

Bird type specimens in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

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Louette et al. (2002) published a catalogue of the bird types in the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren (Belgium). This collection includes 987 type specimens pertaining to 226 nominal bird taxa. At least 125 of these are still in use as valid names for species or subspecies, the remainder are synonyms or require confirmation. These types originate exclusively from Africa and include 110 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 71 from Kenya, 30 from Uganda, and smaller numbers (1-8 types) from Angola, Comoros, Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, São Tomé & Príncipe, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The material from the former Belgian colony Democratic Republic of Congo is of great importance, because it includes the famous *Afropavo congensis* Chapin, 1936, and *Prionops alberti* Schouteden, 1933, and some birds still known only from the holotype such as *Phodilus prigoginei* Schouteden, 1952, and *Caprimulgus prigoginei* Louette, 1990. Recent types in the RMCA are the unique specimen of *Puffinus (Iherminieri) temptator* Louette & Herremans, 1985, from Moheli (Comoros) and the holotype of *Melignomon eisentrauti* Louette, 1981, from Liberia.

The new type list includes the reasons for accepting or refuting some particular specimens as types, based on the original publication, not on indications on labels; if the RMCA has only paratypes or part of the syntypes of a certain taxon, the presence of the holotype or other syntypes in other collections is indicated, but not always of all the paratypes. Special attention was paid to the correct position of the type locality, based on a locality database of the RMCA compiled by D. Meirte. Also, the catalogue includes a short biography of the authors of bird types in the RMCA.

Some previously undocumented type material was discovered, such as a paralectotype of *Chaetura thomensis* Hartert, 1900. Lectotypes were designated in some taxa, either for birds in which the type material is entirely restricted to the RMCA (*Francolinus squamatus confusa* Schouteden, 1954, *Cossypha caffra kivuensis* Schouteden, 1937, *Pseudoalcippe atriceps kivuensis* Schouteden, 1937, *Cinnyris regius kivuensis* Schouteden, 1937, and *Poliospiza striolata kivuensis* Schouteden, 1937) or, out of necessity, for taxa of which type material is shared with other museums: *Vinago calva salvadorii* Dubois, 1897 (shared with the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences, Brussels), *Sylviella baraka* Sharpe, 1897 (The Natural History Museum NHM, Tring, U.K.) and *Dicrurus adsimilis jubaensis* van Someren, 1931 (Field Museum of Natural History FMNH, Chicago, USA). The examination of the holotype shows that *Nectarinia preussi pauwelsi* (Dubois, 1911) is the valid earlier name for the taxon known until now as *Nectarinia preussi kikuyensis* (Mearns, 1915).

Among the types from East African countries, the majority are from V.G.L. van Someren. The RMCA owns a type-written script containing a catalogue of his collection, annotated with the whereabouts of his specimens. From this script one may assume that his other types are in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York (as part of the Rothschild Collection) and in the FMNH. However, registers in The National Museums of Scotland (Edinburgh) show that apparent types of *Andropadus ugandae* van Someren, 1915, *Apalis nigriceps collaris* van Someren, 1915, and *Cossypha some- reni* Hartert, 1912, are present there also (B. McGowan in litt.). Some of Van Someren's birds proposed as lectotypes by various authors do not agree with his original description and the whereabouts of other types are unclear. Therefore, a thorough study is necessary in all museums housing his specimens, not only in the museums mentioned but also in the NHM. This study should also address whether the designation of 'lectotypes' by Hartert (1922) was a valid action. LeCroy & Sloss (2000) and LeCroy (2003) took the lead already in searching for improper designation of lectotypes. During the conference in Leiden in October 2003, Mary LeCroy made a plea to avoid lectotypification as much as possible, especially when type series were split over several collections. Her proposal was generally well-supported by the audience of the conference.

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