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Systematic Notes on Palearctic Birds. No. 3 *Turdoides caudatus* and *Turdoides altirostris*

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During a study of the Palearctic Timaliinae I examined two species (*Turdoides caudatus* and *T. altirostris*) the relationships of which, together with their nomenclature which required clarification, are presented in the following review.

The range of the two species is shown in figure 1. *Turdoides caudatus* is an Indian form the range of which extends westward to lower Iraq where it occurs commonly in date palm gardens. In India the species is widespread, occurring in suitable regions in open country, and in arid or semi-desert areas, chiefly at low elevations. This species varies geographically. The second species, *T. altirostris*, occupies a relatively very limited range and, being restricted to one uniform region, chiefly reed beds, in lower Iraq and neighboring parts of southwestern Iran, does not vary geographically. The existence of two superficially very similar but ecologically distinct species in the same region and occasionally at the same localities was not suspected until fairly recent years.

The nomenclatural history of the two sympatric forms is as follows (the full synonymy of the two species is given below). *T. altirostris* was described by Hartert in 1909 as a race of *T. caudatus*, but Ticehurst later showed conclusively (1922) that the two are separate species. The race of *T. caudatus* which in the western part of its range overlaps *T. altirostris* was apparently first described as *salvadorii* by de Filippi in 1865, but this description, published in a travel book, escaped attention, and *salvadorii* was again described by Meinertzhagen in 1930 as *T. c. theresae*. The type locality of *salvadorii* is Shiraz, Fars, in southern Iran and that of *theresae* is Baghdad, but the paratypes of *theresae* are from both Shiraz and Baghdad.

In 1912 Zarudny, who is apparently the only author who has ever called attention to *salvadorii*, questioned whether this name should not

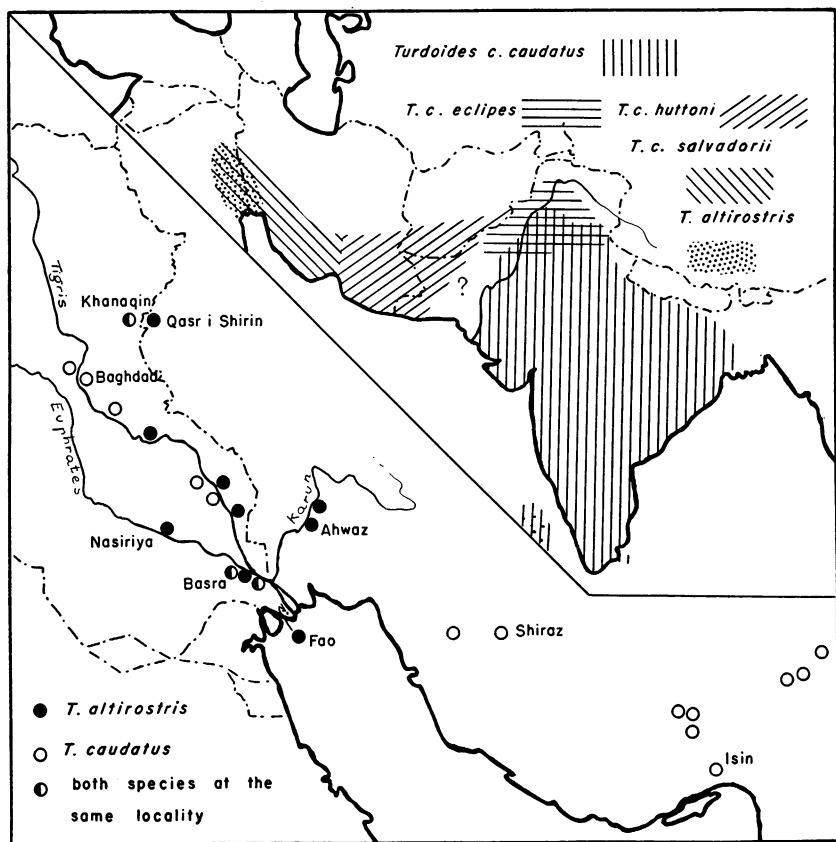


FIG. 1. Distribution of *Turdoides caudatus* and *T. altirostris*. The records shown are from specimens examined and the records given by Ticehurst (1922).

replace *altirostris*. He stated that two specimens from Shiraz had a "short and high bill" and corresponded to the description of *altirostris*, but he was misled by holding to his opinion that this character was the only constant one on which the two forms could be distinguished. Hartert (1922) in direct answer to Zarudny's query upheld the validity of *altirostris* but made no attempt to clarify the identity of *salvadorii*.

