

CORRESPONDENCE

"NEW SPECIES OF BIRDS DESCRIBED FROM 1938 TO 1941"

THE EDITOR OF THE AUK:—In The Auk, 60, 249–262, 1943, Zimmer and Mayr have, in their list of recently described birds, made some comments under the various new names. These comments, and in some cases decisions, are undoubtedly most useful, especially where it is known for certain that the new names given are synonyms of species already discovered. If the authors had left it at that no objections could be raised, but this unfortunately is not so, and they have in some cases come to conclusions which cannot be allowed to pass without comment.

Page 255. *Treron pemaensis* Pakenham. The authors definitely state this to be a race of *Treron australis* (Linnaeus). Before this bird was given a name it was very carefully compared by the staff and all workers in the Bird Room of the British Museum, not only with *T. australis* but with all the Fruit Pigeons of Africa and Asia, and it was decided that it must be described as a new species and not as a race. *T. australis* was naturally one of the first species to which it was compared and from which it differs in having the whole head, neck, chest to belly and tail gray, the latter with lighter gray ends; mantle and scapulars, inner secondaries and wing coverts, but not the wing shoulder, olive green. It therefore resembles *Treron australis*, *Treron wakefieldi* and *Treron delalandii* only in the vinous wing shoulder, gray under wing coverts, and the pattern of the feathers of the lower belly, thighs and under tail coverts. It is as different from the eastern African mainland Fruit Pigeons as *Treron s. thomae* is from the western African mainland Fruit Pigeons.

Page 256. *Alethe lowei* Grant & Praed. The authors state that this is a race of *Cossypha anomala* (Shelley). This specimen was compared to all known *Cossypha*, *Alethe* and *Sheppardia*, etc., by myself and others. I may say that the naming of this bird was by no means hurried, and it was looked at and compared with other genera and species over a period of at least two years. It has nothing to do with *Alethe anomala*, being much smaller, having a much shorter bill; is above more olive with no chestnut wash; tail more olive not nearly so chestnut; no gray stripe over eye; no gray on malar region; no gray edging to wing feathers, coverts or edge of wing; no white throat and not gray below, and, as stated in the description, is nearer to *Alethe montana* Reichenow (which is not a race of *A. anomala*) but it is not even a race of this species as it has a smaller bill; is altogether a smaller bird; tail is more olive; there is no chestnut spot in front of eye, and the underparts are brown not olivaceous.

As stated under 'Remarks' in Bull. Brit. Orn. Club, 41: 61, 1941, its general appearance is so close to *Sheppardia sharpei sharpei* (Shelley) that it can be mistaken for a *Sheppardia* and was so recorded by Lynes in Jour. für Orn., 82: 82, 1934.

Page 256. *Sheppardia bensoni* Kinnear. Macdonald took considerable trouble and spent much time on this group, and I can assure Messrs. Zimmer and Mayr that it is, and not 'apparently,' a race of *Sheppardia gunningi* Haagner, having the gray primary coverts and gray outer edges of outer primaries of that species as given by Macdonald in the Ibis, 14 (4): 667, 1940.

Page 256. *Scepomycter winifredae* Moreau. The authors have tentatively placed this in the genus *Mixornis* on Dr. Chapin's remark that it reminded him 'superficially' of that genus. This specimen was not only most carefully examined by all in the Bird Room of the British Museum but was sent to the Berlin and Tervueren museums for Drs. Stresemann's and Schouteden's opinions. In consultation with the staff and other workers in the Bird Room it has now been compared to *Mixornis* from which it differs in the hooded nostril; longer tarsus; narrower tail feathers; no indication of streaks on throat; first primary broader and tip less pointed. It has also been compared with *Zosterornis* with which it agrees in the hooded nostril, but from

which it differs in the shorter tail and narrower tail feathers; bill longer and narrower; first primary broader and tip less pointed. It is undoubtedly closely allied to *Artisornis* but cannot remain in that genus as it has a hooded nostril and a longer tail. Moreau in Bull. Brit. Orn. Club, 64: 44, 1946, has now described the adult male and this shows that the color pattern is very different from that of *Mixornis* and has nothing whatever to do with that genus.

Page 260. *Zosterops chyuluensis* van Someren. This is not considered to be a race of *Zosterops virens* Sundevall. Both Messrs. Zimmer and Mayr appear to have overlooked van Someren's grouping in Jour. E. Afr. & Uganda Nat. Hist. Soc., 14: 117, 1939.—C. H. B. GRANT, 8, Cornwall Gardens Court, 50, Cornwall Gardens, London, S. W. 7.

THE EDITOR OF THE AUK.—In the paper referred to by Captain Grant¹ all remarks on Old World birds were made by Mayr, as is stated in an introductory paragraph, while Dr. Zimmer discussed the New World species. The undersigned therefore takes the sole responsibility for the following remarks.

Page 255. *Treron pemaensis* Pakenham. Contrary to Captain Grant's assertion, I merely stated: "No character is given in the original description which would militate against considering this form a race of *Treron australis*." Captain Grant's comments do not alter the validity of this statement. It is, of course, known that the species criteria of some ornithologists are different from those of others. I might add that the specific status of several of the mainland *Treron* is equally open to question, but *australis* is in any case the oldest name.

Page 256. *Alethe lowei* Grant and Mackworth-Præd. Only a single female is known. I therefore stated: "Whether *Cossypha anomala lowei* is the correct nomenclature remains to be seen . . . The taxonomy of these thrushes is still unsettled in regard to the validity of genera as well as species. A complete revision is needed, based on more material than is available at present." No such revision has yet been published since the above remarks were written.

Page 256. *Sheppardia bensoni* Kinnear. When the two ornithologists of the British Museum, Kinnear and Macdonald, disagree with each other whether a given form should be considered a species or a subspecies, the outsider can only state that the latest discussant appears to be right and refer to his paper, which I did. Since Captain Grant also agrees with this decision, I do not quite understand what his objections are.

Page 256. *Scelopomycter winifredae* Moreau. I am sorry to disagree with Captain Grant, but I still consider it bad taxonomic practice to name a new genus on the basis of a single immature specimen in such a notoriously difficult group as that involving the borderline genera between the warblers and the babblers.

Page 260. *Zosterops chyuluensis* van Someren. It is surprising that Captain Grant should want to uphold the specific distinctness of this form since van Someren himself conceded the purely provisional nature of the specific designation. There is nothing in van Someren's grouping to which Captain Grant refers which would indicate that groups 1 and 2 are not conspecific with *virens*.

Finally, I would like to state that in a review like that prepared by Dr. Zimmer and myself, one is forced to make certain decisions on the basis of the published data. Additional information may necessitate modifications. Colonel Meinterzhagen, for example, has communicated to me unpublished evidence, not contained in the rather meager original description of *Sylvia ticehursti* Meinertzhagen, which indicates that this form is a valid species.—E. MAYR, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

¹ MAYR, E., AND ZIMMER, J. T. New species of birds described from 1938 to 1941, The Auk, 60: 249-262, 1943.