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BIRDS COLLECTED DURING THE WHITNEY SOUTH SEA EXPEDITION. XXIII¹

TWO NEW BIRDS FROM MICRONESIA

By ERNST MAYR

There are two specimens of short-eared owls among a collection of birds from Ponape Island received by the Museum two years ago from the Whitney South Sea Expedition. Knowing the migratory habits of this species, I considered the two birds stragglers from Asia, and neglected in the rush of other business to examine them carefully. During the preparation of a list of Polynesian birds, recently, I came across Finsch's notes that the species was resident on Ponape, which fact caused me to look up the specimens again. A hasty comparison revealed at once their distinctness, and since there is very little Palaearctic material in our own collection, I sent the birds to the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy. Mr. James L. Peters of that institution examined the specimens very carefully, comparing them with the entire M. C. Z. material, and not only confirmed the differences noted by me, but added a few that I had overlooked. He concluded his letter by saying: "Your bird is an extremely well-marked insular race and decidedly worth naming." I am greatly obliged to Mr. Peters for his valuable notes. The presence of an endemic race of the short-eared owl in Micronesia is of great zoögeographical interest.

***Asio flammeus ponapensis*, new subspecies**

TYPE.—No. 331224, Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.; ♀ ad.; Ponape Island, Caroline Islands; December 12, 1930; W. F. Coultas.

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—Averaging slightly smaller than *flammeus*, and with a comparatively short tail, but much larger than *sanfordi* (wing, 276–288 mm.) or *portoricensis* (wing, 270–286 mm.). Darker than *flammeus* and *sandvicensis*, and much darker than *breviauris* and *sanfordi*, but not as dark as *galapagoensis*. In general coloration it somewhat resembles *bogotensis* Chapman, which has about the same length of wing, but a longer tail (140–148 mm.) and culmen; it differs from *bogotensis* by the lighter upperside; feathers on forehead, crown, and hind neck with broad ochraceous edges; feathers of back and scapulars with narrow ochraceous edges, whereas in *bogotensis* some of these feathers are almost uniformly brown; pattern in

¹Previous papers in this series comprise American Museum Novitates, Nos. 115, 124, 149, 322, 337, 350, 356, 364, 365, 370, 419, 469, 486, 488, 489, 502, 504, 516, 520, 522, 531, and 590.

the wing reduced as in *bogotensis*, but tail not as dark and no black streaks on feathers of tarsus. I cannot see any difference in coloration between *flammeus* and *sandvicensis*, but the Hawaiian birds run smaller on the average. In comparison with *flammeus* (and *sandvicensis*) the blackish shaft-streaks on the upperside are much broader and the ochraceous edges reduced; the black bands on the tail are much broader, and the wing-coverts much darker; the feathers of the tarsus are not streaked, but the under tail-coverts, which are uniformly colored or only faintly streaked in *A. f. flammeus*, have broad shaft-stripes; the under wing-coverts are heavily spotted, while they are usually immaculate in *flammeus*; dark marks on wing much enlarged; lower part of primaries dark brown without or with greatly reduced light bars; outer edge of first primary dark brown in lower third, without light bars; large light field on the base of the first primary crossed by a broad dark bar, which in *flammeus* is usually greatly reduced or missing.

	WING	TAIL	CULMEN	TARSUS
2 ♀ ad.	295, 307	135, 139	17.0, 17.5	48, 51 mm.

RANGE.—Ponape Island, Caroline Islands.

This bird was originally considered a straggler from Siberia, but Kubary found it breeding and collected the eggs, as reported by Finsch (1880, Journ. f. Ornith., p. 283, and 1881, Ibis, p. 113).

Mr. Coultas fully confirmed the breeding status of the Ponape short-eared owl; in fact, the two females that he collected have enlarged ovaries with small yellow eggs. It is therefore not surprising that this bird does not agree with the Holarctic race.

Mr. Coultas writes about this bird as follows:

There are at least two dozen or more owls on Ponape but those are very difficult to obtain.

After 5 o'clock in the evening, they put in their appearance over the grassland of the islands. In the twilight and on moonlight nights one can see them flying very low over the top of the grass and small bushes searching for rodents, etc. One hears their cat-like call at all hours of the night, except in rainy weather, when they are silent. They hide very successfully during the daytime. One never sees them. I was never able to flush one during the day, though I spent many hours in the grass patches and forest close by looking for finches.

The bird is startled easily and runs away from the slightest sound. Once frightened, it does not return again the same night.

My Ponape guide and self picked out a good grass patch of about 200 acres in size and visited this in the evening at sun-down. There we remained, at different times, until 9 to 11 P.M., in hopes that we could obtain specimens. On two different occasions, I obtained single shots (misses), which frightened the birds and spoiled the business at hand.

We tired of this and went at the matter with persistence. At one side of the field, where the grass was shortest, we cut a swath about 100 yards long by 40 feet wide, in an easterly and westerly direction, and burned off all of the grass. Near the easterly end, in a clump of bushes, we built a blind that sheltered us and at the same time gave us a good view of the runway looking toward the western twilight-lit heavens.

