# Short Communications

## Further Comments on the Type-locality of *Cracticus torquatus argenteus* Gould

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Ford (1979) demonstrated that the northern Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus* consisted of two distinct forms, which he designated *C.t. argenteus* (northern part of the Northern Territory) and *C.t. latens* (Kimberley region of Western Australia). This elevated the problem of the exact type-locality of the original specimen of the 'silver-backed' form of the Grey Butcherbird *C. argenteus* Gould from one of '. . . purely historical interest . . .' to '. . . direct relevance to the nomenclature to be used in the future . . .' (Mees 1983, p. 123). Ford (1979) concluded that the type-locality was Port Essington (11°15′S, 132°12′E, i.e. within the range of the northern Northern Territory subspecies) but Mees (1983) argued that the type-locality was Hanover Bay (15°16′S, 124°46′E, within the range of the Kimberley subspecies). Below, Ford and Mees respectively present their arguments for Port Essington or Hanover Bay being the type-locality.

### J. Ford: the case for Port Essington

The population in the Kimberley was diagnosed as *latens* on the basis of it having a partly black bib or necklace on the breast and, sometimes, a small black patch on the chin (Ford 1979). Gould (1841a, 1848, 1865) in *each* description of *argenteus* stated that the throat, all the undersurface and sides of the neck were pure white, and all specimens of the Northern Territory population examined by me agreed perfectly with this description. This consistent difference between the two populations was not mentioned by Mees (1983). Gould's descriptions of colouration exactly fit birds in the Northern Territory but not those in the Kimberley. Interestingly, some specimens of *torquatus* from south-western Australia have a vestigial black frill on the sides of the breast (Ford 1979) but this is not relevant to the status of *latens*. Mees (pers. comm., June 1985) believed that a specimen he collected in the King Leopold Ranges was like Northern Territory birds. However, though his specimen does not have a black bib as strong as in the type of *latens* (Emu 79: plate 4), it has a partial black necklace on the sides of the breast whereas Northern Territory birds have no black.

As Mees correctly remarked, Capt. George Grey was given as the source of the material on which Gould based his initial description. However this was not remarked on by Gould but by the minute secretary of the Zoological Society of London. There are cogent reasons for accepting that at the time Gould also had specimens from Port Essington and based his description on them because Gould in his reiterative remarks of 1848 and 1865 specifically mentioned that his description or figure (plate) was also based on a specimen from Benjamin Bynoe. This would have been collected while Bynoe was surgeon on H.M.S. *Beagle*. The minute secretary indicated that specimens from the *Beagle* were available to Gould in 1840 because at the same meeting Gould described the Pictorella Mannikin *Amadina pectoralis* from the collection of J.E. Dring of the *Beagle*. Mees (1983) also conceded that Gould had already seen specimens from elsewhere (Port Essington) at least by the time Grey was preparing his report, which was published in 1841.

Presumably, Gould in 1840 had the brown juvenile specimen from Grey now in the British Museum (Natural History) but this is clearly not the type. If Grey had also collected an adult in the Kimberley, it is strange that Gould never mentioned the presence of black on the breast and used the specimen from Bynoe for his figure. The adult specimen from Port Essington collected by Bynoe is extant (Schauensee 1957) and would have been available to Gould in 1840, whereas it is conjecture whether he had an adult from the Kimberley. Gould's belated acknowledgement of his indebtness to Bynoe is suggestive of the brown juvenile being the only specimen collected by Grey. No other explanation for Gould's later reference to Bynoe seems plausible. Moreover, because Gould had a keen eye for morphological differences and, had he seen adult specimens from both the Kimberley and Northern Territory populations, he doubtless would have bestowed binominals to both populations as evidenced by him giving names like *Cracticus leucopterus* and *Vanga* (*Cracticus*) *cinerea* to other populations of the species *C. torquatus*, which had previously been described by Latham. Trinominal nomencla-

ture had not been invented by Gould's time so taxonomists described each differentiated population under a binominal heading.

