C; *Masius chrysopterus*, C; *Chloropipo unicolor*, U; *Piprites chloris*, R; *Schiffornis turdinus*, U; *Sayornis nigricans*, U; *Colonia colonus*, R; *Tyrannus melancholicus*, C; *Legatus leucophaius*, U; *Conopias cinchoneti*, U; *Myiozetetes similis*, L; *Rhytipterna simplex*, R; *Myiarchus cephalotes*, L; *Myiarchus tuberculifer*, R; *Contopus fumigatus*, C; *Myiobius villosus*, U; *Myiotriccus ornatus*, C; *Pyrrhomyias cinnamomea*, C; *Myiophobus phoenicomitra*, U; *Myiophobus cryptoxanthus*, L; *M. roraimae*, R; *Platyrinchus mystaceus*, C; *Tolmomyiass ulphurescens*, U; *Rhynchocyclus fulvipectus*, R; *Todirostrum cinereum*, U; *P. capitale*, R; *Lophotriccus pileatus*, C; *Pseudotriccus (pelzelni)*, L; *Pogonotriccus ophthalmicus*, C; *Serpophaga cinerea*, C; *Mecocerculus calopterus*, U; *Tyranniscus viridiflavus*, C; *Leptopogon superciliaris*, C; *Mionectes olivaceus*, C; *M. striaticollis*, U; *Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*, C; *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*, U; *Cyanocorax yncas*, U; *Odontorchilus branickii*, U; *Troglodytes aedon*, C; *Henicorhina leucophrys*, C; *Cyphorhinus thoracicus*, U; *Catharus dryas*, C; *Platycichla leucops*, C; *Turdus albicollis*, R; *Smaragdolanius leucotis*, C; *Vireo gilvus*, U; *Hylophilus olivaceus*, R; *Psarocolius* sp., L; *Parula pitiayumi*, C; *Myioborus miniatus*, C; *Basileuterus tristriatus*, C; *B. rivularis*, U; *Coereba flaveola*, C; *Diglossa glauca*, C; *Iridophanes pulcherrima*, L; *Dacnis cayana*, C; *D. lineata*, C; *Chlorophonia cyanea*, C; *Euphonia xanthogaster*, C; *E. mesochrysa*, R; *Chlorochrysa calliparaea*, C; *Tangara chilensis*, C; *T. schrankii*, C; *T. punctatus*, C; *T. arthus*, C; *T. xanthocephala*, C; *T. chrysotis*, U; *T. parzudakii*, R; *T. cyanotis*, U; *T. cyanicollis*, C; *T. gyrola*, U; *Thraupis episcopus*, U; *T. palmarum*, C; *T. cyanocephala*, R; *Ramphocelus nigrogularis*, L; *Calochaetes coccineus*, U; *Piranga leucoptera*, C; *Lanio fulvus*, U; *Creurgops verticalis*, U; *Chlorospingus flavigularis*, C; *C. canigularis*, C; *Saltator maximus*, R; *Pitylus grossus*, L; *Sporophila castaneiventris*, R; *Atlaptetes brunneinucha*, U; *Myospiza aurifrons*, U; *Carduelis olivacea*, U.

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The case for the retention of *Anaplectes* as a separate genus.

by J. H. Elgood

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The genus *Malimbus* is sufficiently distinctive to have attracted the attention of several ornithologists. Moreau (1958) stated 'the case for retaining

Malimbus as a separate genus is not strong', maintaining that it is separated from *Ploceus* 'by nothing more than the red carotenoid pigment in the plumage'. But it must be remembered that Moreau later (1960a,b) took a fairly extreme view, reducing the weaver species into a very much smaller number of genera than had been formerly recognised.

