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Notes on the Birds of Northern Melanesia. 4[1]

By Ernst Mayr

THE GENUS *ACCIPITER*

Few places in the world are as rich in hawks of the genus *Accipiter* as the Indo-Australian region. In all North America there are only three species, compared to eight in the New Guinea area and seven in northern Melanesia. Many of these species are exceedingly similar, yet subject to strong geographic variation. As a result, there has been much disagreement as to the classification of many of the better-defined geographical isolates. Stresemann, in a series of papers (particularly 1924, 1925) has greatly contributed to an understanding of the accipiters of the Papuan region, but recent studies have convinced me that several forms are still associated with the wrong species or species group. The object of this paper is to present evidence in favor of a new classification. It is not within the scope of this study to give complete descriptions. A good deal of analysis of plumages, and particularly of the geographical variation of immature plumages, still remains to be done.

All measurements are in millimeters. "Tail index" indicates length of tail expressed as percentage of wing length. "Tarsal index" indicates length of the tarsus expressed as percentage of wing length. "Toe index" indicates length of the middle toe expressed as percentage of the length of the tarsus. (For full bibliographic references to the listed forms, see Peters, 1931.)

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[1] Birds Collected During the Whitney South Sea Expedition, No. 64. For Nos. 1–3 of "Notes on the birds of northern Melanesia," see American Museum Novitates No. 1294 (1945), No. 1417 (1949), and No. 1707 (1955).

A study of the superb Whitney-Rothschild Collection indicates that, in addition to the widespread *A. novaehollandiae* and *A. fasciatus* groups, another somewhat more easterly group must be recognized—the *Accipiter rufitorques* group. This group contains several closely related species which, so far, have been considered to be quite isolated or have been placed with unrelated forms. Two forms in particular have so far been wrongly classified. One of these is *rufitorques* which was classified by Stresemann (1924) with *A. fasciatus*. A renewed study has revealed that it has nothing to do with that species, as shown particularly by the coloration of the immature plumage but also by general coloration and proportions. The second form is *A. eichhorni*. Hartert combined this Feni Island endemic with subsequently described *imitator* from Choiseul Island in a polytypic species. However, these two forms have nothing in common with each other. On the other hand, there is no reason why *eichhorni* should not be considered conspecific with *albogularis* of the Solomons, while *imitator,* with its aberrant proportions, color pattern, and immature plumage, is obviously not related to this group. What its true relationship is remains to be determined. At the present time this peculiar Choiseul Island endemic appears to be a very isolated species. The same is true for *A. luteoschistaceus* from New Britain. The latter appears a little more similar to the *rufitorques* group; yet it differs strikingly in its immature plumage and other characteristics.

As a consequence of these rearrangements we are left with seven species or species groups in northern Melanesia:

gentilis group
poliocephalus group
luteoschistaceus
rufitorques group
imitator
novaehollandiae group
cirrhocephalus group

The following comments may be helpful.

Accipiter gentilis Group

The species *A. meyerianus* Sharpe has been recorded from the Moluccas, Japen, the Bismarck Archipelago, and the Solomon Islands. It is dimorphic, occurring in a white-bellied and a black-bellied phase, as do several other species of *Accipiter*. Variation and proportions were discussed by Mayr (1934, pp. 1–2), where a listing of the earlier literature is given, to which is to be added a note by Stresemann (1925, p. 319) on the occurrence on Guadalcanal. Other records in northern Melanesia are from Kulambangra and New Britain (including Vuatom).

Accipiter poliocephalus GROUP

This group is represented in northern Melanesia by a single species, *A. princeps* from the mountains of New Britain. No new information has become available since the original description of this interesting species (Mayr, 1934, p. 3). The tarsus and the middle toe of this species are very short. The immature plumage is still unknown.

Accipiter luteoschistaceus

This species, restricted to New Britain, seems equally far removed from *albogularis* and from *imitator*. Since its original description by Rothschild and Hartert in 1926 (Bull. Brit. Ornith. Club, vol. 46, p. 53, and Novitates Zool., vol. 33, p. 127), the characters of the species have been discussed by Stresemann (1929). Its cere is reddish orange; the feet are orange yellow. There is no rufous collar, and the second primary is shorter than the sixth. All seven specimens in the American Museum of Natural History are, curiously, males. All are quite similar to one another; the entire upper parts and the under side of the tail are slaty. An adult and a juvenal female have been described by Stresemann (1929).

