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A NEW GENUS AND SPECIES OF PHILIPPINE BIRD

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The birds of the island of Leyte are perhaps the least known of those of any of the major islands of the Philippines. To be sure, the relatively modest elevations of the mountains of this island do not induce high hopes for outstanding new discoveries. Nevertheless, when arrangements were made for collecting on Leyte on behalf of the Philippine National Museum and the American Museum of Natural History, we looked forward keenly to the results. We were not, however, prepared for the almost immediate receipt by air mail of four specimens of what appears to be a very distinct new genus and species of babbler of the family Timaliidae (see frontispiece). This bird is related, although not at all closely, to the genus *Macronus* of the East Indies and the Philippines.

The collectors were Mr. Manuel Celestino of the well known collecting family and Mr. Godofredo Alcasid, Chief Zoologist of the Philippine Museum. Arrangements for field work had been initiated by Dr. Eduardo Quisumbing, then Director of the Philippine National Museum, to which institution will go two of the four specimens of the babbler.

Micromacronus, new genus

Diagnosis.—Presumably related to the genus *Macronus* of the family, or subfamily, of babblers, Timaliidae. It agrees with *M. pilosus* of that genus in having three patches of specialized feathers, one on the back and one on each side. These feathers are elongated, with white, slightly thickened shafts and with the vanes reduced to scattered barbs (fig. 1). In other species of *Macronus* such feathers are present only on the back.

The principal characters in which *Micromacronus* differs from *Macronus* are the following: Size very much smaller. Tail relatively much shorter, about 75 per cent of wing, rather than nearly or quite as long as wing. Tarsi and feet slender and tiny, especially for a babbler. Bill relatively thin, slightly decurved. Coloration very different with bright yellow underparts and supraocular stripe.

Were it not for the presence of the specialized feathers, *Micromacronus* is so different from *Macronus* that no relationship would be suspected; indeed, it would be difficult to place the new bird as to family. Probably, after eliminating the Dicaeidae on the basis of wing structure, it would be regarded as a leaf warbler.

The genus *Mixornis* is now sometimes included in *Macronus*, although its members lack the specialized feathers mentioned above. In coloration some forms of *Mixornis* show a slight approach to *Micromacronus* in that they have a yellowish throat, breast and superciliary.

Micromacronus leytensis, new species

Type.—Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. no. 767553, adult ♂; taken at Dagami, Barrio of Patok, eastern shoulder of Mount Lobi (1500 feet), Leyte, Philippine Islands, August 11, 1961. Collectors: Godofredo Alcasid and Manuel Celestino. Measurements of type in millimeters: wing, 41; tail, 29; tarsus, 15; culmen, 9.5; length to which back feathers project beyond end of tail, 5.5.

Diagnosis.—The same as for the genus, of which it is the only known member.

Description.—Male: crown, upper and midback, wings, tail, bright olive green; crown feathers indistinctly tipped with black. Wing and tail quills fuscous black glossed with bright olive green along



MICROMACRONUS LEYTENSIS
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Male (above) and female, slightly less than natural size
From a painting by Arthur Singer

outer vanes of feathers, so that wing, when folded, is green like back. Plumage of lower back and rump consists of a patch of specialized, elongated feathers with heavy conspicuous white shafts, with vanes reduced on exposed portions to a few scattered barbs. Specialized feathers 40 to 45 millimeters long, reaching beyond the end of the tail. Approximately 15 millimeters of end of each feather abruptly brown, not white, and hence blending with tail and less conspicuous. In the specimen in best feather, the clump of back plumes, somewhat decurved terminally, extends beyond the tail as a swatch or "pony tail." Similar but sparser clump of white plumes springs from each side of body in its mid-

