

Eastern Races of the White-rumped Swift, *Apus pacificus* (Latham)

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A SERIES OF 17 adults of *Apus pacificus* taken in western Szechwan during July, August, and October prove to be quite distinct from the nominate race, with which breeding birds of south-western China have heretofore been placed, but are inseparable from a series of nine May-collected adults from the Batanes, islets in the strait separating Formosa from Luzón. These are *Apus pacificus kanoi* (Yamashina), described in the Bulletin of the Biogeographical Society of Japan (12, (2), Jan. 15, 1942: 79), a well-marked subspecies supposed by the describer to be restricted to Formosa and Botel Tobago (type locality).

Since it seemed to me improbable that two populations of *kanoi* should exist in such widely separated regions with another race between them, and since as early as 1931 La Touche (A Handbook of the Birds of Eastern China, 2, (1): 91) had reported the capture of an unidentifiable white-rumped swift in north-western Fukien ("in some way intermediate between true *pacificus* and *cooki*, but nearer the former," *vide* Stresemann, *in epistola*), Mr. J. C. Greenway has at my request courteously lent me not only his material from Szechwan but also La Touche's Fukien skin (now No. 130763 of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Mass.). La Touche's specimen turns out to be, as I expected, *kanoi*, and Stresemann's "*cooki*" from Kwangsi will doubtless also belong to this race.

A Malayan bird in Washington, received from the Selangor Museum and collected at the Semangko Pass on 29 February 1908, is likewise a representative of *kanoi*, and I consider it probable that most Malayan examples of "*cooki*" are in fact *kanoi*. I have not yet seen the true *cooki* from any point south of the Siamese province of Surat Thani just south of the Isthmus of Kra.

The three subspecies to be sought in Malaya may be distinguished by the following diagnoses:—

1. *Apus pacificus pacificus* (Latham).

Upper parts blackish brown, virtually unglossed, decidedly paler on head and nape, each feather very narrowly margined apically with pale grey; white rump band averaging *ca.* 20 mm. in breadth; dusky shaft streaks of feathers of throat and rump band few and very narrow; second primary longest.

2. *Apus pacificus kanoi* (Yamashina).

Upper parts brownish black and distinctly glossed, the head and nape paler but scarcely demarcated from the mantle, the light apical fringes obsolescent or absent; white rump band averaging *ca.* 15 mm. in breadth; dusky shaft streaks of feathers of throat and rump band few and very narrow; second primary longest (one out of 28 skins has the first longest).

3. *Apus pacificus cooki* (Harington).

Upper parts glossy black, the head and nape scarcely demarcated from the mantle, the light apical fringes obsolescent or absent; white rump band averaging *ca.* 10 mm. in breadth; shaft streaks of feathers of throat and rump band numerous, broader, and blacker; first primary longest.

It should be mentioned that the colour tones of the upper parts given above for each race are drawn from specimens in reasonably fresh plumage; these parts become paler and browner with wear and exposure to sunlight, although the relative differences may still be seen in birds comparably worn.

Deignan's short paper above shows that *Apus pacificus kanoi* (Yamashina, 1942) should be added to the Malayan checklist as No. 239c. His note also suggests that the second subspecies reaching Malaya is actually *kanoi* and not *cooki*, as previously recorded.

Apus pacificus certainly occurs widely though irregularly in the western Malay States, and probably in the central mountains, from October to March at least. Small numbers are probably present, either as migrants or visitors, over a longer period, though clearly the large flocks which are seen at intervals, usually during or after heavy rain, are seldom encountered outside the winter months. The only records from the east side of Malaya are from Kelantan and Great Redang Island, off the coast of Trengganu. In the former state, according to the late Charles Young (*Malayan Nat. Journ.*, 1, (4), 1941: 155), *Apus pacificus* is almost entirely a bird of passage, and the period over which it occurs is much wider: he says,

... I have not met with it between the end of October and the end of January. Autumn arrivals appear about mid-July, and then in increasing numbers throughout August; no more are seen after the third week in October. The return passage commences during the first half of February and continues until about the first week in June, being most marked in April and May, when large numbers can be seen migrating northwards on a broad front along the Kelantan valley. Stragglers are occasionally to be seen in June and early July, possibly non-breeding birds. The southward movement in autumn is very much less pronounced, and at all times the occurrence of this species is erratic ...