The juvenal plumage is very distinctive (figs. 1A, 2A): lower throat and breast coarsely barred with rufous brown; wing-feathers and tail-feathers tawny red, with sharply defined narrow black bars; crown black (feathers with white bases); rest of upper parts heavily barred black and rufous. This extraordinary juvenal plumage resembles more that of a Kestrel than a normal *Accipiter* plumage. A somewhat similar juvenal plumage occurs in the unrelated species *A. henicogrammus* (figs. 1G, 2G).

MEASUREMENTS: Wing: Male adult, 185, 189, 191, 191, 194; male immature, 185, 202. Tail: Male adult, 139, 142, 144, 145; male immature, 139, 143. Tarsus: Male adult, 57, 58.5, 59, 60, 64; male immature, 58, 60.5. Middle toe: 27–28. Tail index: Male adult, 75.2, 75.2, 75.4, 75.8; male immature, 70.9, 75.2. Tarsal index: Male adult, 30.8, 30.8, 30.9, 33.5; male immature, 29.9, 31.3. Toe index: 43.8, 46.6.

The bird described by Hartert (1929) under this name is a young of *A. albogularis gilvus*.

Accipiter rufitorques GROUP

This group consists of the following species, essentially in a west to east sequence: *melanochlamys* (New Guinea), *albogularis* (Feni, Solomons, Santa Cruz), *rufitorques* (Fiji), and *haplochrous* (New Caledonia), all of which can be considered members of a single superspecies. The grouping of *albogularis* (+ *sharpei*) with *rufitorques* and *haplochrous* was first suggested by Oustalet (1877).

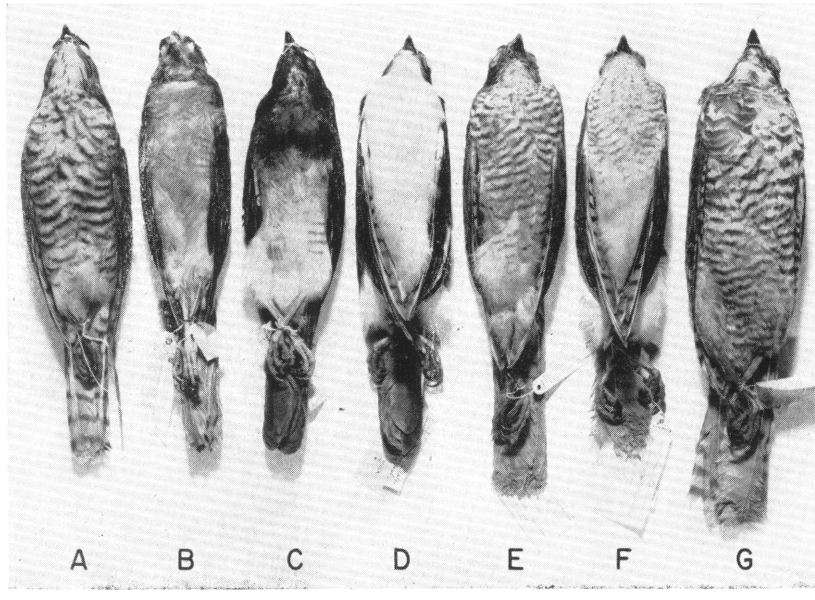

FIG. 1. Ventral views. A. *Accipiter luteoschistaceus*, male juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 333750, New Britain. B. *A. luteoschistaceus*, male subadult, A. M. N. H. No. 533361, New Britain. C. *A. imitator*, female adult (black breasted), A. M. N. H. No. 228272, Choiseul. D. *A. imitator*, female adult (white breasted A. M. N. H. No. 532990, Choiseul. E. *A. imitator*, female juvenal (dark), A. M. N. H. No. 532992, Ysabel. F. *A. imitator*, female juvenal (light), A. M. N. H. No. 532989. Choiseul. G. *A. henicogrammus*, female juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 533026, Batjan.

The iris is usually yellow, the cere yellowish or blue-gray, and the feet are always yellow. There is usually a rufous collar (except in *haplochrous, a. gilvus,* and *a. albogularis*), and the throat may be washed with gray. The second primary is about as long as the sixth, slightly longer in some species and shorter in others. The under wing of adults is usually unmarked.