It must be remarked here that, although the bill of *T. altirostris* is more highly ridged and usually shorter than that of *T. caudatus* (fig. 2), this character is not absolutely constant. In three or four of 20 specimens of *T. c. salvadorii* that I have examined from southern Iran the shape of the bill is identical with that of the bill of *T. altirostris*, and as shown in table 1 its length may overlap also. All the records from southwestern

Iran published at one time or another by Zarudny must be questioned, as he does not distinguish the two forms with certainty.

The identity of *salvadorii* must no longer remain in doubt, for this

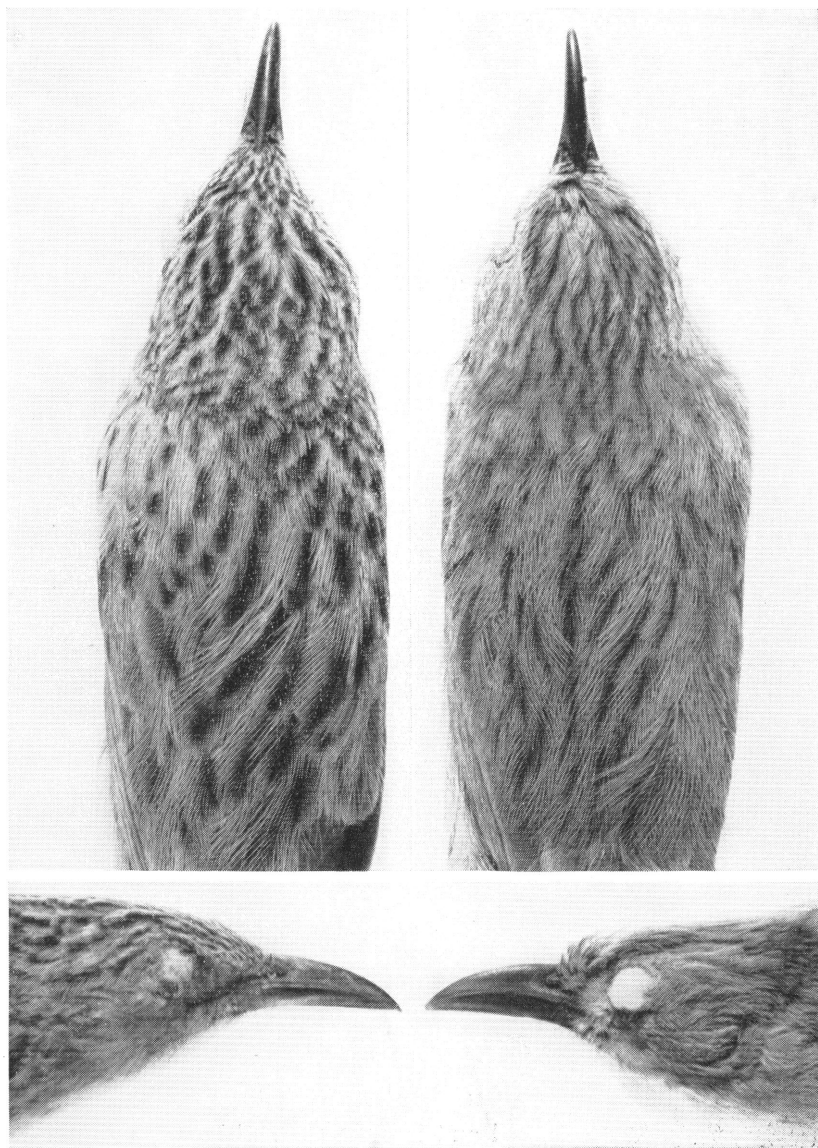


FIG. 2. Plumage pattern in fresh plumage and shape of the bill in *Turdoides caudatus salvadorii* (left) and *T. altirostris* (right). Natural size.

