# Notes on Some Forms of the Genus *Chalcites* Lesson

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Mayr (1939, *Emu,* 39, pp. 128-129), reporting the occurrence of birds inseparable from *Chalcites malayanus minutillus* (Gould) on islands of the Banda Sea in February, April, May, August, September, November and December, has asked for information on migratory movements of this species in northern Australia. The following facts may be of interest in this connection.

1. Mathews (1918, *Birds of Australia,* 7, pp. 362-363), quoting Rogers, has shown that it is present on Melville Island, Northern Territory, in October, November, December, January and February.

2. The junior author has examined in the National Museum, Melbourne, Territory examples collected in November, December, January and April.

3. The senior author, while a member of the Commonwealth of Australia/National Geographic Society/Smithsonian Institution Expedition to Arnhem Land (1948), took non-breeding specimens in March, April, May, June and July. That none was found in September, October and November is perhaps explainable by the fact that field work during those months was carried on at a locality away from the coast.

In short, the species is definitely known from the Northern Territory in all months except August and September, and further search would doubtless show its presence there even in those months.

Eggs attributed to *Chalcites m. minutillus* are in the H. L. White Collection at Melbourne; the junior author has ascertained their dates as November, December, January, March and June. We are advised by N. J. Favaloro of Mildura, Vic., that all of these should be treated with suspicion. The dates are, however, plausible, since, as mentioned, all individuals collected by the Arnhem Land Expedition (March to July inclusive) had the gonads wholly inactive.

The evidence available indicates either that *minutillus* is only partially migratory or that it is resident on the Banda Sea islands, sympatrically with *Chalcites 'malayanus' rufomerus* and *C. 'm.' crassirostris.* If the latter hypothesis be correct, *minutillus* cannot be conspecific with *rufomerus* and *crassirostris.*

It would be possible to withdraw these last from the *malayanus* group, treating them as a separate species. They have in common a deep metallic *bluish*-black subterminal

area on the central rectrices, more or less white edging to the upper wing coverts, and the colour pattern of the third rectrix from outside is the same in each race. In either of them, individual variation appears in the colour of the upper parts, but the bluer examples of *rufomerus* approximate the greener ones of *crassirostris*.

A form of *Chalcites malayanus* has been reported by numerous authors from the southern Philippines; it has been identified as *C. m. malayanus*, a race otherwise known only from Malaya and Sumatra. Since special subspecies appear in Java, Borneo and the Celebes, this identification of Mindanao birds has seemed to us improbable. We have so far seen no Philippines skin, but would suggest that such a specimen will prove to be either *minutillus* or an undescribed endemic race.

The senior author has before him nine adults of the genus *Chalcites* from north-eastern Borneo. Three females and three of the males belong to the form called *C. m. aheneus* Junge (1938, *Zool. Meded.*, 20, p. 238); three other males are of the type mentioned by Junge from Mount Kinabalu, which differed from his ten specimens of *aheneus* "in having the head much darker (bluish green) and the rest of the upper parts greener, though of a much darker colour than in Malayan specimens." These three might be considered mere colour variants of *aheneus*, if their bills were not distinctly smaller, less robust, and decidedly narrower when viewed from above. They cannot represent a race of the northern Bornean mountains, since an immature from Kinabalu agrees with *aheneus* in size and shape of bill, and one of the three was collected at Abai on 29 June, while *aheneus* was taken at Abai on 27, 29, and 30 June. It is possible that here again we are concerned with two very similar sympatric species.

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**Chestnut-breasted Finches around Melbourne.**—On July 31, 1949, when in company with Messrs F. A. Watts and R. Ferguson, I observed one adult and six juvenile Chestnut-breasted Finches (*Donacola castaneothorax*) at a swamp at Bundoora (near Melbourne). Evidently some aviary escapees are commencing to breed there.—HAROLD E. TARR, Middle Park, Vic., 14/8/49.