Not too much importance should be given to Gould's use of north-west coast and north coast as designating different geographical regions of Australia because Gould was not always consistent. Indeed Gould (1848, 1865) stated examples of this new species [*argenteus*] were discovered on the north coast of Australia, both by Sir George Grey and B. Bynoe, Esq, a quotation perhaps indicating that these regions were considered equivalent. Gould (1841b) caused similar difficulty with the type of the White-quilled Rock-Pigeon *Petrophassa albipennis*, also collected by members of *Beagle*. He remarked that it came from the north-west coast of Australia and this was construed as King Sound until Crome & Johnstone (1979) gave three reasons for believing that the type came from the Victoria River, Northern Territory: the cotypes of *albipennis* best match specimens from areas about the Victoria River rather than from those in the west Kimberley; Gould did not describe this taxon until two years after he described several new taxa from King Sound (i.e. after he obtained material from the *Beagle*'s 1839 survey of the Northern Territory); no habitat (ridges and cliffs of large rocks) exists for this species on the Sunday Islands.

Mees (1983) quoted measurements given by Gould for the type of *argenteus* and remarked that comparison with Table 1 in Ford (1979) almost certainly pointed to the Kimberley as the provenance of Gould's type. However, Mees overlooked the measurements in Amadon (1951), which extend the upper limit in size of mensural characters in the Northern Territory population. Moreover, Gould sometimes made errors with his measurements as, for example, with the northern form of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus macrorhynchus* (Ford 1980). Therefore, the measurements given by Gould do not provide categorical proof that the type was a Kimberley bird. Gould's remark that in size this species (= *C. argenteus*) is directly intermediate between *Cracticus cinereus* (= *torquatus*) and *C. varius* (= *nigrogularis*) is of no assistance because he used the same words on each occasion (1841, 1848, 1865) and *argenteus* and *latens* are each fairly similar to *torquatus* in size rather than directly intermediate between *torquatus* and *nigrogularis*.

So as to resolve this problem, I select the specimen from Port Essington, considered by Meyer de Schauensee (1957) to be the holotype of *argenteus*, as neotype. This is registered No. 15452 in The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. No other specimen exists that could conceivably be construed as Gould's type.

Incidentally, the table of comparisons between forms of *Cracticus* in Ford (1979) omitted an interesting character in the Hooded Butcherbird *C. cassicus* not previously remarked upon. The upper tail-coverts in *cassicus* are quite elongate and cover 65% of the length of the tail whereas in other butcherbirds, including the Pied *C. nigrogularis*, they extend only about 32-38%.

## G. Mees: the case for Hanover Bay

Ford's case can be summarised in four points: (1) the Kimberley subspecies has a blackish pectoral band that Gould would certainly have mentioned, had it been present in his specimen, ergo the specimen described could not be from the Kimberley Division; (2) the statement that the type was collected by Captain Grey was not made by Gould but was an error committed by the minute secretary; (3) Gould's North-West Coast included Port Essington; (4) Gould is known to have made errors in measurements, and therefore the measurements published may be wrong; moreover, a Northern Territory specimen studied by Amadon is so large that the presumed difference in measurements between the two subspecies becomes very doubtful and a bird with the measurements given by Gould might actually have come from the Northern Territory.

(1) The black bib or necklace. In my note, I failed to mention this. That was not because I was concealing this character but because it is not confined to the Kimberley population. Ford (1979, p. 193) already mentioned that: 'Some individuals of *C.t. torquatus* from south-western Australia have a vestigial black frill on the sides of the breast . . but whether this is permanent as in *latens* or is only a transient plumage is not known'.

