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## A NEW SPECIES OF SCIMITAR-BABBLER (TIMALIIDAE: *JABOUILLEIA*) FROM THE SUB-HIMALAYAN REGION OF MYANMAR

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**ABSTRACT.**—An expedition of representatives from the Myanmar Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division and the Smithsonian National Zoological Park's Conservation and Research Center visited the town of Naung Mung on the Nam Tisang River in the extreme northern portion of Kachin State, Myanmar, during February 2004. The town is located in the sub-Himalayan region of the country at 27°29'N, 97°48'E, elevation 540 m, 118 km south of the Tibetan border and 53 km west of the border with Yunnan Province, China. The purpose of the trip was to inventory the poorly known avifauna of the premontane temperate rainforest habitat at that site. On 6 February 2004, we captured two scimitar-babblers that appeared to be representatives of the genus *Jabouilleia*. An additional individual of the taxon was captured in the same vicinity on 8 February 2004. These were the first records for *Jabouilleia* from Myanmar, and subsequent investigation showed that these specimens were members of a previously undescribed species, which we designate *Jabouilleia naungmungensis*, the Naung Mung Scimitar-Babbler. Received 1 October 2004, accepted 2 July 2005.

**Key words:** *Jabouilleia naungmungensis*, Myanmar, Naung Mung Scimitar-Babbler, new species, Timaliidae.

### Une Nouvelle Espèce de *Jabouilleia* (Timaliidae) dans la Région sub-Himalayenne de la Birmanie

**RÉSUMÉ.**—Une expédition regroupant des représentants de la "Myanmar Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division" et du "Smithsonian National Zoological Park's Conservation and Research Center" ont visité la ville de Naung Mung sur la rivière Nam Tisang, tout au nord de l'état de Kachin, Birmanie en février 2004. La ville est située dans la région sub-Himalayenne du pays, aux coordonnées 27°29'N, 97°48'E, à une altitude de 540 m, à 118 km au sud de la frontière tibétaine et à 53 km à l'ouest de la frontière avec la province de Yunnan, Chine. Ce voyage consistait à inventorier l'avifaune peu connue de la forêt pluvieuse tempérée pré-montagneuse présente sur ce site. Le 6 février 2004, nous avons capturé deux oiseaux qui semblaient être des représentants du genre *Jabouilleia*. Un autre individu de ce taxon a été capturé aux alentours le 8 février 2004. Ces individus constituaient les premières mentions de *Jabouilleia* en Birmanie. Des investigations subséquentes ont montré que ces spécimens appartenaient à une espèce inconnue précédemment décrite et que nous avons dénommé *Jabouilleia naungmungensis*, le "Naung Mung Scimitar-Babbler".

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*JABOUILLEIA DANJOU* (Robinson and Kloss 1919), the Short-tailed Scimitar-Babbler, was described as *Rimator danjoui* on the basis of specimens collected in the Lang Bian Mountains of southern Annam, Vietnam (12°00'N, 108°41'E), in April 1918, by C. B. Kloss. The authors stated, "There is little doubt that this bird is either congeneric with *R. malacoptilus* or represents a distinct genus between *Rimator* and the *gravivox* section of *Pomatorhinus*" (Robinson and Kloss 1919:579). A plate depicting the bird accompanied the description.

Delacour (1927:160) revised the group, assigning the species *danjoui* to the monotypic genus *Jabouilleia*, providing the following diagnosis:

"Intermediate between the *Pomatorhinus* of the *tickelli* group and *Rimator*. Differs from the first-mentioned genus in having the tail shorter than the wing and a very different bill, not so long, more compressed, with a higher ridge; nostrils are open and oval. From *Rimator*, in which it was previously placed, the new genus differs in the much larger size, less wren-like, with a longer tail, stronger and coarser bill and legs. Culmen ridge higher."