The most characteristic feature of this superspecies is the color of the immature plumage (see Mayr, 1940, pp. 11–12, under *A. melanochlamys;* this paper, figs. 3, 4). The breast is marked with dark (blackish brown), drop-shaped spots, the flanks and abdomen with coarse dark brown bars. The thighs, except in *haplochrous,* are usually rufous and heavily marked with wavy rufous bars. The markings on the under wing are usually heart-shaped or drop-shaped. The upper parts are very dark, and the blackish feathers of the mantle are often rather uniform, although occasionally they have a whitish or rufous base and a rufous or whitish

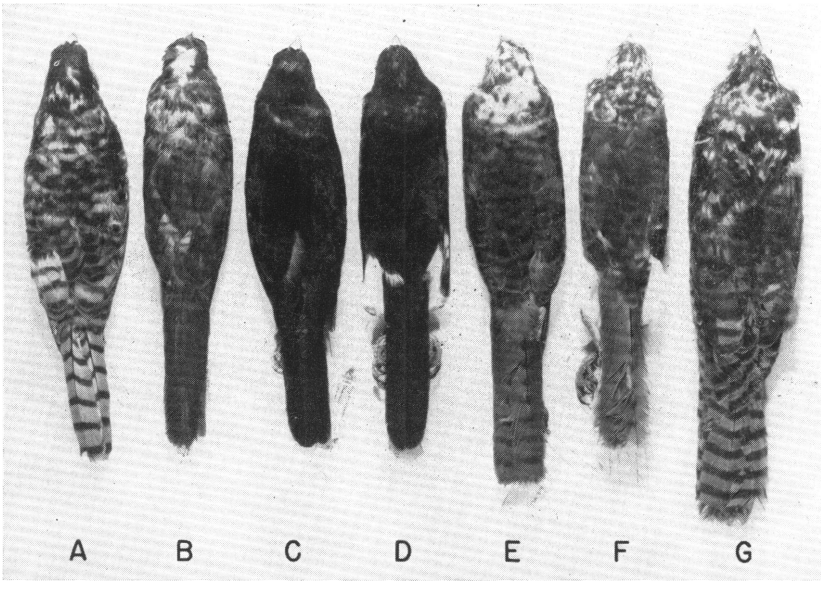

FIG. 2. Dorsal views of the same birds, respectively, as are shown in figure 1.

border. The crown is blackish, and the tail dorsally is usually slaty or fuscous, with numerous rather narrow blackish bars.

How far west this species group extends is still uncertain. The *griseogularis* group in the northern Moluccas, which has been shifted around a good deal (e.g., Stresemann, 1925, p. 322; Siebers, 1930, pp. 225–227), is suspiciously similar to *albogularis,* or to an intermediate between *albogularis* and *novaehollandiae.* The juvenal plumage is rather like that of the *rufitorques* group, with bold, black, drop-like streaking on the breast and a blackish crown and upper back. On the other hand, the under parts are frequently, and the under wing is nearly always, cross-barred. The second primary is usually much shorter than the sixth.

Accipiter melanochlamys

Relationship of this darkened form to the *rufitorques* group is indicated by general color pattern and juvenal plumage (figs. 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B). The bright yellow cere suggests that it might better be kept as a separate species. The under wing is plain rufous; the second primary is much shorter than the sixth. In proportions *A. melanochlamys* does not differ conspicuously from related species or from *novaehollandiae* and *fasciatus* (Mayr, 1940).