Only one adult specimen from the Kimberley Division and three adult specimens from south-western Australia (*C.t. leucopterus*, not recognised by Ford) are available to me, collected by myself. The Kimberley bird has a narrow patch on each side of the neck. One specimen from the extreme south (Carbunup) has something that might be called a complete black pectoral band; the second has on one side a patch a little larger than that of the Kimberley bird, on the other side a patch that is a little smaller (see Fig. 1), the third bird has the patches weakly indicated. As all three specimens are adult, there is no reason to regard this plumage as 'transient' in *C.t. leucopterus*. Ford has borrowed these specimens, and also received photographs, and says: 'Interestingly, some specimens of *torquatus* from south-western Australia have a vestigial black frill on the sides of the breast but this is not relevant to the status of *latens*'. The photograph (Fig. 1) also shows that the Kimberley specimen has 'a partly developed black bib or necklace', and the specimen from Carbunup 'a vestigial black frill on the sides of the breast'.

In the case of the Northern Territory birds, and the subspecific differences, Ford has misunderstood me. Lacking material from the Northern Territory, I have right

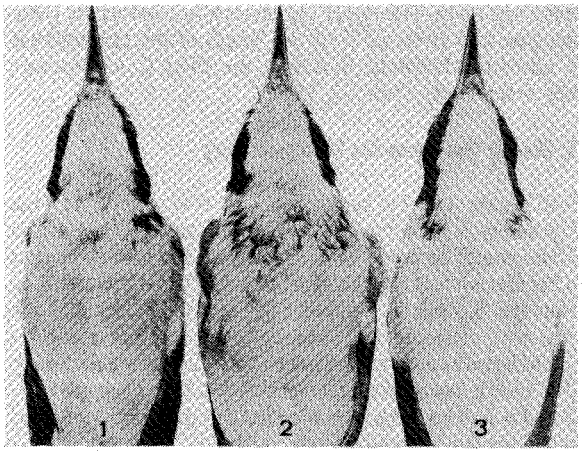


FIGURE 1. 1. *Cracticus torquatus leucopterus*, 11 July 1968, Tamala, mid-western W.A.; 2. *C.t. leucopterus*, 31 March 1968, Carbunup, south-western W.A.; 3. *C.t. argenteus*, 31 July 1968, King Leopold Range, Kimberley Division, W.A.

from the beginning accepted without question the characters given by Ford to distinguish these populations: the black patches or bib, and the difference in measurements. I only wanted to draw attention to the fact that the black is not always so well-developed as in the illustrated type-specimen of *latens*.

Far from being irrelevant, this discussion of *leucopterus* is highly relevant in view of Ford's remark: 'If Grey had also collected an adult in the Kimberley it is strange that Gould never mentioned the presence of black on the breast'. I propose that Gould (1841a) did not mention this: because, although he recognised all forms as different species, ternary nomenclature had not been invented and so gave a differential diagnosis: he did not repeat characters, like the black patch on the sides of the throat, common to several forms. In none of his descriptions of *Cracticus*-forms (including *leucopterus*) did Gould mention such black patches, neither did he comment on their absence in some populations. Gould also omitted to mention the white spot in front of the eye in southerly subspecies, which is black in the north, although he correctly figured this fairly conspicuous character.

(2) The minute secretary of the Zoological Society is blamed for having introduced the name of Grey as collector. I read copies of the original minutes of the meetings of 13 October and of 10 November 1840 when, in the presence of Gould, 'the Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed'. The minutes of 13 October have the following section:

> Mr. Gould exhibited to the meeting an interesting new bird from Swan River which he regarded as closely allied to the Brush Turkey and having pointed out its characters, he proposed for it the name *Pedionomus ocellatus*. A new species of *Centropus* under the specific name *assimilis*, a new *Vanga* which he named *argentea*, and an *Amadina*, named *pectoralis*, were also characterized by Mr. Gould. These birds are all from Australia; the last mentioned species is from the collection of Mr. Dring of the *Beagle*.

Note that the minute secretary has nowhere mentioned the name Grey. Also, the minutes do not contain descriptions of the new birds: indeed, *Centropus assimilis* was never published. The bird, shown at the meeting under the name of *Vanga argentea*, was published as *Cracticus argenteus*, with a diagnosis and the statement that Captain Grey was the collector added. This information that could only have been provided by Gould. The name *Pedionomus ocellatus* was used for a species named *Leipoa ocellata* in the published version, *Pedionomus* being transferred to the species still bearing that name (see also Iredale & Whitley 1943).

