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## A NEW SPECIES OF WAXBILL (*ESTRILDA*) FROM THE SOUTHEASTERN CONGO

BY JAMES P. CHAPIN

During a rapid trip up the Lualaba River by steamer, from Kabalo to Bukama, in August 1927, I took advantage of every stop to collect birds on shore. At Kiabo, a post on the west bank of the river, opposite the southern end of Lake Upemba, or at 8° 46' S. latitude, I was surprised to find a flock of 20 to 30 waxbills, very similar in behavior and appearance to *Estrilda astrild*, but with no red about the eye. Instead they had a black patch in the same place, but of slightly smaller extent. They were in a level grassy plain, probably somewhat swampy when the water of the river is high during the rains, and sat amid patches of high grass and some bushes. Three specimens were secured at this locality, two adult males and a female, but none were seen elsewhere.

So far as I can discover, this species of waxbill is still undescribed, and I propose for it the name *nigriloris*.

### *Estrilda nigriloris*, new species

TYPE.—Male adult; No. 2623, Ruwenzori-Kivu Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History; Kiabo, Lualaba River, Belgian Congo; August 10, 1927.

DESCRIPTION OF ADULT MALE.—Loral region and a small space about the eye black, this color extending to a point about 4 mm. behind the eye. Along the upper loral region runs a streak of pale pinkish or whitish. Otherwise the general coloration is similar to that of *Estrilda astrild nyansæ* Neumann, except that the rosy wash of the underparts is more dilute, approaching the condition in *E. a. occidentalis* Fraser and Jardine. The throat and cheeks are more grayish white, and lightly washed with pink, while even on the back and upper tail-coverts the plumage is faintly tinged with pink. Forehead and crown only a little grayer than the ground-color of back. Hind-crown, upperparts (including wing-coverts and inner secondaries), sides of chest, and flanks barred with dark brown. Abdomen and under tail-coverts black. Rectrices largely blackish, but median ones barred with brown and black basally, and all but the outermost showing some brown with black barring on outer webs near base. Iris very dark brown, bill rather dull scarlet, feet dusky brown. Wing, 47, 48 mm.; tail, 45, 50, outermost rectrices 21–25 mm. shorter than median; exposed culmen, 7; metatarsus, 13.5, 14.

ADULT FEMALE.—Similar to the male but duller. Black of face almost entirely restricted to lores, a faint black streak behind eye. A distinct rosy wash on middle of underparts, but no pinkish tinge on upperparts. Abdomen and under tail-coverts with some brownish markings, and more brown on rectrices. Wing, 46.5 mm.; tail 43 exposed culmen, 7; metatarsus, 13.5.



Fig. 1. Adult male of *Estrilda nigriloris*.  
Two-thirds natural size.

PROBABLE RANGE OF THE SPECIES.—Known only from the type locality, and not likely to be widely distributed, in view of the careful collecting by Neave in the Upper Katanga, Böhm's trip across Marungu to Lake Upemba, and Father Callewaert's extensive collections made at Luluabourg in the Kasai District. It is possible that *Estrilda nigriloris* will be found to be restricted to the swampy region about Lakes Kisale, Upemba, and the many other smaller bodies of water along this portion of the Lualaba.

It is a curious fact that *Estrilda astrild* is very rare—if not actually wanting—in a large area of savanna country which would seem well suited to its needs, south of the Congo forest in the Kasai and Lomani Districts. This area is occupied however by *Estrilda melopoda*, the common red-faced waxbill of the clearings in the Cameroon-Congo forest, the species extending southward to the upper Kwango River, Tshisika near the southern border of the Kasai District at 7° S. latitude, and Katobwe on the Lualaba, at nearly 9° S. latitude.

To the eastward, *E. melpoda* ranges as far as the northwest shore of Lake Tanganyika and the Ruzizi Valley. Nevertheless it does not reach the eastern border of the Ituri forest; and, although it ascends the Aruwimi River to a little above Panga, its place is taken at Avakubi by *Estrilda astrild occidentalis*. In general, throughout the eastern and southern Congo, the ranges of these two distinct species of waxbill are complementary and almost exclusive. In the Ruzizi Valley I noticed them together, however, and sometimes mingling in the same flock. At Boma on the lower Congo both species likewise occurred in the same marsh. Such an exact similarity in habits may play a part in deciding their geographic relationship. The type locality of *Estrilda nigriloris* lies just within the range of *E. melpoda*.

Inasmuch as the plumage of *nigriloris* bears so close a resemblance to that of *astrild* as to suggest that the black face-patch is a recent "mutation," which would not preclude intimate relationship with the latter species, it may be well to call attention to a few minor characters not found in any race of *E. astrild*.

The black face-patch is more restricted in size than the corresponding red area in *astrild*. This difference is especially marked in the female, where there is very little black behind the eye. In *astrild* a slight racial variation is noticeable, the red face-patch being unusually extensive in the richly colored *E. a. rubriventris* Vieillot of the Gaboon Coast and Lower Congo. Furthermore, the black lores of *nigriloris* are bordered above by a faint stripe of pinkish or whitish, while in no race of *astrild* is there any indication of such a marking. The red of the face impinges directly on the gray or gray-brown of the forehead.

The bill of *Estrilda nigriloris* is shorter and blunter than that of *E. astrild*, its culmen more decurved, so that the form of the bill closely resembles that seen in *E. roseicrissa*. These additional differences weigh heavily in favor of specific distinctness for my new form.

