

# THE RACES OF THE NICOBAR MEGAPODE, MEGAPODIUS NICOBARIENSIS BLYTH.

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The Nicobar megapode, *Megapodius nicobariensis*, is of interest as marking the extreme western limit of the geographic range of the Megapodiidae. Furthermore, no members of this family live nearer than the islands off the northern coast of Borneo and the islands in the Java Sea. This species is, therefore, a geographic outlier, as it were, and, as would be expected, apparently a very distinct species, though not, however, distantly related to *Megapodius teninberensis* Selater and *Megapodius cumingii* Dillwyn.

The material used in the present study is all in the United States National Museum, and consists almost wholly of specimens collected by Dr. W. L. Abbott. Measurements have all been made in millimeters, and in the manner described in the present author's paper on *Butorides virescens*.<sup>1</sup> The names of colors used are from Mr. Ridgway's recently published "Color Standards and Color Nomenclature."

The geographic distribution of *Megapodius nicobariensis* is limited to the Nicobar Islands, off the western coast of the Malay Peninsula, in the southeastern part of the Bay of Bengal, but the species is found on practically all the islands of this group. It has been supposed not to vary subspecifically on any of the islands; but by our present examination two well-defined races are shown to exist, which are hereinafter duly described.

There is apparently no sexual difference, either of size or color, in this species. Considerable individual variation is evident, however, the olivaceous color in some specimens being much more rufescent than in others. Also, what amounts to a gray color phase, independent of sex or age, not infrequently occurs, in which the lower parts are extensively slaty or dark grayish, and even the upper surface is to some extent suffused with the same color. The racial differences are shown in the following account of the subspecies.

<sup>1</sup>Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 42, 1912, p. 533.

## MEGAPODIUS NICOBARIENSIS NICOBARIENSIS Blyth.

*M[egapodius]. nicobariensis* BLYTH, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, vol. 15, No. 169, 1846, p. 52 (Nicobar Islands).

*Megapodius trinkutensis* SHARPE, Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. 4, vol. 13, No. 78, June, 1874, p. 448 (Trinkut Island, Nicobar Islands).

*Subspecific characters.*—Coloration relatively light.

*Description.*—Adult male, No. 178326, U.S.N.M.; Katchall Island, Nicobar Islands, February 19, 1901; Dr. W. L. Abbott. Pileum dull cinnamon brown; remainder of upper parts rather light brownish olive; tail mummy brown, verging toward Prout's brown; outer webs of primaries pale cinnamon brown; inner webs of primaries and secondaries somewhat light sepia; outer webs of secondaries, together with both webs of tertials and of upper wing-coverts, cinnamon brown verging to ochraceous tawny, the tertials tinged with brownish olive; chin brownish white; throat and sides of head between drab and hair brown; remaining lower parts rather light Saccardo's umber, with edgings, particularly on posterior portion, of light tawny olive, clay color, and dull cinnamon buff; middle of lower breast and of abdomen with a pronounced slaty gray tinge; lining of wing dull tawny olive to pale sepia.

*Measurements.*—Male<sup>1</sup>: Total length (in flesh), 381–406.4 (average, 392.4) mm.; wing, 206–230 (223.7); tail, 66–73.5 (69.9); exposed culmen, 22–24.5 (23.6); bill from anterior end of nostril, 13–14.5 (13.7); height of bill at base, 11–13 (12); tarsus, 66–69.5 (68.1); middle toe without claw, 40.5–44.5 (42.8).

Female<sup>2</sup>: Total length (in flesh), 387.4–419 (average, 394.4) mm.; wing, 222–233 (225.7); tail, 64–74 (68.9); exposed culmen, 22–24.5 (23.6); bill from anterior end of nostril, 13–14 (13.7); height of bill at base, 11–13 (12.4); tarsus, 63.5–67.5 (66); middle toe without claw, 41–44.5 (42.4).

*Type-locality.*—Middle group of the Nicobar Islands.

*Geographic distribution.*—Middle and northern Nicobar Islands.

*Remarks.*—This species was first discovered by Mr. P. Barbe, but on which island is not known; from the description of the specimen, however, evidently on one of the middle islands. The bird from Trinkut Island was subsequently described by Dr. R. B. Sharpe,<sup>3</sup> but it was found to be identical with the typical form.

This race has been reported from Tillangchong, Camorta, Katchall, Nankauri, Trinkut, Bompoka, and Treis, and probably occurs on other islands in the middle and northern parts of the Nicobar group.

<sup>1</sup> Ten specimens, from the Islands of Katchall, Tillangchong, Nankauri, and Trinkut, in the Nicobar group.

<sup>2</sup> Nine specimens from the Islands of Katchall and Tillangchong.

<sup>3</sup> *Megapodius trinkutensis* Sharpe, Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., ser. 4, vol. 13, No. 78, June, 1874, p. 448.

Examples examined from several of these islands show no geographic variation.

Measurements of all the specimens examined are given below:

*Measurements of specimens of Megapodius nicobariensis nicobariensis.*

[Collected by Dr. W. L. Abbott.]

