

East African Rarities Committee Report 2013–2015

David Fisher (Chairman) and Nigel Hunter (Secretary) on behalf of the EARC

The East African Rarities Committee assesses records of new and very rare birds occurring in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. This includes up to the fifth record of any species from each of the four countries. Sightings of species for which there are fewer than five records for a country should be submitted to the EARC Secretary: Nigel Hunter, P.O. Box 24803, Karen 00502, Nairobi, Kenya. Email: nigelhunter@timbale.org. Please contact the Secretary to obtain clarification of whether a record requires a submission and for guidance on what details to include in the submission. Past records of rare species are also sought in order to bring the EARC database up to date.

Since the Committee's last report in 2014 (*Scopus* 33: 87–91) the following records have been accepted:

Forest Francolin *Peliperdix lathamii*

First record for Tanzania at Minziro Forest on 19 July 1987. Observed regularly on the forest floor and roosting up to 5m above the forest floor at night. Adult and juvenile birds were mist netted and photographed on at least two occasions (Howell 1987). One adult female specimen is currently housed in the AMNH, New York. Previously known only from southern and western Uganda in the Mabira Forest 1913–16, the Bwamba lowlands in 1967, and the Kibale Forest in 1985. Although not racially assigned, the Minziro birds appear to be heavier and longer-winged than typical *schubotzi* in Uganda (N.E. Baker & E.M. Baker *in litt*).

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*

Second accepted record for Kenya. One observed approximately 2 km off Mtwapa, Kilifi District, 31 October 1998 (R. Brenneisen).

Western Reef Heron *Egretta (gularis) schistacea*

First record for Tanzania. One white phase bird photographed feeding alongside two Dimorphic Egrets at Bagamoyo on 04 March 2012 (N. Baker, R. Marais, J. Simms & S. Wells). [Taxonomy of the entire Little Egret complex remains the subject of some debate].

Christmas Island Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*

First record for Kenya and the Western Indian Ocean. One, possibly two birds photographed near Malindi December–January 1969–70 (Mann 1986). [Support for this acceptance was received from two independent reviewers familiar with *F. andrewsi*].

Fox Kestrel *Falco alopex*

First record for Tanzania. One photographed on the Osugat Plain, 40 km north of Arusha on 8 March 2006 (J. Wolstencroft, A. Harries & F. Christopher).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Second record for Uganda. One observed over Lake Saka near Fort Portal on 5 October 2014 (Skeen 2015).

Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

First record for Kenya and the East African region, and only the second or third record for sub-Saharan Africa. One, a presumed adult female, was photographed in flight over farmland close to the edge of Meru NP on 26 September 2014 (R. & E. Marsh). [The record was reviewed and accepted by several raptor experts familiar with this species].

Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus (g.) beaudouini*

Birds photographed in western Kenya at the Bunyala Rice Scheme (13 April 2013, 20 March 2014) and at Nambale in Busia District (27 March and 22 April 2012) were all accepted as the 2, 3, 4 and 5 records for Kenya. (B. Finch & M. Odino). Elsewhere, one photographed at Lake Mburo NP, southern Uganda on 2 October 2011 further confirmed it's widespread distribution there (B. Finch).

Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*

Fifth record for Kenya. One bird (possibly two) photographed in Sibilo NP, East Turkana, on 11 February 2015 (W. Wamiti, P. Mikula & M. Hromada).

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

First record for Tanzania. One photographed on a shallow and slightly alkaline lake 12 km southwest of Naabi Hill, Serengeti NP, on 25 June 2014 (D. Rosengren & M. Palmer).

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius c. cursor*

First record for Kenya of the Palaearctic nominate race at Lake Turkana in January and February 1987 (Schekkermann & van Wetten 1988).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

First record for Tanzania. One in breeding plumage among a flock of White-winged Black *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Common *Sterna hirundo* and Saunders's *Sternula saundersi* Terns on Maziwe Island, 45 km south of Tanga, on 20 March 2009 (M. Baker).

