

First record of Pale Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes undosus* for Uganda

Between 17–21 September 2000 I conducted a bird guide training workshop in Lake Mburo National Park, Mbarara district, south Uganda (0°37'N, 30°39'E). On 19 September at 0800 h I took seven participants and two workshop colleagues to an area of recently burnt acacia savannah, 8 km south of the education centre on the northern side of Lake Mburo. This area is in the north-west of the park. Leaving the vehicle on the track we set off on foot towards Lake Mburo to explore the thicket bush adjacent to the papyrus swamp some 1.5 km away. After 20 minutes of birding my attention was attracted by my colleagues, Alfred Twinomujuni and Clinton Schipper, who were having trouble identifying a bird at the base of an acacia tree. It was a warbler I had not seen before, slightly larger than a Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*, and heavier in appearance. I began to observe it closely and make notes.

The bird was hopping very actively in warbler-style, at the bases of acacia trees in dry, unburned grass and thicker herbage. After 5 minutes or so it would fly 20–60 m to another tree and begin feeding again, often climbing up larger fallen dead branches. Features observed included fine barring on the underparts (under-tail coverts and flanks); a fine, longish and dark, curved warbler-like bill; longish pink legs; pale, barred throat; reddish eye and an elongated body shape. The overall colour was dull greyish. The bird was not moulting and its plumage was fresh. The size was similar to a medium-sized *Cisticola* and recalled a Green-winged Pytilia (*Pytilia melba*).

After some 30 minutes of observation I consulted van Perlo (1995), and later also Zimmerman *et al.* (1996) and Keith *et al.* (**) from which it was clear that the bird was a species of 'bush warbler' (*Calamonastes*). The complete lack of barring on the lower parts ruled out *C. simplex*, the only species so far recorded in Uganda (Britton, 1980). The other *Calamonastes* warblers which could be considered are *C. stierlingi* and *C. undosus*. *C. stierlingi*, which occurs in southern Tanzania, has bold black-and-white barred underparts which this bird did not show. Therefore, of the three possible species, I concluded that it was *C. undosus*, especially considering that it was in fresh plumage and still did not show the strong or clear barring of *C. stierlingi*.

To date *C. simplex* has been recorded on the eastern border of Uganda, whilst the closest that *C. undosus*, (previously considered a race of *C. simplex*) has been recorded to Uganda is north-west central Tanzania. Given that Lake Mburo National Park has a habitat described as an Akegera

system, as in the northern serengeti, then *C. undosus* is a species which could well be expected to turn up in southern Uganda.

References

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This species was also seen by C. Williams on 29th October 2001 in Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda (ed.).

An exceptional autumn arrival of Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* in Tsavo West National Park

The Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* performs perhaps the most remarkable migration of any bird of prey. It breeds between Lake Baikal and the Pacific, south into northern China, and winters in southeastern Africa, mainly from Malawi south to Transvaal (Moreau 1972, Brown *et al.* 1982). It appears in numbers in Assam each autumn, but is then believed to fly more than 3000 km across the Indian Ocean unseen, with the aid of tail winds, reaching eastern Africa mainly during November. It is a gregarious species which tends to migrate in flocks, and forms roosts thousands strong in its winter quarters (Benson 1951, Benson *et al.* 1971, Brown *et al.* 1982).

Backhurst *et al.* (1971) could list only a few records from Kenya, and considered, as did Brown *et al.* (1982) that most birds enter Africa well



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