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A new record of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* in Cameroon

The family *Picathartidae* has only two species, both endemic to the rainforests of tropical west and central Africa. White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* is confined to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Ghana. Grey-necked Picathartes *P. oreas* is found in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea including Bioko island, S and W Cameroon and SE Nigeria (Fry *et al.* 2000). The birds construct their mud nests in caves or on overhanging rocks within closed-canopy primary forest (Thompson & Fotso 1995) and therefore often have a patchy local distribution. Grey-necked Picathartes is classified as Vulnerable (Birdlife International 2004). In spite of its large range, the population is highly fragmented, considered small (less than 10,000 mature individuals), and possibly in overall decline (Birdlife International 2004).

In Cameroon, some of the largest breeding colonies of Grey-necked Picathartes are in the Dja Faunal Reserve, with at least 50 nests known, and much potential habitat not yet surveyed (BirdLife International 2004). Other populations are known from the following Important Bird Areas: Bakossi Mountains, Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary, Boumba-Bek IBA, Campo Ma'an National Park (old records from localities outside the park), Korup National Park, Mbam Minkom-Kala, Mt Manengouba, Mt Nlonako, Mt Rata and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve, Yabassi, Mt Kupe (Bowden & Andrews 1994, Fishpool & Evans 2004). Recently, the species has been discovered near Boumba river in SE Cameroon (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998), in Nsong (Anon. 2000) and in Mesa and Kala forests in Youndé region (Thompson & Fotso 2000). However, many of these populations are small or survive only in poor quality habitat (Thompson & Fotso 1995).

From 11 to 15 January 2004, we visited Bakingili village (4°3'N, 9°3'E), in the SW foothills of Mt Cameroon. During two short trips to the lowland rainforest interior (13 and 14 January 2004), we found a new locality for Grey-necked Picathartes, c. 1 km north-west of the village, at an altitude of c. 100 m. The nearest known population, discovered in 1983 near Bonenza (4°5'N, 9°6'E), was at an altitude of 700 m (Tye 1987).

We spent about 30 min. (13 Jan, first three authors) and 3 h (14 Jan, last author), at the site. One bird (or maybe two individuals) was seen during the morning for 10 min. both days, in a dry stony riverbed with steep rocky cliffs. It was hopping on the ground and in lower undergrowth, searching for food. Although we did not find a nest, we consider that this new locality is suitable for nesting of this species, which is reputed to be sedentary, rarely venturing more than a few hundred m from the breeding site during the year (Thompson & Fotso 1995). Further, Tye (1987) found the species nesting on the SW slopes of Mt Cameroon during the dry season (late December and January). There are numerous dry riverbeds weaving through the forest from the W slopes of Mt Cameroon, and we suggest that numerous individuals of this specialised species could occupy these slopes, which offer large areas of suitable habitat and nest sites.

The locality was about 500 m from the forest edge, where oil-palm plantations replaced the forest. The forest edges are exploited by humans and destroyed by selective logging of larger trees (pers. obs.). Although Grey-necked Picathartes may have greater tolerance for degraded habitats than previously believed (Thompson & Fotso 2000), the progressive wood cutting and increasing human disturbance in the area may threaten the persistence of the species at this locality.

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Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* new to Plateau State, Nigeria

On a field trip on 2 Oct 2004 to Panyam Fish Farm (9°25'N, 9°12'E), 70 km SSE of Jos, on the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria, a Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* was discovered, constituting a species new to Plateau State (Elgood *et al.* 1994, Urban *et al.* 1997, M. Hopkins pers. comm.). The site consists of a series of dikes containing fish ponds in a farmland landscape, the ponds being bordered of varying amounts of *Typha*, *Phragmites* and *Cyperus* reeds. At 7h30 the bird was heard singing while hidden in the reeds in one of the ponds. Since the song was unknown to the observers, recordings of songs and calls (Chappuis 2000) of species potentially present were played, resulting in responses from Greater Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens* and Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*. After a brief view of a medium-sized dark warbler, the song of Little Rush Warbler was played. It was identical to that of the bird singing in the reeds, which also responded to the playback, approaching to within 1 m. The song was distinctive: a loud series of identical, dry, single notes, accelerating and stopping abruptly. Wing-clapping was also heard, as in display flight (Urban *et al.* 1997).

The bird was difficult to see, often moving low in the vegetation, but it was seen singing and moving a few times. The upperparts and flanks were dark chestnut brown, rather than olive-brown as described by Urban *et al.* (1997) and Borrow & Demey (2001), and tinged rufous on rump and upper tail coverts. The tail was dark, graduated, and quite long. The dark brown head bore a pale supercilium. The throat, breast and belly were whitish, with darker streaks creating a band on the breast. The bill was blackish, the eyes dark brown and the legs pinkish. The bird was restless and perched in a near-horizontal position.

Little Rush Warbler is a widespread but fragmented African endemic, with the largest populations in southern Africa. In W Africa it is known as a rare and local resident in small, isolated patches. *B. b. chadensis* occurs around Lake Chad in NE Nigeria and Chad, where it breeds Apr–May (Urban *et al.* 1997, Ottosson *et al.* 2001), while *B. b. centralis* occurs in small areas in N, S central and SE Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994) between 300 and 450 km from Panyam, and also on the border of W Cameroon, where it breeds Jun–Aug (Serle 1981), and along the lower Sanaga river in Cameroon. The species also occurs in S Congo, where it has not yet been determined to subspecies (Borrow & Demey 2001). Recently, a Little Rush Warbler (with