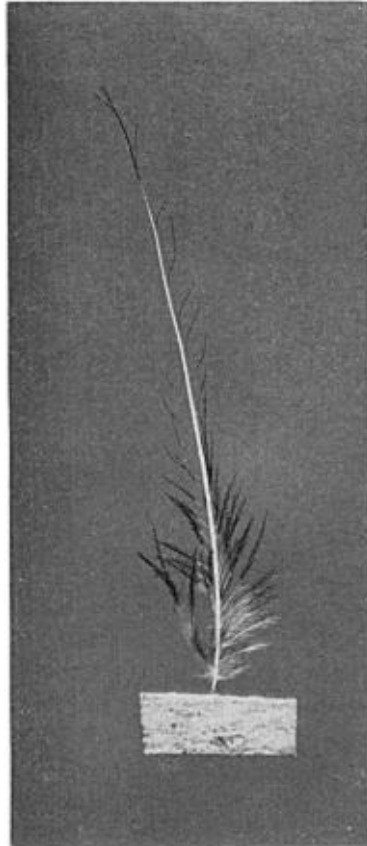


Fig. 1. Specialized back feather of *Micromacronus leytensis* showing the elongated, white, slightly thickened shaft with the vanes reduced to scattered barbs. The length of this feather is about four centimeters.

section and extends back along sides of body and below the tail. Side plumes show little tendency to darken at tips. Underparts, lores, and superciliary stripe bright, clear yellow, becoming tinged with orange on loreal spots which are somewhat expanded so that olive green of crown is confined to a narrow stripe between them extending forward to base of bill. Yellow becomes slightly dusky, mixed with greenish on cheeks. Thighs in part dusky.

Female: the only specimen sexed as female differs from males in slightly duller and more olive back. Superciliary stripe buffy white, especially on lores. Yellow of underparts a bit paler, becoming whitish on throat. Mr. H. G. Deignan pointed out to me that inasmuch as the sexes are usually alike in babblers, it is possible that the differences just noted indicate immaturity rather than sex.

Soft parts: in both sexes eye red. Bill black. Tarsus greenish gray, the toes straw yellow, contrasting with tarsus; claws pale horn color.

Measurements (see above for type). Wing, ♂ 40, 41, ♀ 41.5; tail, ♂ 28, 31, ♀ 30.5. Total length of skins (to end of tail feathers), 76-81.

Micromacronus is, with the exception of some members of the Trochilidae, one of the smallest birds in the world. The tiny "bush-tit," *Psaltria exilis* of Java has a smaller body and may be the smallest songbird (Oscines) in the world. Its wing, however, averages a millimeter or two longer than in *Micromacronus* and its tail is much longer.

The smallest of the flowerpeckers (Dicaeidae) is apparently *Dicaeum pygmaeum pygmaeum* of the Philippines. This stubby-tailed bird is shorter than *Micromacronus* but of about the same bulk; its wing averages a couple of millimeters longer.

Other than hummingbirds, the only birds I have found with a wing shorter than in *Micromacronus* are the tiny tyrannid flycatchers of the genera *Myiornis* and *Polystictus* (= *Habrura*), in some forms of which the wing is only about 35 millimeters long. Even among the hummingbirds only the smaller species have a shorter wing than *Micromacronus*, but of course their wings are long and narrow, and in body size, the important thing, many of them are much smaller. In making further comparisons one should note that the measurements presented in this paper are of the "flattened" wing.

Mr. Alcasid writes as follows: "They were found at an elevation of 1,500 feet on the eastern shoulders of Mt. Lobi. The original forest is broken by patches of clearings. All four were taken at the edge of the forest, feeding on a tall [flowering] tree [45 feet up], more than ten in the group. They were noisy and active, and kept on transferring from branch to branch. At first we thought they were white-eyes. When we got one and noticed they were different, we tried to get more, but succeeded in downing only four; in about two minutes they were gone. Mr. Celestino waited for a long time under the tree while I went to examine other similar trees in the area, but to no avail. Feeding with them in the same tree were *Zosterops* and *Dicaeum*. The next day we returned to the same tree, but luck was not with us. We got instead *Dicaeum*, *Zosterops* and *Orthotomus*."

American Museum of Natural History, New York, November 9, 1961.