

## Further information on the Dohrn-Keulemans collection of birds from the Cape Verde Islands

C.J. Hazevoet<sup>1</sup> & S. Fischer<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Institute for Systematics and Population Biology (Zoölogisch Museum), University of Amsterdam,  
P.O. Box 94766, 1090 GT Amsterdam, The Netherlands;* <sup>2</sup>*Institut für Biologie, Projektgruppe  
Naturschutz, Humboldt-Universität, Invalidenstraße 43, 10115 Berlin, Germany*

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### Abstract

Until recently, only one specimen from the series of syntypes of the Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis*, collected by H. Dohrn and J.G. Keulemans in 1865, was known to be still in existence. Another specimen belonging to this series has now been discovered in the collections of the Berlin museum. Some additional information on the Dohrn-Keulemans collection is given, based on listings in the old catalogues of this museum.

### Introduction

Heinrich Dohrn and Johan G. Keulemans stayed in the Cape Verde Islands from December 1864 to March 1865 and visited the islands of Santo Antão, São Vicente, São Nicolau and Santiago (Keulemans, 1866; Dohrn, 1871). Judging from Dohrn's (1871) paper, they appear to have made considerable collections of birds there, including the series of syntypes of the Cape Verde Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* (Keulemans, 1866). As no type specimen of that taxon had ever been designated and the whereabouts of the syntypes were unclear, Hazevoet (1993) made an attempt to trace the birds in the Dohrn-Keulemans collection. From investigations and inquiries at various zoological museums it became clear that some duplicates from the collection had been transferred to the Leiden, Berlin, London, and Tring museums, those in the Rothschild collection at Tring being later transferred to New York. It was thought, however, that the

majority of the collection had been housed at the Stettin museum (formerly Germany, now Szczecin, Poland), which was founded by Dohrn. After the Second World War the Stettin collection was transferred to Warsaw but none of Dohrn's specimens could be found there in 1992 and their fate remains uncertain (Hazevoet, 1993; 1995). The only specimen of *A. brevipennis* collected by Dohrn and Keulemans that could be traced was housed at the Tring museum, but it had not been recognized so far as being a syntype (Hazevoet, 1993; 1995). Investigations at the Berlin museum by the late G. Mauersberger (in litt., 1991; 1992) yielded little result. Only three of Dohrn's specimens from the Cape Verde Islands were said to be mentioned in the old museum catalogue. These concerned mounted specimens, which were thought to have been destroyed during the Second World War, together with the majority of mounted specimens in the Berlin collection.

### An additional syntype of *Acrocephalus brevipennis*

A renewed search in the archives and collections of the Berlin museum by the second author brought to light some new facts concerning the Dohrn-Keulemans collection of Cape Verde birds. Firstly, it turned out that one specimen of *A. brevipennis* is still present in the collection. It was stored under *Calamocichla* and not registered in any of the museum's catalogues, so that it had presumably been

overlooked earlier. According to one of the specimen's labels, it was collected on the island of São Nicolau. Another label reads "Typus von *Calamodyta brevipennis* Keulemans" and refers to Keulemans' (1866) publication. The skin is of an unsexed immature with fresh tertials and no sign of active moult. The specimen is in a good condition; it does not have a collection number. Incidentally, the syntype in the Tring collection also concerns an unsexed immature, thought to be 2–3 months of age, and there appears to be the strong possibility that both were collected at the same site and time, i.e. February 1865 (cf. Hazevoet, 1993). Both the Tring and Berlin specimens are to be considered syntypes.

#### Other specimens at Berlin

The search in the Berlin collections revealed the existence of only one other specimen from the Dohrn-Keulemans collection of birds from the Cape Verde Islands. This concerns a male Iago Sparrow *Passer iagoensis* (Gould, 1837), Reg. No. 34.3044, collected on the island of Santo Antão, 4 January 1865, which was acquired in exchange with the Stettin museum.

In addition, six more specimens from the Dohrn-Keulemans collection, acquired in exchange with the Stettin museum in February 1868, are listed in the old catalogue of the Berlin museum, viz. a male and a female Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* (Statius Müller, 1776), a male Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (Temminck, 1820), a male and a pullus Iago Sparrow, and, quite surprisingly, an unsexed specimen of "*Sylvia subalpina* Bonelli", a junior synonym of *Sylvia cantillans* (Pallas, 1764), the Subalpine Warbler. This species is a vagrant to the Cape Verde Islands of which only two recent sight records are known (Hazevoet, 1995). Neither Keulemans (1866) nor Dohrn (1871) mentioned the species in the accounts

of their visit to the Cape Verde Islands. Moreover, although dates and locations are given in the catalogue for the kingfishers and sparrows, nothing other than "Cape Verde" is mentioned for the alleged Subalpine Warbler. Apparently, specific identification of the specimen only took place at a later date, because in a still older catalogue it is merely listed as "*Sylvia*", while the specific name "*Sylvia subalpina*" only appears in a later catalogue in which renumbered specimens are listed.

The six catalogued specimens mentioned above probably all concerned mounted birds and these are thought to have been lost due to war conditions. Only the female Grey-headed Kingfisher may still be in existence as it was exchanged to the Kiel museum in 1869. Probably, it will forever remain impossible to confirm the specific identity of the alleged Subalpine Warbler.

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