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*

Photographic evidence from the Rufiji River in the northern Selous GR (17 January 2005) and Maziwe Island and other sandbanks around Tanga (January and March 2013) confirm several earlier reports of periodic influxes of this species to Tanzania waters. In March 2013 over two thousand birds were estimated resting on a sandbank north of Tanga (O. Hamerlynck).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

First record for Uganda. One observed over Lake Munyamyange near Katwe, Lake Edward, southwest Uganda on 5 December 2014 (Hayman & Thorns 2015). Elsewhere an adult photographed at Lake Ndutu in the eastern Serengeti NP on 4 May 2007 was accepted as the second record for Tanzania (A. Geertsema).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

One photographed near Kisite Island on 24 July 2013 was accepted as the 5 record for Kenya (M. Mwema).

Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*

An injured bird found on Fanjove Island (8°34'S, 39°34'E) on 3 September 2013 and successfully released there on 3 October 2013 was accepted as the first record for Tanzania. (P. Ciotti & G. Bordon). [Tarsal measurements clearly ruled out South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki*].

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

A report of one near Naabi Hill, eastern Serengeti NP, on 23 February 1997 (T. Stevenson), and an immature bird photographed near the Mbalageti River in the western Serengeti NP on 9 November 2011 (T. Sinclair) were accepted as the 1 and 2 records for Tanzania.

Bare-faced Go-Away-Bird *Corythaixoides p. personatus*

One near Sololo, west of Moyale on 28 May 1988 was the first confirmed record of the nominate form in Kenya (T. Stevenson). [del Hoyo & Collar 2014 consider this form worthy of full species status with the English name Brown-faced Go-away-bird].

Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowii*

Birds mist netted and photographed at Minziro during the period 21–27 November 1993 and October 1998 were accepted as the 1 and 2 records for Tanzania (Baker & Baker 1994).

Fraser's Eagle Owl *Bubo p. poensis*

One photographed in Semliki NP, western Uganda on 3 January 2015 was only the 5 record for Uganda (R. Skeen).

Akun Eagle Owl *Bubo leucostictus*

First record for Uganda. One photographed in Semliki NP on 27 September 2014 (T. Nyegaard & S. Ampeire).

Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis nigriscapularis*

A bird calling near Minziro village (1°02'S, 31°32'E) in northwest Tanzania was accepted as the first record of this subspecies for Tanzania (McEnery 2014).

White-bellied Kingfisher *Corythornis leucogaster leopoldi*

First record for Tanzania at Minziro Forest in July 1987. Several birds were mist netted and photographed (Howell 1987).

Southern Carmine Bee-Eater *Merops nubicoides*

While the first documented record for Uganda was at Lake Mburo NP in July 1998 (Carswell *et al.* 2005), photographs from Murchison Falls NP in July 2003, July 2005 and July 2007 were accepted as the 2, 3 and 4 records for Uganda (B. Finch & P. Didicoat).

Shrike Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulatus*

First record for Tanzania at Minziro Forest on 8 July 1987 (D. Moyer & M. Woodcock).

[Willard's Sooty Boubou] *Laniarius sp.*

While birds photographed and tape recorded in the Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda (July

2013), and at Buhoma in the Bwindi-Impenetrable NP, southwest Uganda, in June 2012 and June 2013 were accepted as being what was recently described as *Laniarius willardi* (Voelker *et al.* 2010), the taxonomic status of this form in East Africa remains a subject of debate. It may well belong within the *Laniarius poensis* complex as recently suggested by Dickinson & Christidis (2014), while on the other hand the name *melas* (Reichenow 1908) given to a bird collected in the Nyungwe Forest over a hundred years ago may well be an earlier and correct name (Dickinson & Christidis *op.cit.*).

Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans*

First record for Uganda at Mweya Safari Lodge, Queen Elizabeth NP, on 14 June 2013 (N. Borrow and others).

