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An electronic journal published by the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town

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Paper Editor: Les G. Underhill

OVERVIEW OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE WEAVERS

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Recommended citation format:

Oschadleus HD 2016. Overview of the discovery of the weavers. Biodiversity Observations 7. 92: 1–15.

URL: <http://bo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=285>

Published online: 13 December 2016

TAXONOMY

OVERVIEW OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE WEAVERS

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Abstract

There are 117 living species of weavers in the Ploceidae family. These were formally described over the period 1758 to 1990, but some weavers were known long before Linnaeus. The largest number of weaver species described per decade was in the 1880s (n=13) and 1890s (n=11). Most weaver species were described from Angola and South Africa (n=15 for both). Most weavers were described by Reichenow (n=10) and by Linnaeus (n=9). Where the collector is known, most weaver types were collected by Sir Andrew Smith (n=6) and Jean Perrein (both n=5). Most collectors were British (28) or German (n=17). Most weaver descriptions appeared in *Ibis* (n=10).

Introduction

This paper is based on the second Weaver Wednesday series, called Discovery. It started on 17 September 2014, with the first weaver to be described, the Black-winged Bishop (Fig. 1), and ran in chronological sequence for 117 weeks, ending with Kilombero Weaver on 7 December 2016. This paper provides an overview of these species texts, and lists the species with some summary information in Appendix 1.

Currently, 117 living species of weavers in the Ploceidae family are recognised. Hoyo et al. (2010) listed 116 species but Safford & Hawkins (2013) split the Aldabra Fody *Foudia aldabrana* from the Red-headed Fody *Foudia eminentissima*. Dickinson & Christidis (2014) also listed 117 species.



Fig. 1. Black-winged Bishop, figure from Swainson (1837).

Study area and methods

For each species text on the web series, the following information was searched for in the literature, and to a lesser extent, type specimens were viewed in museums:

- Introduction
- Scientific citation
- Meaning of names – primarily from (Jobling 1991).
- First English name
- Alternate names
- Collector
- Date collected
- Locality collected
- Type specimens

The first published illustration that was found for each species was shown in the series.

The sequence is chronological by date of publication, and where more than one species was described in a single publication, the sequence

is in order of appearance. For instance, the first five weavers to be described were in Linnaeus (1758) with Black-winged Bishop on p. 173, Black-breasted Weaver on p. 175, etc.

Results and Discussion

Discovery period

The weavers were formally described over the period 1758 to 1990, but some weavers were known long before Linnaeus. The highest number of weaver species described per decade was in the 1880s (n=13) and 1890s (n=11) (Fig. 2). Most weavers were described by 1910, with 0, 1 or 2 being described per decade thereafter.

The number of weavers described per decade resembles the overall pattern of new birds being described (based on Pimm et al. 2006),

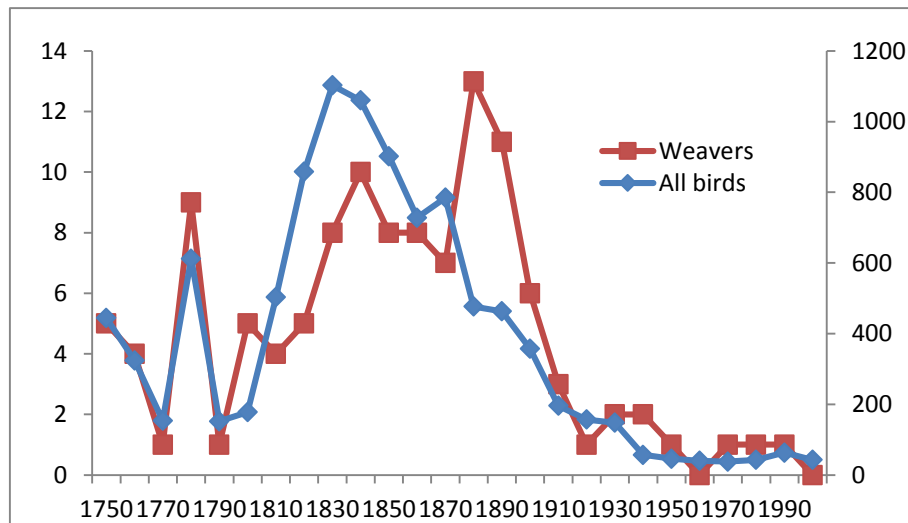


Fig. 2. Number of weavers (Red) described per decade, and number of birds (Blue, axis on right) described per decade.

except that the weavers have a higher rate of species descriptions from 1880 to 1909. These weavers seem to largely be range restricted species. They are species 76 to 105 in Appendix 1.

