

V.—*A note on some Oriental Zosteropidae, and descriptions of new Subspecies.* By E. C. STUART BAKER, M.B.O.U.

THE genus *Zosterops* is one which it is extremely difficult to place. It has external and superficial characters which would seem to ally it with many other families, but these are accompanied by so many other contradictory characters,—at least, in so far as our Oriental species are concerned,—that it appears advisable to place the genus in a family by itself.

In the Oriental species of *Zosterops* the bill is slender and small, about half the length of the head; the culmen is curved throughout its length, the edges of the commissure smooth, and the nostrils are covered with a large membrane; the tarsi are fairly strong and stout but not adapted for terrestrial habits; the tongue is protractile and furnished with two brushes of curiously stiff, horny fibres.

The wing is long, the first primary very minute but always visible with a glass. The tail is short and square, varying in comparative length in different species.

The genus in its entirety is represented by a large number of species in Australia, Asia, and Africa, in tropical regions, and the species and subspecies so run into one another that it is extremely difficult to decide what status many of the forms should bear to each other. Much remains still to be done in this respect, and the following is merely an attempt to define the forms found in the Indian Empire or immediately connected therewith.

There seem to be four species which may be discriminated fairly easily, subspecies of these being found breeding in the same area. These four appear to me to be :—

1. *Zosterops palpebrosa*.
2. *Zosterops ceylonensis*.
3. *Zosterops aureiventer*.
4. *Zosterops siamensis*.

The breeding areas of these overlap as follows. 1 and 2 breed together in the lower ranges of the Ceylon mountains.

1 and 3 breed together in the central parts of Burma and in the north of the Malay Peninsula, and 1, 3 and 4 are found together on various parts of Burma, Siam, Yunnan, etc., in the same areas.

The following key may suffice to define the species.

Key to Species.

A. Chin and throat yellow.

- a. Abdomen entirely grey, or with a mere trace of yellow. Tail long, 33-37 mm., and black suffused with green *Z. palpebrosa*.
- b. Abdomen with yellow central streak. Tail short, 30-32 mm., practically black *Z. aureiventer*.
- c. Abdomen yellow all over *Z. siamensis*.

B. Chin and throat dark greenish yellow *Z. ceylonensis*.

Z. palpebrosa extends throughout India and Ceylon, the greater part of Burma, the north of the Malay Peninsula, Siam, Yunnan, and practically throughout southern China.

Z. ceylonensis is confined to Ceylon.

Z. aureiventer extends from Java, Sumatra, Borneo, through the Malay Peninsula, E. Pegu, Karennee to the Kachin Hills.

Z. siamensis is found in central and southern Burma, Siam, and Cochin-China.

The form of *Z. palpebrosa* found in the hills south of the Brahmaputra is very close to *Z. aureiventer*, but has the long, greenish tail of the former and must be retained in that species.

I recognize the following species and subspecies within, or adjacent to, the Indian area.

ZOSTEROPS PALPEBROSA.

(1) *Zosterops palpebrosa palpebrosa*.—*Sylvia palpebrosa* Temm. Pl. Col. 293, fig. 3, 1824: Bengal.

The type is a dark bird with wing of 54 mm. and bill of 11 mm., and evidently belongs to the southern, not the northern form. In 1824 Orissa formed a part of Bengal as did Chota Nagpore, and it is evident the bird came from one

of these places, and I therefore designate Orissa as the restricted type-locality.

Measurements : wing 52-57 ; bill 11-12 mm.

Distribution. Bengal, Orissa, E. Central Provinces and southern India, including all the hilly country from Mysore southwards, east and west.

(2) *Zosterops palpebrosa elwesi*, subsp. nov.

Very much brighter above, and more yellow and less olive-green ; also paler below.

Measurements : wing 49-53 mm. ; bill 8-9.5 mm. (in one 10 mm.).

Distribution. W. Central Provinces, Rajputana, N.W. India and Himalayas to W. Assam, N. Shan States, and Kauri Kachen Hills.

Type : unsexed, Sikkim, 1876 ; Elwes Coll. Tring Museum.

(3) *Zosterops palpebrosa egregia* Madarasz, Ann. Mus. Budapest, ix. 1911, p. 422, pl. xvi. fig. 1 : Ceylon.

Below very pale, almost albescent ; above much as the last.

Measurements : wing 54-56 mm. ; bill 9-10 mm.

Distribution. Ceylon only.

(4) *Zosterops palpebrosa cacharensis*, subsp. nov.

Resembles typical *palpebrosa* closely, but is smaller and almost invariably has a distinct yellow streak down the centre of the abdomen. In this respect it closely resembles the pale southern form of *aureiventer*, but it has the long greenish-black tail of *palpebrosa*.

Measurements : wing 49-54 mm. ; bill 9-10 mm.

Distribution. Assam, south of the Brahmaputra, Manipur, Lushai, Chittagong, Chin Hills.

Type. ♂, 7.12.95 ; Gunjong, N. Cachar ; Baker Coll. Tring Museum.

(5) *Zosterops palpebrosa peguensis*, subsp. nov.

Nearest to *Z. p. simplex* from Amoy, China, but distinguishable at a glance by its much darker coloration, of a

more olive, less golden tint. The Tenasserim birds, six in number, in the collection of the British Museum are distinctly more olive than those from other parts of Burma, but are very close to them, and for the time I keep all the Burmese birds under the one name. The throat of this race is a very pale, almost lemon yellow.

