

TAXONOMIC STATUS OF THE EASTERN GREY BUSH CHAT, *SAXICOLA FERREA HARRINGTONI* (HARTERT)

The Grey Bush Chat was described by C. R. Gray (1847) from Nepal as *Saxicola ferrea*. Later, Hartert (1910) described *Oreicola ferrea harringtoni* from Lien Kiang, near Foochow, Fukien, China, as the eastern subspecies of the Grey Bush Chat.

Baker (1924), Vaurie (1959) and Biswas (1961) recognized the eastern subspecies in their works, but Kinnear (1934), Stressemann (1940), Mayr (1941), Ripley (1961) and Ali and Ripley (1973) did not accept Hartert's

eastern subspecies, and synonymized it with the nominate subspecies.

While working on the collection of this species of bird recently taken in Kashmir, Bhutan and Assam, we strongly felt the necessity to recognize the eastern subspecies *harringtoni*. We wholly agree with the view of Vaurie (1959) that *Saxicola ferrea harringtoni* (Hartert) is darker in both sexes than the nominate *ferrea*. Baker (1924), however, stated that *harringtoni* was paler than *ferrea*,

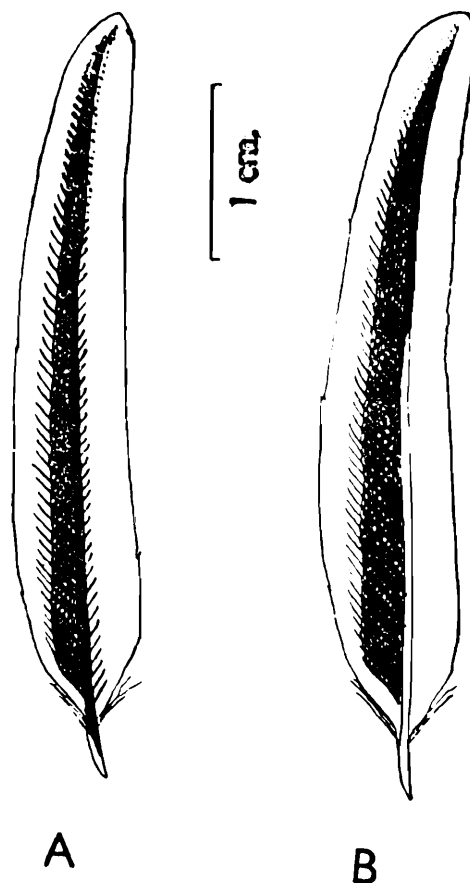


Fig. 1. Left outer-most rectrix showing the colour pattern of A—*Saxicola ferrea harringtoni* (Hartert), B—*Saxicola ferrea ferrea* Gray.

probably due to some clerical error. We would like to add that in the males of the nominate subspecies, the outer web of the outermost tail feather, including the basal two-third of the shaft, is entirely white. In *harringtoni*, on the otherhand, the shaft of the outermost tail feather, except its extreme tip is entirely sepia and in its outer web a brownish grey line runs between the shaft and the marginal white. In the female birds, the ferruginous of the upper tail-coverts and the outer margin of the basal half of the rectrices is deeper, nearly cinnamon in *harringtoni* (Fig. 1).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to Dr. B. Biswas of the Zoological Survey of India for his keen interest and also kindly going through the manuscript.

REFERENCES

ALI, S. AND RIPLEY, S. D. 1973. *Handbook of the*

Zoological Survey of India,
Calcutta

birds of India and Pakistan. 9 : 37-39, Oxford University Press, Bombay.

BAKER, E. C. S. 1924. *Fauna Br. India*, Birds (2nd ed). 2 : 36-38, Taylor & Francis, London.

BISWAS, B. 1961. The birds of Nepal. pt. 5. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 58 (3) : 667-668.

GRAY, G. R. 1847 (1846). In GRAY, J. E. Catalogue of the specimens and drawings of Mammalia and Birds of Nepal and Thibet, presented by B. H. Hodgson, Esq., to the British Museum. *Brit. Mus., London*, pp, 71, 153.

HARTERT, E. 1910. *Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna*, 1 : 711, R. Friedländer, Berlin.

KINNEAR, N. B. 1934. On the birds of the Adung Valley, Northeast Burma. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.*, 37 : 347-368.

MAYR, E. 1941. In STANFORD, J. K. The Varnay-Cutting Expdt. to northern Burma (pt. 3). *Ibis* ; (14) 5 : 213-245.

RIPLEY, S. D. 1961. A synopsis of the birds of India and Pakistan. p. 516. *Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.*, Bombay.

STRESSEMANN, E. 1940. Die Vogel des Mount Victoria. *Mitt. zool. Mus. Berlin.* 24 : 151-264.

VAURIE, C. 1959. *The birds of the palearctic fauna.* Passeriformes : 340-341. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London.

SUBHENDU SEKHAR SAHA
AND
BARID BARAN DATTA

