

**A record of *Cossypha heinrichi* RAND 1955 near Kinshasa
(Democratic Republic of Congo)
with a comment on the osteology of this species
(Aves, Passeriformes, Turdidae)**

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Abstract

A new record of *Cossypha heinrichi* RAND 1955 (Aves: Passeriformes: Turdidae) from a locality near Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo) is reported. Four specimens of this species which generally is considered to be very rare have been collected north of Menkao (4°16' S, 15°42' E) in May 1998. The sternum of *Cossypha heinrichi* is peculiar and differs from that of most other oscine passeriform birds in the very small notches of the caudal margin.

Key words: *Cossypha heinrichi*, Kinshasa, Zaïre, osteology.

Introduction

In 1998 the ornithological division of the Forschungsinstitut Senckenberg received a series of birds collected by Mutashiya TSHINYENYE in the surrounding of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaïre).

Amongst them were four specimens of *Cossypha heinrichi* RAND, an African thrush known to science not before 1955. Since its discovery this species has been reported a few times only and our specimens are from a locality where it has not been recorded previously.

The type specimen of *C. heinrichi* and two additional specimens were collected in 1954 by GERD HEINRICH in Angola (RAND, 1955), and are deposited in the Chicago Natural History Museum. From Angola, too, is a further series (9 specimens) in the Yale Peabody Museum (RIPLEY & HEINRICH, 1966). HARRISON (1977) was the first to show the occurrence

of *C. heinrichi* in the Democratic Republic of Congo; two specimens have been sent to The Natural History Museum in London. Summarizing the distribution of the species, OATLEY, FRY, KEITH & TYE (in KEITH et al., 1992: 437) thus write: "Known from only 2 small areas: c. 30 km northeast of Duque de Braganza in N Angola (12 specimens, 1954, 1957), and 500 km to the north in Bombo-Lumene Forest Reserve 4°30' S, 16°8' E and at nearby Nkiene in W Zaïre (4 specimens, 1975, 1980). Birds have been seen at 4 other sites within 15 km radius of Bombo-Lumene and a bird 'almost certainly of this species' was glimpsed 550 km further north near Mbandaka (equator, 18°24' E)". LOUETTE (1981) reported 3 specimens of *C. heinrichi* in the collection of the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren (Belgium) which have been collected at the locality "Nkiene" (4°10' S, 15°55' E).

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Results and discussion

The specimens of *Cossypha heinrichi* presented in this study have been collected in May 1998 at the locality "Nguma" which, according to the collector M. TSHINYENYE, is identical with the locality Guma (4°07' S 15°40' E), registered in BAMPS (1982).

The four specimens have been prepared as follows: 1 skin (SMF 81007) and the incomplete skeleton belonging to it (SMF 413), 1 freeze-dried specimen (SMF 81008), 1 skeleton (SMF 304), and 1 spirit specimen (SMF 275). Except for SMF 304 (of which the sex is unknown) the specimens are designated as females on the collector's label. Yet since the innards already had been removed when we received the birds, we could not check these statements. The measurements taken from the birds are in agreement with the dimensions of the specimens already known (table 1). In the colouration of the tail, however, the new specimens slightly depart from the figure in CLANCEY (1986: 16): The black colour, on the inner vane of the two rectrices next to the central pair, does not

extend to the tip of these feathers as illustrated by CLANCEY, but ends just 6–7 mm below the tip.

Because there are only a few records, MOUNTFORD (1988: 114) considered *Cossypha heinrichi* to be very rare. Although this species might well have a wider range of distribution than so far assumed, given the political situation in this country, a survey on the population of *Cossypha heinrichi* in the Democratic Republic of Congo is hardly possible at present.

Not much is known about the habits of *C. heinrichi* (see HEINRICH 1958 and the comments in KEITH et al. 1992). The type specimen has been collected in savannah wood but the occurrence of *C. heinrichi* in this habitat obviously is an exception. According to RIPLEY & HEINRICH (1966: 17), the species inhabits the "dense underbrush of shady tropical gallery woods along rivers and brooks". Unfortunately we lack information on the habitat in which our specimens have been caught.

A peculiarity concerning the skeleton of *Cossypha heinrichi* should be mentioned finally. This species has an unusually wide sternum, the caudal margin of which bears a pair of very small incisions (fig. 1A); in specimen SMF 304 one of these incisions is even closed caudally and thus reduced to a minute perforation. This observation is remarkable since, apart from a few exceptions, passeriform birds usually have a sternum with a pair of deep incisions (fig. 1B). *Cossypha albicapilla* (VIEILLOT 1818), which is considered to be the most closely related species (RAND 1955, HALL & MOREAU 1970, WOLTERS 1975–82, JENSEN 1989) makes no exception to this rule (MOURER-CHAUVIRÉ, pers. comm.), and the same is true for *Cossypha natalensis* SMITH 1840 and *Cossypha niveicapilla* (LAFRESNAYE 1838) which we have investigated ourselves. At present the poor knowledge on *Cossypha heinrichi* gives no hints to the functional reasons to which this aberrant configuration of the sternum might be related.

Table 1. Some length measurements of *Cossypha heinrichi* (in mm).

	♂ SMF 81007 (freeze-dried)	♀ SMF 81008 (skin)
wing	117	113
tail	129	119
beak	18	20
tarsus	34.5	34.0

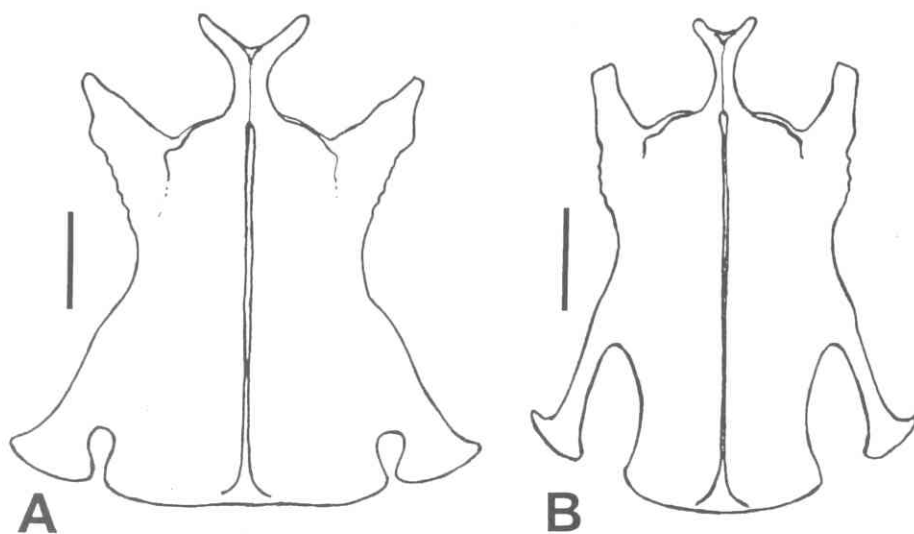


Fig. 1. Sternum in comparison. A) *Cossypha heinrichi*; B) *Cossypha natalensis*. Both figures are slightly schematic, the scale bar represents 5 mm.

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