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Notes on the Birds of Fernando Poo Island, Spanish Equatorial Africa

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In 1953 Amadon listed a collection of birds made on Fernando Poo Island by the late J. G. Correia. Since then one important paper on the avifauna of this island has appeared, that of Wolff-Metternich and Stresemann (1956). Stresemann (1948) had already reported on a few of the specimens taken by Eidmann, the entomologist who accompanied Wolff-Metternich. Earlier, Krumbiegel (1943) discussed the mammals taken by the expedition of the late Count on Fernando Poo and their evolution. In an appendix to the 1956 paper Stresemann listed a collection made on Fernando Poo in 1911 by A. Schultze when he was attached to the German Central African Expedition of the Duke of Mecklenburg. One form, *Mesopicos johnstoni schultzei* Reichenow, had been described previously from Schultze's collection.

The present paper is based on observations of the junior author on Fernando Poo during the past five years. His interest in the natural history of Spanish West Africa is a general one and has resulted in the publication of a book on the mammals of the area (Basilio, 1952). A companion work on the birds is contemplated. Some of the specimens collected have been sent to the American Museum of Natural History in New York for identification. In addition to reporting the more interesting of these records, the present paper attempts to bring up to date the list of resident birds of Fernando Poo published by Amadon (1953, pp. 437, 438). A complete list of the migrants has not been made.

¹ Misioneros Hijos del Ido. Corazón de María, Santa Isabel, Fernando Poo.

Both Wolff-Metternich and Basilio have added to the list of migrant as well as resident species. In the following annotated comments, resident species first recorded from Fernando Poo are marked with a single asterisk; migrants new to the island, with two asterisks.

Podiceps ruficollis capensis Salvadori

COMMON DABCHICK

Observed by Wolff-Metternich on Moka Lake. Basilio has found it there and elsewhere in the highlands and has collected specimens.

Milvus migrans (Boddaert)

BLACK KITE

Recorded by early collectors on Fernando Poo, but not obtained by Correia, and not seen by Basilio during five years of observation. Perhaps only a straggler, but it occurs on São Tome, farther out in the Gulf.

***Falco peregrinus* Tunstall

PEREGRINE FALCON

An occasional migrant. One taken April 8, 1949.

**Sarothrura elegans reichenovi* (Sharpe)

BUFF-SPOTTED CRAKE

One specimen of this rail, from Banapá. Others have been heard and four in all collected. The one compared, a male, seems typical of the West African race, *reichenovi*. New to Fernando Poo.

**Porphyrula alleni* (Thomson)

ALLEN'S REED-HEN

One specimen of this wide-ranging gallinule. It is from the city plaza of Santa Isabel and was taken in May, 1949. Probably a resident.

Sclater (1924-1930, p. 107) states that *P. alleni* occurs on São Tome; hence the species is to be added to Amadon's (1953, p. 439) list of the birds of that island.

***Tringa ochrophus* Linnaeus

GREEN SANDPIPER

Occurs as a migrant. One taken on January 7, 1956.

Agapornis pullaria pullaria (Linnaeus)

RED-HEADED LOVEBIRD

Evidently no longer exists on Fernando Poo.

Apus affinis ?bannermani Hartert

SWIFT

Though still known, apparently, only from the single specimen picked up dead by Chapin (Amadon, 1953, p. 418), there are many colonies of this swift around the public buildings in Santa Isabel and elsewhere.

Hirundo rustica Linnaeus

COMMON OR BARN SWALLOW

Unrecorded until Wolff-Metternich found it, but apparently a not uncommon migrant in suitable places. Basilio secured two from a flock on April 22 and noted that on November 1 they had returned in large numbers to the airport of Santa Isabel.

Andropadus curvirostris curvirostris Cassin

CAMEROON SOMBER BULBUL

Omitted from Amadon's 1953 list by an oversight. Long known from the island and secured by both Correia and Basilio.

**Apalis nigriceps* cf. *nigriceps* (Shelley)

BLACK-CAPPED YELLOW WARBLER

One specimen, apparently the first to be taken on Fernando Poo. It is fairly common at altitudes of 800 to 1000 meters. It seems to agree with the one available specimen of the adjacent mainland form, which is nominate *nigriceps*.

Speirops brunneus Salvadori

FERNANDO POO SPEIROPS

This bird, rare in collections, remained unknown from the time of its description by Salvadori (1903, p. 1) from a single specimen, until Stresemann (1948, pp. 334-335) discussed a specimen taken by Dr. H. Eidmann.¹ Another example, secured by friends of the junior author on the Pico de Santa Isabel (= Clarence Peak), was injected with formalin and sent to New York, where E. T. Gilliard succeeded in making a good study skin of it.

