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A new subspecies of the Nubian Bustard

by CHARLES VAURIE

Received 24th October, 1960

The Nubian Bustard (*Neotis nuba*) inhabits the scrubby regions of the semi desert from the Red Sea Hills of the Sudan southwestward to the region between Abu Hamed on the north and Khartoum in the south, and then westward to Kordofan, Darfur (perhaps), Chad north to the Ennedi, and Niger Territory north to southern Air. It is not well known and relatively few specimens are in collections. The American Museum of Natural History has five specimens, three adult males and one adult female captured in Kordofan which died in the Giza Zoological Garden, and one adult male shot by Captain Angus Buchanan in Niger Territory at Taberghi, south of Agadès, “six or seven days north of Tanout”, on 4th July, 1922.

This last specimen suggests strongly that a different subspecies inhabits the western end of the range of the species for which I propose the name:

*Neotis nuba agaze*¹ Vaurie, new subspecies

Type: Taberghi, as above; A.M.N.H., catalogue no. 547514.

Description: Differs from nominate *nuba* Cretzschmar, 1826, type locality, Kurgos, near Shendi, Sudan, by being paler and less heavily and darkly vermiculated with brown on the back, rump, upper tail coverts, tail, and upper wing coverts, and also by being banded with blue-grey on the upper breast beneath the chestnut band, with a few feathers speckled slightly with pale brown, whereas this grey band is lacking in the specimens from Kordofan, the feathers in the latter beneath the chestnut band being barred or well speckled with darker brown. *Agaze* differs also very distinctly from nominate *nuba* by being smaller, by having a proportionately shorter tail, and much weaker feet.

Measurements: *Agaze*, adult male, wing length 418, tail 177, tarsus length 114, anterior-posterior thickness of the tarsus measured half way down its length 7.5, length of middle toe 45, length of the bill from the skull 63, length of the bill from the anterior border of the nostril 28. In the three males from Kordofan, these measurements are, respectively, 425, 440, 455; 252, 260, 278; 119, 120, 122; 11, 12.5, 13; 57, 59, 60; 73, 74, 75; and 36, 37, 40. In the female from Kordofan, 408, 219, 119, 12, 57, 65, 33.

The specimen from Taberghi is in the last stages of the moult. Its fourth

¹. The native name of this bird in the language of the Tuaregs.

primary (the fourth and fifth primaries are longest in this species) appears to be nearly full grown and the longest tail feathers appear to be full grown as I cannot find traces of a sheath at their base. I may add that virtually all the feathers of the body are very fresh and unbleached.

Discussion: Hartert (1924, *Novitates Zool.*, vol. 31, p. 9) has discussed the specimen from Taberghi and says it may represent a new subspecies but that he could not decide because the difference [in coloration] might be individual and that he was "convinced" it had been wrongly sexed, adding "should it be a male, it would of course be a very much smaller form! [than nominate *nuba*]." Apparently, the females of *Neotis nuba* differ from the males only by being smaller, but Hartert's belief that Buchanan's bird is a female is only an assumption, though perhaps correct. Buchanan was a most conscientious collector. The many hundred of his skins that I have seen are "all they should be", as Hartert states, very well prepared with full data and apparently correctly sexed. At any rate, whether correctly sexed or not, the specimen from Taberghi differs quite distinctly from the female from Kordofan and I believe the differences are too numerous to be merely "individual". Hartert states that "Buchanan says it is a young male", but I cannot account for this statement as Buchanan made no notation that it was immature on his label. It appears to me to be adult as it did to Hartert.

The validity of a substitute name

by S. DILLON RIPLEY

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In my review of the Thrushes (Postilla, 1952, 1954, No. 13 p. 23 et add. p. 1) I provided a substitute name for an Iranian subspecies of the Blue-throat, *Erithacus svecicus* or, as may be preferred by some authors, *Luscinia svecica*.

The original names involved were as follows:

Cyanecula wolffi magna Zarudny and Loudon, 1904, Ornith. Jahrb. p. 225, Bidesar, Arabistan (=Khuzistan, southwestern Iran *vide* Vaurie, Bds. Pal. Fauna p. 385.)

This name I believe is preoccupied in the genera *Erithacus* or *Luscinia* by: *Philomela magna* Blyth, 1833 (Aug.), Rennie's Field Nat. vol. 1, p. 355, a substitute name for *Sylvia Philomela* "Temminck" = Bechstein, 1802; which see also, Blyth, 1833 (May), Rennie's Field Nat. vol. 1, p. 200, here called *Philomela major*.

In the *Birds of the Palaearctic Fauna*, 1959, p. 385, Dr. Vaurie rejects my substitute name on the basis of Copenhagen Decisions No. 115, I.C.Z.N. 1953, that a name published as a synonym without independent description should be rejected as from some future date when the new International Regles are published. Dr. Vaurie states that *Philomela magna* Blyth 1833 is a *nomen nudum*.

I find I must differ. *Philomela magna* is not a *nomen nudum*. Blyth's paragraph (*tom. cit.* 1833 (May), p. 200) is as follows, referring to the British nightingale:

"This renowned songster is of a size, intermediate, between the thrushes and the warblers; at least, he is much larger than any of our British



Vaurie, Charles. 1961. "A new subspecies of the Nubian bustard." *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 81, 26–27.

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