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Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida reiseri* wintering in the Senegal valley

The Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* is a Palaearctic migrant to sub-Saharan Africa. However, due to the difficulty of identification of its subspecies *reiseri, laeneni, pallida* and *elaeica* in the field and the potential confusion with the Western Olivaceous Warbler *H. opaca* from which it was recently split (Helbig & Seibold 1999, Parkin *et al.* 2004, Ottosson *et al.* 2005), the exact non-breeding distribution of each subspecies remains largely unknown (Svensson 2001). The westernmost subspecies *H. p. reiseri* breeds from E Morocco to Tunisia. Southern populations of it are supposedly resident, but northern populations were suggested to migrate to Senegal, Niger and Nigeria (Svensson 2001).

On 21 Jan 2008, two *H. p. reiseri* were mist-netted at the Lake Bire Maoudou (15°7´40´´N, 12°48´26´´W) near Adabéré, Senegal. The birds were distinguished from *H. opaca* by their slightly concave bills and the colour pattern of the tail feathers (Fig. 1), and their morphometrics, especially bill length (Table 1). Due to the wide overlap of morphological characters (Svensson 2001) it is difficult to identify *H. pallida* to subspecies level when only two individuals are available. However, colour pattern of the tail, and locality, strongly suggested *H. p. reiseri* (Svensson 2001). In addition to the two mist-netted individuals, at least ten more birds were observed in *Acacia nilotica* trees surrounding the lake. All showed repeated downward flicking of the tail, which separates *H. pallida* from *H. opaca*, which does not move its tail in this way (Svensson 2001). Additionally, four of the observed birds were singing and the typical repetition of phrases distinguished their songs from that of *H. opaca* (Constantine & The Sound Approach 2006).

Table 1. Comparison of measurements of *H. p. reiseri* from this study with *H. p. reiseri* and *H. opaca* from various sources. Measurements were: wing to nearest 0.5 mm (method 3 in Svensson 1992); bill tip to skull, to nearest 0.1 mm; tarsus to nearest 0.1 mm (Fig. 18 in Svensson 1992); body mass to nearest 0.1 g. We do not know the exact method used by King for his unpublished data cited in Ottosson *et al.* 1992. Data are presented as mean (range, n).

	H. p. reiseri[1]	*H. p. reiseri*	*H. opaca*
Wing	65.0, 67.0	64.0 (59–68, 52)[2]	67.7 (63–72, 71)[2] male: 70.0 (64.5–74.0, 46)[3] female: 68.3 (63.5–71,5, 23)[3] 69.5 (64.0–73.0, 13)[4]
Bill	15.7, 14.3		17.6 (16.4–18.9, 83)[3]
Tarsus	20.1, 22.1	21.9 (20–24, 11)[2]	22.1 (21.1–23.2, 20)[2] 22.5 (21.0–24.2, 81)[3] 23.0 (21.5–27.5, 12)[4]
Body mass	8.9, 9.4	9.7 (7.6–11.0, 52)[2]	10.2 (8.5–12.5, 71)[2] 12.3 (9.3–16.8)[4]

[1]This study, live birds, Senegal.
[2]King, unpubl. data in Ottosson *et al*. 2005, live birds, The Gambia.
[3]Svensson 2001, skins from various localities.
[4]Ottosson *et al*. 2005, live birds, Nigeria.

Figure 1. Head and tail of *Hippolais pallida reiseri*, Lake Bire Maoudou, Senegal, 21 Jan 2008.

H. p. reiseri is recorded from late August to early October and from mid-March to early May in central Mauritania, suggesting a migration to and from non-breeding areas further south (Salewski & Herremans 2006). In potential wintering areas, two specimens were recorded from Ndioum and Kidira, NE Senegal, by Morel & Roux (1966), but later judged as erroneous (Morel & Morel 1990). Two confirmed records are from Richard Toll from June and September 1986 (Morel & Morel 1990). Eight *H. p. reiseri* were mist-netted in Djoudj National Park between 1984 and 1994, mostly in October and November, but two in February and March (Rodwell *et al*. 1996). It is possible that most of these birds were on migration. However, one *H. p. reiseri* was mistnetted at Poste de Gainthe, Djoudj NP, on 22 Jan 2007 (Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team, unpubl. data) and another was observed at Mirador Président, Djoudj NP on 25 Jan 2007 (A. Le Nevé, pers. comm.). Lamarche (1981) mentions three captures of *H. p. reiseri* from Bamako, Mali, in December. On Jinack Island, Gambia, *H. p. reiseri* constituted less than 10% of "Olivaceous" Warblers ringed (Stoate 1998), but King (2000) records about 16 captured each year, compared to an average of 65 *H. opaca* per year, between 1994 and 2000. The observations described here suggest that the E Senegal valley is a potential stronghold of *H. p. reiseri* during the non-breeding season, and most support suggestions that the species tends to avoid coastal areas during migrating and winters mostly inland (Salewski & Herremans 2006, but see King 2000). The exact geographical limits of the non-breeding range of the subspecies remain to be investigated.

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New White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* nesting areas in Ghana

White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* is a threatened endemic bird of the Upper Guinea Forest, occurring in five West African countries including Ghana. All known populations of the species are small and declining, with global population fragmented and estimated at less than 10,000 (Gatter 1997, Thompson 2007). The species is classified as Vulnerable by IUCN, and is wholly protected in Ghana under Schedule I of the Wildlife Conservation Regulation of 1971.

Rapid loss of lowland forests through logging and other forms of forest clearance are major threats confronting White-necked Picathartes in all range states (Thompson *et al.* 2004). Its specific habitat requirements render it highly vulnerable to habitat alteration and destruction. Although regularly recorded at certain sites in Ghana in the 1960s, (Grimes 1964, Grimes & Gardiner 1963, Grimes & Darku 1968) most of these sites are now degraded farmlands which are very unlikely to maintain any viable nesting sites. In 2003 Marks *et al.* (2004), recorded the species from Subim Forest Reserve, an area outside the previously known nesting areas, after nearly 40 years of no credible sighting. The Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS) has begun implementing a national action plan for the White-necked Picathartes, with a nationwide search carried out in 2005 to identify nesting sites of the species within the forests of Ghana.

Fifteen active nesting areas, with over 200 recently-used nests, were discovered in nine forest reserves (Ayum-Subim-Bonsam Bepo block, Worobong South, Southern Scarp, Nkrabea, Neung North, Afia Shelterbelt, Fum Headwaters, Onuem Nyamebe, Onuem Bepo) as well as others in off-reserve farmland areas in the Kwahu South District (Fig 1). These are mainly previously unknown nesting areas but Southern