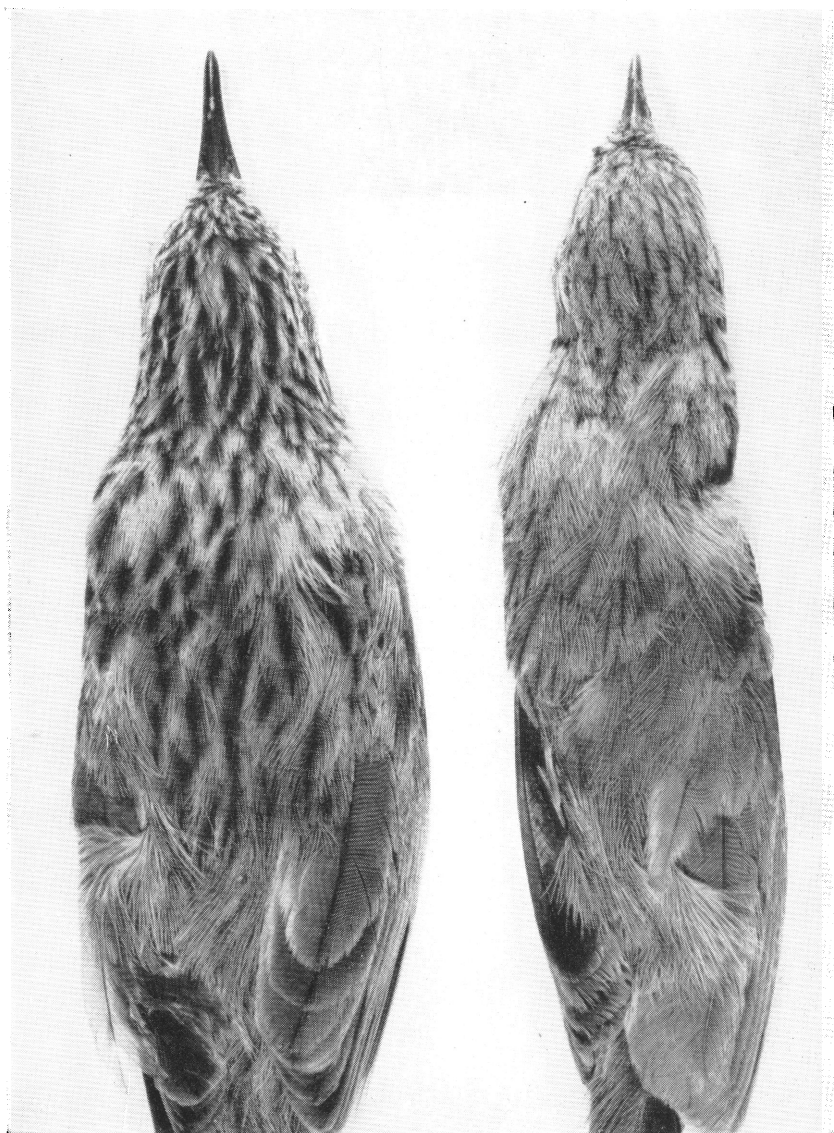


FIG. 3. Plumage pattern in worn plumage in *Turdoides caudatus salvadorii* (left) and *T. altirostris* (right, the specimen depicted being the type of the species). Natural size.

name was properly proposed and is older than *altirostris* or *theresae*. I have not examined the type (if any) of *salvadorii*, the whereabouts of which is unknown to me, but de Filippi's description makes it clear that *salvadorii* is the form redescribed as *theresae* by Meinertzhagen.

