

# POSTILLA

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**Yale** PEABODY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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# Postilla

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## NOTES ON INDIAN BIRDS IV\*

### SOME RECENTLY COLLECTED BIRDS FROM ASSAM

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During a collecting trip this autumn and winter in Assam's eastern Naga Hills and Manipur, a number of interesting specimens were secured which seem to warrant preliminary description prior to further publication. The localities of all these forms are within the Naga Hills District or the Chief Commissioner's District of Manipur (formerly Manipur State), and will be dealt with in detail in a later paper. I am most grateful to the authorities of the British Museum, the United States National Museum, and the American Museum of Natural History for allowing me to examine comparative material in their care.

*Arborophila torqueola interstincta*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 12006) collected November 30, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley on Mt. Zephu, 93 miles east of Kohima, eastern Naga Hills, Assam.

Diagnosis: from *torqueola* of the Sikkim Himalayas this race differs by being more heavily and distinctly barred on the back and inner wing coverts in both male and female

\* Previous papers in this series have appeared in the JOURNAL, BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY 47, 1948, p. 622; ZOOLOGICA 33, 1948, p. 199; and POSTILLA, 1950, No. 1.

plumage. The lower parts in both sexes are richer and darker chestnut, and richer and darker rufous-buff on the thighs and upper under tail coverts.

Compared to *batemani* of Mt. Victoria and the Chin Hills, this form differs as does *torqueola*, lacking the greater degree of chestnut on the sides of the neck and the greater area of chestnut on the scapulars. From *griseata* of Tonkin this population differs in having richer, darker chestnut streaking on the flanks with more pronounced and distinct white drops on the centers of the feathers, and with the black central patch on the feathers of the under tail coverts much reduced in extent.

Measurements (mm.):

	wing	tail	culmen (from skull)
4 ♂ ♂	144.5-156	53-62	19-21
♀	150	56	19

Range: Upper Chindwin River drainage area in eastern Naga Hills of Assam and Burma.

*Indicator xanthonotus fulvus*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 12001) collected December 11, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley at Pfutsero, eastern Naga Hills, Assam.

Diagnosis: from *xanthonotus* of the Himalayan Range this race differs by being darker, more blackish on the upper parts and darker, more blackish on the abdomen, thighs and under tail coverts. The streaking of the abdomen though blackish, is less in extent, thus less prominent. On the forehead the golden patch extends somewhat less far back on the crown, and the edging to the feathers of the back and scapulars is reduced.

Soft parts: iris brown; bill yellowish-horn, distal half of upper mandible and lower mandible brown; feet grayish-brown.

Weight: 29 grams.

## Measurements (mm.):

	wing	tail	culmen
♂	90	57	11
♀	86	56	10

Range: Naga Hills, Margherita (?) Assam, and Myitkina District, north Burma.

Remarks: An opportunity to examine the material in the British Museum showed at once the existence of a dark eastern race of the Yellow-backed Honeyguide. The only specimen from Burma is the one recorded by Smythies (*IBIS*, 91, 1949, p. 645) with which my type agrees. An additional character of this race may be slightly smaller size, but more material would be needed. I include Margherita in the range of the form as Stuart Baker's sight record (*FAUNA BRIT. INDIA IV*, 1927, p. 132) presumably refers to this form.

My male specimen is moulting out the feathers of the nape. Both near Pfutsero, 28 miles east of Kohima at 6000 feet altitude, and on the slopes of Mt. Japvo, 10 miles southeast of Kohima at 7000 feet, we found cliffs abounding in wild bee nests, and both were investigated for Honeyguides. Birds were present, but the height of the nearby trees and the thick vegetation as well as the comparatively short duration of our stay made collecting very difficult. The Angami Naga name is "Mephi Tsu Kelie Para." The body of the type is preserved in alcohol.

*Dendrocopos darjellensis fumidus*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 12002) collected November 9, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley on Mt. Japvo, Naga Hills, Assam.

Diagnosis: from *darjellensis* this subspecies differs by being darker, more smoky on the underparts, particularly the lower throat and breast and with a more richly colored vent patch. The nuchal patch also is darker. There appears to be a tendency in these birds to heavier streaking below, although I am not sure whether this character would hold in a large

series. Specimens of *fumidus* are smaller also than typical *darjellensis*, although Burmese examples, which in color represent *darjellensis*, are also small.

Measurements (mm.):

	wing	tail	culmen
♂	126.5	83.5	32
2 ♀	123, 126	76	31, 32

Range: higher hills in Cachar, Naga Hills and Manipur from 5000 to 9000 feet.

*Spelaeoris chocolatinus nagaensis*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 12004) collected November 12, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley on Mt. Japvo, Naga Hills, Assam.

