm. For these small, pale birds O. Graf Zedlitz has proposed the name *P. s. ansorgei*, 1921. Of this race I have not been able to examine material. In parts of upper Natal the birds are markedly clearer, rather bluer, grey above than either *P. s. subcæruleum*, or *P. s. cinerascens*, lacking almost entirely the brownish cast to the plumage in both of these races, and ventrally they most closely resemble the nominotypical subspecies, differing only in having the striæ of the throat still broader and more intensely black. The bill is also somewhat longer. The differences displayed by the birds from the high interior of Natal are actually greater than the observed differences existing between toptotypical material of the two forms *P. s. subcæruleum* and *P. s. cinerascens*, and seem to warrant the erection of a third geographical race from the south-eastern parts of the range of this species. Recourse to such action is materially strengthened by the knowledge that the population resident in the interior of Natal is isolated both geographically and ecologically from other populations, and enjoys a very restricted distribution on the eastern periphery of the species' range.

While it must be admitted that geographical variation is relatively poorly developed in *P. s. subcæruleum*, four valid races can be recognized to advantage on the basis of the taxonomic series, and the new race I intend to differentiate under the name.

Parisoma subcæruleum orpheanum, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂, adult. Collected on the Estcourt—Weenen road, near Estcourt, central Natal, South Africa. Altitude c. 5,000ft. a.s.l. 22nd

April, 1951. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of The Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, Natal.

Description : Similar to *P. s. subcæruleum* (Vieillot) of the Cape Province but differs in having the upper-parts clearer and more bluish violet-grey with little or no brown wash, and on the underside by having the striæ of the throat still broader and more intensely black. Bill rather longer, thus: ♂ 14–16mm. as against 13–14mm. (measured from skull) in *P. s. subcæruleum*. Differs from *P. s. cinerascens* Reichenow of South-West Africa and adjacent arid areas to the east in having the upper-parts clearer, more bluish violet-grey without the slight brownish wash, which is also present in that race. Ventrally the new race differs from *P. s. cinerascens* in having the white on the abdominal surfaces restricted, the grey on the breast, sides of body and flanks darker, and the throat striæ generally broader and more intensely black. Bill slightly longer.

Measurements of the Type : Wing (flattened) 69, culmen from base 16, tarsus 22, tail 72 mm.

Range : Confined to certain localities in the high interior of Natal (Estcourt, Weenen, Colenso, Ladysmith, etc.). Apparently absent from all districts of southern Natal and from Zululand, and also does not extend to the west and north of its recorded range beyond the limits imposed by the great physical barrier of the Drakensberg Mountains.

Description of the Type : Whole of upper surface light bluish violet-grey, about UV-7–1deg. (*vide* C. & J. Villalobos, "Colour Atlas," 1947); lores, orbital, areas, and ear coverts similar; malar surfaces and entire throat dull white with blackish longitudinal striæ; breast, sides of body and flanks dull bluish grey with slight admixture of dull white; abdominal surface dull white; under tail-coverts cinnamon, about OOS-9–6deg. Wings brownish slate, outer webs of all feathers with bluish violet-grey fringes, except for the bastard-wing feathers which are prominently edged with white; axillaries grey; under wing-coverts grey with narrow white tips. Tail black, three outermost pairs of rectrices with deep white tips, and ultimate pair with white extending up outer web.

Iris, dull creamy white; bill, black; legs and toes black.

Material examined : *P. s. orpheanum*, paratypes, 6; *P. s. subcæruleum*, topotypes, 14; *P. s. cinerascens*, topotypes, 7. *P. s. ansorgei*, not examined.

Remarks : Named *P. s. orpheanum* on account of its delightful song, which recalls similar outpourings by certain Sylviine warblers. I am deeply indebted to the Directors of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, and the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, for the loan of comparative material.

The characters and ranges of the four recognized races of *P. s. subcæruleum* can be defined in synoptic form as follows:

1. *Parisoma subcæruleum subcæruleum* (Vieillot).

Sylvia subcærulea Vieillot, "Nouveau dictionnaire d'histoire naturelle," nouvelle édition, vol. XI, 1817, p. 188: Gouritz River, southern Cape Province (ex Levaillant).

Upper-parts dark smoky grey-brown; throat dull white with broad blackish longitudinal streaks; breast, sides of body and flanks dull bluish grey; abdomen with little white; under tail-coverts cinnamon.

Measurements : ♂♀ wings 63–71, culmen from base 13–14mm.

Distribution : The southern and eastern parts of the Cape Province, but precise limits not clear and presumably intergrades with *P. s. cinerascens* over a considerable area in districts of the Northern Cape and Orange Free State.

2. *Parisoma subcæruleum orpheanum* Clancey, subsp.nov. Herewith. Similar to *P. s. subcæruleum* but clearer, more bluish violet-grey above, and with the striations on the throat broader and deeper black. Bill slightly longer.

Measurements : ♂♀ wings 67–72, culmen from base 14–16 mm.

Distribution : Confined to and isolated in certain districts of the interior of Natal.

3. *Parisoma subcæruleum cinerascens* Reichenow.

Parisoma subcæruleum cinerascens Reichenow, "Ornithologische Monatsberichte," vol. 10, 1902, p.77: Hereroland, i.e., Damaraland, South-West Africa.

Closely similar to *P. s. subcæruleum* on upper-parts but averaging slightly paler and greyer; on underside with paler grey on breast, sides of body and flanks, and more extensive white over abdomen; striations on throat rather finer and not so intensely black; cinnamon of under tail-coverts rather duller.

Measurements : ♂♀ wings 66–72, culmen from base 13–14 mm.

Distribution : The most widely distributed of the races. Ranges from South-West Africa, (?) and parts of southern Angola, eastwards through Ngamiland and Bechuanaland to Matabeleland, Southern Rhodesia, eastern and northern Transvaal, and apparently parts of the Orange Free State. Intergrading to the south of its wide distribution with *P. s. subcæruleum* and to the north-west with *P. s. ansorgei*.

4. *Parisoma subcæruleum ansorgei* Zedlitz.

Parisoma subcæruleum ansorgei Zedlitz, "Ornithologische Monatsberichte," vol. 29, 5/6, 1921, p. 52: Benguella Town, Angola.

Nearest to *P. s. cinerascens* but lighter and even purer grey above, and still paler below, the grey on the sides of the body very light. Much white over the abdomen. Wing feathers with paler outer webs. Smaller.

Measurements : ♂♀ wings 60–70 (After Zedlitz).

Distribution : Little information. Known mainly from Benguella and the littoral of south-western Angola.

On *Caprimulgus pectoralis*, *Caprimulgus fervidus*, *Caprimulgus fraenatus* and *Caprimulgus rufigena quansae*

By CAPTAIN C. H. B. GRANT & MR. C. W. MACKWORTH-PRAED.

Received 8th February, 1954

In the Bull. B.O.C. 58, p.34, 1937, we considered that *C. frænatus* Salvadori, should be placed as a race of *C. pectoralis* Cuvier.

Roberts, Bds. S.Afr. 1940: Vincent, Check-List Bds. S.Afr. 1952;



1954. "Comments on geographical variation in the TitBabbler *Parisoma subcaeruleum* (Vieillot) and the description of a new race from high interior of Natal." *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 74, 30–33.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/125678>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/81418>

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>.