

IDENTITY OF SKUAS *CATHARACTA* IN SRI LANKA

R.I. DE SILVA

*Hepporawatte, Dampe, Madapatha, Piliyandala, Sri Lanka**Received 26 January 1989, accepted 28 May 1989*

Five skuas *Catharacta* sp. have been collected in Sri Lanka. These include four specimens (Colombo Museum Collection Nos. 317, 317A, 317B and a skin reportedly in the British Museum) identified as Subantarctic Skuas *Catharacta skua antarctica* (= *C. a. antarctica*) and a fifth specimen (Colombo Museum Collection No. 318) identified as a South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki* at the British Museum in 1886 (Wait 1925, Whistler 1944, Deraniyagala 1960). A specimen attributed to *Stercorarius antarcticus* by Legge (1880) is not included because the original description is inconclusive and the specimen is no longer extant (Wait 1925). In the light of Devillers (1977) suggestion that all Sri Lankan specimens are probably of South Polar Skuas, I examined and made measurements, following guidelines given by King *et al.* (1975), of the four specimens in the Colombo Museum Collection (Table 1). Some of these were in poor condition, especially No. 317. Measurements of the Sri Lankan specimens (Table 1) were compared with those of the *Catharacta* species and subspecies in the British Museum (Table 2) as given by Devillers (1977) and of other specimens (Table 3) listed by Ali & Ripley (1982).

Tarsus and culmen lengths of the Sri Lankan specimens (Table 1) are significantly greater than those of either *C. a. antarctica* or *C. maccormicki* (Tables 2 & 3), but the measurements are in agreement with those of the Brown Skua *C. a. lonnbergi* (Tables 2 & 3). I therefore consider the correct identity of these specimens to be *C. a. lonnbergi*. Hence I propose the deletion of

C. a. antarctica and the addition of *C. a. lonnbergi* to the list of Sri Lankan skuas.

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TABLE 1

MEASUREMENTS OF SKUAS *CATHARACTA* SP. IN THE COLOMBO MUSEUM, SRI LANKA

Specimen No.	Culmen (mm)	Tarsus (mm)	Locality collected	Collection date
317	55	L. 78 R. 76	Kalutara	22 September 1907
317A	56	L. 81 R. Missing	near Chilaw	June 1886
317B	58	L. 73 R. 74	Wellawatte	October 1949
318	58	L. 76 R. 77	Foul Point, Trincomalee	1886

TABLE 2

MEASUREMENTS OF SKUAS *CATHARACTA* SP. IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM, AFTER DEVILLERS (1977)

Taxon	No.		Culmen (mm)	Tarsus (mm)
Subantarctic Skua <i>C. a. antarctica</i>	35	Mean	45,6	68,6
		Min.	41,2	61,5
		Max.	49,5	72,9
Brown Skua <i>C. a. lonnbergi</i>	40	Mean	51,7	77,0
		Min.	47,5	71,5
		Max.	56,0	85,0
South Polar Skua <i>C. macconnicki</i>	80	Mean	46,6	63,8
		Min.	42,6	58,5
		Max.	49,6	70,0

TABLE 3.

MEASUREMENTS OF SKUAS *CATHARACTA* SP., AFTER ALI & RIPLEY (1982)

Taxon	No.		Culmen (mm)	Tarsus (mm)
Subantarctic Skua <i>C. a. antarctica</i>	16	Mean	48,8	67,5
		Min.	46,5	64,3
		Max.	50,8	70,0
Brown Skua <i>C. a. lombergi</i>	14	Mean	56,0	75,2
		Min.	53,5	70,8
		Max.	58,2	79,3
South Polar Skua <i>C. maccormicki</i>	9	Mean	49,3	64,1
		Min.	47,0	62,4
		Max.	51,8	65,5