

## A revision of the type locality of Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis huttoni* (Moore)

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ABSTRACT: We examine the type locality of Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis huttoni* that is listed as ‘ranges above Simla’ and propose a revision of the same to ‘Afghanistan’.

KEYWORDS: Type locality, Shimla, Pushut, Griffith, Afghanistan, *Prunella atrogularis huttoni*.

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While listing the birds as a supplement of his catalogue, Edward Blyth listed a Black-throated Accentor, as *Accentor atrogularis* Hutton, based on a male specimen obtained by Captain Thomas Hutton from the ‘range beyond Simla, near the snowline’ (Blyth, 1849: 811). Though new names in Blyth’s supplement had the *verbum ‘nobis’* attached to their names, Blyth did not add ‘nobis’ to the entry for *Accentor atrogularis*. This may indicate that the name had already been used by Hutton. However, we are not aware of such a description or usage by Hutton nor does Blyth cite any. Hence, it is unclear whether this particular specimen was the type of *Accentor atrogularis* Hutton. In the absence of a description by Hutton, the nomen *Accentor atrogularis* Hutton cannot be treated as available. However, Blyth (1849: 811) provided a description of this taxon, while attributing the name to Hutton:

No. 727. ACCENTOR ATROGULARIS, Hutton. Closely affined to *A. strophiatatus*, ... The specimen (a male) was procured by Capt. Hutton from the range beyond Simla, near the snowline.

Furthermore, Blyth (1852: 131) listed a specimen of this species, as:

“727. A[CCENTOR]. ATROGULARIS, Hutton, J. A. S. XVIII,  
HAB. Tyne range, beyond Simla.  
A. Specimen presented by Capt. Hutton (1849).”

The reference ‘J. A. S. XVIII’, is where Blyth (1849) was published with a detailed description, probably indicating that no other prior description (by Hutton) exists, and hence the specimen might be considered the type of *atrogularis* Blyth, 1849 [*pro* Hutton, 1849, in error]. Regardless of the availability of *atrogularis* Blyth, 1849, Frederic Moore in Horsfield and Moore (1854: 360), while listing the specimens of the birds in the Museum of the Honourable East India Company, found *atrogularis* to be preoccupied in the genus *Accentor*, and hence offered a substitute name *Accentor huttoni* Moore, in Horsfield and Moore, 1854 with a full description and a footnote on the availability of Blyth’s name, as repeated here, minus the description:

“577. ACCENTOR HUTTONI, Moore.  
*Accentor atrogularis*,\* Hutton, J. A. S. Beng. XVIII.  
p. 811 (1849). Blyth, *Cat. B. Mus. A. S. Beng.*  
p. 131. *Bonap. C. G. Av.* p. 305.  
A. b. Afghanistan. From Griffith’s Collection.

\* This name has been previously used by Dr. Brandt, for a species of this genus from Siberia.”



**Figure 1.** The syntype (NHMUK#1880.1.1.4800) of *Prunella atrogularis huttoni* (Moore, in Horsfield & Moore, 1854: 360), in dorsal, lateral and ventral views, preserved in the type collection of the NHMUK showing the collector's name (Griffith, presumably the tag from the India Museum), and the type locality (Afghanistan). The publication mentioned in the tag as 'Blyth. P.Z.S. 1854. p. 119' is evidently incorrect, as the said paper in *Proceedings of Zoological Society (P.Z.S)* appeared only in 1855, and the name appeared first in Horsfield and Moore (1854), attributed to Moore (and not to Blyth).

Though it must have been Moore's intent to publish the description formally in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, prior to listing the taxon in the museum catalogue, the description in that journal (Moore, 1855: 199) was only published on 7th April 1855 (Duncan, 1937; Dickinson, 2004; Dickinson *et al.*, 2010: 109). Hence, the senior nomenclatural act occurred in *A Catalogue of the Birds in the Museum of the Hon. East-India Company*, dated 1854.

This name, *Accentor huttoni* Moore was used subsequently in all works (Baker, 1930: 128; Ripley, 1964: 9). Moore, while reviewing the genus *Accentor*, included both Shimla [= Simla] and Afghanistan as habitats and continued to synonymise *A. atrogularis* Blyth [*pro* Hutton, in error] with *A. huttoni* Moore (Moore 1855: 119). *Accentor huttoni* is now treated as a subspecies of Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis huttoni* (Moore, in Horsfield & Moore, 1854: 360) with the type locality as 'ranges above Simla' (Ripley, 1964: 9; Hatchwell & de Juana, 2020). Here, we provide a revision of this type locality after examining the specimens and relevant historical literature.