Two of the characters of *salvadorii* given by de Filippi are diagnostic and separate it without question from *T. altirostris*. F. de Filippi states that in *salvadorii* "the feathers of the head and back are broadly flammulated [i.e., streaked and that] . . . the feet are pale." Figure 2 shows that *salvadorii* is indeed broadly streaked, whereas the streaks are much narrower and much less conspicuous in *altirostris*, the dark pigment in this latter being restricted to the shafts. The two specimens depicted in figure 2 are in perfectly fresh unworn plumage. With wear, as figure 3 shows (which includes the type of *altirostris*), the difference is emphasized as the pale edges of the feathers disappear in *salvadorii*. In freshly collected specimens of *salvadorii* and *altirostris*, the tarsus and toes of *salvadorii* are pale yellow; in *altirostris* the tarsus is horn color and the toes are dark brown.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION

Turdoides altirostris, as stated, does not vary geographically, whereas *T. caudatus* is divisible into four races.

Two forms occur in India: a larger and apparently more heavily pigmented race (*eclipses*) in the trans-Indus corner of northwestern India, which is replaced in the rest of the peninsula by nominate *caudatus*. In the latter the populations examined vary somewhat geographically in coloration, but the variation is slight and irregular, although the populations of southern India average more rufous above and below than those of central and western India.

In the northwest the populations of nominate *caudatus* tend to become larger and to approach *eclipses* in coloration, and it is likely that further collecting will define an area (as shown on fig. 1) where the two races intergrade. In this area Whistler (1941) reports two specimens from Bahawalpur and Bhung on the eastern side of the Indus which he states have the larger measurements of *eclipses* but are similar to nominate *caudatus* in coloration. Specimens that I have examined from Patiala and Sirsa east of Bahawalpur begin to show an approach to some of the characters of *eclipses* as defined by Ticehurst (1926), namely, in these specimens the ear coverts are somewhat darker and the pigmented area is somewhat more extensive and the white of the throat contrasts more strongly with the rest of the underparts. I have not examined typical specimens of *eclipses*.

In southern Afghanistan westward to the region of Bampur in Persian Baluchistan, *eclipses* is replaced by a distinctly larger (the difference is best appreciated in the length of the bill; see table 1) and paler race. In this race (*huttoni*), populations examined from Kandahar (topotypical) and Seistan are identical, but the populations of Bampur and other parts

of Persian Baluchistan, though closer to *huttoni*, grade into the more western populations of Laristan and Fars. In these populations (*salvadorii*) the breast is lightly streaked with dark shaft streaks, the streaking on the crown and nape tends to be heavier and broader, and the general coloration is paler and grayer. The streaks on the under parts are occasionally visible in some specimens from Kandahar and Seistan, but when present are less distinct and less numerous.

The four races of *caudatus* can be divided into the Indian group (nominate *caudatus* and *eclipses*), which is smaller and more richly pigmented, and the western group (*huttoni* and *salvadorii*), which is larger, paler, and grayer. Closer examination shows, however, that the geographical variation is clinal in character, the populations becoming larger and, generally speaking, paler and grayer as they range farther west.

NOMENCLATURE AND RANGES OF *TURDOIDES* *ALTIROSTRIS* AND *TURDOIDES CAUDATUS*

Turdoides altirostris Hartert

Crateropus caudatus altirostris HARTERT, 1909, Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna, p. 623; type locality, Fao, Iraq.

RANGE: Lower Iraq and neighboring districts of southwestern Iran. Examined from Khanaqin (Iraq) and Qasr i Shirin (Iran) in the north, to Nasiriya on the Euphrates in the west, to the region of Basra and from Fao in the south; reported from Ahwaz and Band i Qir, and probably Malamir [Izeh] on the lower Karun in Iran but this last record is from Zarudny and uncertain (see text).

Turdoides caudatus caudatus Dumont

Cossyphus caudatus DUMONT, 1823, Dictionnaire des sciences naturelles, vol. 29, p. 268; type locality, India.

RANGE: India (except in the northwestern corner, *eclipses*) in suitable regions from the foothills of the Himalayas to Tinnevely district in the south, from Sind, Rajputana, and southern Punjab in the west to Calcutta in the east, Laccadives and Rameswaram Island.

Turdoides caudatus eclipses Hume

Chatorhea eclipses HUME, 1877, Stray Feathers, vol. 5, p. 337; type locality, "Northwestern Punjab, Trans-Indus and lower valleys of the surrounding hills"; the type is from Peshawar, North West Frontier Province, according to Ticehurst (1926).