Four aberrant white-eyes of the Gulf of Guinea area are currently placed in the genus *Speirops* Reichenbach; viz.:

¹ Stresemann (1956, Wolff-Metternich and Stresemann, p. 283), in his later report on the collections secured by the expedition of Wolff-Metternich, of which Eidmann was a member, lists two specimens.

<i>melanocephalus</i> (Gray)	Mt. Cameroon and adjacent highlands
<i>brunneus</i> Salvadori	Mountains of Fernando Poo = Pico de Santa Isabel
<i>leucophaeus</i> (Hartlaub)	Príncipe (= Prince's) Island
<i>lugubris</i> (Hartlaub)	São Tome (= St. Thomas) Island

The first two of these live in difficult mountain country. The others, inhabitants of oceanic islands, seem more common and widespread. For comparison we have had one specimen of *melanocephalus*, one of *brunneus*, and good series of the other two.

Stresemann (1948) wrote of *brunneus* as follows: "This is apparently the first record of the species since its description in 1903, under the name of *Speirops brunnea*. In colour as well as in proportions it belongs to the 'aberrant' members of the genus. With its brown plumage it approaches *Rukia ruki* Hartert from Truck Island (Central Carolines), but its legs are dark, not orange, and much feebler. The bill of *Zosterops brunnea* is dusky coloured, long and slender; its tail is relatively longer than that of any other species of the family Zosteropidae. Salvadori included the Fernando Po bird in the genus *Speirops*, apparently on zoogeographical reasons only. It stands closer to the ordinary type of *Zosterops* than to *Speirops lugubris* of São Thomé Island (the type of *Speirops* Reichenbach), a species with pale feet, a short yellowish bill and a proportionately far shorter tail (for example, wing 72, tail 48 mm.), not to mention the considerable differences of plumage pattern. *Z. brunnea* has the crown concolorous with the back, a narrow whitish frontal line, no indication of a white circle around the eye, rusty-coloured chin, axillaries and under wing-coverts. The present specimen does not show any traces of a chestnut nuchal spot, which, according to Reichenow ('Vögel Afrikas', 3:438), is said to be present in the type specimen. If one wants to accept the genus *Speirops* at all, it should be used to include only the species *lugubris* (São Thomé), *melanocephalus* (Cameroon Mt.) and *leucophaeus* (island of Príncipe)."

Our specimen of *brunneus*, like that described by Stresemann, has no chestnut nuchal patch; perhaps Salvadori's type was aberrant, or the chestnut color extraneous.

Stresemann's conclusion that *brunneus* is unrelated to the other three *Speirops* seems most doubtful. It has definite resemblances to *melanocephalus*, as, for example, in the very narrow white frontlet. Furthermore, in our specimen of *brunneus* the crown is not concolorous with the back, but, as noted also by Salvadori, is darker, almost blackish, and hence suggests the pattern seen in *melanocephalus* and

lugubris. In general coloration it is browner than either of these, but the lower back of *lugubris* is brownish, very like that of *brunneus*.

Speirops leucophaeus differs from the other three in its pale coloration. The head is whitish, the body pearly gray, darker above, and the wings and tail are fuscous. There is the same tendency for the loss of lipochromes as in the other species; this loss is most complete in *leucophaeus* and *melanocephalus*, even though the latter has far more melanin pigments. The white head of *leucophaeus* contrasts with the much grayer back; the line of demarcation is much as in *brunneus* and *melanocephalus*. *Speirops lugubris* has a black cap, but it is restricted to the crown.

TABLE 1

PROPORTIONS OF WING AND TAIL IN THE FOUR SPECIES OF *Speirops*

Species	Wing (in Mm.)	Tail (in Mm.)	Tail/Wing
<i>melanocephalus</i>	63.0	43.0	0.68
<i>brunneus</i> (2)	64.5	54.0	0.84
<i>leucophaeus</i>	68.3	49.8	0.73
<i>lugubris</i>	74.7	51.6	0.69

The four species differ in proportions as Stresemann points out (see table 1). Stresemann gives the tail length of one specimen of *lugubris* as 48 mm., and Moreau (1957, p. 385) in his recent monograph of the African Zosteropidae gives it as only 46 mm. As our figures were higher, one of us (Amadon) measured 12 males in good feather and found the tail length to range from 49 to 54 mm., with a mean of 51.6 mm. Otherwise, our figures are close to those of the two authors mentioned. As will be seen from the table, the tail is relatively shortest, and about the same in *lugubris* and *melanocephalus*, somewhat longer in *leucophaeus*, and very appreciably so in *brunneus*. This, of course, assumes that the wing length is about the same, proportional to general size, in the four forms.