The first night after our runway was completed, I obtained a female and two nights later I obtained another female. The completion of other series and a stretch of rainy weather finished my nocturnal adventures. . . .

Ponape name, Lu goat: The native god of the bush and mountain regions. It is still revered by the older people.

The species was also reported from Guam, Marianne Islands, by Freycinet, Quoy, and Gaimard of the Uranie Expedition. The specimens are, however, no longer in the Paris Museum, and there is a strong suspicion that the locality was wrongly reported, just as that of many other specimens of that expedition (see Oustalet, 1895, *Nouv. Arch. Hist. Nat. Paris*, (3) VII, p. 168).

The same shipment of the Whitney South Sea Expedition from Micronesia also contained a series of *Hypotaenidia philippensis* from the Palau Islands. Knowing the strong tendency toward geographical variation in this species, I did not believe that the Palau birds were identical with those from the Philippine Islands, as hitherto accepted. A series of four fine specimens from the Philippine Islands, kindly loaned to me by Dr. Herbert Friedmann of the United States National Museum (Washington), revealed at once the distinctness of the Palau Island birds. I wish to thank Dr. Friedmann for his assistance in this matter.

***Hypotaenidia philippensis pelewensis*, new subspecies**

TYPE.—No. 331885, Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.; ♂ ad.; Palau Islands; October 15, 1931; William F. Coultas.

SUBSPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—A small, dark form, with the pectoral band usually present. Has nothing to do with *philippensis* which is a very light bird and of slightly larger size. Differs from *philippensis* by having a large rufous area in the nape (feathers frequently with fuscous tips, but without fuscous shaft-streaks); by having the light edges of the feathers on back, scapulars, and rump narrower and darker (the black centers of said feathers broader and much more conspicuous); and by having the white spotting on the upperside more pronounced, this being most obvious on the upper back and the upper tail-coverts; the underside is much clearer, lacking the dirty, buffy tinge of most specimens of *philippensis*. The breast-band is well developed in most specimens, and the black barring on breast and flanks much darker and more pronounced than in *philippensis*. In many ways rather similar to *H. ph. chandleri* Mathews, but differing from the Celebes bird by smaller size (average of wing in adult males 135 against 142); by the presence of a pectoral band; by having the upperside still darker with the ochraceous-gray edges of the feathers narrower; by having no spotting on the rump and less on the upper tail-coverts; by having the white marks on the upper back more frequently in the form of bars instead of spots; and by having the black bars on outer webs of the primaries broader (they are in this form usually broader than the alternating rufous bars, while in *chandleri* and most other forms they are of the same width or narrower). Differs from New Guinea birds by smaller size, and from birds of the Bismarck Archipelago (*lesoueffi* and *meyeri*) by

the lighter coloration of under and upper parts, and by the ochraceous gray, not dark brownish, edges of the feathers of the upperside.

	WING	TAIL	BILL ¹	TARSUS
12 ♂ ad.	127-143 (134.6)	54-65 (60)	25-29 (27.7)	41-46 (43.5)
3 ♀ ad.	129, 136, 136	56, 57, 58	23, 24, 25	40, 41, 42

RANGE.—Palau (= Pelew) Islands, Micronesia.

Palau Islands birds of this species have been usually named binomially *Hypotaenidia philippensis*, or else referred to the Philippine Islands subspecies *philippensis*. Only Mathews in his review of the species appears to have noticed the difference ('Birds of Australia,' I, p. 199). He compares a single specimen from the Palau Islands with a New Guinea bird and states that it differs by the absence of a pectoral band. This must have been an exceptional specimen. Among the twelve adult males before me, six have a well-developed pectoral band and six have a diffuse or interrupted band; among four adult females two have the breast-band broadly developed, one bird has indications of a breast-band, but it is entirely missing in one. In a series of sixteen adult birds from the Palau Islands the pectoral band is thus absent in only one specimen.

This species is rather rare on the Philippine Islands, and it may be opportune to add a few remarks about the four specimens from Luzon, loaned by the U. S. National Museum, in reference to the description of the race *philippensis* as given by Mathews ('Birds of Australia,' I, p. 196). Although Mathews points out some of the actual peculiarities of this race, such as the reduction of the reddish patch on the hind neck and of the white pattern on the upper parts, the indistinctness of the barring of the under parts, and the dusky coloration of the lores, he mentions other characters which I can not confirm. The primaries are decidedly longer than the secondaries in all four skins before me, not shorter as stated by Mathews. The tail frequently shows some white marks, and there is some white spotting on the upper tail-coverts of all the specimens, though it is much less than in most subspecies. The breast-band is entirely missing in only one of the birds, but is diffusely developed in the other three. The main character, as compared with the neighboring races, is the paleness of the bird from the Philippine Islands.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED

H. ph. philippensis.—Philippine Islands: Luzon, 2 ♂ ad., 2 ♀ ad.²

H. ph. pelewensis.—Palau Islands: 12 ♂ ad., 4 ♀ ad., 2 imm.

H. ph. chandleri.—Celebes: 5 ♂ ad., 3 ♀ ad., 1 imm.

Also considerable material from the Papuan and Polynesian Region.

¹From the lateral termination of feathering to the tip.

²U. S. National Museum.