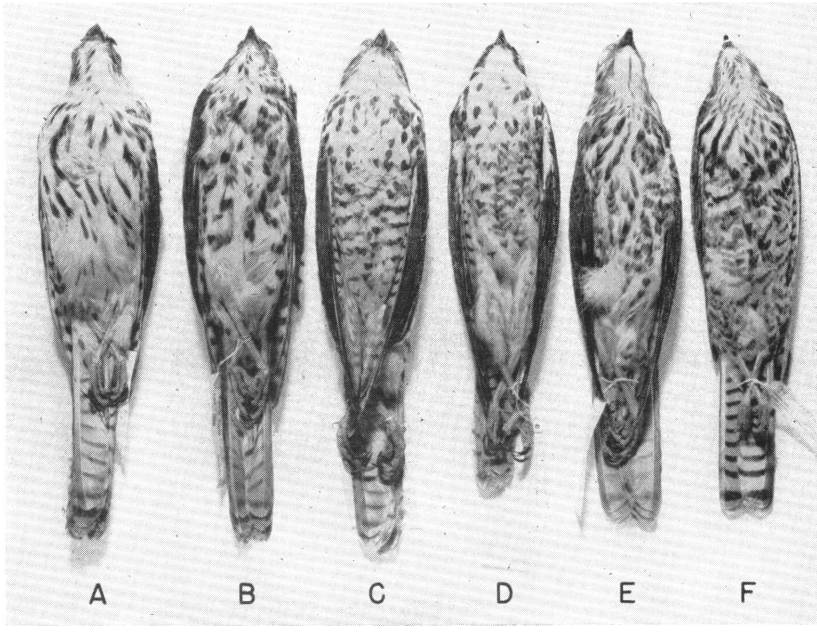

FIG. 3. Ventral views. A. *Accipiter melanochlamys*, male juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 704658, Kubor Mountains, New Guinea. B. *A. melanochlamys*, male juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 329431, southeast New Guinea. C. *A. eichhorni*, female juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 532983, Feni. D. *A. woodfordi*, male juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 533351, Guadalcanal, E. *A. rufitorques*, male juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 249334 bis, Yanutha, Fiji. F. *A. haplochrous*, male juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 337706, New Caledonia.

Accipiter albogularis

As recently as 1931 this species was considered monotypic (Peters, 1931, p. 218). Stresemann (1925) had already suggested the possibility of geographic variation but was in part deceived by specimens of *imitator* from Choiseul and Ysabel. Mayr (1945, p. 8) pointed out not only that there are three races in the Solomon Islands but also that *sharpei* Oustalet is a valid race, restricted to the Santa Cruz Islands. More recently, an examination of *eichhorni* (Feni) showed that it is a fifth race of this species. The characters of the five races are as follows:

Accipiter albogularis eichhorni

This race in adult plumage is lighter above than *albogularis,* more slate gray; the rufous collar is always present, broad and well-defined. The sides of the breast show an indication of a grayish vinaceous ver-

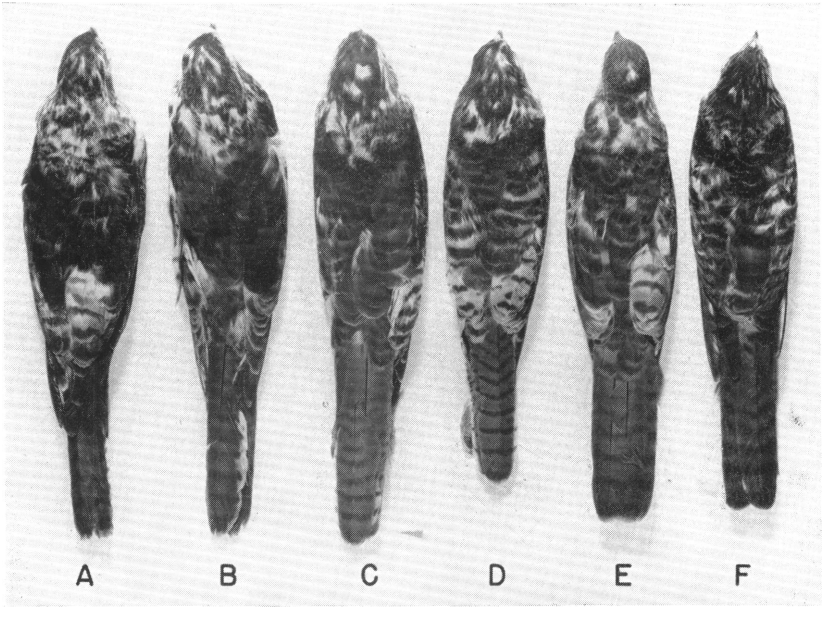

FIG. 4. Dorsal views of the same birds, respectively, as are shown in figure 3.

miculation. The black phase is unknown. The second primary is slightly shorter than the sixth or subequal to it.

The juvenal plumage is indistinguishable from that of *woodfordi* (figs. 3C, 4C). It should be compared with the juvenal plumage of *imitator* (figs. 1E, F, 2E, F).

