An overlooked breeding record of the poorly known Ethiopian endemic Erlanger's Lark *Calandrella blanfordi erlangeri*, with the first formal description of the egg

The subspecies *erlangeri* of Blanford's Lark *Calandrella blanfordi* is endemic to Ethiopia and has previously been considered a distinct taxon. However, due to only slight differences in morphological characteristics, *erlangeri* is currently treated as a subspecies of Blanford's Lark by most taxonomists (White 1960, Ash & Atkins 2009, Collar & del Hoyo 2016, Ryan and Kirwan 2020). While the nominate form *C. b. blanfordi* is native to areas north of Ethiopia and northern Eritrea, *C. b. erlangeri* occurs only within the central highlands of Ethiopia at altitudes from 1940 to 3640 m (Guichard 1950, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1960, Pätzold 2003, Ash & Atkins 2009, Ryan & Kirwan 2020). Similar forms previously considered races of the Blandford's Lark *eremica* and *daaroodensis* are now treated with the Rufous-capped Lark *C. eremica* forming a closely related species confined to the Southern regions of Yemen and Saudi Arabia (Collar & del Hoyo 2016, Stervander *et al.* 2016).

Overall, very little is known about the natural history and breeding biology of *C. b. blanfordi* and *C. b. erlangeri* (Keith *et al.* 1992, Pätzold 2003, Ryan & Kirwan 2020). The breeding season lasts from March to June; however, a single nest has also been recorded in October (Smith 1951; reference here is to the northern population of *blanfordi*, sometimes treated as a separate subspecies *asmaraensis*). First egg-dates ($n = 11$) recorded for the species indicate opportunistic breeding year-round, except during the prolonged rainy season between July and September (Ash & Atkins 2009). The nest is reported to be of scanty construction, built entirely of dry grass or occasionally lacking nesting material at all (Smith 1951). Only a few clutches have been reported to date for either subspecies with clutches ranging from two to five eggs in nests of *blanfordi* (Ash & Atkins 2009, Smith 1951), though with eggs undescribed for both forms (Pätzold 2003, Ryan & Kirwan 2020) and details of clutch size not recorded for *erlangeri* (Ryan & Kirwan 2020). In this note, we provide the first formal description of the egg of *C. b. erlangeri* based on a single preserved clutch held at the Field Museum (FMNH Catalogue Number 2883). We also add to the literature details of nesting seasonality and clutch size, from this presumably overlooked breeding record.

The record concerns a single clutch of *C. b. erlangeri* eggs preserved in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, under the label name *Tephrocorys cinerea erlangeri* (*erlangeri* was historically considered conspecific with the Rufous-capped Lark). The clutch, containing two eggs (FMNH Catalogue Number 2883), was collected by A. M. Bailey on the 26 October 1926 around Addis Ababa. No further details about the exact collection locality, notes on nest characteristics or parental behaviour are given in the label description.

The eggs from the above-mentioned clutch are ovate to elongated-ovate, with a cream-white to dull white base colour, evenly covered with different sized spots of light-brown or dark-brown colour, with a higher density towards the larger egg pole (Fig. 1). Occasionally the spots accumulate to form small clusters or blotches, in particular around the larger egg pole. This colour and patterning is consistent with eggs of other members of the genus (e.g., Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla)*. The linear measurements (mm) for the two eggs are 19.38 × 14.85 and

19.42 × 14.57, respectively (K. Kueffner pers. comm.). No further information is given in the label description.

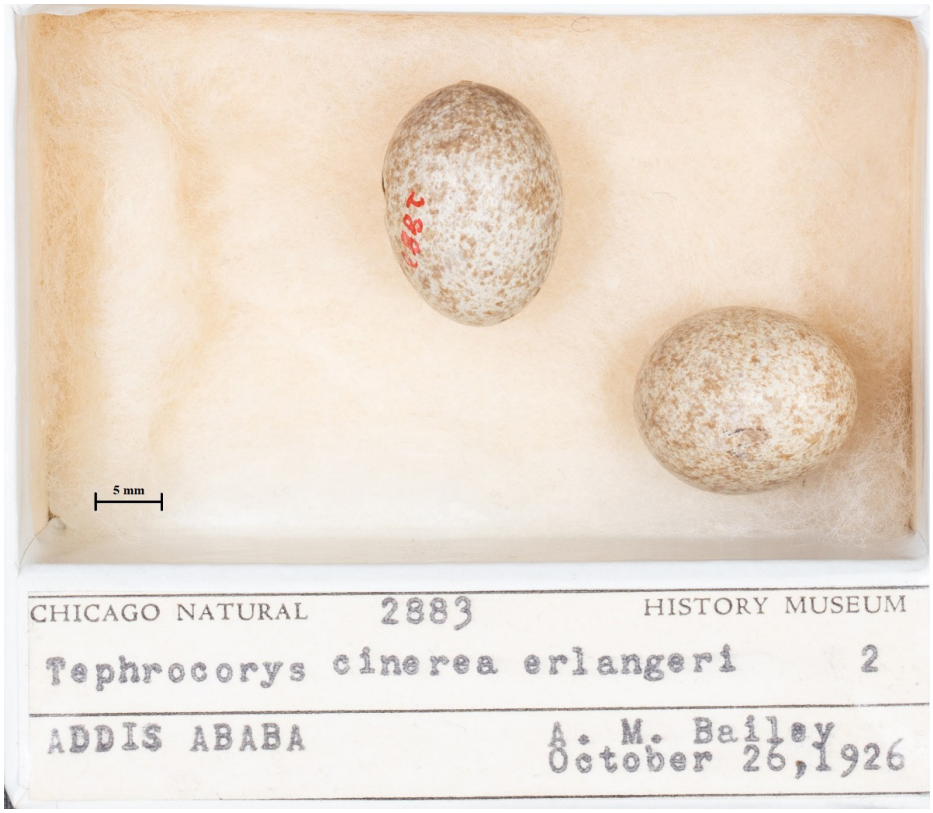

Figure 1. Preserved clutch of *C. b. erlangeri* eggs in the Field Museum of Natural History (Catalogue Number 2883), collected by A.M. Bailey in October 1926 (photo: Kayleigh Kueffner).

Although our note adds a small new detail to our knowledge of *C. b. erlangeri*, much still remains to be discovered about the ecology and life history of the little-known Blanford's Lark

Acknowledgements

Primarily, we would like to thank the Field Museum and the FMNH staff for allowing us to use the information for the preparation of this manuscript. Furthermore, we would like to thank Ben Marks for helping us with our research-related request. We particularly acknowledge the assistance of Kayleigh Kueffner, who provided the image of the egg set and helped us to obtain the linear measurements of the eggs. Lastly, we would like to thank James Bradley and Paul Donald for their suggestions that have been very helpful in improving the manuscript.

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Scopus 41(1): 51-53, January 2021
Received 26 July 2020