

**Australasia -- Melanocharitidae: Add a newly described subspecies, *Melanocharis longicauda intercalans* Carter & Engilis, 2025**

Drafted by Thane K. Pratt with input from Guy Dutson, Andrew Black, Anna Kearns and Leo Joseph.

Main Points: *Melanocharis longicauda intercalans* Carter & Engilis, 2025, is described from the Bewani and Torricelli Mountains, constituting the isolated North Coastal Ranges of New Guinea. The taxon is easily identified by the lemon-yellow wash to the abdomen, lacking in other subspecies. The white markings in the tail also differ (see the excerpt from the Diagnosis that follows). Milla et al. 2021 report high genetic diversification between two other subspecies of *M. l. longicauda* and *M. l. captata*, but how *intercalans* relates to these genetically remains to be investigated.

“DIAGNOSIS. Differs from all other subspecies of *Melanocharis longicauda* in having the central abdomen rich lemon-yellow, much more saturated than in other forms and without any grayish cast; outer rectrices (r6) uniformly blackish, identical in color to the other pairs (r1-5), except for a streak of white along the (narrow) outer edge, extending about two-thirds of the exposed portion. Other subspecies of longicauda exhibit a white outer vein along with an internal white spot on the inner vein of r6...” Carter & Engilis 2025.



This figure reproduced from Figure 8 in Carter and Engilis 2025. Photo of holotype female *M. l. intercalans* subsp. nov. (bottom) in comparison with *M. l. orientalis* (center) and *caprata* (top). Note bright underparts and lack of white spot on outer rectrices of *intercalans*. Photo by C. Prussick, BPBM.

The Australasian RAG has reviewed the proposal with a quorum of 5 members supporting it and none opposing. Leo Joseph noticed possible smaller size of the specimen of *intercalans* in the Fig 1. TKP will follow up with the authors.

#### Recommendations:

Five AusRAG committee members reviewed this proposal and agree with the following recommendations:

1. Recognize *Melanocharis longicauda intercalans* Carter & Engilis, 2025.
2. In the AviList sequence, *Melanocharis longicauda intercalans* would follow *M. l. capitata* and precede *M. l. orientalis*. This position reflects biogeography of the subspecies and also phylogenetics, in the sense that *intercalans* is most similar to *capitata*.

#### References:

- Carter, E. D., and A. Engilis, Jr. 2025. Birds collected in the North Coastal Range (Bewani and Torricelli Mountains) of New Guinea, 1972-1986 in the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI USA. Bishop Museum Occasional Museum Number 171, 66 pp. <https://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/pubs-online/pdf/op171.pdf> (open access)
- Mila, B., J. Bruaux, G. Friis, K. Sam, H. Ashari, and C. Thebaud. 2021. A new, undescribed species of *Melanocharis* berrypecker from western New Guinea and the evolutionary history of the family Melanocharitidae. *Ibis* 163:1310–1329.