

167. *FULIX MARILA*.

Also common during the winter.

168. *PODICIPES PHILIPPENSIS*.

Very common on the creeks and rivers. A resident.

The nomenclature followed is nearly that of the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum.'

XIX.—*On the Melierax metabates of Heuglin.*

By T. SALVADORI, H.M.B.O.U.

THE real status of the bird described by Heuglin under the name of *Melierax metabates* is still uncertain, and I wish to offer a few remarks on it.

The bird was described by Heuglin\* in this journal, the author having been assured by the late Dr. Hartlaub that it was "a good and new species." In fact, Hartlaub repeated the same statement†, saying that "zwischen dieser Art (*Astur musicus*) und *M. polyzonus* steht zwischeninne als gute Art *M. metabates* Heugl."

The type and only specimen obtained was said by Heuglin to be from the "upper Bahr el abiad," or White Nile.

The late Marchese Orazio Antinori, in his catalogue‡, mentions two specimens of a *Melierax* from the White Nile, which, along with others from the Blue Nile, he attributes to *M. polyzonus* (Rüpp.).

Heuglin again, in 1869§, mentions and describes *Melierax metabates* as follows:—"Similis præcedenti [*M. polyzono*], ex toto obscurius tinctus; rectricibus lateralibus fasciis 4-6 nigricantibus: pedibus et ceromate flavis." The dimensions given by Heuglin are somewhat greater than those of *M. polyzonus*.

Dr. Finsch, who, in the second volume of Heuglin's work, published some additions to it, has no remarks about *M. metabates*; but in a previous work, published in conjunction

\* Ibis, 1861, p. 72.

† Journ. f. Orn. 1861, p. 100.

‡ Catalogo descrittivo di una Collezione di Uccelli, p. 17 (1864).

§ Orn. N.O.-Afr. i. p. 63.



with Hartlaub\*, looks upon *M. metabates* as a doubtful species.

We come next to Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, who, in the 'Catalogue of Birds'†, states his opinion that *M. metabates* is "a very doubtful species," apparently established upon an old specimen of *M. polyzonus*. Twenty-five years later Dr. Sharpe‡ maintains the same opinion as regards Heuglin's species, and Dr. Dubois§ also considers it doubtful.

Quite recently Dr. Reichenow|| has said that *Melierax metabates* was probably established on a specimen of *M. polyzonus* not in full plumage.

In order to come to a definite conclusion on this question, it appears to me that there are only two courses—either to examine the type of Heuglin's description or to compare specimens from the White Nile with typical *M. polyzonus*.

As for the type, I do not know whether it is still in existence or where it is to be found. As regards specimens of *Melierax* from the White Nile, I have already alluded to two of them brought home by the late Marchese Antinori, who apparently did not find that they were different from others from the Blue Nile, from Antub, near Khartoum, and Daberki¶, on the river Dinder. I have now before me three specimens obtained by Antinori, and I find that they are absolutely identical with others from Abyssinia and Shoa. Quite lately Mr. Witherby\*\* has met with *M. polyzonus* pretty commonly on the White Nile, and Mr. Ogilvie-Grant also attributes to the same species several specimens collected by Mr. Hawker at Jebel Auli and Kaka, on the White Nile††.

From all this, it appears that the bird from the White Nile is *Melierax polyzonus*, and it is not likely that a nearly allied species would be found in the same region.

\* Die Vögel Ost-Afr. pp. 90, 91, 855 (1870).

† Vol. i. p. 92 (1874).

‡ Hand-list, i. p. 248 (1899).

§ Synopsis Avium, p. 839 (fasc. xii. 1902).

|| Die Vögel Afrika's, ii. p. 545 (1901).

¶ Daberki is not a place in Shoa, as stated by Dr. Reichenow (Die Vög. Afr., Atlas, p. 13), but is on the river Dinder, about 13° N. lat.

\*\* Ibis, 1901, p. 270.

†† Ibis, 1902, p. 441.



Dr. Reichenow, who, as stated above, has already identified *M. metabates* Heugl. with *M. polyzonus* (Rüppell), has shown that, most unfortunately, Rüppell's name for this species cannot be maintained, being preoccupied by *Nisus polyzonus* Less.\* This is quite true, although Dr. Reichenow is mistaken in regard to Lesson's name belonging to the southern *Melierax canorus* (Rislach). *Nisus polyzonus* Less., the type of which has been figured by Des Murs†, was established on a specimen brought from the Cape by Delalande, and I think that it has been rightly identified by Dr. Sharpe with *Astur* (or *Scelopizias*) *tachiro*‡. Dr. Reichenow mentions *Nisus polyzonus* Less. also among the synonyms of *Astur tachiro*, shewing that his previous statement was made by mistake.

In conclusion, the name *Melierax metabates* of Heuglin (1861), which at that time had no right to stand, the bird to which the name was given not being different from *Falco* (*Nisus*) *polyzonus* Rüpp. (1835), ought, according to Dr. Reichenow, to be restored to use on account of Rüppell's name being preoccupied by *Nisus polyzonus* Less. (1831). I feel that this change is unfortunate, but I cannot see the way to avoid it §.

XX.—*On the Birds collected during a recent Expedition through Somali-Land and Abyssinia to Lake Tsana.* By W. R. OGILVIE-GRANT, F.Z.S. *With Field-Notes by the Collector, Mr. E. DEGEN.*

(Plates V. & VI.)

DURING recent years so many naturalists have traversed the

\* *Traité d'Orn.* p. 58 (1831).

† *Iconogr. Orn.* pl. 61.

‡ *Cat. B. i.* p. 99.

§ [With due respect to our much-esteemed correspondent, we do not quite understand why Rüppell's name *polyzonus* should not be retained for the *Melierax*, as Lesson's name does not refer to the same genus, and is, moreover, merely a useless synonym of *Astur tachiro* Daud.—EDD.]



Salvadori, Tommaso. 1904. "On the Melierax metabates of Heuglin." *Ibis* 4(2), 248–250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1474-919x.1904.tb07777.x>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/81301>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1474-919x.1904.tb07777.x>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/378790>

#### **Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

#### **Sponsored by**

Smithsonian

#### **Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.