The fundamental raised issue is what constitutes a genus? Biologists agree that a genus is a group of species thought to have had a close common ancestry and that are, usually, quite distinct and separable from other groups of species in the same widely accepted next higher taxon, whether tribe, sub-family or family. Some genera may now be monotypic, with a single surviving species, and for these there can be no case for merging each in a nearly related polytypic genus. On the other hand, where a taxon is thought to be still evolving, as with the Ploceinae, some evolutionary trends may be represented by a single known species, thus also giving rise to a monotypic genus. In the Ploceinae the earlier taxonomic 'splitters' had undoubtedly gone too far in erecting an array of genera to group somewhat similar looking species, but the 'lumpers' seem now to have moved equally too far in the opposite direction, being apparently unwilling to admit monotypic genera for divergent forms. Thus in addition to the mergence of former *Anaplectes* with *Malimbus,* with which we are here concerned, there has also been, for example, (following Moreau) the mergence of former *Brachycope* with *Quelea* (Hall & Moreau 1970) or with *Euplectes* (White 1963) and of former *Notiospiza* with *Ploceus* (Hall & Moreau, White). If the genus concept is to have value in taxonomy it is far preferable to give full generic status to a clearly divergent form rather than blur an otherwise clear-cut related genus. In my view, that *Anaplectes* should be excluded from *Malimbus,* is a case in point.

The question then is whether the 3 (or 4) subspecies previously grouped in the genus *Anaplectes* by earlier workers (Sharpe 1890, Sclater 1930, Bates 1930, Bannerman 1949, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1955, 1963, 1973), but merged by White (1963) (following the recommendation of Moreau 1960a and since followed by others such as Morony *et al.* 1975) into a single species *Malimbus rubriceps* are in fact sufficiently distinctive, and by implication through separate ancestry, to warrant separation from *Malimbus* and the retention of the genus *Anaplectes.*

It is noteworthy that originally Moreau (1958) kept *Anaplectes* separate from *Malimbus* and was therefore able succinctly to define *Malimbus* as a group of species (i) 'confined to or closely associated with, the lowland equatorial rain-forest of Western Africa, for the most part between about 5°N and 5°S'; (ii) 'almost exclusively insectivorous' and (iii) having 'plumages that are alike in being black and red'. The *Anaplectes* forms do not comply with either the first or last point, and typical *Malimbus,* in fact, consume a wider range of foods than is suggested by Moreau's second distinction, which in any case, is not exclusive to *Malimbus.*

With regard to distribution, Hall & Moreau (1970) show such striking allopatry between *Malimbus* and *Anaplectes* that an extension of the allopatric superspecies concept might lead to the proposition that the 2 genera be thought of as a 'supergenus', their presumably mainly insectivorous common ancestor having given rise to 2 diverging forms, a 'pro-Malimbus' and a 'pro-Anaplectes', adapting to fill 2 niches, in rain-forest and savanna respectively. That the forest genus was more successful than the savanna is suggested by

the array of some 10 species of *Malimbus* as opposed to the single species of *Anaplectes*.

Coming to Moreau's second point, the food of *Malimbus,* many weavers have a fairly wide range of feeding choices. Although the Ploceinae are basically graminivorous, most feed on insects to some extent, even if only seasonally while alate termites are readily available, or to meet the protein needs of ovulation and of nestlings (Ward 1965a,b). Several species of *Malimbus,* though apparently never graminivorous, certainly utilise some vegetable food. (It should be recalled that grasses are virtually absent from tropical rain-forest.) Thus *M. rubricollis, ibadanensis* and *scutatus* (and probably others) also include strippings from the fruit of the oil-palm *Elais guineensis* in their diet. The feeding habits of *M. rubriceps* (*Anaplectes*) have been inadequately reported, but it is probably mainly insectivorous. I have never seen it on the ground nor on grass heads, only searching the foliage and twigs of savanna trees, though McLachlan & Liversidge (1978) mention seeds as well as insects.