MEASUREMENTS: Wing: Male adult, 202, 203, 207; female adult, 232, 233, 244; female immature, 232, 239. Tail: Mail adult, 149, 152, 155; female adult, 176, 178.5, 181; female immature, 177, 179. Tarsus: Male, 49, 50, 52; female, 56, 59.5, 60, 60, 60.5. Tail index: Male, 73.3, 74.8, 75.5; female, 74.2, 74.9, 75.5, 76.7, 76.8. Tarsal index: Male, 24.2, 24.3, 25.7; female, 24.0, 24.4, 25.3, 25.9, 25.9.

RANGE: Restricted to Feni Island.

Accipiter albogularis woodfordi

In adult plumage *woodfordi* is indistinguishable from *albogularis*. The upper parts are very blackish. Two among 10 immature birds are in the rufous immature plumage of the *holomelas* phase (figs. 5A, 6A), described by Stresemann (1925). Three of the 10 white-bellied adults in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History lack the rufous collar completely. Its expression is variable among the other seven.

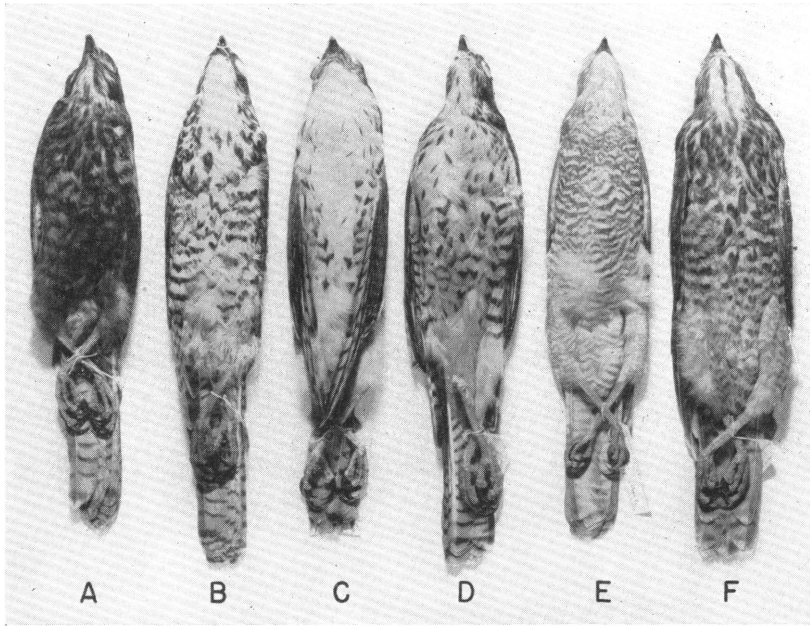

FIG. 5. Ventral views. A. *Accipiter woodfordi*, female juvenal ("*holomelas*"), A. M. N. H. No. 228269, Choiseul. B. *A. woodfordi*, female juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 219008, Guadalcanal. C. *A. gilvus*, female juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 533-347, Vella Lavella. D. *A. albogularis*, female juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 227751. Santa Anna. E. *A. fasciatus vigilax*, female subadult, A. M. N. H. No. 337047, Uvea. F. *A. fasciatus vigilax*, female juvenal, A. M. N. H. No. 336968, Aneiteum.

In the normal phase of juvenal plumage (figs. 3D, 4D, 5B, 6B), *woodfordi* is buffy white underneath, heavily marked with spots which are drop-shaped on the upper breast and heart-shaped on the lower breast and abdomen. The under wing is buff, slightly marked with blackish shaft streaks. The crown and upper back are rather blackish, with the scapulars and upper tail-coverts heavily barred with black on a lighter (rufous gray) background. The tail is slaty rufous with narrow black bars.

RANGE: Bougainville, Treasury, Shortlands (Tauro), Choiseul, Florida, Guadalcanal, and Malaita.

Accipiter albogularis gilvus

In adult plumage *gilvus* is similar to *woodfordi*. The two adults examined by me are white-bellied and without a rufous collar.

