



WHITEHEAD'S SWIFTLET
(*COLLOCALIA WHITEHEADI* OGILVIE-GRANT)
IN NEW GUINEA AND MELANESIA

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During the visit of the Noona Dan Expedition to the mountains of New Ireland in April 1962 we collected a specimen of Whitehead's Swiftlet (*Collocalia whiteheadi*), a species previously quite unknown in the Bismarck Archipelago. The bird was caught in one of our mist-nets, but we did not meet with the species any more. We constantly looked out for it, but never observed it with certainty; all suspicious specimens shot turned out to be *Collocalia vanikorensis*.

In order to study the subspecific status of the specimen from New Ireland I compared it with the collection of this species in the American Museum of Natural History during a visit to New York in the summer of 1962. I wish to thank the authorities of the American Museum of Natural History and Dr. DEAN AMADON, Dr. TOM GILLIARD and Dr. CHARLES VAURIE of the Department of Ornithology, for all kind help rendered to me during my work at the museum.

Whitehead's Swiftlet is a rare bird in collections. Generally it inhabits remote mountains, difficult of access, and feeds higher up in the air than do the smaller species of Swiftlets. It is, therefore, not easy to collect it. Apart from the bird obtained by us in New Ireland, all specimens of Whitehead's Swiftlet collected in New Guinea and Melanesia are kept in the American Museum of Natural History. In the present study, therefore, the entire material known has been examined. My studies gave to result that it is necessary to distinguish between the following four forms in New Guinea and Melanesia:

Collocalia whiteheadi papuensis Rand

Collocalia whiteheadi papuensis Rand, 1941, Amer. Mus. Novitates, no. 1102, p. 10. — Idenburg River, Netherland New Guinea, at 1800 meters altitude. (Type in the American Museum of Natural History examined.)

Diagnosis: Tarsus densely feathered along its entire length. Upper-parts black with a slight greenish iridescence, feathers of nape with greyish white basis, strongly contrasting with the black tips. Throat silvery grey, contrasting with the darker, sooty-brown breast and abdomen.

Measurements: Wing-length of ♂♂ ad.: 128, 136, 139, 140, 141 mm; ♀♀ ad.: 129, 133 mm; ♂ juv.: 123 mm; ♂♂ ad. with longest primaries in growth: 127, 132, 133 mm.

Material: RAND's original series of 11 specimens, the only ones known.

Range: Northeastern Netherland New Guinea, known from Hollandia and the Idenburg River area, from sea level up to 1800 meters altitude.

Collocalia whiteheadi nuditarsus, new subspecies

Type: ♀ ad., Baroka, Bioto Creek, near Hall Sound, Papua, at 30 meters altitude, 18th April 1933, coll. R. ARCHBOLD and A. L. RAND, in The American Museum of Natural History, no. 419805.

Diagnosis: Differs strikingly from *papuensis* in having a bare tarsus, completely devoid of feathers; also in having the upper-parts dull black, almost without any iridescence, the feathers of nape with blackish grey basis, not—or almost not—contrasting with the black tips; the colour of throat not differing from that of breast and abdomen, but the entire under-parts being uniform sooty-brown, darker than in *papuensis*.

Measurements: Wing-length of ♂ ad.: 138 mm; ♀♀ ad.: 137, 139 mm; ♀ ad. with longest primaries in growth: 130 mm.

Material: Five specimens: ♀ ad., Mt. Goliath, southeastern Netherland New Guinea, at 5000 feet altitude, MEEK coll.; ♂ ad. and ♀ ad., Kubor Mountains, Central Highlands, at 5000–6000 feet altitude, GILLIARD coll.; ♀ ad., Baroka, Papua, at 30 meters altitude, ARCHBOLD and RAND coll. The fifth specimen is kept in spirit; it is an adult, unsexed specimen from Kubor Mountains, GILLIARD coll., and was examined for tarsus feathering only, not for plumage coloration. MAYR and GILLIARD (1954, Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., vol. 103, art. 4, p. 343) mention two specimens in spirit, but one of them could not be located.

Range: Southern and southeastern New Guinea, south of the watershed, known from Mt. Goliath, Kubor Mountains and Baroka (near Hall sound), from sea level up to about 1800 meters altitude.

Remarks: The difference between *papuensis* and *nuditarsus* in the feathering of the tarsus is very striking. The differences in plumage coloration are constant and easy to be seen in all specimens. The darkest coloration is found in the male from Kubor Mountains, but the type specimen almost matches it; the Mt. Goliath specimen and the female from Kubor Mountains are not quite as dark on the under-side as the two other specimens, but match them in the coloration of the upper-parts. RAND (1941, Amer. Mus. Novitates, no. 1102, p. 10), when describing *papuensis*, also examined the Mt. Goliath and the Baroka bird and remarked that they differed from the rest in having unfeathered tarsus and darker throat.

This form is very similar to nominate *whiteheadi* from northern Luzon, Philippine Islands, which also has an unfeathered tarsus and dull black upper-parts of the same colour shade as in *nuditarsus*. However, the under-parts in nominate *whiteheadi* are paler, with a more brownish tinge and less conspicuous shaft-streaks. The two forms do not differ in proportions; wing-length in *whiteheadi*: ♂ ad. 136 mm, ♀ ad. 134 mm.

***Collocalia whiteheadi leletensis*, new subspecies**

Type: ♀ ad., Lemkamin, Lelet Plateau, central New Ireland, Bismarck Archipelago, at 900 meters altitude, 10th April 1962, coll. F. SALOMONSEN, in Zoologisk Museum, Copenhagen, collector's number 1380.

Diagnosis: Tarsus unfeathered as in *nuditarsus*, and the colour of the under-parts is also exactly similar to that in *nuditarsus*. *C. w. leletensis* differs, however, strikingly from *nuditarsus* in having a grey, contrasting band across the rump and, also, in having a much stronger and darker bluish gloss on the upper-parts.

Measurements: Wing-length of type (♀ ad.): 134 mm (worn).

Material: Only known from the type.

Range: New Ireland; only known from the type locality.

Collocalia whiteheadi orientalis Mayr

Collocalia lowi orientalis Mayr, 1935, Amer. Mus. Novitates, no. 820, p. 3. — Guadalcanar, Solomon Islands. (Type in the American Museum of Natural History examined.)

Diagnosis: Similar to *leletensis*, but differing in having much broader (double as broad) and slightly paler grey rump band; colour of upper-parts

exactly as in *nuditarsus*, without the dark, bluish gloss of *leletensis*; colour of under-parts as in the two preceding forms; tarsus thinly feathered.

Measurements: Wing-length of type (♀ ad.) with longest primaries in growth: 127 mm.

Material: Only known from the type.

Range: Solomon Islands; only known from the type locality.

