

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

NOTES ON THE RACES OF *RAMPHALCYON CAPENSIS*.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

Since the publication of the writer's revision of the genus *Ramphalcyon*,¹ various data concerning the subspecies of *Ramphalcyon capensis* have accumulated. These have been gathered chiefly from the examination of additional material, and seem worthy of placing on permanent record.

Dr. E. D. Van Oort has recently² transferred the name *Ramphalcyon capensis javana* (Boddaert) to the Philippine bird commonly known as *Ramphalcyon capensis gigantea* (Walden); and the bird from Borneo, to which Dr. Sharpe, Dr. Hartert, and the writer have restricted the name *Ramphalcyon capensis javana*, he has named *Ramphalcyon capensis innominata*.³ This, as we have in detail elsewhere shown⁴ is certainly not the best disposition of the case. The chief basis⁵ of Boddaert's name might be either the pale form from the Philippine Islands or the bird from Borneo; and, in view of this situation, it is undoubtedly preferable to follow the selection of the first revisor, in which case the pale Philippine race will continue to be called *Ramphalcyon capensis gigantea* (Walden), and the Borneo subspecies, *Ramphalcyon capensis javana*, which disposition would make *Ramphalcyon capensis innominata* a synonym of *Ramphalcyon capensis gigantea*.

The form of this species inhabiting the Rhio Archipelago and the Island of Singapore, *Ramphalcyon capensis hydrophila*,⁶ has recently⁷ been synonymized with *Ramphalcyon capensis malaccensis*, but it is clearly a recognizable race. It differs from *Ramphalcyon capensis malaccensis* in its larger bill, lighter, and (when in fresh plumage) more extensively ochraceous pileum, and usually paler lower parts.

Dr. Edgar A. Mearns described the form of *Ramphalcyon capensis* occurring in the central part of the Philippine Islands as *Ramphalcyon*

¹Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XXXV, February 9, 1909, pp. 657-680.

²Notes Leyden Mus., XXXII, Nos. 2 and 3, April 30, 1910, pp. 125-126.

³Loc. cit., p. 126.

⁴Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., LV, June 5, 1919, pp. 485-486.

⁵d'Aubenton, Planches Enluminées, pl. 757.

⁶Oberholser, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XXXV, February 9, 1909, p. 677.

⁷Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus., VII, Part 2, December, 1916, p. 71.

capensis smithi,¹ and while this is, of course, intermediate between *Ramphalcyon capensis capensis gouldi* and *Ramphalcyon capensis gigantea*, it seems to have characters and a geographic range sufficiently distinct to entitle it to recognition by name.

For lack of sufficient comparable material, the writer formerly considered birds from southeastern Sumatra and Billiton Island² as belonging to the typical race from Java. Additional specimens, particularly from the last mentioned island, show clearly that birds from southeastern Sumatra are readily separable from *Ramphalcyon capensis capensis* of Java, and, furthermore, are not identical with any of the other races. This form apparently has no name, and we therefore propose to call it

***Ramphalcyon capensis arignota*, subsp. nov.**

Chars. subsp.—Similar to *Ramphalcyon capensis capensis*, but bill shorter; pileum darker, and, in worn plumage, with less ochraceous; cervix darker; back and wings somewhat more deeply colored and slightly more bluish; lower parts decidedly darker, more uniform; and throat less whitish.

Description.—Type, adult male, No. 178994, U. S. National Museum; Indrigiri River, southeastern Sumatra, September 23, 1901; Dr. W. L. Abbott. Pileum, sides of head and of neck, light clay color, the feathers of the pileum centrally dark hair brown; cervix ochraceous; upper back and scapulars between prussian green and dark cinnabar green; lower back pale Nile blue; rump Nile blue; middle upper tail-coverts beryl green; remaining upper tail-coverts prussian green; tail fuscous, but middle pair of feathers and broad edgings on the remainder, juvenile blue, with, in places, indigo blue reflections; wings chaetura black, but paling to chaetura drab on their inner webs, the inner margins of the latter chamois verging toward cinnamon buff; lesser wing-coverts like the back; remaining superior wing-coverts juvenile blue, with, in places, indigo blue reflections; chin and throat between warm buff and light ochraceous buff; rest of the lower parts, including the lining of the wing and the malar region, ochraceous, somewhat darker posteriorly.