The immatures (figs. 5C, 6C) are "much less heavily marked underneath. The streaks on the chest are narrower; the under wing-coverts

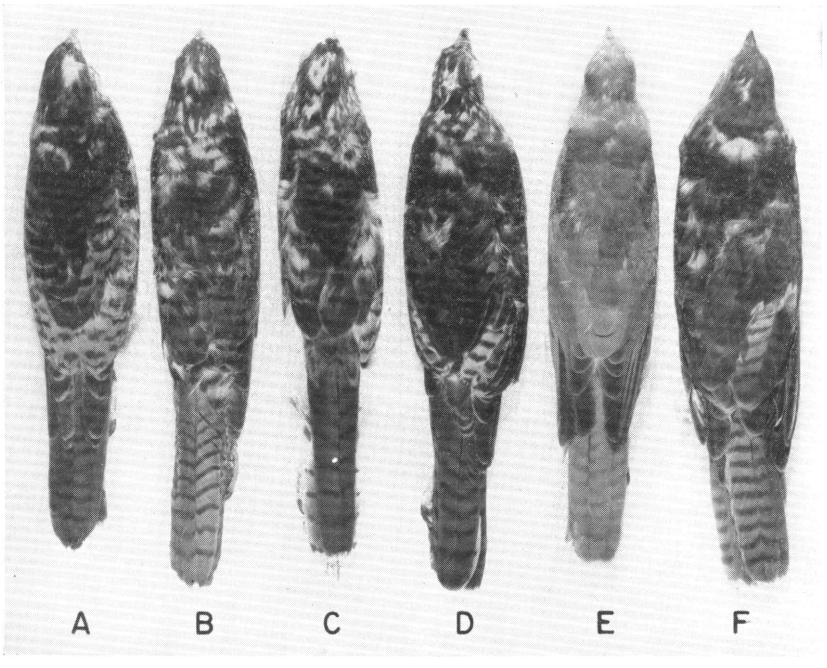

FIG. 6. Dorsal views of the same birds, respectively, as are shown in figure 5.

TABLE 1

MEASUREMENTS AND INDICES OF *Accipiter albogularis woodfordi*

	Male		Female	
	Adult	Immature	Adult	Immature
Wing	203, 207.5, 211, 211.5, 220	207, 208, 209, 212, 213, 214	243, 247, 247, 250, 254, 262	243, 246, 246, 246.5, 247, 249
Tail	148, 150, 150, 152.5, 155.5	151, 152,153, 159, 159, 159	177, 178, 179, 182, 182, 183, 184	179, 180, 182, 184, 185, 187
Tarsus	56.5, 57, 57.5, 58, 59	55, 57, 57, 59, 60, 60	62, 64, 64.5, 65, 65, 66.5, 72	65, 66, 66, 66.5, 66.5, 67
Tail index	70.7, 71.1, 72.1, 72.3, 72.9	72.7, 72.9, 73.5, 74.3, 75.0, 75.1, 75.3	69.5, 71.4, 71.7, 72.8, 72.9, 73.6, 74.2	72.4, 73.6, 74.0, 74.5, 74.7
Tarsal index	26.1, 26.8, 27.5, 27.9, 28.6	25.9, 27.4, 27.5, 27.7, 28.0, 28.7	25.1, 25.6, 25.8, 26.2, 26.7, 26.9, 27.5	26.3, 26.7, 26.8, 27.0, 27.1, 27.2

are almost unmarked. The feathers of the thighs are marked with narrow, dark brown shaft streaks while in *woodfordi* the markings are rufous and arrow-shaped. The ground color of the under parts is deeper, pale ochraceous, not buffy white" (Mayr, 1945, original description). See also Stresemann (1925, p. 320).

MEASUREMENTS: Wing: Male adult, 211, 211; male immature, 212, 214; female immature, 247. Tail: Male adult, 150, 154; male immature, 159, 160; female immature, 177. Tarsus: Male adult, 57, 59; male immature, 60, 61; female immature, 66. Tail index: Male adult, 71.2, 73.0; male immature, 74.7, 75.0; female immature, 71.7. Tarsal index: Male adult, 27.0, 28.0; male immature, 28.0, 28.8; female immature, 26.7.

The size is as in *woodfordi*.

RANGE: Vella Lavella, Kulambangra, New Georgia, and Rendova.

Accipiter albogularis albogularis

Both adults examined by me are in the white-bellied phase and without trace of a rufous collar; the sides of the throat are dusted with blackish.