As to Moreau's third distinction, to anyone familiar with malimbes in the field, their black and red plumage, typically with bold clear-cut patterns, together with slim curved black bills, make them instantly recognisable; as clearly defined a generic taxon as in any branch of vertebrate zoology. Nevertheless some *Malimbus* species do not fully conform. Two species, *M. coronatus* and *M. cassini,* have entirely black females, though the males are typical malimbes with a red crown and a mainly red head, neck and breast respectively. Again both sexes of *M. racheliae* have a plumage pattern closely similar to that obtaining in the corresponding sex of the typically coloured *M. scutatus,* but with yellow instead of scarlet under the tail and with orange-yellow bordering the red breast area of both sexes and the red head of the male. Similarly the imperfectly known and recently described *M. ballmanni* (Wolters 1974) has both sexes with a pattern somewhat resembling the corresponding sex of *scutatus* but with the coloured areas of the head yellow with a faint chestnut wash and with bright yellow under the tail. This new species was first located in forest in Ivory Coast, but unfortunately the publication was not noticed in *Ibis* abstracts so that, in his review of *Malimbus,* Field (1979) who had sighted *ballmanni* in a small forest area of Sierra Leone at Gola, overlooked Wolter's description and thought he had found a new species for which he proposed the name *M. golensis* once specimens eventually came to hand. Prigogine (1981) has since stated that *golensis* is a synonym of *ballmanni.* Field described the under tail coverts as being 'daffodil yellow', but assures me (pers. com.) that despite many *Ploceus* weavers being similarly black and yellow, *ballmanni* (=*golensis*) distinctly had the general appearance (jizz in colloquial parlance) of a typical malimbe. Another comparatively recently described malimbe, *M. ibadanensis* (Elgood 1958), was found to differ from typical *Malimbus* species in that most individuals have an occasional red feather within the black areas of the plumage and this was thought to point to a possible hybrid origin, with *M. scutatus* and *M. rubricollis* as the possible parents. However, Hall & Moreau (1970) accepted it as a full species forming a superspecies with *M. erythrogaster.*

Mention should also be made of another weaver, the so-called 'Yellow-legged Malimbe' *M. flavipes* (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1973), a bird first described by Chapin (1916). Both sexes are essentially black but with 'feet

and toes yellow'. Few, if any, authorities would want to place this species in *Malimbus* any longer, most now regarding it as a *Ploceus,* though there would seem to be some case for placing it in another monotypic genus *Rhinoploceus* (Gyldenstolpe 1924).

Thus, apart from the departures from the characteristic black and red plumage noted above, it may be said that all true malimbes (*Malimbus sensu strictu*) have a clear cut characteristic generic plumage pattern, with general shape and attitude (jizz) quite distinct from those of *Ploceus* species. *Anaplectes* does not conform with them in any way. The females of all its races lack both black and red: the males have red heads, and one race (*leuconotos=melanotis*) has black cheeks, but otherwise the plumage is mainly brown above and whitish below. In short, male *Anaplectes,* with some red in the plumage, does not resemble any of the savanna species of *Ploceus,* suggesting it has had an ancestry separate from both *Ploceus* and *Malimbus.*

Two important points of general appearance remain. All true malimbes have black bills (bluish-black in *M. nitens*) but both sexes in *Anaplectes* have rosy-crimson bills in all seasons. Again *Anaplectes* differs from all true malimbes in having distinct eclipse and nuptial plumages, with consequent double moult of most of the contour feathers, a phenomenon known in many other savanna weavers (*Ploceus, Quelea, Euplectus* – including former *Coliuspasser*) but in no true *Malimbus.* The perennial mode of dress of *Malimbus* can be correlated with its distribution in the rain-forest zone 5° either side of the Equator, where seasonal differences in climate and day length are relatively slight. On the other hand *Anaplectes* ranging much farther north and south in savanna, is exposed to sharply demarked wet and dry seasons and has, in consequence, marked seasonal plumage change.