Diagnosis: compared to *chocolatinus* this race is much more olivaceous-brown, less rufous above, the lores, cheeks and sides of the head grayish-brown rather than reddish-brown. The throat is white, the breast pale brownish-white, narrowly spotted, with terminal blackish edgings to the feathers. There is dimorphism in this subspecies, females being much more rufescent below, in this approaching the two existing unsexed specimens of *chocolatinus* although by no means matching them. The type and paratype of *chocolatinus* may thus both be females. In any case the fine spotting on the underparts and the white throat at once distinguish this race from the nominate form.

From *oatesi* this race differs by being more grayish-brown about the head, and the spots and terminal edgings on the feathers of the lower surface being strikingly different, much finer and more delicate in pattern and form.

From *reptatus* this subspecies differs by having a white throat and far more pronounced spotting below.

## Measurements (mm.):

	wing	tail	culmen
4 ♂ ♂	49-52	41-44	13-14
2 o o	49, 52.5	42(2)	12.5, 13
♀	48	41.5	12.5

Range: Naga Hills.

Remarks: In my review of this genus (Auk. 67, 1950, p. 390) I had no material from the Naga Hills. Thus it may be now supposed that *longicaudatus* must occur from the Khasia Hills southeast across southern Cachar without entering the eastern Barail Range, for it apparently does not occur on Mt. Japvo.

*Phylloscopus fuscatus mariae*, subspec. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 12005) collected October 19, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley at Moirang, Manipur.

Diagnosis: upper parts dark olive brown, rump hair brown, a distinct supercilium varying in tone from cinnamon-rufous to ochraceous-buff, lores and ear coverts blackish-brown, cheeks and sides of throat ochraceous-buff mixed with hair brown, the latter becoming predominant on the sides of the breast. Throat and center of breast whitish to pinkish-buff. Flanks and thighs cinnamon brown, under tail coverts and under wing coverts ochraceous-buff. Outer edges of tail feathers tinted with olive green. Rictal bristles three extending nearly to end of nasal groove. Nasal hairs extending nearly to end of nasal groove.

## Measurements (mm.):

	wing	tail	culmen
3 ♂ ♂	57.5-63.5	50-55	10.5-11
♀	57	43(m.)	10

Wing formula: 2 = 8. Sixth primary emarginate on the outer web. First primary exceeds the coverts by 12-14 mm. Third, fourth or fifth primary longest.

Soft parts: (different labels note varieties in color) iris brown; bill, upper mandible brown, dark brown, black; lower mandible basally yellow, distally brown, yellowish-brown, brown tip, yellowish horn; feet brownish-yellow, light brown, greenish-brown; pads yellow.

Weight: ♂♂ 7-8.5 grams; ♀ 8 grams.

Range: four specimens were taken at Kanglatongbi and Moirang in Manipur.

Remarks: This form is closest to *Phylloscopus fuscatus* from which it differs in darker coloration, a richer, more ochraceous-buff tone to the cheeks, sides of the under parts, and under wing and tail coverts, a shorter bill, and, presumably, a slightly different wing formula, the third primary equalling or exceeding the fifth and fourth primaries.

The subspecies may have been overlooked in collections due to the difficulty of identifying willow warblers in general, and foxing. The specimens collected by us were in low bushes and long grass in swampy areas, behaving rather like *Phylloscopus subaffinis* in this respect. They were often near cultivation. It is undoubtedly a wintering bird and should be looked for in similar situations in the northern plains of Assam.

It gives me great pleasure to name this subspecies of willow warbler after my wife who worked tirelessly as a member of the recent Yale-Assam Expedition.

*Horeites flavolivaceous alexanderi*, subsp. nov.

Type: ♀ ad. (Yale Peabody Museum No. 12003) collected November 21, 1950, by S. Dillon Ripley on the Phek-Meluri Road, 60 miles east of Kohima, Naga Hills, Assam.

Diagnosis: from *flavolivaceous* of the Himalayas this race differs by being much darker below, more olive buff with dark buffy breast and flanks. Compared to *weberi* of Mt. Victoria this race is richer, more olive buff on the breast and flanks. Compared to both preceding races, this form is darker above

and intermediate in size apparently, the bill larger than *weberi*.

From the Shan form, *intricatus*, these birds may be distinguished by being much darker, more buffy below and darker above.

Measurements (mm.):

	wing	tail	culmen
♀ ♀	48, 51	53.5, 54	12, 12.5

Soft parts: iris brown; bill black, base of lower mandible pinkish-horn; lower mandible yellowish, tip brown; feet flesh, pale brown.

Weight: 6, 7 grams.

Range: eastern Naga Hills.

Remarks: This is a difficult species to collect, skulking in high grass and light second growth scrub. The call is a wren-like "tsick." The area where we found this race is in the Chindwin drainage, so it may well extend into the Naga Hills of Burma.

This form is named for my friend Horace Alexander, the well-known field student of Indian birds who accompanied me on part of my journey into the eastern Naga Hills.