

POSTILLA

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Yale PEABODY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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NEW PASSERINE BIRDS
FROM THE INDO-CHINESE SUBREGION*

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I.

Aware of my interest in the races of the babbling thrush, *Pellorneum ruficeps* Swainson, Dr. Dillon Ripley has sent for my examination five specimens of this bird recently collected by him in the hill country of eastern Assam. Three of them, from the Naga Hills District, prove to agree very well with *P. r. chamealum* Deignan and serve to extend northeastward the range of this form, which is otherwise known from the Garo Hills, Khasi Hills, and Cachar Districts. The remaining two, from Manipur, are the first I have seen from that District, and are apparently sufficiently distinct from all other described populations of Assam and Burma to justify the erection of yet another subspecies, which, at Dr. Ripley's kind invitation, is named below.

For the loan of material for comparison with that in the Yale Peabody Museum and the United States National Museum, I am indebted to Dr. Dean Amadon and the authorities of the American Museum of Natural History.

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Pellorneum ruficeps vocale, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (Y.P.M., No. 12007) collected at Kangle-tongbi (ca. lat. 24°59'N., long. 93°54'E.), elev. 2933 ft., Chief Commissioner's District of Manipur (formerly Manipur State), October 19, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley (original number 33).

Diagnosis: while inseparable by characters of the under parts from *P. r. chamelum* (Cachar District), the new form differs from *chamelum* by having the forehead, crown, and nape chestnut (rather than rufous); the blackish-brown centers to the feathers of the uppermost back obsolescent (rather than sharply defined); the olivaceous brown of the remaining upper parts deeper in tone.

From *P. r. hilarum* (Pakkoku District, Burma), it differs in having the forehead, crown, and nape chestnut (rather than rufous); the blackish-brown centers to the feathers of the uppermost back more clearly defined; the olivaceous brown of the remaining upper parts much deeper in tone; the under parts more strongly washed with buff, and with the central streaks of the feathers of the breast and sides of the abdomen broader and more numerous.

Range: the valley of central Manipur.

Remarks: I have given detailed comparisons of the new race only with the two that occur nearest its range, one to the west and northwest of Manipur, the other to the southeast. From such more distant forms as *ripleyi* (Lakhimpur District south of the Brahmaputra) and *stageri* (Myitkyina District, Burma), it is immediately separable by its obsolescent (not well-defined) dark centers to the feathers of the uppermost back, as well as by other characters.

II.

I have for some time been aware that the population of *Oligura castaneo-coronata* (Burton) inhabiting Szechwan and northwestern Yunnan could not properly be combined with

either of the recognized races, the nominate one from the Himalayas or *O. c. abadii* (Delacour and Jabouille).

Again I am indebted to the authorities of the Yale Peabody Museum and the American Museum of Natural History for the loan of comparative material that enables me to define the characters of the new form.

Oligura castaneo-coronata ripleyi, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (U.S.N.M., No. 296605) collected in the Likiang Mountains, Yunnan Province, China, in June 1923, by Joseph F. C. Rock (original number 584).

Diagnosis: from *O. c. castaneo-coronata* separable by significantly greater length of wing and tail (see measurements below) and the slightly paler and brighter orange-rufous of the pileum.

From *O. c. abadii* distinguishable by slightly greater length of wing and tail and the distinctly paler and brighter orange-rufous (without brownish cast) of the pileum, which is, moreover, sharply defined from the olive green of the mantle, rather than insensibly intergrading with it.

Measurements (mm.):

O. c. castaneo-coronata (16 specimens)

Wing: 45-50 (avg. 16 spec.: 47.25)

Tail: 21-26 (avg. 12 spec.: 23.5)

O. c. ripleyi (7 specimens)

Wing: 52-57 (avg. 7 spec.: 55.4)

Tail: 28-32 (avg. 7 spec.: 30.3)

O. c. abadii (4 specimens)

Wing: 50-53 (avg. 4 spec.: 51.5)

Tail: 27-29 (avg. 4 spec.: 28)

Remarks: Delacour (*IBIS*, 84, 1942, p. 515), removing this species from the genus *Tesia*, has established for it the new generic name *Chlorotesia* (there misspelled *Chorotesia*; but see *ibid.* the seventh line below), in the belief that *Oligura*, like *Tesia*, has *Tesia cyaniventer* Hodgson for genotype. This is, however, not the case.

Oligura of Hodgson first appeared in Gray's ZOOLOGICAL MISCELLANY, 1844, p. 82, as a *nomen nudum*, with mention of *Oligura (Tesia) cyaniventer* and *O. flaviventer*.

The genus was first properly diagnosed in PROCEEDINGS OF THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, 13, 1845, p. 25, with reference to the same two species, in reverse order.

In THE GENERA OF BIRDS, 1, 1849, p. [156], G. R. Gray affirms that *T[esia]. castaneo-coronata* (Burton), of which *Tesia flaviventer* Hodgson is listed as a synonym, is the genotype of *Oligura* Hodgson, as he does again in CATALOGUE OF THE GENERA AND SUBGENERA OF BIRDS CONTAINED IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM, 1855, p. 31 (where, for the first time, he treats *Oligura* as a valid genus). Thus, since 1849, *Sylvia? castaneo-coronata* Burton has been the genotype of *Oligura* Hodgson, by subsequent designation of G. R. Gray.

Having shown that *Oligura* Hodgson is properly applied to *Sylvia? castaneo-coronata* Burton, I must now discuss its homonym, *Oligura* Rüppell. The former first appeared in August 1845, the latter in "1845," and it is not possible to prove that Hodgson's name has priority of publication.

The genotype of Rüppell's name is *Troglodytes micrurus* Rüppell = *Sylvietta brachyura micrura* (Rüppell), a mere sub-species of *Sylvietta brachyura* Lafresnaye, the genotype of *Sylvietta* Lafresnaye, 1839. Rüppell's name never achieved wide currency and can almost certainly never in the future be brought into use; Hodgson's, on the other hand, has been employed by authors for a century. In the circumstances, it seems best simply to *assume* that Hodgson's name antedates Rüppell's (as I have done above), and to consign Delacour's *Chlorotesia* to its synonymy.