Authors

The weavers were described by 49 authors (counting first authors only, where more than one was involved; Table 1). Most weavers were described by Reichenow (n=10), followed by Linnaeus (n=9) and Hartlaub (n=8). Most authors were British (16), followed by German (n=13) and American (n=5).

Collectors

There were at least 75 different collectors, with up to 8 unknown collectors. Most weavers were collected by Sir Andrew Smith (n=6), who also described many weaver species, followed by Jean Perrein (n=5) and José Alberto de Oliveira Anchieta (n=4). Most collectors were British (28), German (n=17) and French (n=13). Twenty collectors provided the primary specimen for at least two valid weaver species (Table 2).

Countries

Weaver species were first described from 34 different countries, including four Asian countries. Most weaver species were described from Angola and South Africa (n=15 weavers in each country), followed by Tanzania and Senegal (8 each).

Table 1. Number of valid weaver species described per first author (country and profession is based on Wikipedia where available, else on other sources).

n	First author	Wikipedia summary
10	Reichenow	German ornithologist and herpetologist
9	Linnaeus	Swedish botanist, physician, and zoologist
8	Hartlaub	German physician and ornithologist
7	Sharpe	English zoologist
6	Smith	Scottish surgeon and naturalist
6	Vieillot	French ornithologist
5	Cassin	American ornithologist
5	Shelley	English geologist and ornithologist
4	Bocage	Portuguese zoologist and politician
4	Gmelin	German naturalist
4	Rüppell	German naturalist and explorer
3	Bonaparte	French biologist and ornithologist
3	Cabanis	German ornithologist
3	Daudin	French zoologist
2	Boddaert	Dutch physician and naturalist
2	Chapin	American ornithologist
2	Fischer	German African explorer
2	Gray	English zoologist and author
2	Lichtenstein	German physician etc
1	Baker	English ornithologist
1	Büttikofer	Swiss zoologist
1	Clarke	English soldier and naturalist
1	Cretzschmar	German physician
1	Dubois	Belgian naturalist

n	First author	Wikipedia summary
1	Elgood	English Professor of Zoology
1	Elliot	American zoologist
1	Grant	British ornithologist and collector
1	Heuglin	German explorer and ornithologist
1	Horsfield	American physician and naturalist
1	Hume	English civil servant and ornithologist
1	Isert	German botanist
1	Latham	English physician, naturalist and author
1	Louette	Belgian ornithologist
1	Newton A	English zoologist and ornithologist
1	Newton E	British colonial administrator and ornithologist
1	Reichenbach	German botanist and ornithologist
1	Ridgway	American ornithologist
1	Rothschild	British banker, politician, and zoologist
1	Salvadori	Italian zoologist and ornithologist
1	Sassi	Austrian zoologist
1	Sclater	British zoologist and museum director
1	Scopoli	Italian physician and naturalist
1	Sparrman	Swedish naturalist
1	Stadius Müller	German zoologist
1	Sundevall	Swedish zoologist
1	Swainson	English ornithologist
1	Verheyen	Belgian ornithologist
1	Vigors	Irish zoologist and politician
1	Wolters	German ornithologist

Conclusion

To read the illustrated accounts of the discovery of each weaver species, see a list at <http://weavers.adu.org.za/species.php>. The links to each species give the Discovery history as well as Biology summary (from the first Weaver Wednesday series, which ran from 20 June 2012 to 10 Sept 2014).

These 117 species of weavers are not fixed. The new Illustrated Checklist of Birds of the World Vol 2, to be published at the end of this year (<http://www.lynxeds.com/product/hbw-and-birdlife-international-illustrated-checklist-birds-world-0>), claims 10 new weaver splits. These have not been formally accepted, but at least some of them are likely to be shown to be valid splits, once genetic analyses have been conducted.

