

Photospot:

Juvenile Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum*

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Première photo d'une Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum* juvénile à l'état sauvage.

La Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum* est une petite chouette forestière dont l'aire de répartition s'étend du Sierra Leone au Ghana et du sud du Cameroun au bassin du Congo et au Kenya occidental. L'espèce, qui est généralement peu commune, est en partie diurne et chante parfois pendant la journée, ce qui facilite son observation. Curieusement, son plumage juvénile n'est pas décrit dans les ouvrages de référence majeurs et selon les monographies récentes ce plumage demeure inconnu. Nous l'avons toutefois décrit succinctement dans notre *Birds of Western Africa* (2001) comme 'Parties inférieures sans marron et avec des taches plus petites, ou sans taches'. Ceci est basé sur quatre spécimens dans la collection du Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, dont nous présentons ici les photos, avec la première photo d'un juvénile à l'état sauvage.

Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum* is a small forest owl occurring from Sierra Leone to Ghana and from southern Cameroon to the Congo Basin and western Kenya (Holt *et al.* 1999). Although it is at present not considered to be globally threatened and may be locally frequent, it is generally rather uncommon to rare (Holt *et al.* 1999, BirdLife International 2014). This quite distinctive, attractive little owl is partially diurnal and sometimes calls during the day, which facilitates its observation. The nominate race, confined to the Upper Guinea forest block, has rufous-chestnut breast-sides and flanks, the rest of the underparts being white with bold blackish spots. The other three races, *pycrafti*, *medje* and *elgonense*, which principally differ from each other in measurements and the tone of the upperparts, have less rufous and are more heavily spotted below (Fig. 1).

Curiously, the juvenile plumage has not been described in any major handbook (e.g. Kemp 1988, Holt *et al.* 1999) and recent monographs continue to state that it is undescribed (König *et al.* 2008, Mikkola 2013). However, we did present a succinct description in our *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001): 'Underparts lack rufous-chestnut and have smaller or no spots'. This was based on four specimens of the subspecies *medje* from DR Congo in the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. The first two, collected in the north-east—at Buta, Bas-Uele, by J. Hutsebaut in the 1930s, and at Paulis, now Isoro, Haut-Uele, by Abbeloos in 1949—have small spots on the entire

underparts, which are white, without any rufous, and are smaller than adults (Figs. 2–3). The other two—a male and female, secured at Bolombo-Buya, Basankusu, by P. Herroelen on 5 April 1956 and at Ikela, Tshuapa, by P. Lootens on 30



Figure 1. Adult Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum pycrafti*, Lopé National Park, Gabon, 16 July 2013 (Nik Borrow)

Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum pycrafti* adulte, Parc National de la Lopé, Gabon, 16 juillet 2013 (Nik Borrow)



Figures 2–3. Juvenile Red-chested Owlets *Glaucidium tephronotum medje*, Buta, Bas-Uele, Oriental Province, DR Congo, 1930s (RG 18365; top) and Paulis, Haut-Uele, Oriental Province, DR Congo, 1949 (RG 47594) (A. Reygel / © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium)

Chevêchettes à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum medje* juvéniles, Buta, Bas-Uele, Province Orientale, RD Congo, années 1930 (RG 18365 ; en haut) et Paulis, Haut-Uele, Province Orientale, RD Congo, 1949 (RG 47594) (A. Reygel / © Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgique).

Figures 4–5. Immature Red-chested Owlets *Glaucidium tephronotum medje*, Ikela, Tshuapa, Equateur Province, DR Congo, 30 June 1956 (RG 82747, female; top) and Bolombo-Buya, Basankusu, Equateur Province, DR Congo, 5 April 1956 (RG 81111, male) (A. Reygel / © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium)

Chevêchettes à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum medje* immatures, Ikela, Tshuapa, Équateur, RD Congo, 30 juin 1956 (RG 82747, femelle ; en haut) et Bolombo-Buya, Basankusu, Équateur, RD Congo, 5 avril 1956 (RG 81111, male) (A. Reygel / © Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgique)

June 1956—have all-white underparts, but for one or two juvenile spots, whilst one or two adult spots have appeared; the birds are also larger than the previous two, being as large as adults (Figs. 4–5). The birds with spotted underparts are thus juveniles, whilst those with unspotted underparts have a subsequent, still immature plumage. Given the collection date of these specimens, it is remarkable that the plumage of young Red-chested Owlets has remained unknown for so long.

In March 2014, NB photographed a juvenile in the Bakossi Mountains, Cameroon (Fig. 6). This, as far as we can ascertain, is the first photograph of a juvenile Red-chested Owlet in the wild.

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Figure 6. Juvenile Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum pycrafti*, Bakossi Mountains, Cameroon, 27 March 2014 (Nik Borrow)

Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum pycrafti* juvénile, Monts Bakossi, Cameroun, 27 mars 2014 (Nik Borrow)

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