Boran Cisticola *Cisticola bodessa*

Second record for Uganda at Kidepo Valley NP on 3 September 2011 (B. Finch).

Tiny Cisticola *Cisticola nanus*

First record for Uganda at Kidepo Valley NP on 4 September 2011 (B. Finch).

Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota*

First records for Tanzania at Minziro Forest in July 1987. A total of seven birds were mist netted and photographed (Howell 1987).

Yellow-lored Bristlebill *Bleda notatus*

Although the first record for Tanzania was at Minziro on 7 December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), several others were present there during July 1987 (Howell 1987). [This species was formerly known as the Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius*, but following Chappuis & Erard (1993), the yellow-lored, dark-eyed *notatus* is treated as a distinct species from *eximius*. Meanwhile the East African form (*ugandae*) has bright lemon-yellow eyes, and although included within *notatus* by Chappuis & Erard (*op.cit.*), may be worthy of further scrutiny].

Spotted Greenbul *Ixonotus guttatus*

Although the first records for Tanzania were at Minziro in December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), several small groups were regularly observed there during July 1987, calling from the high canopy of fruiting fig trees (Howell 1987). Tape recording evidence and sketches of the Minziro birds were unanimously accepted as belonging to this distinctive greenbul.

Little Grey Greenbul *Andropadus gracilis*

First record for Tanzania. Specimen collected at Minziro Forest on 26 October 1998 (D. Moyer).

Simple Greenbul *Chlorocichla simplex*

One in the Ishasha area of Queen Elizabeth NP was accepted as the first record away from the Bwamba lowlands (B. Finch).

Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus*

First records for Tanzania at Minziro Forest in July 1987 and October 1998 (N. Baker, D. Moyer). Additional photographic and audio evidence presented confirmed the presence of this species at Minziro.

Xavier's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus xavieri*

While the first documented record for Tanzania was at Minziro in December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), several others were recorded there in July 1987 and October 1998. There is also a specimen from Minziro housed in the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Meanwhile audio evidence has also confirmed the presence of this species at Minziro.

Yellow Longbill *Macrosphenus flavicans*

Photographic evidence from Minziro in July 1987 was accepted as the first record for Tanzania.

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*

Audio evidence from Minziro Forest in October 1998 was accepted as the first record for Tanzania (D. Moyer).

Scaly-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis albipectus*

While the first documented record for Tanzania was at Minziro on 7 December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), several others were mist netted and photographed there during July 1987 (Howell 1987).

White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis*

Photographic evidence of mist netted birds from Minziro in July 1987 was accepted as the first records for Tanzania.

Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe diademata*

While the first documented record for Tanzania was at Minziro in December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), several others were mist netted and photographed there during July 1987 (Howell 1987).

Blue-shouldered Robin Chat *Cossypha cyanocamptor*

Photographic evidence of mist netted birds from Minziro in July 1987 was accepted as the first records for Tanzania.

Forest Robin *Stiphronis erythrothorax*

Photographic evidence of mist netted birds from Minziro in July 1987 was accepted as the first records for Tanzania.

Lowland Akalat *Sheppardia cyornithopsis*

While the first documented record for Tanzania was at Minziro in December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), several others were also mist netted and photographed there during July 1987 (Howell 1987).

Ruaha Chat *Myrmecocichla (arnotti) collaris*

A report from Rubanda, Kabale District, sw Uganda on 13 June 2012 was accepted as the recently described Ruaha Chat (N. Borrow and others). This bird was previously known in Uganda as the White-headed Black Chat, resident and breeding around Murema Hill along the Rwanda border in Kagera District (vande Weghe 1992, Carswell *et al.* 2005).

Grey-throated Flycatcher *Myioparus griseigularis*

Photographic evidence of a mist netted bird at Minziro on 20 July 1987 was accepted

as the first record for Tanzania. [Britton (1980) had earlier reported a historical record from the Bukoba region, details of which cannot be traced].