Measurements: wing 53–58 mm., bill 9·0 to 10 mm.

Distribution. Southern Burma, from Pegu, through the greater portion of eastern Burma to Yunnan, Hainan and Formosa. From the last two places the birds differ slightly, but are very near indeed to the Burmese form.

Type. ♂. Brit. Mus. Reg. No. 86/12/1/1700. Moulmein, 4.12.78.

(6) *Zosterops palpebrosa simplex* Swinhoe, Ibis, 1861, p. 331: Amoy (nom. nud.); id., P. Z. S. 1863, p. 203.

Similar to *Z. p. palpebrosa*, but duller, more olive-green above and darker and greyer below, but still brighter and more yellow than in *peguensis*.

Measurements: wing 51–56·5 mm., bill 8·5–10 mm.

Distribution. Eastern China.

There are apparently several forms in China which require working out. Thus there are two southern forms, one much darker than the other and apparently having an east and west distribution; again, the Kukiang bird can at once be picked out from all others by its pale yellow throat.

(7) *Zosterops palpebrosa nicobariensis* Blyth, J. A. S. B. xiv. 1845, p. 563: Nicobars.

Similar to *Z. p. palpebrosa* from southern India, but darker and with a much larger bill, 11–12 mm., as compared with birds from N.W. India: wing 52–55 mm. I cannot separate Richmond's *ventralis* from the Car Nicobars (Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus. xxv. 1902, p. 288).

Distribution. Andamans and Nicobars, including Car Nicobar.

Zosterops ceylonensis Holdsworth, P. Z. S. 1872, p. 459, pl. 20. fig. 2 : Ceylon.

This is a very dark bird with the throat a greenish yellow, and the upper parts dark olive-green with a distinct brownish tinge, especially on the head.

Distribution. Confined to the Ceylon hills from about 1000 feet upwards.

Zosterops siamensis Blyth, Ibis, 1867, p. 34 : Siam.

Whole underparts yellow.

Distribution. Pegu, S.W. and central Burma, Siam, Cochin China.

ZOSTEROPS AUREIVENTER.

(1) *Zosterops aureiventer aureiventer* Hume, Str. Feath. vi. 1878, p. 519 : Tavoy.

Differs from all forms of *palpebrosa* in its short black tail, measuring 30–32 mm., as against 34–37 mm. The green margins to the tail-feathers are absent or obsolete and the tail is practically black. There is a definite yellow streak down the centre of the breast and belly, and the flanks are a very pale grey, albescent where they meet the yellow stripe.

Distribution. Tenasserim and south along the coast through the Malay Peninsula and north through Karennee into the southern Shan States.

Zosterops mesozantha (Salvadori, Ann. Mus. Civ. Genova, vii. 1889, p. 396 : Karen Hills) is a synonym of this form.

(2) *Zosterops aureiventer buxtoni* Nicholson, Ibis, 1879, p. 167 : W. Java.

Vent and abdomen broadly yellow, flanks dark grey. Wing 48–51 mm.

Distribution. Java, Sumatra, Borneo.

(3) *Zosterops aureiventer tahanensis* Ogilvie-Grant, Bull. B. O. C. xix. 1906, p. 10 : Gunong Tahan, Pahang.

I cannot separate this bird, in any way as regards colour, from *buxtoni*, but it is a trifle larger, wing 49–50 mm. As they overlap so greatly this hardly seems a sufficient reason

to keep them as two races. The characters relied on by Robinson and Kloss, *i. e.* the yellow forehead, yellow lores and eyebrow, and yellower upper tail-coverts, are purely individual, and Dr. Hartert and I have carefully examined the specimens in the Tring Museum together and agree that the characteristics are of no sub-specific value.

Distribution. Malay Peninsula; mountainous country only.

VI.—*Some Remarks on the Names of certain Birds.*

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IN spite of all that has been written of recent years by expert nomenclaturists on what names have priority for each species, there are, and must be for years to come, a good many names which are still being used incorrectly even by the strictest priorists, since even in my small sphere of work a few have come under my notice, and I have thought that it would be desirable to call attention to them.

1. THE YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER.—This is the *Motacilla superciliosa* of Gmelin, the *Phylloscopus superciliosus* of most authors. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Messrs. Mathews and Iredale (Austral Avian Rec. vol. iii. pp. 44–5, Dec. 1915), the *Motacilla superciliosa* of Gmelin is not the same species as the *Motacilla superciliosa* of Boddaert, 1783, and so, of course, *superciliosa* cannot be used for this Warbler. Messrs. Mathews and Iredale failed to find a synonym which could be used instead, and (*loc. cit.*) they proposed the name *præmium* for this bird, which would then become *Phylloscopus humei præmium*, and this name has been adopted in the B. O. U. List, 2nd Ed., 1915, etc.

These nomenclatorial explorers, however, need not have looked beyond Yarrell (Ed. iv. p. 445, footnote) to have got on the right track, and a little further search would have led them to Blyth's 'Catalogue of the Birds in the Museum of the Asiatic Society' p. 184, and so to J. A. S. B. xi. p. 191,



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