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Jean-Michel Lapios

27 rue de l'Abreuvoir, F-78570 Chanteloup-les-Vignes, France

jmlapios@diomedea.org

Observations of Böhm's Flufftail *Sarothrura boehmi* in Nigeria

From February 1998 until February 2000 I worked in a rural Primary Health Centre (10°41.2'N, 5°24.4'E) in Hwimo, Niger State, Nigeria. On 16 Aug 1998, I heard an unrecognised bird call from one of the rice fields next to our house, and on 17 and 18 Aug tape-recorded it. The muddy rice field habitat suggested it might be a rail or flufftail (Rallidae). The clinic staff told me it was a tiny bird that was very difficult to see. Comparison with Gibbon (1995) suggested Böhm's Flufftail *Sarothrura boehmi*. On 19 Aug, the bird responded to playback of the *S. boehmi* call from Gibbon (1995) and I managed to catch a glimpse of it, enough to see it was a flufftail. It continued to be heard until 30 Aug. It called for long periods. The call was a quite low "hoo", hardly 1 s long and repeated about 25–30 times per min. Phil Hall (pers. comm.) also compared the call I had recorded with Gibbon (1995), and concurred with the identification.

On 5 Sep 1999 at 21h00, I heard the same call again, from a rice field about 100 m from where it had been heard and seen in 1998. The next day it called again, but now in the same rice field as the previous year. I last heard it on 7 Sep 1999 at 02h00.

Elgood *et al.* (1994) mention only one record of Böhm's Flufftail for Nigeria, a bird captured at Ife University in Feb 1968, though a nocturnal call thought to be from this species was not infrequently heard there. These observations are therefore the second and third for Nigeria.

As in each year the bird was heard for only a short period, it may have been a rainy season visitor from further south and the possibility of breeding is unknown. The clinic staff however, told me that they hear the same bird nearly every year in the same places. They say it is there, but only in small numbers. These observations

suggest that Böhm's Flufftail may have been overlooked in Nigeria, partly because of its nocturnal behaviour, soft call and the low density of birdwatchers.

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Marc de Bont

Revised 1 October 2000 C.P. 083, São Gabriel da Cachoeira AM, 69.750-000, Brazil
email: hermarc10@hotmail.com

A new sight record in Cameroon of the distinctive race *crossensis* of Green-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia rubescens*

On 19 March 2000, while watching birds along the edge of Bali-Ngamba Forest Reserve, near Bamenda, Cameroon (5°50'N, 10°4'E), our attention was drawn to a large number of sunbirds visiting a flowering *Albizia zygia* tree. Amongst some 15 Orange-tufted Sunbirds *Nectarinia bouvieri* were a pair of Northern Double-collared Sunbirds *N. preussi*, a pair of Green-headed Sunbirds *N. verticalis* and a larger, completely dark-looking sunbird. Once the latter's iridescent green forehead was seen, contrasting with the rest of the blackish-brown plumage, the bird was easily identified as a male Green-throated Sunbird *N. rubescens*. However, it lacked the species's eponymous green throat: only the malar stripe was iridescent green bordered by violet, as were the forehead and forecrown. Having observed a similar bird in SE Nigeria, RD recognized it as the distinctive subspecies *crossensis*, in which the throat is concolorous with the rest of the underparts (Mackworth-Præd & Grant 1973). Aware of the importance of this record, we spent an hour at the site and counted four adult males, one immature male and two females. The birds were easily picked out from the other sunbirds present by their larger size and, in the males, their blackish plumage. The immature male was moulting into adult plumage, with blackish-brown feathers breaking through the brownish-olive, female-like plumage.

This appears to be the first documented record of *N. r. crossensis* from Cameroon since Serle collected the specimens from which the subspecies was described (Serle 1963). Only two adult male specimens were secured: the first just west of Bamenda (5°55'N, 10°10'E), in May 1948 (Serle 1950), the second at Mamfe (5°45'N, 9°20'E), in March 1953 (Serle 1963).

The subspecies was recently discovered in E Nigeria, apparently at the north-western edge of its range, where single males were recorded at three sites in 1995–7