Edgar (*in litt.*) has also reported it from Kelantan in October. In 1948 it was encountered on Great Redang Island on 9 and 10 August, and in 1950 on 10 September (Gibson-Hill, *Bull. Raffles Mus.*, 24, 1952: 231).

Unfortunately our knowledge of the distribution of this species in Malaya is derived largely from visual records, and relatively few skins have been examined. Further we now have only four locally taken specimens in the Raffles Museum collection. These skins have been re-examined in the light of the summary given above, and apparently the races represented in the short series are as follows,

Apus p. pacificus (Latham). Three skins, taken 5 October, 1907, by Selangor Museum collectors at or near Kuala Lumpur (♂♂, Mus. Nos. 2651/07 & 2653/07; ♀, Mus. No. 2654/07). The gap (Mus. No. 2652/07) suggests that there may formerly have been at least one other skin in the series, but this cannot be taken for granted. We may perhaps record at the same time that the collections also contain two examples of this race from Peninsular Siam: the south-west corner of Koh Pennan (off the Bight of Bandon), 31 May, 1913 (apparently the sole survivor of three specimens taken on the island in the

last week of May, 1913; see Robinson, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, 5, (3), 1915: 146), and a male from Kandhuli, north of Chaiya, 12 September, 1919 (E. Seimund coll.; also recorded in Robinson & Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam*, 5, (2), 1922: 144).

Apus pacificus cooki (Harrington). A single specimen, ♂, taken by Selangor Museum collectors in the Semangko Pass, 17 February, 1908 (Mus. No. 223/08). This bird agrees closely with Major Harrington's description of *cooki* (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, 31, 1913: 57): the dusky shaft streaks on the feathers of the throat and rump are well marked and prominent; the white rump band averages 11–12 mm. in breadth.

In addition to the last record, Edgar (*Malayan Nat. Journ.*, 2, (2), 1947: 9) reports that Chasen identified examples taken from an immense flock seen over the Dindings (on the Perak coast) as *cooki*.¹ Robinson & Kloss² refer to a specimen from Kedah Peak, and Robinson (*Birds Malay Peninsula*, 2, 1927: 125) to one from Bukit Tangga, Negri Sembilan, neither of which are now in the Museum collection. Robinson (*loc. cit.*) says that these birds, together with the example(s) before him from the Semangko Pass,³ were separable from typical *pacificus*, being "darker, with a very much more marked greenish gloss, the rump band narrower and of slightly smaller dimensions." Accordingly he provisionally ascribed the birds from all three localities to *cooki*, but the validity of this identification is now doubtful in the light of Deignan's paper.

At this juncture we can only say with certainty that the typical race of *Apus pacificus* undoubtedly reaches Malaya, and that single formal records are extant for both *A. p. kanoi* and *A. p. cooki*. In addition there are several formal records published before *kanoi* was described, the material for which is no longer available for re-examination. These may have been specimens of *kanoi* or *cooki*, and must now be considered indeterminate, though it can be accepted that they were not examples of the nominate race.

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1. "... some birds collected in Dindings at sea-level were later identified as *cooki*. These were shot from the largest congregation of swifts I ever hope to see. I was driving home one evening about an hour before dark, and came to a straight stretch of road about three quarters of a mile long, with flat jungle on the west, and a large area of open lalang on the east. I cannot remember the exact date, but it was in the spring, the time of northward movement. The flight had started when I arrived and was still going on when I left three quarters of an hour later; flying roughly south-east to north-west were countless thousands of these swifts, strung out in small parties of ten or a dozen, and covering the whole sky as far as I could see. They were flying low, and slowly, as if tired". (Edgar (1947: 9). The identification by Chasen was confirmed by Edgar, *in epistola*.

2. "We are unable to say if the darker form described by the late Col. Harrington as *C. p. cooki* from the Northern Shan States . . . occurs in Peninsular Siam; the probabilities are that it does, as we have one specimen closely agreeing with the description, shot on the summit of Kedah Peak in December, 1915" (Robinson & Kloss, 1922: 145).

3. Robinson (*Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, 2, (4), 1909: 175), writing of this species, says that it was "Very common at the Semangko Pass in February, 1908, and also at Kuala Lumpur during rainy, windy weather in October, 1907. Hitherto its occurrence in the Peninsula has rested on a specimen c¹ of the British Museum Catalogue obtained by Cantor in Penang." It is not clear how many specimens were actually taken in the Semangko Pass, or where they went. The U.S. National collection includes one example, taken there on 29 February, 1908, twelve days after the one in the Raffles Museum collection (see Deignan, above).