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Seq	Link	Authors	Spno	Species	Latin	Country	Collector
48	Hartlaub 1848a	Hartlaub	1166	Sao Tome Weaver	<i>Ploceus sanctithomae</i>	Sao Tome & Principe	Weiss
49	Hartlaub 1848a	Hartlaub	806	Red-headed Quelea	<i>Quelea erythrops</i>	Sao Tome & Principe	Weiss
50	Cassin 1848a	Cassin	814	White-winged Widowbird	<i>Euplectes albonotatus</i>	South Africa	Verreaux
51	Cassin 1848a	Cassin	3754	Zanzibar Bishop	<i>Euplectes nigroventris</i>	Tanzania	Rivoli
52	Cassin 1849a	Cassin	3812	Red-vented Malimbe	<i>Malimbus scutatus</i>	Liberia	MacDowell
53	Cassin 1850a	Cassin	3892	Cinnamon Weaver	<i>Ploceus badius</i>	Sudan	Rivoli
54	Sundevall 1850a	Sundevall	793	Red-headed Weaver	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>	South Africa	Wahlberg
55	Bonaparte 1850a	Bonaparte	1096	Príncipe Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus princeps</i>	Sao Tome & Principe	Weiss
56	Bonaparte 1850a	Bonaparte	3952	Grey-headed Social-weaver	<i>Pseudonigrita arnaudi</i>	Sudan	Arnaud
57	Bonaparte 1850a	Bonaparte	1069	Red-headed Fody	<i>Foudia eminentissima</i>	Comoros	Rosseau
58	Hartlaub 1854a	Hartlaub	3944	Yellow-mantled Weaver	<i>Ploceus tricolor</i>	Sierra Leone	Sabine
59	Cassin 1857a	Cassin	3808	Rachel's Malimbe	<i>Malimbus racheliae</i>	Equatorial Guinea	DuChaillu
60	Elliot 1859a	Elliot	3796	Cassin's Malimbe	<i>Malimbus cassini</i>	Gabon	Verreaux
61	Hartlaub 1861a	Hartlaub	3932	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>	Madagascar	Sganzin
62	Heuglin 1861a	Heuglin	3934	Speke's Weaver	<i>Ploceus spekei</i>	Somalia	Speke
63	Monteiro 1862a	Hartlaub	801	Holub's Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>	Angola	Monteiro
64	Reichenbach 1863a	Reichenbach	3940	Northern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus taeniopterus</i>	Sudan	
65	Newton 1865b	Newton A	3762	Rodrigues Fody	<i>Foudia flavicans</i>	Mauritius	Lloyd
66	Newton 1867b	Newton E	1178	Seychelles Fody	<i>Foudia sechellarum</i>	Seychelles	Newton A
67	Hume 1869a	Hume	4185	Finn's Weaver	<i>Ploceus megarhynchus</i>	India	Hume
68	Cabanis 1869a	Cabanis	3898	Golden Palm Weaver	<i>Ploceus bojeri</i>	Kenya	Decken
69	Finsch 1870a	Hartlaub & Finsch	802	Southern Brown-throated Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthopterus</i>	Malawi	Kirk

Seq	Link	Authors	Spno	Species	Latin	Country	Collector
70	Shelley 1873a	Shelley	3830	Compact Weaver	<i>Pachyphantes superciliosus</i>	Ghana	Saunders
71	Cabanis 1876a	Cabanis	3938	Loanga Weaver	<i>Ploceus subpersonatus</i>	Angola	Falkenstein
72	Bocage 1876b	Bocage	3884	Maxwell's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus albinucha</i>	Angola	Whitely
73	Schalow 1878a	Fischer & Reichenow	3746	Fire-fronted Bishop	<i>Euplectes diadematus</i>	Kenya	Heine
74	Bocage 1878a	Bocage	795	Bar-winged Weaver	<i>Ploceus angolensis</i>	Angola	Anchieta
75	Bocage 1878a	Bocage	971	Hartlaub's Marsh Widowbird	<i>Euplectes hartlaubi</i>	Angola	Anchieta
76	Schalow 1880a	Cabanis	3750	Black Bishop	<i>Euplectes gierowii</i>	Angola	Schütt
77	Bocage 1880b	Bocage	3942	Bocage's Weaver	<i>Ploceus temporalis</i>	Angola	Anchieta
78	Hartlaub 1880a	Hartlaub	807	Cardinal Quelea	<i>Quelea cardinalis</i>	Sudan	Pasha
79	Fischer 1884a	Fischer & Reichenow	3954	Black-capped Social-weaver	<i>Pseudonigrita cabanisi</i>	Tanzania	Fischer
80	Reichenow 1886a	Reichenow	3914	Heuglin's Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus heuglini</i>	Sudan	Heuglin
81	Reichenow 1886a	Reichenow	811	Tanganyika Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus reichardi</i>	Tanzania	Böhm
82	Reichenow 1887b	Reichenow	3766	Rufous-tailed Weaver	<i>Histurgops ruficauda</i>	Tanzania	Fischer
83	Shelley 1887b	Shelley	1151	Black-billed Weaver	<i>Ploceus melanogaster</i>	Cameroon	Johnston
84	Reichenow 1887c	Reichenow	3716	Bob-tailed Weaver	<i>Brachycope anomala</i>	DR Congo	Bohndorff
85	Hartlaub 1887a	Hartlaub	1065	Slender-billed Weaver	<i>Ploceus pelzelni</i>	Uganda	Pasha
86	Shelley 1888a	Shelley	3904	Northern Brown-throated Weaver	<i>Ploceus castanops</i>	Uganda	Pasha
87	Shelley 1888b	Shelley	3916	Golden-backed Weaver	<i>Ploceus jacksoni</i>	Kenya	Jackson
88	Buttikofer 1888a	Büttikofer	782	Chestnut-mantled Sparrow-weaver	<i>Plocepasser rufoscapulatus</i>	Angola	Kellen
89	Sharpe 1890a	Sharpe	3902	Taveta Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus castaneiceps</i>	Kenya	Hunter
90	Sharpe 1891b	Sharpe	1150	Brown-capped Weaver	<i>Ploceus insignis</i>	Uganda	Jackson
91	Sharpe 1891a	Sharpe	3752	Jackson's Widowbird	<i>Euplectes jacksoni</i>	Kenya	Jackson
92	Reichenow 1892c	Reichenow	3930	Preuss's Weaver	<i>Ploceus preussi</i>	Cameroon	Preuss
93	Shelley 1893a	Shelley	798	Bertram's Weaver	<i>Ploceus bertrandi</i>	Malawi	Whyte

