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Observations of two species new to Mauritania and detailed records confirming the presence of two other species

We report Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* and Lesser Blue-eared Starling *Lamprolornis chloropterus* as new to Mauritania, and African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* and Purple Glossy Starling *L. purpureus*, for which there were no previous detailed records for the country. All four were observed in the Guidimaka region of Mauritania, by MS.

***Anthus similis* Long-billed Pipit.** Two were observed at 15°10'8.0"N, 12°10'56.9"W, c. 3 km north of Selibaby, on 17 Jan 2007. The area is a sparsely vegetated chain of stony and rocky hills that rise 50–80 m above the surrounding savanna, which is dotted with *Acacia* spp. and thorny bushes. They were observed from 16h00 to 16h15, during which they moved carefully between the rocks, constantly looking up and wagging their tails, but uttering no sounds. They were larger than Tawny Pipit *A. campestris*, with dark brown, strongly streaked upperparts, lighter underparts with dark streaks on the breast fading towards the flanks, and a dark tail with light outer edges. The throat and supercilium were pale, and a dark streak on each cheek was visible. The bill was long and deep, and the upper mandible slightly down-curved. MS identified them as Long-billed Pipit, with which he was familiar from repeated observations in Yemen and Oman. Richard's Pipit *A. richardi* has fewer streaks on lighter underparts, a more upright body posture and longer legs. Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* and Plain-backed Pipit *A. leucophrys* were eliminated because the

observed birds had streaked upperparts. Long-billed Pipit has previously been observed in Senegal (Rodwell *et al.* 1996) in Djoudj National Park which is just across the Senegal River from Mauritania. It has since been photographed in Mauritania, at 16°25.9', 10°21.4', in March 2007 (I. Maggini *in litt.*).

***Oriolus auratus* African Golden Oriole.** A male was observed at 14°56'22.1"N, 12°23'13.5"W, *c.* 2 km northeast of Boutanda, on 15 Nov 2007. The bird was in large trees up to 15 m tall around a lake covering about 1 ha, which was surrounded by dry savanna covered with *Acacia* spp. and Baobab *Adansonia digitata* trees. The male's call "fee-o" was shorter than that of the Eurasian Golden Oriole *O. oriolus* (which MS was familiar with in Europe) and was heard continuously from 10h00 to 11h30, during which the bird was seen several times, perching and flying. It had a pinkish red bill, yellow under- and upperparts, black primaries, yellow wing-coverts and secondaries (which are black in the Eurasian Golden Oriole) and a black eye stripe which extended behind the eye (further than in the Eurasian Golden Oriole). The African Golden Oriole has previously been observed in Senegal immediately south of where it was found in Mauritania (Morel & Morel 1990).

***Lamprolornis purpureus* Purple Glossy Starling.** Two were observed on the Mauritanian side of the Senegal River at 15°7'59.2"N, 12°42'40.3"W near Wompou, on 16 Nov 2007. They were observed from 14h30 to 16h00, feeding continuously and silently on *Ficus* fruits at *c.* 10 m height within one of the many bushes and trees which grew densely along the river. They had a glossy purplish head and underparts, blue-green upperparts and wings, golden-yellow eyes, black bill, relatively large head and short tail, and were clearly larger than two adult Lesser Blue-eared Starlings *L. chloropterus*, which were observed nearby (see below). Purple Glossy Starling has also been observed in Senegal immediately south of where it was found in Mauritania (Morel & Morel 1990).

***L. chloropterus* Lesser Blue-eared Starling.** This species was first recorded when six adults and one juvenile were observed at the edge of Khabou, on 21 Nov 2005 (Table 1). The adults had metallic blue-green underparts, slightly greener metallic upperparts including the tail (purplish in Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling *L. chalcurus*), a dark mask around the eyes, yellow-orange eyes (more orange than the golden-yellow eye colour of Purple Glossy Starling), and black bill. The juvenile was light sooty brown with a faint green sheen on the upperparts. They were first discovered at 6h30 in thick vegetation of trees, bushes and grasses bordering a wet ditch. They then flew into the adjacent agricultural fields where they foraged until 7h00. They were smaller than the Purple Glossy Starlings described above and the Greater Blue-eared Starling *L. chalybaeus* which was observed an hour later in Khabou. Furthermore, the calls of the Lesser Blue-eared Starling were brighter and clearer than those of the Greater Blue-eared Starling. Ten subsequent records are detailed in Table 1, including one photographic record (Fig. 1). The Lesser Blue-Eared Starling is also known from Senegal immediately south of where it was found in Mauritania (Morel & Morel 1990).

Table 1. Records of the Lesser Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus* in Mauritania.

Date	Location	Coordinates (N, W)	Number seen
21 Nov 2005	Khabou	14°43'29.1", 12°3'20.8"	6 plus 1 juvenile
23 Nov 2005	Gouraye	14°54'27.5", 12°26'56.0"	4
24 Nov 2005	Wompou	15°7'59.2", 12°42'40.3"	2
25 Nov 2005	Ould Ramy	15°9'10.8", 12°42'45.2"	5
10 Jan 2007	Ould Yenje	15°32'3.9", 11°43'40.5"	5
12 Jan 2007	Ould Yenje	15°32'3.9", 11°43'40.5"	2
13 Jan 2007	Oudhen Levrass	15°59'18.2", 12°2'27.7"	4
15 Jan 2007	Selibaby	15°10'8.0", 12°10'56.9"	2
16 Nov 2007	Wompou	15°7'59.2", 12°42'40.3"	2
18 Nov 2007	Arr	15°11'14.8", 12°34'35.8"	3
19 Nov 2007	Arr	15°11'14.8", 12°34'35.8"	1



Figure 1. Two Lesser Blue-eared Starlings in Wompou, 24 Nov 2005 (photo: MS).

African Golden Oriole and Purple Glossy Starling are mentioned by Isenmann *et al.* (2010) among species not retained on the Mauritanian list “because they are inherently unlikely, unsupported by a description or seen by one observer only”. Lamarche (1988) had reported these two species as present in Mauritania in general terms with respect to locations and dates, and without detailed descriptions: African

Golden Oriole was said to be a rainy season visitor to Mauritania in the southern Sahel and Senegal River valley, while Purple Glossy Starling was reported from the south of Karakaroo Valley and the upper Senegal River valley. The observations reported here therefore confirm their presence in the country.

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