

East African Rarities Committee report and change of remit

The East African Rarities Committee assesses records of new and very rare birds occurring in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Our remit has changed slightly and we now consider up to the fifth record of any species from *each* of the three countries. It is hoped that this will make it easier for observers to establish whether or not their sightings need to be submitted to the committee. If you see a species with fewer than five records in the country please submit the details to the EARC secretary: Jeremy Lindsell, c/o The RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK, or E-mail them to jeremy.lindsell@rspb.org.uk. Please contact the secretary if you are unsure whether your sighting requires a submission and for guidance on details to include in any submission. Past records of rare species are also sought. Records from other countries within the *Scopus* region (Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Malawi and the Indian Ocean islands) can be submitted to the editor of *Scopus*. The committee has recently been expanded and now comprises: Neil Baker, Brian Finch, David Fisher, Colin Jackson, Jeremy Lindsell, David Moyer, Willis Okech, David Pearson, Don Turner and James Wolstencroft.

Recent circulations have resulted in the acceptance of thirteen country firsts, including five regional firsts. We are grateful to all observers who submit their records to the committee as this helps ensure that the national lists for the three countries remain clearly documented and up-to-date.

Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*

First record for Tanzania. Ndundulu Forest, Udzungwa Mountains, Tanzania, 11 September 2004 and three subsequent dates (Trevor Jones). An extraordinary addition to the Tanzania list with further details to be found in Jones (2007).

Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*

Second record for Kenya. Imenti Forest, near Meru town, Kenya, 16 May 2006 (Brian Finch). This is an astonishing record from such a well-known area. Could it really have been overlooked all this time, or does it represent recent arrival - but from where?

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

Third recent record for Tanzania. East of Mkumbale, en route between Mombo and Same, Korogwe District, Tanzania, 7 November 2003 (S. Plat, B.W.J. Oosterbaan, W.E.J. Oosterbaan). Adult.

Grey-throated Rail *Canirallus oculeus*

First record for Uganda and East Africa. Hotsprings area, Semliki National

Park, Uganda, 21-22 July 1996 (Urban Olsson). Carswell *et al.* (2005) refer to an earlier sighting which lacked any supporting details so the current record is the first with adequate documentation.

Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*

First record for Uganda. Kibimba rice scheme, eastern Uganda, 2-3 May 2009 (Sarah Nachuha Kasozi and Achilles Byaruhanga). Although this species occurs in East Africa in southwest Tanzania, it is possible that this individual came from the Ethiopian population.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

First record for Tanzania. Crater Lake in the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania, 14 March 2005 (Matthew Aeberhard).

Common Gull *Larus canus*

First record for Kenya and East Africa. Sabaki River mouth, Kenya, 1 December 2005 (Terry Stevenson *et al.*). A single adult bird.

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachyoccyx audeberti*

First record for Uganda. Ruroko Track, Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda, 29 March 2000 (Charlie Williams). An old record from Murchison Falls National Park (Britton 1980) was not considered acceptable by Carswell *et al.* (2005) so this becomes the first for Uganda.

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinica*

First record for Tanzania. Seronera Airstrip, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 1 February 2005 (Teet Sirotkin). Adult.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*

First record for Kenya. Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Kenya, 21 May 2000 (Colin Jackson and Tansy Bliss). From the description this was certainly not the race *heuglini* found in Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia, but most likely *furcatus* which reaches southern Tanzania with a few records further north and is known to be somewhat migratory. A record from Vanga (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989) was unverified and the species subsequently removed from the Kenya list.

Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*

Second record for Uganda. Mityebili, south of Kyotera, southern Uganda, 6 March 2006 (Derek Pomeroy). The only previous record in Uganda was about 80 km from here on the Tanzania border (Carswell *et al.* 2005).

Gillett's Lark *Mirafraga gilletti*

Second record for Kenya. Between Mandera and Ramu, northern Kenya, 6

September 2000 (J. Miskell). The first record for Kenya was in 1901 (Miskell & Ash 1985) but there have been none since.