Captain Thomas Hutton (1807–1874) spent most of his life in India and Afghanistan (Kinnear, 1952: 770). From his writings, it is clear that he was in Afghanistan at least until 1841. It is amply clear that both Blyth (1852: 131) and Blyth (1849: 811) were referring to the very same specimen collected by Hutton in 1849. However, this particular specimen of Black-throated Accentor is not traceable in the collections of the Zoological Survey of India (Praveen *et al.*, 2024). Neither was it there in the Museum of the Honourable East India Company, London (= India Museum<sup>1</sup>) as recorded by Moore (1855), nor as a type in the Natural History Museum (NHMUK), Tring (Warren & Harrison, 1971). HvG searched among the complete *Prunella*

<sup>1</sup> The 'India Museum' in London, UK was different from the 'Indian Museum' that is in Kolkata, India.



**Figure 2.** The syntype (NHMUK#1880.1.1.2922) of *Prunella atrogularis huttoni* (Moore, in Horsfield & Moore, 1854: 360), in ventral and dorsal views, preserved in the main collection of the NHMUK showing the locality of collection (Pushut = Pashshad in Afghanistan). Though it is in the main collection, it is clear that this belongs to the type series due to the pencilling on the label as ‘cotype’, a practice usually followed during the segregation of NHMUK type specimens.

collections at the NHMUK and no such specimen by Hutton exists. We also searched the catalogue of the collections at the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) as well as [www.gbif.org](http://www.gbif.org) for any such specimen but found none.

However, NHMUK holds the two syntypes of *Prunella atrogularis huttoni* (Moore, in Horsfield & Moore, 1854: 360) from the (William) Griffith collection (Figures 1 and 2), collected from Afghanistan. Moore, in Horsfield and Moore (1854) listed two specimens, as ‘A. b.’, from Afghanistan in his original description. Warren and Harrison (1971: 245) also mentioned NHMUK had two syntypes. As was the practice then (Warren & Harrison 1966: iv), one of the syntypes was segregated to the type collection of NHMUK while the other remained with the main collection. There is no date or collector name on one (NHMUK#1880.1.1.4800) to deduce the provenance; however, Griffith himself may have been the collector, or he got this specimen from one of his accompanying officers during the Anglo-Afghan War, amongst whom, interestingly, Hutton was one. The second syntype (NHMUK#1880.1.1.2922), with a label, where

written in pencil is “cotype”, is also undated and without collector details but from a locality called ‘Pushut’. Griffith’s writings indicate an extended stay at Pushut (Griffith 1847: 433), a capital town where there used to be a fort, which was completely destroyed in the earthquake of 1842 (see electronic supplement of Martin & Szeliga, 2010); just a village called Pashshad stands there now at (34.730° N, 71.023° E) in Kunar province of Afghanistan. The India Museum (London) had several specimens collected from Pushut obtained through Griffith’s collections (Horsfield & Moore, 1854, 1856) and several of them match well with the travel accounts in Griffith (1847).

Though Moore may have based his description after Blyth (1849: 811) as well, there is no evidence to believe that Moore had a physical access to the holotype of *atrogularis* Blyth, 1849 collected by Hutton, though he included Shimla in the range of *A. huttoni*. When Moore found that the name was preoccupied (Brandt, 1843), and hence resorted to naming this taxon after Hutton as *A. huttoni*, he was, in fact, providing a description for a new taxon *A. huttoni* with the type material from the Griffith collection. Hence, *huttoni* Moore cannot be treated as a replacement name for *atrogularis* Blyth [*pro* Hutton, in error], as interpreted in Baker (1930: 128), and followed subsequently in Peters’ Check-list (Ripley, 1964: 9), Ali & Ripley (1987: 618), and Hatchwell and de Juana (2020). Instead, *huttoni* Moore is an available junior synonym of *atrogularis* Blyth, 1849, the latter name being unavailable by virtue of homonymy with *Accentor atrogularis* Brandt, 1843 from Siberia.

Through this note, we propose to revise the type locality of *P. a. huttoni* Moore, in Horsfield & Moore, 1854 (p. 360) from ‘ranges above Simla’ to ‘Afghanistan’ based on the type material examined by Moore and preserved in the NHMUK.

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