The current known distribution for *J. danjoui* is east-central Laos, East Tonkin, and northern, central, and southern Annam, Vietnam (Robson 2000). Two subspecies have been described: the nominate form, *J. d. danjoui* (Robinson and Kloss 1919), from southern Annam; and *J. d. parvirostris* (Delacour 1927), from east-central Laos and northern and central Annam. Vogel et al. (2003) collected a specimen of an apparently new taxon of *Jabouilleia* on 11 May 2000 in "dense vegetation of a damp gully" at an elevation of 1,400 m on Mt. Tay Con Linh, Ha Giang Province, in Tonkin, Vietnam (22°46'N, 104°50'E). Comparison of photographs and measurements show that this specimen clearly is not conspecific with the species described herein or the previously described subspecies of *J. danjoui*. A description of this new taxon, along with a complete morphological and genetic analysis and comparison of all the taxa of both *Jabouilleia* and *Rimator*, is in preparation (P. R. Sweet et al. unpubl. data).

During February 2004, a joint expedition of the Myanmar Nature and Wildlife Conservation

Division and the Smithsonian Conservation and Research Center traveled through the sub-Himalayan region of Myanmar 43 km east-northeast of the town of Putao to the village of Naung Mung on the Nam Tisang River. On 6 February 2004, we captured the holotype and one of the paratypes in 2 of 13 mist nets (12 m × 2.5 m × 36 mm mesh) set in a line with ~30 m between each net on a steep hillside in temperate rainforest at site no. NM01 (27°29'N, 97°48'E, elevation 540 m). The birds were tentatively identified as members of the genus *Jabouilleia* on the basis of descriptions in King et al. (1995) and Robson (2000). However, we recognized that assignment of the birds to that genus was problematic, because the nearest known previous record for *Jabouilleia* was the above-cited specimen collected by Vogel et al. (2003) from northwestern East Tonkin, more than 600 km southeast of our site (Fig. 1). On 8 February 2004, we netted a third individual of this species



FIG. 1. Map of Southeast Asia showing the type locality for *Jabouilleia naungmungensis* (star), *J. danjoui* (filled circle), and the *Jabouilleia* taxon (filled box) discovered by Vogel et al. (2003) from northwestern East Tonkin.

at site no. NM04-3, located ~1.5 km south of the site where we had captured the first two birds. The habitat was temperate rainforest similar to that at the other locality.

On our return to Yangon, we arranged with U Khin Maung Zaw, Director of the Myanmar Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, to export two of the specimens to the United States for identification, leaving one for the nascent Myanmar National Museum Collection. The two exported specimens were taken to the U.S. National Museum and compared with three specimens of *Jabouilleia* in that collection, all taken in the Annam region of Vietnam. After those comparisons had been made, we were certain that the Myanmar specimens were representatives of a new species of *Jabouilleia*. Subsequently, we have examined specimens at the British Museum, Philadelphia Academy of Sciences, and American Museum of Natural History, including the specimen from Tonkin representing a published but as-yet-undescribed taxon, as discussed above (Vogel et al. 2003). We propose the following name for this new member of the genus:

***Jabouilleia naungmungensis*, sp. nov.**  
Naung Mung Scimitar-Babbler

*Holotype*.—U.S. National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C., USNM no. 633213, female, Naung Mung, Naung Mung Township, Kachin State, Union of Myanmar, elevation 540 m, 27°30'N, 97°48'E, collected 6 February 2004 by Nay Myo Shwe, prepared by J. H. Rappole, original field catalog number JHR04-45.

*Diagnosis*.—A timaliid assignable to the genus *Jabouilleia* by combination of the following characters: long, decurved bill; long legs, toes, and nails; relatively short tail and wings; general body proportions; and coloration. Separable from the other member of the genus by the longer bill, tarsus, hallux, and hallux nail (Table 1); single, thick, black malar stripe, rather than two thin dark stripes separated by a white stripe; absence of rufous breast band; brown rather than rusty sides and flanks.

*Description of holotype*.—Color classification scheme follows Smithe (1975). The bill is Sepia (119) at base, distal half increasingly pale toward tip approaching Pale Horn (92). The crown is Hair Brown (119A), paler toward forecrown, lores, auriculars, and supercilium. The rachises

TABLE 1. Information on holotype and paratypes of *Jabouilleia naungmungensis*.

