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BRIEF COMMENTS ON THE THRUSHES

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In Postilla no. 13, 1952, pp. 1-48 *et seq.*, 1952, 1954, I published a fairly extensive review of this large and sprawling subfamily of the Old World Muscicapidae. More recently I have been gathering data on this assemblage for Peters' *Check-list*, and so it appears worthwhile to list here a few of the changes and revisions which have been made subsequent to my earlier publication.

Certain large general works have been of the greatest use such as Chapin's (1953) section on thrushes in his monograph on birds of the Congo, Vaurie's (1959) monograph on Palearctic birds and Mackworth-Praed and Grant's (1955) volumes on birds of eastern Africa. In addition shorter papers have been of value such as that of White (1961) on African thrush genera. I have been very grateful for comments and help received from Messrs. Clancey, Deignan, Dilger, Charles Hartshorne, Ivanov, Johansen, Mmes. B. P. Hall and E. Koslova, Messrs. Lees-Smith, Meinertzhagen, Terence Oatley, George Watson, White, and Winterbottom.

After correspondence and discussion with these various authors, as well as with the editors of the *Check-list*, Messrs. Greenway, Mayr, and Paynter, it appeared wise to retain the Prunellidae as a monotypic family close to the thrushes. I

believe my preliminary revisional work of 1952 has served a good purpose, however, in raising comments and criticism. Without such preliminary work and the subsequent eddies and fluctuations of opinion aroused, little long-range revisional work would be possible.

Erythropygia, *Cercotrichas*, and *Pinarornis*.

Following the suggestion of White (1961), I have grouped *Cercotrichas* and *Pinarornis* next to *Erythropygia*. I do not agree to merging *Cercotrichas* with *Erythropygia*. This is a rather distinct species and such field workers as Meinertzhagen (1954) would keep them decidedly separate.

Pogonocichla and *Erithacus*.

Moreau's interesting paper (1951) offers evidence that *Pogonocichla* with two included species has characters which set it sufficiently apart to be kept as a separate genus. Little published work has convinced me that the genus *Erithacus* cannot be kept as an expanded genus. Japanese workers, among them Morioka (in litt.), point out the close resemblance of the Japanese robin, *akahige* to the European *rubecula*, contra Lack (1954). More recently Hall (1961) has suggested adding the species *gabela*, described from Angola in 1957, to the genus *Erithacus*.

Cossypha and *Xenocopsychus*.

The reasons advanced by White (1961) for transferring *Xenocopsychus* to *Cossypha* seem provocative, and I accordingly have followed this suggestion, having already included *Dessonornis* (*Bessonornis* auct.) earlier.

Pseudocossyphus.

I have removed the species *sharpei* and *imerina* from *Cossypha* and placed them in *Pseudocossyphus* following Goodwin (1956) whose suggestions and evidence I have found most helpful.

Rhyacornis and *Chaimarrornis*.

I also follow Goodwin (1957) in keeping *Rhyacornis* as a separate genus for the small tropical redstarts with such distinctive alternate plumages, and placing *Chaimarrornis* close to *Monticola* following *Oenanthe*.

Grandala and *Sialia*.

It is not obvious to anyone apparently where *Grandala* should be listed. I leave it near *Sialia* for lack of a better linear arrangement suggestion, not out of any conviction on the basis of anatomy or phenotypic characters.

Phaeornis.

From personal observation in the field and listening to songs I have decided that my earlier feeling that *Phaeornis* was close to *Myadestes* following Stejneger (1887) was wrong. *Phaeornis* has two species on Kauai Island which overlap ecologically. The larger, a subspecies of *obscurus*, has a broad bill which resembles a solitaire. I believe it is a secondary adaptation to coexistence in an overlapping niche, the separate first invader being small and possessing a much smaller bill. In powerful song and apparently in habits these birds seem far closer to *Catharus* especially the central American nightingale-thrush group.

Stizorhina.

Stizorhina may well prove to be a flycatcher. Unpublished work in this laboratory (Ames ms.) shows un-turdine-like indications in the syrinx of *S. fraseri* although the evidence is by no means compelling, as *Myadestes* also has a very similar syrinx.

Myrmecocichla, *Pentholaea* and *Thamnolaea*.

I follow White (1961) in combining *Pentholaea* with *Myrmecocichla*, although I keep *Thamnolaea* distinct, both on

account of slight plumage differences as well as partially of habits, as Cave and Macdonald (1955) emphasize for *T. coronata*. I have moved the Buff-streaked Chat, *bifasciata*, to *Oenanthe* on further examination, convinced that in plumage and behavior it fits better with the wheatears.

Catharus and *Platycichla*.

A few species changes have been made in the arrangement of *Catharus* on the advice of various tropical American specialists such as Messrs. Blake, Paynter, Skutch, and Wetmore. I have placed *Platycichla* as a separate genus on the advice of several authors including Messrs. Bond and Phelps (personal communication).

Turdus.

For advice on the large genus *Turdus* I have been much indebted to Dr. Chapin and Mrs. Hall on African species and specimens in the British Museum. This huge genus with more than sixty-five species is a difficult one to arrange and I have felt constrained to list the species regionally beginning with Africa and ending with the New World. I have valued Dr. Wetmore's comments on *ignobilis* and *plebejus* which I have separated as two species. I have also moved *swalesi* near to our North American robin, feeling that this species is merely a relict robin.

Several problematical genera have been removed from the arrangements of thrushes of earlier authors just as others have been added to it. Some of these former are *Turnagra*, the New Zealand "thrush," obviously not a thrush at all, *vide* Oliver (1955), who places the genus in a separate family based on the presence of mouth bristles, union of maxillo-palatines, long first primary and lack of spotted young. *Namibornis* (or *Bradornis*) *herero*, the south West African flycatcher, *Achaëtops*, another South West African genus, inadvertently assigned to the thrushes by the South African Ornithological Society List Committee (1958), and "*Cercomela*" *buryi* which

may or may not be a *Parisoma*, but certainly with its wing structure appears to be a warbler rather than a chat, are all problematical species which I would include in the Muscicapinae, Timaliinae and Sylviinae respectively.

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