

REDISCOVERY OF RHOPORNIS ARDESIACA (WIED).¹

BY ELSIE M. B. NAUMBURG.

PERHAPS the most interesting bird obtained by Kaempfer while collecting for The American Museum of Natural History in Bahia, southeastern Brazil, in 1928, was a female of *Rhopornis ardesiaca* Wied. which proves to be the only specimen in any museum.

It is true that when Maximilian, Prince of Wied found and described the male of this species, in 1831, he also described what he thought was the female of the species and stated that his specimens came from southeastern Brazil without specifying an exact locality. His description of the female does not fit our specimen and it would appear that it belongs to an entirely different species.

Kaempfer obtained this female specimen at Boa Nova (alt. 2600 ft.), Lat. 14.32° S.; Long. 40.18° W. while at Ituassu (alt. 3000 ft.), Lat. 13.43° S.; Long. 41.24° W. he secured an unsexed specimen which is a typical male. The structural details and general distribution of colors agree so well that it is evident that they represent the sexes of a single species while Wied's description of the female evidently applies to a very different bird.

He states that the upper parts are pale grayish brown, more grayish on the pileum and mantle, more fulvous on the rump and greater upper wing coverts which are edged with pale fulvous brown. The under parts are described as light fulvous, darker on the breast. We know that his travels were confined to the coast of southeastern Brazil with short trips inland all of which has been clearly outlined on an excellent map which appears in an article on the Prince of Wied by Dr. Amaral, in the 1931 issue of the Bulletin of the Nacional Museum of Rio. Kaempfer's locality, Boa Nova, is in the region covered by Wied's travels and we suggest that it be designated as the definite type locality of the species.

The identity of the bird that he described as the female of *Rhopornis ardesiaca* still remains to be determined. After running through the Ant Birds the only description that even slightly resembles Wied's description is *Pyriglena leucoptera* from the Serra

¹ Read before the American Ornithologists' Union Semicentennial Anniversary, November, 1934.

do Itatiaya, the female of which is fulvous brown; tail blackish, lengthened, and cinereous brown beneath; bill much compressed. As this is hardly sufficiently like the bird described by Wied the identity of the latter must remain a mystery.

A résumé of the published history of Wied's "*Formicivora ardesiaca*" following his original description follows.

In 1835 Ménétries¹ says he has taken his description of the female of *Formicivora ardesiaca* from the Prince of Wied, and that the bird is very rare and he has never seen it.

As early as 1847 Cabanis² started the error of synonymizing *Myiothera ardesiaca* and *Hypocnemis myiotherina*.

Burmeister³ in 1856 confounded the two birds in his description as well as in his text, the result being a hypothetical composite species.

In 1858 Mr. Sclater⁴ placed Wied's *Myiothera ardesiaca* in his list of species not recognized, but while generally synonymized by both Allen and Sclater with *Hypocnemis myiotherina*, Sclater said he did not believe *Myiothera ardesiaca* of Prince Maximilian to be the same as this species, and that he had never seen specimens of it. In his Catalogue⁵ it is apparently not mentioned at all.

J. A. Allen⁶ in 1889, in his article on Maximilian's Types of South American Birds, lists the bird under *Hypocnemis myiotherina* and says that although Wied ascribes the specific name to Lichtenstein, *Myiothera ardesiaca* Licht. was doubtless merely a manuscript name which Lichtenstein adopted.

In 1891 in 'Further Notes on Maximilian's Types,' etc., Allen⁷ says "It has been found that the type of Maximilian's *Myiothera ardesiaca* was wrongly referred to *Hypocnemis myiotherina* Spix from which it proves to be even generically distinct, and also not referable to any of the commonly recognized genera." So he described a new genus calling it *Rhopocichla*, and was obliged to give Wied's description of the female because he had never seen one.

¹ Ménétries, Mem. Ac. Sc. St. Petersb., 1835, Vol. III, Part 2 (Sci. Nat.), 5th Ser., p. 507 (ex Wied).

² Orn. Nat. in Wieg. Arch., 1847, Vol. I, p. 210 (in part).

³ Thiere Bras., 1856, Vol. III, p. 65 (part).

⁴ P. Z. S., 1858, p. 288.

⁵ Bds. Brit. Mus., 1890, Vol. XV.

⁶ Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 1889, Vol. II, p. 255.

⁷ Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 1891, Vol. III, p. 199.

In 1902 in the 'Proceedings' of the Biological Society of Washington (p. 35), Charles W. Richmond said the name of *Rhopocichla* was first used by Oates in 1889¹ for an Indian Timeline bird two years before Dr. Allen proposed the name for Wied's bird.²

This earlier use of the name by Oates necessitated renaming Allen's *Rhopocichla* and Dr. Richmond proposed *Rhopornis*, type *Myiothera ardesiaca* Wied.

Ridgway in 1911³ says his efforts have been handicapped by lack of many species desired for comparison, among which is *Rhopornis* (type *Myiothera ardesiaca* Wied).

It will be seen, therefore, that the female of this species has a curious history and apparently has not been seen by any of the writers who have referred to it.

Rhopornis is a well-marked genus. With *Pyriglena* it is clearly not identical, differing in its much longer, more depressed as well as more decidedly ridged bill, in the less stiffened, closely set and elongated lateral frontal feathers which form such a conspicuous feature in *Pyriglena*; in the narrower, apically slightly attenuated, not bluntly rounded rectrices; in its more slender tarsi and toes, and proportionately much longer, as well as more strongly graduated tail.

Rhopornis has many features in common with *Cercomacra* and *Myrmoderus* (*M. loricatus*). It recalls *Cercomacra* in the slate-gray coloration of the male plumage and the white wing-marking (though it lacks the white interscapular blotch). However, the tail is far more steeply graduated, the rectrices are apically rather attenuated instead of nearly squarely cut, the tarsi are much longer, the bill longer and basally less dilated, the frontal feathering shorter and less dense. Shape of bill and degree of graduation of tail very similar to "*Myrmoderus*" *loricatus*, but tarsus and tail much longer, while the pattern of coloration is quite different. The rather scanty frontal feathering is not unlike *Myrmeciza longipes*, and allies, but *Rhopornis* has no naked (bare) spots either below or behind the eye.

The female of *Rhopornis ardesiaca*, now for the first time described, differs from the male principally in having the top of the

¹ Fauna Brit. India Birds, 1889, I, p. 159.

² Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 1891, Vol. III, p. 199.

³ Birds of North and Middle America 1911, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 50, p. 10.

head and the hind neck tawny brown (between ochraceous tawny and cinnamon brown of Ridgway) forming a well defined cap; in the white instead of black chin and throat and in some minor characters. The back and scapulars are slightly shaded with brownish olive and a similar tinge is noticeable on the basal portion of the upper wing-coverts which are, however, marked with black and white in a similar way as in the male. The outer webs of the remiges are less grayish and more brownish; the lores are paler gray, the auriculars more conspicuously streaked with whitish and the gray of the breast and sides is paler. The flanks are washed with dull brownish olive and the middle of the belly is extensively whitish. The male measures: wing 73.5; tail 85.5; exposed culmen 19.5 mm. The female: wing 73.5; tail 85.5; exposed culmen 19 mm.

To sum up the acquisition of the female specimen enables us for the first time to accurately describe the female of *Rhopornis ardesiaca* while the data accompanying the male specimen provide a definite locality for the species.

American Museum of Natural History,
New York City.