Several workers have invoked nest structure and mode of construction as throwing light on weaver affinities (Crook 1960, Collias & Collias 1964). A wide range of nest types is found amongst the true malimbes, ranging from the 'globular' nest of *M. nitens* to the extreme 'retort shaped' nests of *M. scutatus* and *M. cassini* (Crook 1960), these last having a tubular entrance tunnel of up to 0.75m in length, giving the nest the appearance of an inverted bed-sock. The main features of the nest of *Anaplectes* are: (i) an unusual, rope-like, method of attachment of the nest roof to the tip of a branch of, typically, a broad-leafed tree, 'pensile from the roof' (Collias & Collias 1964), met otherwise in only a few species of *Ploceus;* (ii) although basically a retort shaped type, the mode of suspension and the partial incorporation of the entrance tunnel into the nest contour tend to give it an overall spindle shape; and (iii) it is constructed, mostly by the male, very largely of leaf petioles and mid-ribs (and sometimes whole leaves) of broad leafed trees, often from the tree supporting the nest. Collias & Collias (1964), who retain the name *Anaplectes,* make special mention of 'the frequent use of alternative reverse winding', which they say is absent from the nests of other *Malimbus* species, but is seen in some *Ploceus* species. Of some interest is the fact that *Anaplectes* is perhaps the only weaver occasionally to attach its nest to artificial supports such as telegraph wires (Bannerman 1949) and certainly no malimbe has been found to do so.

Data from egg-shell patterns and microscopic structure, and from egg-white and blood proteins is mostly undetermined or too scanty for consideration.

Anaplectes (*M. rubriceps*) therefore differs significantly from all other malimbes as follows:-

(i) it is a latitudinally wide-ranging savanna form, whereas malimbes are confined to the sub-equatorial rain-forest zone;

(ii) it has plumage quite different from the typical black and red of malimbes;

(iii) both sexes have a rosy-crimson bill (developing early in life) as opposed to the black bill of malimbes;

(iv) it has seasonal plumage changes, like many other savanna weavers, whereas malimbes have perennial plumage.

In feeding it certainly resembles malimbes in being insectivorous, perhaps more strictly so than most malimbes.

Nest structure and mode of construction suggest separation from both *Malimbus* and *Ploceus* but perhaps rather nearer to *Ploceus*.

In conclusion, there are emphatically good reasons for removing *rubriceps* from *Malimbus* and re-establishing it in the monotypic genus *Anaplectes*. If further it is considered to be a single species with 3 or 4 races, it should be named *Anaplectes melanotis,* this being the earliest name attached to *Anaplectes* (Lafresnaye 1839), with precedence over *rubriceps* (Sundevall 1850) and *leuconotos* (Muller 1851).

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The status of the Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* in Suriname

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The Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* is a rather common breeding bird on sandy ground in Suriname, nesting in isolated pairs in burrows in low sandwalls and often in descending tunnels in level ground. I do not know whether it ever digs the burrow itself, but it regularly nests in burrows of the Swallow-wing *Chelidoptera tenebrosa,* which is a characteristic bird of this habitat.

Breeding activity starts in February and lasts into June:- males with enlarged gonads 13 Feb; female in burrow with finished nest ready for eggs, 26 Feb; nest with 4 heavily incubated eggs, 9 Apr; nest with 2 nestlings and 1 egg, 8 Apr; nestlings just having left the nest, being fed by their parents, 22 May and 12 June; nest with 2 nestlings and 1 egg, 6 June (Haverschmidt 1968).

During my residence in Suriname, 1946–1968, I observed yearly near my home on the left bank of the Suriname River just outside Paramaribo, where this swallow does not breed, loose groups of *S. ruficollis* hurrying northward, following the river downstream. They were certainly not migrating in the proper sense, but they behaved like Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on migration, flying low and rapidly. The majority came over in the late afternoon between 1630 and 1800, and I observed these afternoon flights all around Paramaribo and even over the centre of the city. Apparently they were heading for a communal roost, where the total number must have been very great. I observed these flights between February (earliest date 18 Feb 1962) and October (latest date 6 Oct 1957). The greatest numbers were seen during March and April through well into August. Sometimes a number settled down on telephone wires, where it was easy to collect specimens. All were moulting their primaries and in non-breeding conditions. These facts suggested to me that 2 different populations were involved, one resident and breeding from February into June, and a second one composed only of immigrants from February to October.

In the report of a collection of Surinam birds collected 1912–1914, Bangs & Penard (1918) described a new race, *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis caccabatus,* (from