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

Single birds photographed at Lake Mutande, Kisoro District, on 24 March 2014, and at Lake Bunyampaka, Kasese District, on 8 March 2015 were accepted as the 2 and 3 records for Uganda (F. Hodgson, P. L'Hoir & J. Heggen).

White-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis albirostris*

Three male birds photographed at the Naabi Hill Gate, Serengeti NP, in March and May 2005 and November 2013 were accepted as this species (Panzera & Boano 2015).

Northern Masked Weaver *Ploceus taeniopterus*

Photographic evidence of two birds in a mixed weaver colony near Fort Portal in early October 2014 was accepted as the first record for Uganda (R. Skeen).

White-collared Olive-back *Nesocharis ansorgei*

While the first documented record for Tanzania was at Minziro in December 1984 (Baker & Hirslund 1987), photographic evidence of birds mist netted at Minziro in July 1987 was accepted as further evidence of its presence at Minziro.

Jameson's Antpecker *Parmoptila jamesoni*

First record for Tanzania at Minziro Forest in July 1987. A field painting by Martin Woodcock of a mist netted bird was accepted as the first record for Tanzania. This scarce and little known species was previously known only from specimens and a few recent sight records in the Bwamba lowlands and the Kalinzu and Bwindi-Impenetrable forests of western Uganda. [Formerly known as *P. woodhousei jamesoni*, but considered worthy of specific status by Chapin (1954) despite similar females, but with no known intergrades in an area of overlap. See also Woodcock (2003).

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

A report of several birds observed feeding with Bronze Mannikins *Lonchura cucullata* in the Semliki Valley on 15 September 2013 was accepted as further evidence of its continued presence in that area of western Uganda (B. Finch). This species was first recorded from Semliki in December 2002 and June 2003, with regular reports from 2005 onwards (Skeen 2014).

[Western Citril] *Crithagra (citrinelloides) frontalis*

Photographic evidence from the Gwasssi Hills, Homa Bay District, in November 2014 was accepted as the first record of the form *frontalis* for Kenya (Bradley *et al.* 2015). [The systematics of the East African citrils remains a subject of debate. While *frontalis* and *hyposticta* have been considered to comprise two additional species (Fry & Keith 2004, Dickinson & Christidis 2014), their ranges are almost contiguous, and while plumage variation is well marked, vocal differences are evident only in the songs of nominate and *frontalis*. While *brittoni* and *kikuyuensis* may overlap in a small area of western Kenya, in South Elgon and the Cheranganis there have been several reports dating back to Van Someren's days of intergrades between *frontalis*, *kikuyuensis* and possibly *brittoni*. Certainly all three come closest to each other in the area astride the Kenya / Uganda border, and high up on Elgon (close to the tree line) there are some black-faced (*frontalis*-type) birds as well as grey-faced forms].

Papyrus Canary *Crithagra koliensis*

The report of two birds mist netted and photographed at the edge of a papyrus swamp in the Kagera River Valley close to the Rwandan border on 1 December 1993 was accepted as the 1 record for Tanzania (Baker & Baker 1994).

Brown-rumped Bunting *Emberiza affinis*

One observed on the Kongelai Escarpment, Kapenguria, on 21 March 2012 was accepted as the 3 record for Kenya (N. Hunter & M. Sinyereri).

The following records were REJECTED, either due to misidentification or insufficient details to establish identification with certainty:

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* at Akagera NP, Rwanda, on 30 September 2011; Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus* at Lake Albert, Uganda, in early March 2014; Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* near Tanga, Tanzania, on 4 January 2015; Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena* southwest of Songea, southern Tanzania, in May and July 1994; Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* at Chumbe Island off Zanzibar on 21 March 1995; Northern Masked Weaver *Ploceus taeniopterus* at Murchison Falls NP, Uganda, on 30 December 2013; and Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* at Mafia Island, Tanzania, on 28 January 1997.

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