(3) The North-West Coast. Ford states, correctly, that the north-west coast was sometimes included in the north coast by Gould. This makes sense, north-west being subsidiary to north (north-west, north, and north-east could all be called northern Australia), but Gould has never included north under north-west; occasionally, his 'north-west' went as far east as the mouth of the Victoria River, but not beyond.

Ford forces me also to go into the matter of the type-locality of *Petrophassa albipennis*. Whittell (1954, p. 101), Mees (1961, p. 112) and Parker (1968) all agreed that the type material was taken while the Beagle was off Swan Point, West Kimberley Division, in January-February 1838. Crome & Johnstone (1979) have shown that specimens had been collected not only in West Kimberley, but also along the Victoria River, N.T., on 27 November 1839, which could have been in Gould's hands when he described the species, and they argued that the type-locality is the Victoria River rather than West Kimberley. Ford has used their argument to support his opinion that Gould's north-west coast included the Northern Territory, but the Victoria River is still a long way from Port Essington. However, Crome & Johnstone as well as Ford appear to have overlooked that, in this particular case, Gould (1841b, pp. 173-174) not only remarked that the types of *Petrophassa albipennis* came from the north-west coast of Australia but explicitly stated that they were from Western Australia, which even in Gould's time was a definite political and geographical concept and could never have included Port Essington. In giving Western Australia as the type locality, Gould has automatically excluded any material that he may have seen from outside that state from being typical. Therefore, the type-locality of *Petrophassa albipennis* remains Western Australia, restricted to the Sunday Islands on the basis of Stokes's diary. Far from

showing inconsistency, this underlines that to Gould the north-west coast was in Western Australia. This is also clear from appendix D in Grey (1841, p. 415-421), where Kimberley birds are marked with the letters N. W. C. for North-West Coast.

(4) Ford (1979, Table 1) indicates a clear difference in size between Western Australian and Northern Territory birds, and suggests that the measurements provided by Gould (1841a) are too large for the latter. Now, it transpires that Ford's Northern Territory sample was not representative. Dr. Amadon has re-measured the specimen from South Alligator River, for which he had recorded a wing-length of 152 mm (*cf.* Amadon 1951, p. 8), and has confirmed that it had been measured correctly. The other measurements of this bird (tail 114, tarsus 36?, culmen 41 mm) are also larger than those provided by Ford for N.T. specimens, and it is apparent that the supposed difference in size between Kimberley and Northern Territory birds is largely imaginary.

The occurrence of large birds in the Northern Territory does not make Ford's argument more plausible, for Gould's measurements do not fit the (small) Philadelphia specimen, which Ford holds to be the bird described by Gould. The bird was re-measured for me by Dr. Robbins, who reported that the published measurements for wing and culmen (149 and 37 mm) are correct. He added those for tarsus (27.3 mm) and tail (98 mm), but observed that 'the tail has only two feathers, and both are worn'.

Ford states: 'The adult specimen from Port Essington collected by Bynoe is extant . . . and would have been available to Gould in 1840 . . .'. It is well to point out that it is only conjecture that this specimen was collected by Bynoe, as there is no original label, and neither a date nor a collector's name associated with it. Ford adds: 'I select the specimen from Port Essington, considered by Meyer de Schauensee (1957) to be the holotype of *argenteus* as neotype.... no other specimen exists that could conceivably be construed as Gould's type'. Surely Gould's (1848) statement that he was indebted to Bynoe 'for one of the specimens from which my figures were taken', implies that by that time he had more than one adult specimen? Having discussed all this in my previous contribution (Mees 1983), I see no need to elaborate on it again. Ford's designation of the specimen as a neotype is invalid, as it does not fulfil the very strict conditions set out in the International Code (Ride *et al.* 1985, art. 75).

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