

GENERAL NOTES

The name of the White-faced Titmouse of the Philippines.—C. E. Hellmayr, in his 'Kritische Bemerkungen über die Paridae, Sittidae, und Certhiidae' (Jour. für Orn., 49: 170–172, April, 1901), proposed the generic name *Penthornis* (type, *Melaniparus semilarvatus*), and applied to what he considered a second species the specific name *luzoniensis* Gmelin, after Sonnerat's figure. Later on ('Genera Avium, Paridae,' Brussels, 1911) he used the older name *tessacourbe* Scopoli, based on the same plate.

In his 'Manual of Philippine Birds,' Manila, 1909, pp. 108–109, Richard C. McGregor had already applied to the White-faced Titmouse of Mindanao the name of *Penthornis tessacourbe*. In our 'Notes on the Taxonomy of the Birds of the Philippines' [Zoologica, 30 (3): 114, November 15, 1945], we have shown that *Penthornis* is a synonym of *Parus*, and that the species *tessacourbe* is very closely related to *Parus varius*.

I now find that the name *tessacourbe* is not applicable to the species, and that the proper name is *Parus semilarvatus* (Salvadori, Atti Soc. Ital. Sci. Nat., 8: 375, 1865), with two subspecies: *semilarvatus* from Luzon, and *nehrhorni* (Blasius, Jour. für Orn., 38: 147, 1890), from Mindanao.

In his manual, McGregor writes:

"*Muscicapa tessacourbe* Scopoli, and *M. luzoniensis* Gmelin were both based upon Sonnerat's plate. The species was unrecognized until Platen collected a male in Mindanao. Blasius described this specimen under the name *Micropus nehrhorni*, suggesting the probability that it was the same as *Muscicapa luzoniensis*. Sonnerat's figure does not look much like a *Penthornis*."

If we now turn to Sonnerat's figure and description of the bird ['Voyage à la Nouvelle-Guinée': 59, pl. 27, 1776 (Paris)] we find that the text reads as follows:

"La quatrième espèce de Gobe-mouche noir, est un peu plus gros que les précédents; il est aussi d'une forme plus courte et plus ramassée; on le trouve à Madagascar, ainsi qu'aux Philippines; la tête, la gorge, le col en arrière, le dos, les ailes et la queue, sont d'un noir changeant en violet; la poitrine, le ventre et les côtes sont d'un gris noirâtre; il y a sur chaque aile, dans son milieu, une tache blanche; le bec et les pieds sont noirs; l'iris tire sur le brun."

It is obvious that this does not fit in at all with the characteristics of the White-faced Titmouse. As to the figure, it does not correspond to any known bird. It has very long rictal bristles, like a true flycatcher, a long, thin curved bill, and gray breast, abdomen and rump, contrasting with the black throat and upper parts. The white patch on the wing is large and situated on the lesser wing-coverts, while in the Titmouse it is restricted to the base of the primaries and outer secondaries.

That the name in any case cannot be applied to a Philippine bird, in spite of the general heading "Gobbes-mouche de l'Isle de Luçon" three plates representing five birds, and the previous mention that he had seen there no fewer than five "Gobbes-mouches," is evident from Sonnerat's text, giving Madagascar as the principal locality and the Philippines as a secondary one only, the emphasis being laid on the fact that the name "tessacourbe" was used for the bird by the natives of the former island. The only black Madagascar species to which it might possibly be applied is *Copsychus alboscapularis*, but this bird has no long rictal bristles, and although its lower belly is sometimes mottled with white or brown it cannot be said to possess a gray breast and abdomen!

It appears therefore that *Muscicapa tessacourbe* should be considered as unidentifiable.—JEAN DELACOUR, *American Museum of Natural History, New York 24, N. Y.*