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Acacia Warbler Apalis pulchella

On 8th December 1970 in an acacia thicket about 20 miles south of Potiskum on the road to Maiduguri I saw what I first took to be a yellowish Phylloscopus. Closer views made it clear that while it was a warbler, it was new to me. The following description is based on a field sketch:-

Small Phylloscopus-like warbler, shape differing only in spikier bill and longer, graduated tail; plumage essentially greenish-grey above relieved by yellowish around eye, slightly darker wings and tail feathers which also showed striking white tips, underparts apparently wholly warm yellow, bill brown, legs reddish flesh.

The bird was feeding quietly in canopy foliage and searching hard for insects.

Bannerman (1953) is not specific about the occurrence in Nigeria of the Acacia Warbler Apalis pulchella but reference to that work and Mackworth-Praed and Grant (1953) left me in no doubt that it was this species that I had seen. That it does occur in Nigeria is shown by several records made on the western side of Lake Chad by A.J. Hopson but its occurrence near Potiskum represents a range extension of about 160 miles W.S.W.

NOTES

A SPECIES NEW TO NIGERIA

RED-BACKED SHRIKE Lanius collurio AT LAGOS

The bird was first seen 23. November. 1970 on Victoria Island and collected 26 November.

DESCRIPTION: Immature male. Length 6 3/4 inches. Upperparts: Forehead and crown brown speckled with darker brown, buff and rufous. Nape brown without speckling. Back and scapulars rufous barred with dark brown edged with buff. Rump similar but slightly greyer brown. Upper tail coverts like back but with more buff. Coverts extend 1 3/4" down tail. Retrices: Upper side dark brown, slightly rufous. Tips worn but three outermost pairs have narrow buffy-white tips with narrow dark brown subterminal bands. Outer web of outer retrices cream colored. Next three pairs have narrow cream edging on outer edge, this light edging decreasing in length inwards. Tail slightly graduated, outermost retrices being 5 mm. shorter than worn middle pair. Middle retrices become narrower towards tip, presenting a slightly pointed appearance,

Wings: Primaries dark brown with faint buff tips and buff edging on outer edge. Secondaries similar but with broader buff edging and tips. Innermost secondaries have narrow darker brown band separating buff tip from rest of feather. Wing coverts brown with broad rufous-buff edges and darker brown subterminal markings. (In the field a light "shoulder edge" was sometimes visible due to exposure of whitish underwing coverts). Head: Buff line over eye more evident in field than in hand. Lores buff with a few dark specks. Ear coverts dark brown appearing in field as dark patch from eye through ear. Underparts: Chin, throat, belly and under tail-coverts unmarked greyish white. Breast slightly darker greyish-white. Sides of throat and breast, flanks and thighs scalloped with dark brown - scalloping extends all the way up side of neck to base of earpatch and bill. Underside of tail grey brown with buff tips and dark subterminal markings. Underside of primaries silvery grey. Under-wing coverts a mixture of silvery grey and whitish with dark specks. Soft Parts: Eye very dark brown or black. Feet and tarsus dark brown-grey, soles lighter. Bill dark horn colour tip, greyish-white to yellowish-white base. Gape has yellow edge when mouth closed but inside mouth is whitish. Measurements: Wing 90. Tail 70. Tarsus 22. Bill 12.5. Second primary longer than fifth. Internal: Testes small. Stomach contained beetle parts. Bird exceedingly fat.

An identical looking bird was seen a year ago in November 1969 on Victoria Island by the same observers. An attempt to collect that bird was unsuccessful.

John P. Gee

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