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## THE PHILIPPINE SUBSPECIES OF *CENTROPUS* *BENGALENSIS* (GMELIN) (AVES, CUCULIDAE)

by

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The Philippine populations of *Centropus bengalensis* had been generally included in the widely distributed subspecies *C. b. javanensis* (Dumont), type locality Java, until Deignan (1955) observed that the population of Palawan is actually referable to this subspecies, but: "that those of other islands are separable by having, in fresh plumage, increased nigrescence of the anterior upper parts, the black or blackish area usually extending to the center of the back". For this subspecies Deignan used the name *C. molkenboeri* Bonaparte (1850: 108, "ex Philippinis"), which had been listed as a synonym of *C. b. javanensis* by Shelley (1891), Stresemann (1912) and Hachisuka (1934-1935).

Parkes (1957) confirmed and amplified Deignan's findings as regards the distinctness of the Philippine race, concluding his paper with the remark: "the purpose of this note is to introduce the combination *Centropus bengalensis molkenboeri* into current taxonomic literature so that it may be used without burdensome explanation in forthcoming papers". In a later paper, Parkes (1965) has again discussed the characters of the Philippine subspecies of *C. bengalensis*, using, as in his previous paper, the name *C. b. molkenboeri* for it.

Although I am not aware that the name *molkenboeri* in the combination *C. b. molkenboeri* has been used by other authors (in the post-Parkes publications by Ripley & Rabor, 1958, and Rand & Rabor, 1960, the name *C. b. javanensis* was still applied to Philippine birds), its use has not been challenged either and for that reason, and before that combination becomes too firmly entrenched in literature, I want to state that the holotype of *C. molkenboeri* is still in our collection, and that it does not belong to the species *C. bengalensis*, but is an adult male of *C. viridis viridis*. *C. molken-*

*boeri* Bonaparte, 1850, is a synonym of *C. viridis viridis* (Scopoli, 1786), as had been pointed out long ago by Schlegel (1864).

From this it follows that if Deignan and Parkes are right in regarding the Philippine population of *C. bengalensis* as subspecifically different from *C. b. javanensis*, it remains to be named. Only two Philippine specimens (from Mindoro) were available to me in Leiden, which were indeed found to differ from a large series of specimens from Java, Sumatra, etc. These two specimens forming a somewhat narrow basis for describing a new subspecies, I borrowed eight additional skins (from Mindanao) from the Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen (courtesy of Dr. F. Salomonsen and Mr. S. Bruhn). In this material I failed to find all the distinguishing characters listed by Deignan and Parkes, but consider it, nevertheless, justified to describe the Philippine birds as a slightly differentiated new subspecies as follows:

***Centropus bengalensis philippinensis*** subspecies nova

Diagnosis. — Very similar to *C. b. javanensis*, but the feathers of the upper wing coverts and, less distinctly, the primaries and secondaries with paler margins: primaries and especially secondaries and upper wing coverts usually with more or less distinct black barring, such as is only rarely found in *C. b. javanensis*. Holotype, ♀, 28.V.1888, Calapan, Mindoro, leg. E. L. Moseley (Steere Exp., RMNH cat. no. 1).

Ten specimens (2 from Mindoro, 8 from Mindanao) compared with over one hundred specimens of *C. b. javanensis*, mainly from Java and Sumatra, a few from Malacca, Bangka, Borneo and the Sulu Islands.

Discussion. — The characters given here to differentiate the new subspecies are among those listed by Parkes (1957, 1965); my material does not support the other characters given by that author: minimal iridescence of the black feathers, and dark scapulars and interscapular areas, whereas the contrasting pale shaft-streaks are no more than an average character. The differences between this subspecies and *C. b. javanensis* are, indeed, so slight that I have hesitated to describe it, as there is a certain amount of individual variation which suggests that in a very large material some specimens would not be subspecifically identifiable.

The fact that *C. b. philippinensis* is so slightly differentiated, makes Parkes' (1965: 94) opinion that: "The nature of the distinguishing features of the race... strongly suggests that we have here an excellent instance of character displacement in an area of overlapping ranges", unconvincing, and I believe that as an example to support the interesting theory of "character displacement", it should be withdrawn. In this connection it

should be observed that in the juvenile plumages, when there would be hardly any need for "character displacement", the two species *C. viridis* and *C. bengalensis* are strikingly different, the former being black underneath, the latter yellowish-white.

The tenacity of the mistaken notion that the species would have a "winter plumage" (Delacour & Mayr, 1946; Delacour, 1947; Smythies, 1968), or an "eclipse plumage" (Parkes, 1965) is remarkable, as well over half a century ago Stresemann (1913) gave a very adequate description of the various plumages and proved that once the adult plumage is attained, it does not change again. My material is entirely in accordance with Stresemann's findings, although I want to mention that his "Hypothetisches Cairii-Kleid" probably never occurs: all specimens in the "I. Brutkleid" examined by me had at least a considerable amount of black on the underparts and rather than divide this plumage artificially into two ("Paradoxus-Kleid" and "Hypothetisches Cairii-Kleid"), I would say that in this plumage a certain variable amount of the "II. Jugend-Kleid" is retained.

Parkes (1957) noted that specimens from the Sulu Archipelago belong clearly to the race *javanensis*, and an individual in our collection (♀ in "I. Brutkleid") confirms this.

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