The juvenal plumage differs from that of *woodfordi* by being suffused with tawny underneath (figs. 5D, 6D). The inner webs of the wing-feathers are a deeper rufous. This rufous plumage (described by Ramsay as *versicolor*) does not correspond to the *holomelas* (juvenal) plumage in *woodfordi*. All six *albogularis* juvenals seen by me are in this rufous plumage.

MEASUREMENTS: Wing: Male adult, 202; female adult, 243; female immature, 239, 240, 245. Tail: Male, 137; female, 166–175 (171.2). Tarsus: Male, 56; female, 64–65. Middle toe: Male, 37; female, 42–44. Tail index: Male, 67.8; female, 67.8–73.3 (71.1). Tarsal index: Male, 27.7; female, 26.1–27.2. Toe index: Male, 66.1; female, 64.6, 67.7.

RANGE: San Cristobal and Santa Anna; ?Ugi.

The geographic variation in the polymorphism of *Accipiter albogularis* in the Solomon Islands is shown in table 2. For this table were utilized: Ramsay's records of specimens in the Australian Museum in Sydney (1883, pp. 29–31), the material of the American Museum of Natural History (including the Rothschild Collection), of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, of the United States National Museum, and of the British Museum (Natural History). Only adults are included in the tabulation. The preponderance of birds with a rufous collar (*"woodfordi"*-plumage) in the range of *woodfordi* and the absence of this plumage in the range of *albogularis* and *gilvus* are notable. All four birds in the black *"holomelas"*-plumage from the range of *albogularis* were reported by

Ramsay from "Ugi." This record for *holomelas* requires confirmation in view of the unreliability of Ramsay's locality records.

Accipiter albogularis sharpei

In adult plumage the upper parts of this race are blackish slate, a shade blacker than those of *eichhorni*. The rufous collar is almost obsolete. The sides of the throat have a grayish vinaceous patch, and the upper breast is finely and sparsely vermiculated with vinaceous.

The juvenal plumage is unknown.

TABLE 2

GEOGRAPHIC VARIATION IN THE POLYMORPHISM OF *Accipiter albogularis* IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

	Rufous Collar Present	Rufous Collar Absent	Under Parts Black
albogularis	—	7	4
woodfordi	13	3	4
gilvus	—	2	—

MEASUREMENTS: Wing: Male adult, 221, 222; female adult, 239, 255. Tail: Male, 156, 159; female, 177, 188. Tarsus: Male, 60, 63; female, 74. Middle toe: Male, 36, 36; female, 38. Tail index: Male, 70.3, 72.0; female, 73.7, 74.1. Tarsal index: Male, 27.1. 28.5; female, 31.0. Toe index: Male, 55.6, 60.0; female, 51.4.

RANGE: Vanikoro and Utupua, Santa Cruz Islands.

Accipiter rufitorques

This species was included by Stresemann (1924) in *A. fasciatus,* and he was followed by Peters (1931) and other subsequent authors. There are, however, good reasons to consider *rufitorques* not to belong to *fasciatus* but, rather, to be close to *albogularis*. In all eastern races of *fasciatus* (fig. 6E, F) the upper parts of adults are mixed with brownish, while in *rufitorques* they are bluish gull gray, much lighter than in *A. albogularis eichhorni*. The under wing is uniform, as in *albogularis,* not barred as in nearly all specimens of *fasciatus*. The second primary is as long as the sixth or only slightly longer, while in *fasciatus* it is usually decidedly longer. The inner webs of the wing-feathers are hardly barred, as in *albogularis,* while they are heavily barred in *fasciatus*. The tail-feathers of *fasciatus* always show an indication of barring, particularly the lateral tail-feathers, while this is reduced or absent in *albogularis* and *rufitorques*.

In the juvenal plumage (figs. 3C, 4C) the narrower streaking of throat and under wing and the reduction of barring underneath and on wing-feathers and tail-feathers agree much better with the *albogularis* group than with *fasciatus* (figs. 5F, 6F).