USNM number	Date	Locality	Elevation (m)	Type(s)	Mass (g)	Skull (%)	Gonads	Fat	Habitat
633212	6 February 2004	27°29'59.9"N, 97°48'07.7"E	540	Skin, partial skeleton	35.0	100	Ovary: 8 × 10 mm; largest ovum: 2 mm	Light	Disturbed primary forest, some cutting of selected trees; hillside bordering paddy field
633213	6 February 2004	27°29'59.9"N, 97°48'07.7"E	540	Skin, partial alcoholic	36.0	100	Ovary: 8 × 10 mm; largest ovum: 2 mm	Light	
633214	8 February 2004	27°29'28.0"N, 97°49'17.3"E	530	Skin, partial alcoholic	—	100	Ovary	Light	Disturbed primary forest, some selective cutting; 100 m from ridgeline on hillside

of crown feathers are whitish. The malar region is black with some feathers partially whitish. The chin and throat are whitish. The breast is whitish centrally with some individual feathers Hair Brown (119A) or Cinnamon Brown (33), giving a mottled effect. The sides of the breast are Cinnamon Brown (33). The belly is whitish. The flanks are Hair Brown (119A). The nape-sides, mantle, upper and lower scapulars, and six subscapulars are Hair Brown (119A) with whitish rachises, shading toward Cinnamon Brown (33) on sides of neck, breast, and flanks. The primaries, secondaries, tertiaries, lesser coverts, median coverts, greater coverts, and rectrices are Hair Brown (119A). The undertail coverts and vent are Cinnamon (23A). The tarsus and feet are Burnt Umber (22).

*Measurements of holotype.*—Unflattened wing 78 mm, tail 52 mm, bill (base of skull to tip) 33.5 mm, bill depth at nares 5.1 mm, tarsus 30 mm, ovary 8 × 10 mm, largest ovum 2 mm, skull 100% ossified, body mass 35.0 g.

*Specimens examined.*—Three specimens of *J. naungmungensis* have been examined: the holotype and two paratypes. The holotype, USNM 633213, and one of the paratypes, USNM 633212, were captured on the same day along the same net line within 100 m of each other. The other paratype, USNM 633214, was captured two days later at a site ~1.5 km south of the type locality and at a similar elevation and habitat (Table 2).

*Etymology.*—We name this species after the population center located closest to the collection sites, a town of ~400 persons, mainly of Rawan ethnic background, located on the east

bank of the Nam Tisang River, and capital of Naung Mung Township. Other English spellings for this town that we have seen include “Nogmüng” and “Na Mung.” The English name for the species similarly refers to the collection locality.

#### REMARKS

*Variation within the type series.*—The three birds in our sample are very similar in morphology (Table 2) and appearance. The breast of USNM 633213 is mostly white with a few scattered brown feathers, whereas USNM 633214 shows a few more brown feathers, almost forming a necklace. The malar region of USNM 633213 is a solid black stripe about 3 mm wide, whereas the malar stripe of USNM 633214 is black and of similar width, with a few white feathers.

*Sexual variation.*—We have no data on intersexual differences. On the basis of sexual variation in *J. danjoui*, as well as in the related babbler genera *Rimator* and *Pomatorhinus*, sexual variation seems likely to be slight and restricted to measurements.

*Variation between the two species of Jabouilleia.*—The general appearance of the two species implies a close relationship: medium-sized bird; brownish above, whitish below, with relatively long legs, large feet, short tail, and long decurved bill. Indeed, no other species in the Timaliidae bear a remote resemblance to these two, and the combination of characters observed in *Jabouilleia* is not common. Western taxonomists, struggling for some common experiential basis for comparison, have called

TABLE 2. Mean ( $\pm$  SD) and range for measurements (mm) of *Jabouilleia* specimens.

Taxon (sample size)	Culmen <sup>a</sup>	Tarsus <sup>b</sup>	Wing <sup>c</sup>	Tail <sup>d</sup>
<i>J. danjoui danjoui</i> (12)				
Mean	36.4 $\pm$ 2.4	30.1 $\pm$ 1.3	74.4 $\pm$ 2.8	62.3 $\pm$ 3.6
Range	30.4–40.2	27.9–32.2	69.0–79.0	55.8–69.0
<i>J. danjoui parvirostris</i> (5)				
Mean	30.2 $\pm$ 1.8	27.8 $\pm$ 1.3	72.0 $\pm$ 2.3	56.0 $\pm$ 3.2
Range	27.4–33.1	26.2–29.6	68.0–74.0	52.0–60.0
<i>J. naungmungensis</i> (3)				
Mean	38.7 $\pm$ 0.5	37.4 $\pm$ 5.8	75.0 $\pm$ 3.9	43.9 $\pm$ 3.7
Range	38.2–39.2	33.3–44.0	70.5–77.7	40.2–47.6

<sup>a</sup> Exposed culmen.

