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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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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

(Hopkins *et al.* 1999). Subsequently, several birds have also been reported from Atteh, c. 10 km north-west of Buru, Taraba State, on 7–9 January 1999 (M. Hopkins *in litt.*).

Our sighting adds more weight to the argument that *crossensis* is a valid race. The limited number of specimens and the absence of further records have induced some authors to question this (White 1965 p. 297, Eisentraut 1973). Although the glossy forehead suggested otherwise, Hopkins *et al.* (1999) did not entirely rule out the possibility that *crossensis* was an eclipse plumage, or derived from one, because eclipse plumages are known to be highly variable in some sunbird species (Skead 1967). In view of the new record, and the fact that this plumage has now been observed at different times of year, this possibility appears increasingly improbable. It would be interesting to find out the limits of this race's range to the south, between Mamfe and the Bakossi-Bamale area, where it meets nominate *rubescens* (Hopkins *et al.* 1999).

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