There is a surprising amount of variation in the color of the soft parts in the four species. This has been tabulated by Moreau (1957, p. 387) along with key plumage characters. Moreau, we think correctly, states that, if the genus *Speirops* is to be maintained, *brunneus* belongs in it. We think he is in error, however, along with some earlier authors, in treating *melanocephalus* as a race of *lugubris*, though leav-

ing the other two as full species. This procedure is geographically unconvincing, as it unites the two most distant forms. Had Moreau been able to examine a specimen of *brunneus* he might share our belief that it is probably more closely related to *melanocephalus* than is *lugubris*. Admittedly, we have seen only one rather poor specimen of *melanocephalus*. We suggest that *Speirops* be maintained as a genus and that all four of the constituent forms seem to have attained specific status.

Speirops lugubris, the type of the genus, with its well-developed eye-ring, is more like a typical *Zosterops* than the others, but even it is very aberrant in color and in its large size and robust proportions. The other three would not, at first glance, be assigned to the Zosteropidae at all. *Speirops melanocephalus* is said to have a few tiny white feathers around the eye, but these are scarcely visible in the specimen examined.

As noted elsewhere (Amadon, 1953, p. 431), *Speirops brunneus* seems to be the only full species of bird endemic to the island of Fernando Poo, which is, of course, a continental island close to the mainland, and with its upper zonal habitats duplicated on Mt. Cameroon 30 miles away.

Of other white-eyes in the range of *Speirops*, an endemic insular species, *Zosterops ficedulinus* Hartlaub, is found on Principe and São Tome, with a race on each island. On Annobon, still farther out in the Gulf of Guinea, one finds *Z. griseovirescens* Bocage which may be related to *ficedulinus*, a much smaller species. Both *ficedulinus* and *griseovirescens*, especially the latter, are rather pale, washed-out, in color, for *Zosterops*, and *griseovirescens* has unusual tawny flanks and abdomen. These characters reflect isolation on oceanic islands, but neither species seems to have anything to do with *Speirops*. The latter is very aberrant, but whether it is also primitive is a moot question. It has no particular resemblance to any of the unusual white-eyes (genera other than *Zosterops*) of the East Indies, Philippines, and western Polynesia, and probably represents independent evolution of peculiarities on islands. *Speirops* may be one of the rare genera in which insular forms have been able to colonize a continent, *melanocephalus* on Mt. Cameroon, but this is conjectural.

* *Passer griseus* subsp. (Vieillot)

GRAY-HEADED SPARROW

Not uncommon in the streets of Santa Isabel, and a pair or two are present around most of the settlements. Not recorded earlier; perhaps introduced.

Coliuspasser capensis ?phoenicomerus (G. Gray)

YELLOW BISHOP-BIRD

Wolff-Metternich and Stresemann (1956, p. 282) first reported the species on Fernando Poo. The former found it common in the grasslands, especially at medium elevations. Basilio secured a female in the Moka grasslands.

As the Yellow Bishop was not reported by earlier collectors, it may be a newcomer to Fernando Poo, presumably from the Cameroons where *phoenicomerus* is the resident race.

For reasons for placing this species in *Coliuspasser* and not in *Euplectes*, see Chapin (1932-1954, pt. 4, p. 427).

Estrilda nonnula ?elizae Alexander

BLACK-CROWNED WAXBILL

Occurs in the Moka grasslands, but less commonly than *E. astrild occidentalis* Jardine and Fraser and *Lonchura bicolor poensis* Fraser. On Santa Isabel Peak it is more common.

The one specimen sent to New York does not permit an opinion as to whether *elizae* is a valid race. Wolff-Metternich and Stresemann, who had a specimen, list it without comment.

Estrilda (Nesocharis) shelleyi shelleyi Alexander

OLIVE-BACKED WAXBILL

Alexander when describing the species had only females, one of which is now in New York. Basilio secured two males and a female from a flock of 10 at Banapá; these may be the only males recorded from the island, and the second time the species has been collected there. Both sexes have been taken, however, on Mt. Cameroon, where this subspecies also occurs (Serle, 1950, p. 637).

This has been considered a highland species, but Banapá is only 90 meters above sea level. Eisentraut (1956, p. 299) has described its habits in the Cameroons.

Lonchura cucullata cucullata (Swainson)

BRONZE MANNIKIN

Correia secured one specimen in 1929, evidently the first for the island. Basilio finds it common in the grasslands in the lowlands, especially near Santa Isabel.

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