<sup>b</sup> Measured from distal to proximal end of the tibiotarsus on the bird's right side.

<sup>c</sup> Measured from bend of wing to tip of longest primary (unflattened) on the bird's right side.

<sup>d</sup> Measured from insertion to tip of outermost rectrix on the bird's right side.

them "wren-like," but the bill is much longer and more decurved, whereas the legs are longer and the feet larger proportionately than in any troglodytid, implying perhaps a more strictly terrestrial, probing foraging mode.

Nevertheless, despite their gross similarity, members of the two species differ considerably in details of plumage and body shape. *Jabouilleia danjoui* is brown tinged with cinnamon dorsally and white ventrally with cinnamon brown along the sides, flanks, and undertail coverts, and with a more-or-less distinct brownish-cinnamon breast band. *Jabouilleia naungmungensis* is dark brown dorsally and white ventrally with dark brown along the sides, flanks, and undertail coverts. It lacks a breast band. The main differences between the two, however, are in body shape (Table 1). *Jabouilleia naungmungensis* has a longer, more decurved bill with curvature measurements more than triple those of *J. danjoui*. It also has a longer wing, a shorter tail that is more rounded than that of *J. danjoui* (difference between length of outer- and innermost rectrices is 43% greater for *J. naungmungensis*), a longer tarsus, and a larger hallux nail.

*Habitat and behavior.*—The principal habitat for the species appears to be the understory of premontane temperate rainforest, also described as "cloud forest," "temperate, semi-deciduous broad-leaved rain-forest," "sub-tropical forest," or "hill jungle" by other authors (Ward 1949, Khin and Aung 1999, Lwin 1999, Win 1999). All three birds we collected were mist netted within one meter of the ground in primary forest subject to relatively little human disturbance (hunting, selective cutting for timber). We have no data on behavior of the birds, because we saw no free-flying individuals. Robinson and Kloss (1919:579) report that *J. danjoui* "...is a ground-feeder," and they depict it as such in the painting accompanying the bird's description. Robson (2000:455) similarly refers to the bird as "skulking and usually close to ground," whereas Wildash (1968:201) states that *J. danjoui* is "shy and retiring" in habits. As noted above, the morphology of the bird implies a terrestrial foraging mode focused on probing for food items located on or near the ground. C. Robson (pers. comm.) states that he has observed *J. danjoui* feeding on the ground on several occasions.

*Reproduction.*—All birds in our sample are females, and all three showed evidence of

ovarian development characteristic of preparation for breeding. The ovary of USNM 633212 measured 8 × 10 mm, with largest ovum = 2 mm. February ovarian development is somewhat earlier than in most other species of this region that we have sampled. Robson (2000:455) mentions the breeding period for *J. danjoui* in Vietnam as "January–April. Otherwise undocumented." No nest of any member of *Jabouilleia* has been found, to our knowledge.

*Distribution and status.*—Presumed distribution is limited to the premontane rainforest areas of northern Myanmar east of Putao. Similar habitats may extend westward into adjacent regions of Myanmar and Assam, India, and to the east into Yunnan Province of China, and perhaps even into northern Laos, but we have no data on this species from outside the immediate vicinity of Naung Mung. In fact, in February and March of 2001, we sampled extensively, using mist nets, at localities in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan region of northern Myanmar north and east of Putao, including the Naung Mung area, accumulating 2,500 net-hours at 28 sites representing all major primary and seral habitats at elevations ranging from 400 m to >3,000 m over a six-week period. One hundred and fifty-two individuals representing 76 species were captured, but no representatives of *J. naungmungensis* were found. Nevertheless, the fact that three birds were captured during nine days of netting (1,800 net-hours) would seem to indicate that, despite an apparently restricted distribution, the species is fairly common in temperate rainforest near Naung Mung. Discovery of a member of *Jabouilleia* at this locality is the first instance documenting a member of this genus in sympatry with the closely related genus *Rimator*.

Unfortunately, the Naung Mung sites are not protected. They are located 25–27 km southwest of the boundary of the vast Hkakabo Razi National Park (3,812 km<sup>2</sup>) that includes nearly all the northern tip of Myanmar.

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