Measurements.—Male:³ wing, 137.5–141 (average, 139) mm.; tail, 86.5–92 (88.9); exposed culmen, 70.5–76.5 (73.5); tarsus, 16–17 (16.6).

Female:⁴ wing, 147.5–150.5 (average, 148.7) mm.; tail, 92–98.5 (94.2); exposed culmen, 70–75.5 (73); tarsus, 17.5–18.5 (17.8).

Geographic distribution.—Southeastern Sumatra and Billiton Island.

This new subspecies differs from *Ramphalcyon capensis hydrophila* of the Rhio Archipelago and Singapore in its decidedly smaller size, particularly of the bill; lighter, more ochraceous, and less distinctly capped pileum; and darker lower surface.

The following detailed measurements show the difference between *Ramphalcyon capensis arignota* and *Ramphalcyon capensis capensis* from Java.

¹Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XXXVI, May 27, 1909, p. 466 (Dumurug Point, Masbate Island Philippine Islands).

²Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XXXV, Feb. 9, 1909, pp. 664 and 665.

³Four specimens, from Sumatra.

⁴Three specimens, from Sumatra and the Island of Billiton.

Measurements of *Ramphalcyon capensis arignota*.

Museum and Number.	Sex.	Locality.	Date.	Wing.	Tail.	Exposed culmen.	Tarsus.
U.S.N.M. 178995	♂	Indrigriri River, Sumatra.	Sept. 19, 1901.	137.5	89	76.5	16.5
178994	♂	Indrigriri River, Sumatra. ¹	Sept. 23, 1901.	138.5	86.5	70.5	16
Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila. 39093	[♂]	Goenong Soegi, Lampong, Sumatra.	Oct.-Nov., 1901.	141	88	71.5	17
39096	[♂]	Goenong Soegi, Lampong, Sumatra.	Oct.-Nov., 1901.	139	92	75.5	17
U.S.N.M. 180516	♀	Tangong Poctak, Billiton I.	Aug. 13, 1904.	148	92	70	18.5
Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila. 39094	[♀]	Goenong Soegi, Lampong, Sumatra.	Oct.-Nov., 1901.	150.5	98.5	75.5	17.5
39095	[♀]	Goenong Soegi, Lampong, Sumatra.	Oct.-Nov., 1901.	147.5	92	73.5	17.5
Measurements of <i>Ramphalcyon capensis capensis</i> .							
U.S.N.M. 218408	♂	Batavia, Java.	Apr. 9, 1909.	135	90	74.5	18.3
219826	♂	Samarna, Wynkoop's Bay, Bantam, Java.	Nov. 4, 1909.	139	97	69.8	17.5
U.S.N.M. 219376	♀	Batavia, Java.	July 8, 1909.	149.5	102	79	18

¹Type.

With the above addition the recognized subspecies of *Ramphalcyon capensis* now number 17. A list of these, rearranged in accordance with what now seems to be their most natural order, is as follows:

- Ramphalcyon capensis capensis* (Linnaeus)
- Ramphalcyon capensis floresiana* (Sharpe)
- Ramphalcyon capensis javana* (Boddaert)
- Ramphalcyon capensis gouldi* (Sharpe)
- Ramphalcyon capensis smithi* Mearns
- Ramphalcyon capensis gigantea* (Walden)
- Ramphalcyon capensis simalurensis* (Richmond)
- Ramphalcyon capensis nesoecca* Oberholser
- Ramphalcyon capensis sodalis* (Richmond)
- Ramphalcyon capensis isoptera* Oberholser
- Ramphalcyon capensis cyanopteryx* Oberholser
- Ramphalcyon capensis arignota* Oberholser
- Ramphalcyon capensis hydrophila* Oberholser
- Ramphalcyon capensis malaccensis* (Sharpe)
- Ramphalcyon capensis intermedia* (Hume)
- Ramphalcyon capensis burmanica* (Sharpe)
- Ramphalcyon capensis gurial* (Pearson)

The genus *Ramphalcyon*, as already so well shown by Mr. W. DeW. Miller,¹ is quite out of place in any of the currently recognized subfamilies of ALCEDINIDAE, so it should really be separated as a monotypic subfamily, **Ramphalcyoninae**, and placed between the *Daceloninae* and the *Alcedininae*.

¹Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XXXI, September 12, 1912, pp. 259-261.