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NOTES ON INDIAN BIRDS. VI.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE WREN- BABBLER, *SPELAEORNIS*

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At the suggestion of Dr. Walter Koelz, I have assembled a number of specimens of *Spelaeornis*, the small Wren-babbler whose status I reviewed in 1950 (*Auk*, 67:390-391), and again in 1952 (*Jour. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 50:492-494, and col. pl.). Dr. Koelz has kindly loaned me a series of 10 specimens, which with my own series and 16 specimens of *chocolatinus* and *longicaudatus* from the British Museum and five specimens of *longicaudatus* in the American Museum of Natural History has given me a total of 38 examples of these two species for study. I am most grateful to Dr. Koelz as well as to the authorities of the Institutions concerned for permission to examine this material.

Dr. Koelz' original question concerned my statement (1950 and 1952) that I had examined a specimen of *Spelaeornis longicaudatus* from Kedimai, Manipur, and that thus this species overlapped *S. chocolatinus* in range. As a result, being sympatric, they must be listed as separate species. Dr. Koelz felt (personal communication) that the differences between the species were so slight that they must be considered as all one.

On further examination I find I must stick to my original statement that these are two valid species, and it may be worthwhile here to list the differences between them.

A. S. longicaudatus. This species described from the Khasia Hills, occurs as far east as Manipur (one specimen known and reexamined). It is rather olive brown above, each feather particularly on the head and upper back, margined narrowly with black; the rump, tail, and outer edges of the wings and wing coverts tinged or edged with rich chestnut or rufous. In most, but not all, specimens (perhaps partly due to poor make-up of the skins) there is a small, buffy, ashy or white streak just over the eye. The lores, cheeks, and ear coverts are ashy. Below there is a small white chin spot and a number of the feathers of the lower breast and abdomen are terminally white, or tipped with white, particularly along the distal end of the shaft and inner margin of the feather. The effect is to produce an irregular patch of white on the abdomen. The rest of the underparts tend to be deep buff to ferruginous buff, rather rufous buff along the flanks. The feathers of the sides of the throat and upper breast have pale buffy shaft streaks, roughly elongated and diamond-shaped in outline. Higher on the sides of the neck, the feathers have subterminal buffy crescent-shaped spots, producing a slightly scaled appearance.

B. S. chokolatinus. This species occurs from Cachar and the Naga Hills south to Manipur, the Chin Hills, Bhamo and the Shan States in Burma, north to Yunuan, and in Tonkin. The nominate form described from Kedimai, Manipur, differs from *longicaudatus* by being deeper, darker olive brown above, but with similar narrow black terminal margins on the head and back. The upper parts including the rump and upper tail coverts and tail tend to be rufous in females, which show considerable dimorphism in this regard. All sexed specimens which show this rufous suffusion are females. The lores, cheeks, and ear coverts, and a circumocular ring are ashy. The underparts show some variation, females tending to have the white areas reduced to a chin spot or small patch, and an abdominal patch similar to that in *longicaudatus*. The majority of specimens,

however, 13 out of 17 or 76 per cent, including all the males and one female (in which the buffy throat patch is very extensive and light in color), have large areas of white or palest buff on the throat extending continuously down to the abdomen and belly, so that the underparts may appear largely white with ashy sides of the neck, and buff or olivaceous flanks and under tail coverts (see the colored plate, 1952, *op. cit.* in which the female is the upper figure, the male the lower).

The feathers of the sides of the neck and flanks in typical *chocolatinus* have narrow white shaft streaks opening out near the tip to a narrow whitish fork enclosing a black terminal spot. The white or buffy feathers of the lower throat and breast have this same pattern, which on the white feathers is indicated simply by a terminal black spot.

These differences are summarized below:

Species	Upperparts	Superciliary	Underparts	Pattern of underparts
A.	brownish	small, usually present	uniform, with white submental spot and patch on abdomen	reduced, pale shaft streaks on sides
B.	dark olive or rufous brown	absent	apparently sexually dimorphic, ranging from largely white (♂), to largely buff (♀)	prominent streaks and black spots on breast and sides

	Measurements:				wing-tail index,	
	wing	mean	tail	mean	per cent	culmen
A. 20 (♂ ♂ ♀ ♀)	49-55	52.8 ± 0.41	45-55*	50.1 ± 1.36	90-100	11-14 mm.
B. 16 (♂ ♂ ♀ ♀)	46-52	50.1 ± 0.43	41.5-47.5	43.8 ± 0.43	81-93	12-14 mm.

* One juvenal female from Mawphlang, Khasia Hills, in the Koelz collection has a tail measurement of only 43.5 mm.

Comparison of the means of the tail length of these two samples gives a figure for σ_d of 1.53 which is statistically significant although somewhat high. It appears, therefore, that there is a distinct likelihood that any specimen of species B., i.e., *chocolatinus*, will tend to have a shorter tail measurement than specimens of the typical form of species A., i.e., *longicaudatus*.

Finally the examination of all available specimens of *chocolatinus* from Manipur and the Naga Hills has convinced me that sexual dimorphism is a prominent feature of this species, that the type and other known specimens of *chocolatinus* from Manipur, although unsexed, are most probably females. In addition Dr. Koelz's series from the Naga Hills contains three strongly rufous colored females, far richer than any in my original series when I described *nagaensis* (*Postilla*, 1951, No. 6:4), with much reduced white areas on the lower parts. As these specimens are inseparable from *chocolatinus*, I feel that all should be combined under that name as follows:

Spelaeornis chocolatinus chocolatinus

(Godwin-Austen and Walden)

Pnoepyga chocolatina Godwin-Austen and Walden, 1875, Ibis, 5(3):252. (Kedimai, Manipur.)

Elachura haplonota Baker, 1892, Ibis 4(6):62. (Hangrum, N. Cachar.)

Spelaeornis chocolatinus nagaensis Ripley, 1951, *Postilla*, No. 6:4. (Mt. Japvo, Naga Hills.)

Range—Assam in the hill ranges of north Cachar from Hangrum east to the Naga Hills in the Japvo area and east to Pfutsero at least, south to Kedimai in Manipur, presumably above 5500-6000 feet, in evergreen forest.