

DESCRIPTION OF TWO NEW BIRDS FROM SOMALI LAND.

By HARRY C. OBERHOLSER,

Assistant Ornithologist, Department of Agriculture.

The two birds described below were included with a collection of African birds some time since presented to the United States National Museum by Dr. A. Donaldson Smith. Their apparent distinctness from hitherto recognized forms was recently detected, and they are accordingly herewith brought properly to the notice of ornithologists.

MEROPS SUPERCILIOSUS DONALDSONI, *a* new subspecies.

Chars. subsp.—Resembling *Merops superciliosus superciliosus*, but upper parts paler, the contrast between the color of the head and that of the back less pronounced; brown of head more golden; green of remaining upper surface more yellowish; lower parts lighter, more yellowish green, usually with less wash of bluish.

Description.—Type, adult male, No. 177908, U.S.N.M.; Bar Madu, Ganana River, Somali Land, February 19, 1895; Dr. A. Donaldson Smith. Pileum golden olive brown with a wash of greenish, shading imperceptibly into the yellowish green of the remainder of the upper surface—all with a pronounced satiny luster; tail like the back, though rather duller, the feathers, excepting the middle pair, margined on their outer webs with dusky; wings of the same uniform yellowish green, save for dark brown tips to nearly all the quills, fuscous edgings on the distal portions of the inner vanes, a bluish wash on the innermost secondaries (tertiaries), and a broad area of ochraceous on the basal part of the interior webs of both primaries and secondaries; narrow frontal line greenish white; superciliary stripe pale green, somewhat mixed with whitish and bluish; lores, subocular region, and broad postocular stripe brownish black, slightly washed with green; chin white, suffused with olive buff; broad malar stripe white, washed anteriorly with olive buff, posteriorly with bluish;

a Named for the collector and donor, Dr. A. Donaldson Smith, of Philadelphia, Pa.

upper throat reddish hazel; rest of lower surface light yellowish green, with a satiny luster, darker and shaded with olive across the jugulum, slightly bluish on center of abdomen, least yellowish on crissum; lining of wing ochraceous; "iris red."

The type and another specimen from the same locality measure in millimeters as follows:

Sex.	Wing.	Tail.	Exposed culmen.	Tarsus.	Middle toe.
Male (type)	135	137	44	12	13
Male	136	143	42	12	13

Compared with numerous specimens of *Merops superciliosus* from Madagascar this new form is very different, but the probability is strong that these extremes are connected by intermediates on the continent, and a trinomial is therefore employed for *donaldsoni*. Its chief distinction lies in its pale coloration, a feature that seems to be characteristic of many Somali Land forms. The original description of *Merops superciliosus*^a was based on the bird from Madagascar, and the *Merops vaillanti* of Bonaparte^b came from the same region. The only remaining synonym, *Merops ruficapillus* Vieillot,^c was founded on Levaillant and was supposedly from Africa; but, judging from the description, it is undoubtedly the same as true *Merops superciliosus* from Madagascar. The Somali Land race seems, therefore, up to the present, to have been unprovided with a name.

POLIHIERAX SEMITORQUATUS HOMOPTERUS, new subspecies.

Chars. subsp.—Similar to *Polihierax semitorquatus semitorquatus*, but upper surface paler, the lower parts more purely white.

Description.—Type, adult male, No. 177898, U.S.N.M.; Goulf (Laga), western Somali Land, Africa, November 29, 1894; Dr. A. Donaldson Smith. Above slate gray, the extreme forehead, a narrow cervical collar, and the upper tail-coverts white; tail brownish black, with broad broken bars of white, which are reduced to spots on the middle rectrices; wings sepia brown, all the coverts plain slate gray, the quills with incomplete white bars (which are more or less fused on the secondaries) on their inner webs, and corresponding spots on their outer vanes, the secondaries with white tips; sides of neck slate gray like the upper surface; sides of head and entire ventral surface, including the lining of the wings, white. "Iris brown; bill gray; legs light red; bare eyelid vermilion." Length of wing, 117; tail, 71; exposed culmen without cere, 10; tarsus, 29; middle toe, 19 mm.

^a Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., 12th ed., I, 1766, p. 183.

^b Consp. Avium, I, 1850, p. 161.

^c Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., XIV, 1817, p. 23.

The adult female of this new form bears out the characters exhibited by the male. As will be noticed by reference to the measurements, there is apparently no difference in size between true *P. semitorquatus* and *P. semitorquatus homopterus*. The latter is evidently a pale desert race, probably confined chiefly if not wholly to Somali Land. The type of *Polihierax semitorquatus*^a came from near old Latakoo, South Africa, and birds from the region of Mount Kilimanjaro seem to be the same. While no specimens have been examined from nearer the type locality of Heuglin's *Hypotriorchis castanonotus*,^b which is Gondokoro, on the White Nile, between 4° and 6° north latitude, it is reasonably certain that this name belongs as a synonym under *Polihierax semitorquatus semitorquatus*.

^a *Falco semitorquatus* (err. typ.) Smith, Rep. Exped. Explor. Cent. Afr., 1836, p. 44.

^b *Ibis*, 1860, p. 407.