Seq	Link	Authors	Spno	Species	Latin	Country	Collector
94	Ridgway 1893a	Ridgway	3763	Aldabra Fody	<i>Foudia aldabrana</i>	Seychelles	Abbott
95	Reichenow 1893b	Reichenow	3908	Yellow-capped Weaver	<i>Ploceus dorsomaculatus</i>	Cameroon	Zenker
96	Reichenow 1893c	Reichenow	3800	Red-bellied Malimbe	<i>Malimbus erythrogaster</i>	Cameroon	Zenker
97	Sharpe 1895a	Sharpe	3876	Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-weaver	<i>Plocepasser donaldsoni</i>	Kenya	Donaldson Smith
98	Salvadori 1896a	Salvadori	3906	Juba Weaver	<i>Ploceus dichrocephalus</i>	Ethiopia	Ruspoli
99	Reichenow 1899a	Reichenow	919	Olive-headed Weaver	<i>Ploceus olivaceiceps</i>	Tanzania	Fülleborn
100	Reichenow 1900b	Reichenow	3756	Montane Marsh Widowbird	<i>Euplectes psammocromius</i>	Tanzania	Fülleborn
101	Dubois 1900a	Dubois	3946	Weyns's Weaver	<i>Ploceus weynsi</i>	DR Congo	Weyns
102	Sharpe 1902b	Sharpe	3886	Strange Weaver	<i>Ploceus alienus</i>	Uganda	Archer
103	Reichenow 1904a	Reichenow	3928	Black-chinned Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigrimentus</i>	Angola	Anchieta
104	Sharpe 1906a	Sharpe	3798	Red-crowned Malimbe	<i>Malimbus coronatus</i>	Cameroon	Bates
105	Sharpe 1908a	Sharpe	3896	Bates's Weaver	<i>Ploceus batesi</i>	Cameroon	Bates
106	Rothschild 1912a	Rothschild	3764	Forest Fody	<i>Foudia omissa</i>	Madagascar	
107	Clarke 1913a	Clarke	3912	Clarke's Weaver	<i>Ploceus golandi</i>	Kenya	Clarke
108	Chapin 1916a	Chapin	3792	Yellow-legged Weaver	<i>Ploceus flavipes</i>	DR Congo	Chapin
109	Sassi 1920a	Sassi	3890	Golden-naped Weaver	<i>Ploceus aureonucha</i>	DR Congo	Grauer
110	Sclater 1931a	Sclater	3926	Usambara Weaver	<i>Ploceus nicolli</i>	Tanzania	Moreau
111	Chapin 1932a	Chapin	3894	Bannerman's Weaver	<i>Ploceus bannermani</i>	Cameroon	Drinkwater
112	Verheyen 1947a	Verheyen	3882	Katanga Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus katangae</i>	Zambia	Brédo
113	Grant 1947a	Grant & Mackworth-Praed	3936	Fox's Weaver	<i>Ploceus spekeoides</i>	Uganda	Fox
114	Elgood 1958a	Elgood	3802	Ibadan Malimbe	<i>Malimbus ibadanensis</i>	Nigeria	Elgood
115	Wolters 1974a	Wolters	3794	Gola Malimbe	<i>Malimbus ballmanni</i>	Ivory Coast	Ballmann
116	Louette 1982a	Louette & Benson	3880	Lufira Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus ruweti</i>	DR Congo	Ruwet
117	Baker 1990a	Baker & Baker	3900	Kilombero Weaver	<i>Ploceus burnieri</i>	Tanzania	

References for Table 1. (Author & Year in bold is a short reference to the Link column above)

Taxonomic note: Sometimes the author of a species is not the first author of the publication in which the description appeared, e.g. Finsch is the author of the book “Finsch 1870a”, but Hartlaub is the first author of the species description within the book.

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