

SHORT NOTES

The syrinx of the Southern Scrub-robin *Drymodes brunneipygia*

Ames (1975, Bonn. zool. Beitr. 26: 107-134) has examined the syringial morphology of the Old World insect-eaters, often grouped together as the Muscicapidae. He has shown that typical thrushes, Turdinae of this classification, and typical flycatchers, Muscicapini in the narrow sense, have in common a peculiarity of the syringial musculature. This sets them apart from other passerines. In most oscines, including *Microeca*, the dorsolateral intrinsic muscles of the syrinx *M. bronchotrachealis posticus* and *M. bronchialis posticus* taper to an insertion on the flattened dorsal end of the second bar, or more rarely the most posterior bar, of the three bony intermediary bars of the syrinx. In the typical turdines and flycatchers, however, a thumb-like extension of these muscles envelopes the posteriorly bent dorsal end of the most posterior bar of the syrinx. *M. sternotrachealis* is also much thinner in the last two taxa. Ames was unable to examine any material of the genus *Drymodes*, which, as he commented, is interesting as the only genus of thrush endemic to the Australian continent. This genus was placed in the Turdinae by Ripley (Peters 1964, Check-list Bds Wld, 10) but this has been queried by Sibley (1974, Comm. and abst., XVI Int. orn. Congr., Canberra). A specimen of the Southern Scrub-robin *Drymodes brunneipygia*, preserved in spirit (BMNH Reg. No. 1966.22.62), was collected in Western Australia on the Fourth Phase of the Harold Hall Expeditions. An examination of the syrinx of this bird reveals that the arrangement of muscles is typical of the general oscine pattern and not of the turdines. *M. bronchotrachealis posticus* and *M. bronchialis posticus* taper to an insertion on the anterior surface of the second of the three bony intermediary bars of the syrinx. *M. sternotrachealis* is fairly thick.

On the present criterion, therefore, this species ought not to be included in either the typical thrushes, Turdinae, or the typical flycatchers, Muscicapini, but this evidence does not indicate where the true affinities lie.

DR C. J. O. HARRISON, *Sub-department of Ornithology, British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 6AP, England.*
27 January 1976.

A record of the Eastern Grass Owl from the Northern Territory

An Eastern Grass Owl *Tyto longimembris* was found dead on the Barkly Highway approximately twenty kilometres west of Camooweal (19°55'S, 137°57'E) on 24 October 1975. The habitat was grassland interspersed with tree-lined creeks. Ten dead Barn Owls *T. alba* were counted on the road between Camooweal and Barry Caves (175 km) on the same day.

The specimen (CSIRO 18112) was a sub-adult female with wing-length of 328 millimetres. This is within the range (321–342) for six females reported by Mees (Zool. Verh., Leiden (65): 57). Its stomach contained juvenile *Rattus villosissimus*, which local informants claimed to be present in large numbers.

The only other specimens from the Northern Territory (2 ♀♀) were collected by Dahl in 1895 on the Victoria River (Mees, op.cit.: 48). Recent sight records have been claimed from Humpty Doo, near Darwin, by Crawford (Emu 72: 142) and J. L. McKean (pers. comm.). When Mees (op. cit.: 46-9) reviewed this species in 1964, there were no Australian records greater than 160 kilometres from the coast. The bird described here was approximately 330 kilometres inland, which, when taken with the sight records of McKean *et al.* (Aust. Bird-Watcher 3: 196-8) at Narrabri, NSW, and Mitchell, Qld, (310 and 450 km inland respectively) and the specimens collected by Cox (SAOA Newsletter (77): 11) at Pandiburra Bore, north-eastern South Australia (approximately 600 km inland), suggests that this species can be expected in the interior of eastern Australia, although its unobtrusiveness precludes more frequent recordings.

M. G. BROOKER, *Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO, PO Box 84, Lyneham, ACT 2602.*
21 April 1976.