South African Cliff Swallow *Hirundo spilodera*

First record for Kenya and East Africa. Aruba Dam, Tsavo East National Park, Kenya, 22 July 2000 (Terry Stevenson *et al.*). This species migrates between breeding grounds in South Africa (August to April) and non-breeding grounds in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Malawi, so this was presumably an overshoot from that northward movement.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Second and third records for Tanzania. South-east of Seronera, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 28 April 2000 and south of the Seronera airstrip, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 24 February 2005 (Thomas Gottschalk).

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*

First record for Kenya and East Africa. Near Oloololo gate, Maasai Mara, Kenya, 17 July 2003 (Terry Stevenson *et al.*). A single adult in a flock of Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* was not only the first record for Kenya but seemingly the first for the Afrotropical region since published records from Ethiopia and South Africa post-date this bird (Schollaert 2006, Sagvik 2009).

Rufous-tailed Weaver *Histurgops ruficauda*

First record for Kenya. Maasai Mara, close to the Tanzania border, Kenya, 4 July 2000 (Dave Richards). A group of five birds. With it occurring so close to the Kenya border in Tanzania, this arrival of this species in Kenya is not unexpected. There have been numerous recent records from the Maasai Mara including breeding, but this observation by Dave Richards is the earliest dated sighting we have been sent, so constitutes the first record for Kenya.

Rufous-tailed Weaver *Histurgops ruficauda*

Second record for Kenya. Musiara, Maasai Mara, Kenya, 2 May 2007 (Brian Finch). A party of six birds, considerably further north than the first sighting.

White-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis albirostris*

First record for Tanzania. Naabi Hill Gate, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 2 March 2005 (Johnny Stenbäck). An odd record of a bird well outside of its normal range seen in a well-watched area. Thankfully, there is a convincing photograph to back it up.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

First record for Uganda and East Africa. Sempaya, near Semliki National Park, Uganda, 26 December 2002 (David Gee and Fay Enright). This sighting of eight birds predates an earlier published record (Dijkstra & Balyesiima 2004)

and thus becomes the first for Uganda and the region.

A number of other records remain under review: Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* (Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda 19 August 2003), Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (Lake Baringo, Kenya 22-23 December 1994), Dimorphic Egret *Egretta dimorpha* (Samuka Island, Lake Victoria, Uganda 23 April 2005), Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* (Zanzibar channel, Tanzania 30 July 2006).

A number of records were rejected either because of misidentification or insufficient details to establish identification with certainty. These were: Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* (at sea of northwest Pemba, Tanzania 16 September 2004), Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (Nairobi National Park, Kenya 16 April 2006), Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans* (Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda 16 June 2001), Cyprus Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca* (Serengeti National Park, Tanzania 27 November 2004).

References

- Britton, P.L. (1980). *Birds of East Africa: their habitat status and distribution*. East Africa Natural History Society, Nairobi.
- Carswell, M., Pomeroy, D., Reynolds, J & Tushabe, T. (2005). *The bird atlas of Uganda*. Oxford and London: British Ornithologists' Union and British Ornithologists' Club.
- Dijkstra, K-D. B., & Balyesiima, G. (2004). First record of Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpods* in East Africa. *Scopus* 24, 50.
- Jones, T. (2007). Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus africanus* in Ndundulu Forest: a first record for Tanzania, with biogeographical implications. *Journal of East African Natural History* 96 (2), 187-192.
- Lewis, A. & Pomeroy, D. (1989). *A bird atlas of Kenya*. Rotterdam and Brookfield: A. A. Balkema. Pp 620.
- Miskell, J.E. & Ash, J.S. (1985). Gillett's Lark *Mirafra gilletti* new to Kenya. *Scopus* 9: 53-54.
- Sagvik, J. (2009). A record of Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* in southern Africa. *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 16 (1), 89-90.
- Schollaert, V. (2006). First record of Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* for Ethiopia and sub-Saharan Africa. *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 13 (1), 75.

Jeremy Lindsell

The RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

E-mail: jeremy.lindsell@rspb.org.uk

David Fisher

56 Western Way, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DU, UK