RANGE: Northwestern Punjab (Salt Range, Attock, and Rawalpindi districts), borders of southern Kashmir, and North West Frontier Province from Peshawar to Fort Sandeman in northern Baluchistan.

Turdoides caudatus huttoni Blyth

Malacocercus Huttoni BLYTH, 1847, Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal, vol. 16, p. 476; type locality, Kandahar, southern Afghanistan.

RANGE: Southern Afghanistan westward through Seistan to the region of Bampur in Persian Baluchistan, probably neighboring districts of Baluchistan proper.

Turdoides caudatus salvadorii de Filippi

Crateropus Salvadorii DE FILIPPI, 1865, Note di un Viaggio in Persia (Daelli, Milan), p. 346; type locality, Shiraz, Fars, southern Iran.

Argya caudatus theresae MEINERTZHAGEN, 1930, Bull. Brit. Ornith. Club, vol. 50, p. 55; type locality, Baghdad, Iraq.

RANGE: Southern Iran in Laristan, Fars, westward to lower Iraq; the westernmost specimen examined is from Gurmat Ali, "4 miles above Basra."

MOLT

Ali (1939) states that *T. caudatus*, at least in India, breeds apparently throughout the year. My specimens suggest also that it has no regular molting season. Specimens from India molting some parts of the plumage have been examined from every month except September and November, from which I have no specimens. In Afghanistan adult specimens taken at Kandahar in the second half of October (17-23) are in the very last stages of the molt which appears to have been complete. In Iran (including Seistan and Persian Baluchistan) molting adults were examined from February, June, July, August, November, and December. Three specimens taken on January 31 are not molting but a specimen taken on February 3 in the same region is molting the tail. Judging by three specimens which appear to be first year birds, the post juvenal molt is complete. These specimens were taken, one on March 19 at Cuddapah in southern Madras, and two on December 17 at Isin, Laristan.

In *T. altirostris* the molting season seems to be irregular also, but fewer molting specimens have been examined. Of four adults, two taken on September 9 at Basra and on November 23 at Khaniqin are ending a molt that was complete. In two specimens taken in April (no date) at Nasiriya and on August 21 at Basra the molt is starting with that of the wing feathers; it is interesting to note that the August specimen, which was not sexed, was incubating.

MEASUREMENTS

The measurements given in table 1 are not separated as to sex, for the sexes are alike in coloration, the sexing may be uncertain, and a

number of specimens were not sexed. Judging by the labels, females average somewhat smaller. The tail measurements are not exact and are too low, for almost no specimens have a perfect tail; the tail, being very soft, quickly wears down to an extent that is not known.

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENTS OF ADULTS OF *Turdoides caudatus* AND
Turdoides altirostris

Form and Region	N	Wing	Tail	Bill from Skull
<i>Nominate caudatus</i>				
Southern India . . .	20	74-84 (79)	98-115 (106)	20-22 (20.7)
Central India . . .	13	74-79 (77)	^a	20-21.5 (20.6)
Kathiawar	7	77-80 (78.5)	100-115 (107)	21-23 (21.5)
Sind	4	75-80 (78.5)	103-116 (109)	21-22 (21.5)
Bahawalpur ^b	2	81.5, 84.5	123, 128	—
Southern Punjab ^b . . .	7	78-84 (80.5)	107-125 (115)	20-21.5 (20.5)
<i>T. c. huttoni</i>				
Kandahar	8	85-90 (87)	115-128 (120)	21-25 (23.5)
Seistan	6	82-92 (87.5)	118-128 (123)	23.5-25 (24.2)
Persian Baluchistan	6	87-92 (89)	115-128 (121)	23-25.5 (24.5)
<i>T. c. salvadorii</i>				
Laristan, Fars	20	84-93 (89.5)	113-132 (123)	22-26 (24.5)
Iraq	1	92	^a	24.5
<i>T. altirostris</i>				
Iran and Iraq	18	73-83 (77.5)	93-113 (104)	20-25 (22.8)

^a The tail is molting or too badly worn to be measured.

^b See text.

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