U. S. N. M. No.	Sex.	Locality.	Date.	Total length. <sup>a</sup>	Wing.	Tail.	Exposed culmen.	Bill from anterior end of nostril.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe with-out claw.
178327.....	Male....	Katchall I., Nicobar Islands.	1901. Feb. 19	mm. 387.4	mm. 224	mm. 73	mm. 22	mm. 14.5	mm. 12	mm. 68	mm. 42
178328.....	do.....	do.....	do.....	406.4	225	72.5	24	14	12	68	44
178329.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 20	400	220	67	23	14	12	69	44
178328.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 23	381	222	66	24.5	13	12.5	68	44.5
178336.....	do.....	Tillangchong I., Nicobar Islands.	Jan. 30	381	230	69.5	23	13.5	12	69	42
178337.....	do.....	do.....	Jan. 31	387.4	228	69	24	13	13	68	42
178338.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 1	400	224	72.5	24.5	14.5	11	69.5	40.5
178342.....	(Male).....	do.....	do.....	400	229	70	23	13	12.5	68.5	43.5
178350.....	Male....	Nankauri I., Nicobar Islands.	Feb. 8	400	229	73.5	23.5	13	12	67	43
178349.....	do.....	Trinkut I., Nicobar Islands	Feb. 3	381	206	66	24	14	11	66	42
178330.....	Female.	Katchall I., Nicobar Islands.	Feb. 19	387.4	224	74	24.5	14	13	65	43
178334.....	do.....	do.....	do.....	400	222	71.5	24	13.5	12	63.5	42
178331.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 20	393.7	227	67.5	23	13.5	13	66	41
178332.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 21	387.4	225	64	23.5	14	11	66	44.5
178333.....	do.....	do.....	do.....	387.4	226	69	23	13.5	12	67	42
178335.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 23	393.7	225	69	22	13	13	67	42
178339.....	do.....	Tillangchong I., Nicobar Islands.	Jan. 31	390.7	233	71	24	14	13	65.5	42
178340.....	do.....	do.....	Feb. 1	390.7	223	65.5	24.5	14	12.5	67.5	44
178341.....	do.....	do.....	do.....	419	226	69	24	13.5	12.5	66.5	41.5

<sup>a</sup> Measured in the flesh by the collector.

MEGAPODIUS NICOBARIENSIS ABBOTTI, new subspecies.<sup>1</sup>

*Subspecific characters.*—Similar to *Megapodius nicobariensis nicobariensis*, but darker on both upper and lower parts, including the upper surface of the wings; the primaries particularly darker on outer webs, and with less contrast in color between the outer and inner vanes.

*Description.*—Type, adult male, No. 178343, U.S.N.M.; Little Nicobar Island, Nicobar Islands, February 28, 1901; Dr. W. L. Abbott. Pileum reddish cinnamon brown; cervix brownish olive; upper back olive brown, shading posteriorly to between Prout's brown and dresden brown on the upper tail-coverts; tail mummy brown verging toward Prout's brown; outer webs of primaries cinnamon brown; inner webs of primaries and secondaries sepia; outer webs of secondaries, and the greater coverts, of the same color as the tail; rest of the superior wing-coverts like the back; tertials similar to the rump, but a little more rufescent; sides of head, together with chin and upper throat, between hair brown and drab; sides of neck

<sup>1</sup> Named in honor of Dr. W. L. Abbott, who collected the type series.

like the cervix; lower surface Saccardo's umber, posteriorly the feathers tipped with tawny olive; middle of breast and of abdomen tinged with slaty gray; lining of wing rather light dull sepia.

*Measurements.*—Male<sup>1</sup>: Total length (in flesh), 381–387.4 (average, 385.3) mm.; wing, 215–230 (221); tail, 66–69.5 (67.2); exposed culmen, 23–24 (23.5); bill from anterior end of nostril, 14–14.5 (14.2); height of bill at base, 11–11.5 (11.2); tarsus, 69.5–71.5 (70.3); middle toe without claw, 42.5–44 (43).

Female<sup>2</sup>: Total length (in flesh), 374.6–387.4 (average, 381) mm.; wing, 215–223 (218); tail, 64–71.5 (67.2); exposed culmen, 22.5–23.5 (23); bill from anterior end of nostril, 13–13.5 (13.3); height of bill at base, 12–13 (12.3); tarsus, 65.5–67 (66.2); middle toe without claw, 41–44 (42).

*Type-locality.*—Little Nicobar Island, Nicobar Islands.

*Geographic distribution.*—Great Nicobar Island and Little Nicobar Island in the southern portion of the Nicobar Islands.

*Remarks.*—Specimens of this new subspecies have been seen from only the islands of Little Nicobar and Great Nicobar, but it may well be found also on other and smaller islands in the southern part of the Nicobar group. Birds from these two islands are identical.

Measurements of specimens examined are as follows:

*Measurements of specimens of Megapodius nicobariensis abbotti.*

[Collected by Dr. W. L. Abbott.]

U. S. N. M. No.	Sex.	Locality.	Date.	Total length. <sup>2</sup>	Wing.	Tail.	Exposed culmen.	Bill from anterior end of nostril.	Height of bill at base.	Tarsus.	Middle toe without claw.
178346.....	Male...	Great Nicobar I., Nicobar Islands.	1901. Mar. 8	mm. 381	mm. 215	mm. 66	mm. 23	mm. 14	mm. 11	mm. 70	mm. 42.5
178347.....	do.....	do.....	Mar. 18	387.4	230	66	23.5	14.5	11	71.5	44
178343.....	do.....	Little Nicobar I., Nicobar Islands. <sup>3</sup>	Feb. 28	387.4	218	69.5	24	14	11.5	69.5	42.5
178348.....	Female	Great Nicobar I., Nicobar Islands.	Mar. 12	374.6	216	66	22.5	13	12	65.5	41
178344.....	do.....	Little Nicobar I., Nicobar Islands.	Feb. 25	387.4	223	71.5	23	13.5	12	66	44
178345.....	do.....	do.....	Mar. 2	381	215	64	23.5	13.5	13	67	41

<sup>1</sup> Three specimens, from Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar Islands.

<sup>2</sup> Measured in the flesh by the collector.

<sup>3</sup> Type.