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Division of Birds, U. S. National Museum



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A series of 26 specimens of the giant nuthatch, representing the material in the United States National Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, shows that the bird of northwestern Yunnan is quite distinct from *magna*, based on specimens from Karen-ni. For the new form I propose the name

SITTA MAGNA LIGEA, n. subsp.

Type.—Adult male, U.S.N.M. no. 297271; collected at Likiang, northwestern Yunnan, 8,200 feet, August 1923, by Dr. Joseph F. Rock.

Diagnosis.—Readily distinguished from *Sitta magna magna* by its markedly shorter and laterally slenderer bill, although not separable by color characters or other measurements. The culmens of nine males from northwestern Siam and the Shan States measure (from the base of the rhamphotheca) 30.3 to 32.5 mm (average: 31.4 mm); of eight females from the same localities, 29.5 to 32.5 mm (average: 31 mm). On the other hand, the culmens of four males from the mountains of Likiang measure 26 to 28.5 mm (average: 27.1 mm). The difference in the "heaviness" of the bill is scarcely to be shown in figures, but is very obvious to the eye.

Range.—Northwestern Yunnan: the Likiang mountains, 8,200 to 10,000 feet; Yung-pei.

Remarks.—I have not seen toponymical *magna*, but feel justified in considering Siamese specimens, taken about 50 miles east of Karen-ni, to belong to that form, especially since they agree perfectly with Shan States examples which British authors have held to be identical with Karen-ni birds.

Two Shan birds, whose measurements are not included above, are not fully mature, as is indicated by the texture of the plumage. In these specimens, the bill is as short as in the Likiang examples, but at the same time as thick laterally as in fully adult Shan specimens, a combination which gives it a peculiarly blunt appearance for a nuthatch.

The sexes of this species are easily separable in series. The male has the dark markings of the head wholly glossy blue-black; in the female they are dull black or black washed with gray, with a tendency to gloss only on the shoulders. In the male the mantle is slaty-blue; in the female paler slaty and much less suffused with blue. The female has the underparts pale gray, more or less suffused throughout with buff or pale chestnut; the male has the same parts wholly a soft blue-gray, with buffy suffusion confined to the lower abdomen. The chin and throat are white in either sex, but in the female they are faintly washed with buff.

The "Fauna of British India" describes the upper plumage simply as "slaty-blue," and fails to mention one of the most striking characters of the species. Actually, the whole portion of the head, neck, and upper back included between the broad black stripes is quite different from the mantle, the front and crown being a soft blue-gray, changing gradually to a still paler gray upon the nape and upper back, which is sharply defined from the color of the remaining upperparts. In the female the light portion is very faintly suffused with buff, and, because the adjacent colors are less contrasting, is slightly less conspicuous than in the male.

The front and crown in either sex may have more or less black streaking in the gray. In the series before me, these parts vary individually from immaculate gray to almost solid black.

My thanks are due to John T. Zimmer, who has kindly sent me the Burmese material from the Rothschild collection, and to R. M. de Schauensee, who has lent me the Yung-pei specimen of *ligea*, as well as his valuable series of *magna* from Siam.