

large bars and stripes, so that the blackish markings decidedly predominate over the buff ground-colour. The black bars on the belly are also considerably broader than in the other two specimens. The upper surface is much alike in the three females before me, being black and crossed all over by fine buff vermiculations except the elongated crest-feathers, which are uniform black. In the males the rufous cross-bars on the upper surface are much broader and more distinct.

The following are the only known localities from which *Zebrilus pumilus* has been recorded :—

CAYENNE (*Buffon*). SURINAM: Rijweg, near Paramaribo (*Chunkoo coll.*). BRITISH GUIANA (*E. Im-Thurn*). N.E. PERU: Shanusi, near Yurimaguas* (*G. Garlepp coll.*). W. BRAZIL: Matto Grosso; Caiçara, on the Upper Paraguay; Engenho do Gama, on the Rio Guaporé (*Natterer coll.*).

Typical locality: CAYENNE (*ex Buffon*).

III.—SOME COMMON-SENSE NOTES ON CREEPERS, TITMICE, AND REED-WARBLEDERS.

By ERNST HARTERT.

HAVING just finished the review of the *Certhiidae* and *Paridae* for my book 'Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna,' I believe that a few short remarks may interest the readers of the 'Ornis.'

Among the *Certhiidae* it did not surprise me to find how comparatively easy it became—after a little study and time spent with the Creepers—to distinguish the two European species, *Certhia familiaris* and *Certhia brachydactyla*, as I knew the differences already from former acquaintance with this group; but I came to the conclusion that not only the Creepers from N.W. Africa, Spain, Southern Italy, and Asia Minor, but also the North-American forms belong to the *brachydactyla*-group, and not to *familiaris*. It is amusing to find notes by observant British travellers to the effect, that the call-notes and song of

* Bcrlepsch, Journ. f. Ornith. 1880, p. 318.

continental Creepers differ remarkably from those of the British form*—needless to say they came across *C. brachydactyla*, while in England only a form of *C. familiaris* is found.

Among the *Paridae* the most difficult groups for a student of geographical forms are probably the “Blue Tits” (*Parus caeruleus* and *cyaneus*) and the “Great Tits” (*P. major*). Especially the latter is very widely spread and difficult. It is not correct to treat the European forms as subspecies and to separate as another species the Asiatic forms without greenish and yellowish colours, because *Parus major intermedius*, *minor*, and several others connect those with green and yellow and those without these colours. The most closely allied forms seem to be the European races. All over the European continent, with the exception of the southern peninsulas, we find *Parus major major*—at least I have not been able to separate any central continental subspecies, though I tried hard to do so. In Great Britain and Ireland, however, we find a race which can easily be distinguished by its large and thick bill. It has been named *Parus major newtoni*, and this name, based on English specimens, must be adopted, though the original description is a very bad one. In Corsica we meet with another form which has duller colours and a reduced white area on the two outer rectrices. This is *Parus major corsus*. On Cyprus lives a Great Tit with a rather short tarsus and wing; its colours are usually bright, the yellow of the under surface is light and clear, and specimens often occur with a cream-coloured, instead of yellow, under surface. Such aberrations have been described by Madarász as *Parus aphrodite*. This name must be adopted for the Cyprus subspecies, although its author quite misunderstood it, not separating the typically coloured examples from *P. major* and considering the cream-coloured aberrations as a different species. This view is erroneous, because aberrations with cream-coloured underside occur also in Central Europe, though much more rarely, because we find intermediates between the cream-coloured and yellow examples, and because the yellow Tomtits from Cyprus are not quite like “typical” (*i. e.* Scandinavian) *major*.

* See among others ‘British Birds with their Nests and Eggs,’ i. p. 173.

The Tomtits from Asia Minor and Greece seem also to belong to *aphrodite*, but I have not been able to examine good series. I cannot yet decide about the Spanish form, because I have not had sufficient material from Spain.

A somewhat difficult and therefore interesting group are the so-called "Marsh-Tits." It is now a well-known fact that in most parts of Europe (all over Central Europe) two forms are resident side by side. One of these has more rounded and glossy feathers on the crown of the head, a less graduated tail, and a less musical song, the latter being a mere clapping. It seems that very often the more musical song of the "dull-headed" Marsh-Tit has been mistaken for that of our common Marsh-Tit—both have black heads and cannot be distinguished at a distance: and unfortunately many of the best observers of the habits of birds have an insufficient knowledge of the species and subspecies which they observe; most egg-collectors are as bad or worse; and, still more unfortunately, collectors of skins are often not the best of observers and do not make notes about the call-notes and songs of the birds they collect. Thus only is it possible that different opinions exist about the song of the Marsh-Tits and about the Creepers on the Continent—the most natural explanation, *i. e.* that the different songs are those of different species, generally not being resorted to.

In England the "Willow-Tit," as I have named the representative of the dull-headed continental forms (*borealis* in the North, *salicarius* in Germany and Austria, *rhenanus* on the Rhine, *montanus* in the Alps, and *assimilis* in the Carpathian Mountains), is very widely spread. I have examined specimens from St. Leonards, Hastings, Tunbridge Wells, Essex, Middlesex, and Northern Scotland, and eggs from Tunbridge Wells. Doubtless this bird has a wide distribution in Great Britain, and is frequently mistaken for the common Marsh-Tit, *Parus palustris dresseri*. Ornithologists unacquainted with the differences of young and old birds and with the changes of plumage taking place in Titmice have hinted that the Willow-Tits were young *Parus palustris dresseri*—an idea which I myself had twenty years ago, when the dawn of the new era of ornithology, that of the close and minute study of geographical forms and species, had hardly begun to glow on the distant horizon.

That, however, the different habits of the two species of Marsh-Tits strike sometimes even the unsophisticated layman, is shown by a very interesting article by Dr. Otto Natorp in No. 5 of volume xxx. of the 'Ornithologische Monatschrift,' edited by the German Society for the Protection of Birds.

More difficult to distinguish than the Marsh-Tits are undoubtedly the two Reed-Warblers of the Continent, *Acrocephalus streperus* and *palustris*—in fact, skins are most difficult to distinguish; yet everybody who has some rudimentary knowledge of European Birds knows that they are two different species, with different songs, nests and eggs, colour of mouth, and, I may add, shape of second primary!

No serious ornithologist of modern times has ever attempted to deny that *Acrocephalus streperus* and *palustris* are distinct species: why there should be so much controversy about the two "Marsh-Tits," which are much easier to distinguish, is difficult to understand.

In my review of the genus *Parus* I have recognised 68 Palearctic forms. I was obliged to be short in these remarks, but I hope to give some more detailed explanations and additions elsewhere, before long.

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