

*LUSCINIA MEGARHYNCHOS* BREHM IN THE WESTERN  
PALAEARCTIC REGION, AND A NEW RACE FROM  
THE BRITISH ISLES

BY PHILLIP A. CLANCEY AND ADOLPH VON JORDANS

IN the past, the majority of Palaearctic workers have been content to treat the European and North African populations of the Old World Nightingale as of one race, namely, *Luscinia megarhynchos megarhynchos* Brehm, 1831, from Germany, but that other races are separable has been shown by Parrot and over many years by von Jordans. As a result of researches recently carried out, we are now of the opinion that at least four races, including the typical one, are recognizable in Europe and North Africa.

Dr. J. M. Harrison (*Ibis*, 1933: 594) has alluded to the fact that British breeding examples of *L. megarhynchos* differ from those from Bulgaria in that they are not so pale and grayish on the backs nor so white on the ventral surfaces. We have investigated further the differences noted by Harrison with a series amassed for the purpose in Suffolk. We find that if British breeding birds are compared with exact toptotypical material of *L. m. megarhynchos* the differences are even more prominent than when they are laid alongside Balkan examples.

In the series, British breeding *L. megarhynchos* are of a noticeably duller and less rufous shade of brown on the upperparts, wings and tails, and on the undersides the breasts and flanks are duller and more grayish than certainly ever seems to be so in the true German bird. We now consider it advisable to differentiate these occidental *L. megarhynchos* populations from Great Britain as a new race, and in recognition of their dull coloration we designate it,

***Luscinia megarhynchos caligiformis***, new subspecies

TYPE: Male, adult, breeding. Martlesham, Woodbridge, East Suffolk, south-eastern England. May 4, 1941. In the Clancey collection. CO-TYPE: Male, adult, breeding. Martlesham, Woodbridge, East Suffolk, south-eastern England. June 11, 1941. In the collection of the Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, Germany.

DISTRIBUTION: Confined as a regular breeding bird to England south of a line from Wash to Severn. North and west of the Wash-Severn line it rapidly decreases in numbers and is not known as a breeding bird from northern England, Scotland or Ireland. Winter quarters in tropical Africa are not at present known.

NOTE: The populations found in north-western France, Belgium, and

Holland, require further study to ascertain their affinities. It should be appreciated by those who study *L. megarhynchos* that series of breeding birds are seldom uniform owing to the differing stages of wear. Some examples arrive on the breeding grounds at the end of April in considerably abraded dress, and they appear paler than those in which the plumage is not worn to any palpable degree.

*Luscinia megarhynchos luscinioides* von Jordans (Falco, 1923, Sonderheft: 3) was founded on a breeding series of 26 skins, mostly taken on a second collecting trip to the Balearic Islands by von Jordans. The criteria used largely in the 1923 separation of *L. m. luscinioides* had already been discussed in 'Die Vogelfauna Mallorcas,' published in 1914. Further information in support of the recognition of this race of the Nightingale is given in Journ. für Orn., 1924:162-163, and Nov. Zool., 1928: 282. Hartert and Steinbacher (Vög. Pal. Fauna, Ergänz, 1935: 325) after comparing part of the paratypical series arrived at the conclusion that the differences claimed for the race were insufficient to support its recognition. With this finding we cannot agree. With the very adequate series of *L. megarhynchos* races preserved in the collection of the Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, at our disposal, it has been possible to go into the whole question of the validity of *L. m. luscinioides* once again, and our findings fully substantiate the naming of the Balearic Islands populations.

In *L. m. luscinioides* the wing-formula is as in the Thrush Nightingale, *Luscinia luscinia* (Linnaeus), and the upper-parts have the reddish-brown tones of the typical race replaced by dark grayish-brown coloration, much as in *L. luscinia*. The tail is also darker and less reddish-brown than that of *L. m. megarhynchos*. The song of *L. m. luscinioides* differs from that of the typical race—a fact to which Brehm years ago drew attention in respect of the neighboring Spanish populations. Very exhaustive details in support of this form have already been given, supported by diagrams, by von Jordans (see in particular, Nov. Zool., 1928) and it would be pointless to add further to these. We propose, therefore, to recognize *L. m. luscinioides* on account of its distinctive morphological criteria, and on biological and geographical grounds.

Of *Luscinia megarhynchos corsa* Parrot, 1910, from Ajaccio, Corsica, we can add little that is new, but would remark that on the basis of the material available to us it certainly seems to be a maintainable race. It is recognized by Hartert (Vög. Pal. Fauna, 3: 2167, 1922). Further study of the *L. megarhynchos* populations of the Mediterranean Basin is clearly required. The summarized characters and distributions of the four races dealt with are as follows:

1. *Luscinia megarhynchos megarhynchos* Brehm, 1831: Germany. Upper-parts, wings and tail, red-brown. Under-parts dull white, shaded dusky on breast and flanks. Wing: 82–87 mm. (mostly *ex* Neithammer and Stresemann).

*Distribution*: Germany (except Baltic coast), Poland (west of Vistula), south-western Russia, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, France, (?) southern Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Balkans, Crete, Cyprus, Asia Minor, western Transcaucasia. (?) Also in North Africa from Morocco to Cyrenaica.

2. *Luscinia megarhynchos caligiformis* Clancey and von Jordans, new subspecies. Like *L. m. megarhynchos*, but darker, less rufous, above and on wings and tail. Darker on breast and flanks. Wing: 81–88 mm.

*Distribution*: England—see fuller details given above.

3. *Luscinia megarhynchos corsa* Parrot, 1910: Corsica. Darker red-brown on upper-parts than *L. m. megarhynchos* and smaller in size. Wing: 79–84 mm.

*Distribution*: Corsica.

4. *Luscinia megarhynchos luscinioides* von Jordans, 1923: Balearic Islands. Upper-parts darker grey-brown than in *L. m. megarhynchos* and tail less rufous. Wing-formula as in *L. luscinia*. Wing: 80–87 mm.

*Distribution*: Balearic Islands. (?) Parts of southern Spain.

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9 Craig Road, Cathcart, Glasgow S. 4., Scotland, and Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, Germany, July 27, 1949.