

## ON BONAPARTE'S TYPES OF THE CUCKOOS BELONGING TO THE GENUS PIAYA

by

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Recently Dr. J. L. Peters drew my attention to the fact that Bonaparte's *Piaya circe* and *Piaya mehleri* never were closely examined in the light of modern knowledge. It is, indeed, a good thing to do this, for the names, especially *mehleri*, have been used for birds from various localities by different authors; this caused a good deal of trouble and confusion in the genus. Thanks to the kindness of Dr. J. L. Peters of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, Cambridge, Mass., and Dr. S. C. Simms of Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, I received some specimens of each race to which the names possibly should be applied.

### **Piaya circe** Bonaparte

In 1850 (p. 110) Bonaparte described *Piaya circe* with habitat "Columbia". Sclater (1860, p. 285) placed this name in the synonymy of *Piaya macroura* Gambel and in accordance with this Cabanis (1862, p. 168) considered the originally given locality to be wrong and said that Bonaparte's description agreed best with the birds from Montevideo and S.E. Brazil. Together with Heine he made the same statement in *Museum Heineanum* (1862—1863, p. 87). To the area inhabited by this bird in this paper they added Paraguay, which was fixed by later authors as the type locality. Allen (1893, pp. 137—139), however, considered Gambel's name *macroura*, based on a bird which originally was said to come from Surinam (which locality was also changed by Cabanis and Heine and later fixed as Paraguay) as a synonym of *P. cayana* (L.). Allen thought that *circe* probably was a Central American bird and the name *circe* therefore should antedate Sclater's name *thermophila* for this animal, the name

*thermophila* being from 1859 (p. 368). Most authors, however, joined Cabanis and Heine and generally *P. circe* is considered to be a synonym of *P. cayana macroura* Gambel from Paraguay. My examination showed that this is wrong. The type specimen of *P. circe* is a ♂ ad. collected by van Lansberge<sup>1)</sup> and as locality is given Caracas. There is no reason to doubt this locality, for as far as I am aware van Lansberge never was in the southern part of South America. A comparison with 2 specimens of *macroura* (1 ♂, 1 ♀ from Misiones, Argentina) showed immediately that the type specimen had nothing to do with this race. *Macroura* has a much longer tail and the brown in the upperparts is of quite a different tinge. It was self evident to compare *circe* closely with *P. cayana venezuelensis* Cory, which race was described from Orope, Zulia, Venezuela (1913, p. 284). I could compare Bonaparte's type with 1 ♂, 1 ♀ from Orope and 1 ♀ from Catatumbo, Venezuela. It proved that these birds were nearly identical with *circe*, the colour of the upperparts is exactly alike, the head in the type is slightly less warm brown, which may be due to fading, for the colour of *P. c. incincta* Griscom, which resembles *circe* strongly, is paler and of another tinge. The wingmeasurements in the 3 specimens are 140—144 mm, of the type of *circe* 147 mm, tail 308 mm (in the 2 specimens of *macroura* 350 and 353 mm), culmen 25 mm. Cory compared *venezuelensis* with *cayana* only; from this race *venezuelensis* is easily separable by the more rufous coloured upperparts. Of course I have seen too little material to discuss the different races sufficiently, but I want to mention here that the differences between *circe* and *incincta* (I saw 1 ♂, 1 ♀ from E. Panama) seem to be the paler head, the darker more blackish abdomen and the perhaps slightly heavier bill in the latter.

Summarizing the above we may conclude that *P. c. venezuelensis* Cory is a synonym of *P. c. circe* Bonaparte.

### **Piaya mehleri** Bonaparte.

The name *mehleri* has been used for different forms. The locality of the type was given by Bonaparte (1850, p. 110) as "Santa Fé de Bogota". Sclater (1860, p. 285) examined the type specimen and considered it identical with the birds from Mexico and Guatamala, which he named *P. thermophila* a year earlier (1859, p. 368), and which name he now considered

1) R. F. van Lansberge was born in 1804. Nineteen years old he went to Curaçao in the service of the Netherlands government. Later he was vice consul in Santa Fé de Bogota, Columbia; consul general in Ecuador, New Grenada and Venezuela. In these countries he collected for the Leiden Museum. Afterwards he was governor of Curaçao (1856—1859) and of Surinam (1859—1867). He died in the Hague in 1873.

as a synonym of *mehleri*. Consequently he doubted the exactness of the locality given by Bonaparte. Cabanis (1862, pp. 168—169) and Cabanis and Heine (1862—1863, pp. 83—84), not having seen the type of *mehleri*, joined this view on Sclater's authority. In 1867 (p. 758), however, Sclater and Salvin used the name *mehleri* for birds from E. Peru on account of Schlegel's statement (1862, p. 57) that the type locality was Bogota. Allen (1893, pp. 137—139) also used the name *mehleri* for birds from Columbia, Ecuador, E. Peru and a part of Bolivia, he quoted *P. nigricissa* Sclater and *P. mesurus* (Cabanis & Heine) as synonyms of *mehleri*. Hartert (1898, p. 499) joined this view and called birds from N.E. Ecuador *mehleri*, the same did Sharpe (1900, p. 170). Stone, however, in his revision of the genus *Piaya* (1908, pp. 494 and 499) overlooked Sclater's correction and used the name *mehleri* again for the Central American birds. Ridgway (1916, p. 50) and others took the same view. In Cory's Catalogue of the Birds of the America's (1919) Bonaparte's name *mehleri* is lacking.

The type specimen has been collected by van Lansberge too. It is an immature bird with equal brown central tailfeathers and a pale brown neck and mantle. There is no doubt that this bird is identical with the birds now called *P. c. columbia* (Cabanis) (compared with 1 ♂ and 1 ♀ from Santa Martha, Columbia), for neck and mantle in this race and in the type specimen of *mehleri* are paler than in any of the other races. Besides the type the Leiden Museum possesses 2 specimens from the same locality also collected by van Lansberge which fully agree with the type specimen. *Columbiana* was described in 1862 (p. 170) by Cabanis and therefore is to consider as a synonym of *mehleri*. The measurements of the type specimen are: wing 140 mm, tail 256 mm, culmen 26 mm. In the other 2 specimens (1 ad., 1 imm.) these measurements are: wing 143 and 139 mm, tail 276 and 250 mm, culmen 25 mm.

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