Assigning *rufitorques* to the *albogularis* group is also supported by zoogeographic considerations. *Accipiter fasciatus,* in its pattern of geographic variation, is a western bird with a center of distribution in the Lesser Sunda Islands and Moluccas. Its comparative uniformity in Australia, New Caledonia, and New Hebrides indicates that it has reached this area only recently; this is confirmed by its virtual absence in the Papuan region (except southern and eastern New Guinea). It would be hard to explain how this species could have given rise to the very distinct endemic *rufitorques* on Fiji. On the other hand, the pattern of a superspecies or polytypic species with a distribution from the Solomon Islands to Fiji and New Caledonia is a very common one. As it is also supported by the morphological evidence, the shift of *rufitorques* from *fasciatus* to the *albogularis* group can no longer be questioned. *Accipiter rufitorques* appears to be sufficiently distinct from *A. albogularis* to be considered a full species.

The juvenal plumage indicates that the somewhat aberrant *haplochrous* (New Caledonia; figs. 3F, 4F) is another member of the *rufitorques* species group.

Accipiter imitator

This species, originally confused with *albogularis,* was described by Hartert (1926) as a race of *cichhorni.* Actually, it has little to do with the *rufitorques* group and is a very isolated species. The upper parts are jet black, not slate or dark slate (fig. 2C, D). The under side of the tail is pure black; white and black are sharply separated from each other on the under side of the primaries, not grading into each other through a gray zone. The second primary is *much* shorter than the sixth. There is no rufous collar. Two color phases are found—one all white underneath (fig. 1D), the other with black throat and breast (fig. 1C). The white phase has a pure white under wing. The adult male is unknown.

The immatures are even more distinct from *cichhorni* (figs. 1E, F, 2E, F): throat and breast finely barred with rufous bars; abdomen, lower flanks, and thighs buff, with or without rufous vermiculation; feathers of crown with narrow black tips (and broad white bases) contrasting with rufous collar and fuscous back; individual feathers of back fuscous, with narrow rufous edges; wing-feathers and tail-feathers brownish gray, with indistinct narrow black bars.

MEASUREMENTS: Wing: Male immature, 182; female adult, 197, 199, 199, 200, 202, 208; female immature, 198.5, 213. Tail: Male immature, 141; female adult, 149, 149, 150, 151, 153, 163; female immature, 155, 164. Tarsus: Male, 56; female, 56–62 (59.0). Middle toe: 29–30. Tail index: Male, 77.4; female, 73.8–78.4 (76.3). Tarsal index: Male, 30.7; female, 27.7–31.3 (29.2).

RANGE: Choiseul and Ysabel only.

Accipiter novaehollandiae

The geographic variation of this species in northern Melanesia has been fully discussed in recent years (Mayr, 1945, pp. 6–8), and nothing further needs to be added. The specific characters of *novaehollandiae* were listed by Stresemann (1925). The cere is always bright yellow, and a nuchal collar is absent in the Melanesian forms. The second primary is shorter, usually much shorter, than the sixth. The under wing is often plain. The juvenal plumage is subject to much geographic variation, most of it still undescribed in the literature. On the whole, the upper parts are rather brownish in this plumage, without indication of a rufous collar. Breast, flanks, and under wing are usually conspicuously barred; the thighs are usually very rufous. Nowhere in northern Melanesia is it difficult to distinguish this species from *A. albogularis* or any other sympatric *Accipiter*. The species is, curiously, absent from San Cristobal.

Accipiter cirrhocephalus GROUP

The New Britain species *brachyurus* clearly belongs in the *cirrhocephalus* group, together with the Moluccan species *erythrauchen*. It is very different from neighboring *A. cirrhocephalus papuanus* (New Guinea) because of its large size and pale dove gray under parts. The upper parts are dark bluish slate; there is a rufous collar. In some ways *brachyurus* is more similar to *erythrauchen* than to *cirrhocephalus*.

DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of the seven species groups in northern Melanesia is as follows:

Present in the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon Islands: *gentilis* group (*meyerianus*), *novaehollandiae*.

Restricted to the Bismarck Archipelago: *poliocephalus* group (*princeps*), *luteoschistaceus*, *cirrhocephalus* group (*brachyurus*).

Restricted to the Solomon Islands: *rufitorques* group (*albogularis*) (reaching the Bismarcks with *eichhorni* at Feni), *imitator*

The Australian species *Accipiter fasciatus* has reached Rennell and Bellona Islands, being one of several typically Australian elements of these islands. This population cannot be separated from nominate *A. f. fasciatus* (Condon and Amadon, 1954, pp. 209–212).

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