

towards where the bird had been seen to fly but was unable to relocate it. JF also visited the area and watched for an hour but also without luck. The bird was not reported again by any other visitor during the following week and must have simply moved on.

## Discussion

Identification of this species is thankfully not very difficult, the Swallow-tailed Bee-eater being the only bee-eater in the world with the long, blue, deeply-forked tail. Indeed, this field character serves "...to distinguish this species from all other bee-eaters and indeed from all other birds" (Fry *et al.* 1992).

*M. hirundineus* is recognized as comprising of four sub-species. *M.h. chrysolaimus* in West Africa and *M.h. heuglini* in Sudan, Ethiopia, DR Congo and Uganda both have green tails—the Arabuko-Sokoke bird had a clearly had a blue tail and thus could not have been either of these. The bird was not seen well enough to note the detail of further racial features on the forehead and throat but from a distribution of the races one is far more likely than the others. *M.h. hirundineus* is found in central and western southern Africa and so is much less likely than *M.h. furcatus* which occurs further east and north into the southern half of Tanzania up to around 5°S with only 2–3 records just north of this.

The species is known to be somewhat migratory though its movements are as yet poorly understood. This bird was an adult, immatures lacking the yellow throat, and is likely to have moved up the coastline from south of Dar es Salaam ending up in some favourable habitat in Arabuko-Sokoke.

The species is said to have been recorded in Vanga on the southern Kenya coast (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989); however, the record(s) was unverified and the species removed from the Kenya list. This being the case, the bird seen in Arabuko-Sokoke and described here is the first record for Kenya.

## References

- Fry, C.H., Fry, K. & Harris, A. (1992). *Kingfishers, Bee-eaters & Rollers*. Christopher Helm.  
Lewis, A. & Pomeroy, D.E. (1989). *A bird atlas of Kenya*. CRC.

## Colin Jackson

A Rocha Kenya, P.O. Box 383, Watamu, 80202, Kenya; Email: colin.jackson@arocha.org

*Scopus* 32: 46–47, June 2013

Received 12 July 2010

## Remarks concerning the East African coastal form of the Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus sublacteus* (Cassin 1851), and its supposed black morph

The Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus* is a common and widespread black-and-white bushshrike of forests, woodlands and thickets throughout much of East Africa. The coastal form *sublacteus*, treated recently as a race of this species, was described by John Cassin in 1851 as *Dryoscopus sublacteus*. The type was part of the Massena (Rivoli) Collection of African birds acquired for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia in 1846. Cassin gave "Eastern Africa" as the type locality, though

it possibly originated from Zanzibar. Grant & Mackworth-Praed (1944), when discussing the races of *Laniarius ferrugineus* in eastern Africa, proposed Mombasa as the type locality of *sublacteus*, with a distribution from Mombasa to Dar es Salaam and west to Makindu, Lake Jipe, the North Pare Mountains and Mpapwa. They later (Grant & Mackworth-Praed 1947) restricted the type locality to Lamu, eastern Kenya, but without giving their reasons.

In July 1878 an all-black bushshrike was collected from Kipini, Lamu district, eastern Kenya, and named *Dryoscopus nigerrimus* by Reichenow (1879). Later, Reichenow (1905: 834), when describing material collected by Erlanger from the Juba Valley, southern Somalia, named another all-black bird as *L. erlangeri* and a black-and-white one as *L. a. somaliensis*. Between 1916 and 1918, van Someren and his collectors obtained series of bushshrikes from Lamu District and from the Lower Juba Valley, which included both black-and-white and all-black birds. Van Someren compared his own all-dark birds from Manda Island with those he had himself collected from the Lower Juba. He could detect no differences and so seriously questioned the validity of the name *erlangeri*, considering it to be a synonym of *nigerrimus* (van Someren 1922, 1932). Jackson & Sclater (1938: 1209) fully supported van Someren's comments on these all-black boubous, and listed *L. nigerrimus* for the Kenya Colony and Italian Somaliland. Subsequently, however, Stresemann (1947) deemed that Reichenow's Kipini bird was no more than a mutation of *L. ferrugineus sublacteus*, while Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955: 643) considered it to be a melanistic phase of *L. a. sublacteus*. The myth of a rare dark morph of *sublacteus* in Kenya's coastal forests was then perpetuated in the literature for over sixty years (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996, Fry *et al.* 2000, Harris & Franklin 2000).

Recently, we demonstrated quite clearly that the all-black birds on Manda Island, Lamu District, are vocally and behaviourally quite distinct from black-and-white *sublacteus* (Turner *et al.* 2011). Nguembock *et al.* (2008) in their phylogeny of some *Laniarius* bushshrikes, showed that an all-black bird from Somalia, which they considered to be *erlangeri*, was not closely related to *Laniarius aethiopicus*, and suggested that it warranted species status. Whether *nigerrimus* and *erlangeri* are the same species (or the same taxon as claimed by van Someren) can be better determined when their DNA is compared. The status of *somaliensis* with respect to *sublacteus* likewise requires a DNA comparison. Although Nguembock *et al.* (*op. cit.*) recommended separating both *sublacteus* and *major* from the traditional *L. aethiopicus*, further study of vocalizations together with additional molecular work that includes representatives of *erlangeri*, *nigerrimus* and *somaliensis* would seem necessary to clarify relationships and species limits within this group of bushshrikes.

In the meantime we propose that the all-black coastal boubous in eastern Kenya at Kipini and Manda Island be separated from *sublacteus* and treated again as *Laniarius nigerrimus* (Reichenow 1879).

#### Acknowledgements

The authors thank David Pearson for his comments and input to this note.

#### References

- Fry, C.H., Keith, S. & Urban, E.K. (eds.) 2000. *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 6. London: Academic Press.
- Grant, C.H.B. & Mackworth-Praed, C.W. 1944. Notes on eastern African birds. (2) On the races of *Laniarius ferrugineus ferrugineus* (Gmelin) occurring in Eastern Africa; and the type locality of *Laniarius ferrugineus sublacteus* (Cassin). *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*

64: 45–48.

- Grant, C.H.B. & Mackworth-Praed, C.W. 1947. On the type-locality of *Laniarius ferrugineus sublacteus* Cassin. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 68: 36.
- Harris, T. & Franklin, K. 2000. *Shrikes and Bush-Shrikes*. London: A. & C. Black.
- Jackson, F.J.J. & Sclater, W.L. 1938. *The birds of Kenya Colony and the Uganda Protectorate*. London: Gurney & Jackson.
- Mackworth-Praed, C.W. & Grant, C.H.B. 1955. *Birds of eastern & north eastern Africa. African handbook of birds*. Ser. 1, vol. 2. London: Longmans.
- Nguembock, B., Fjeldså, J., Couloux, A. & Pasquet, E. 2008. Phylogeny of *Laniarius*: molecular data reveal *L. liberatus* synonymous with *L. erlangeri* and “plumage coloration” as unreliable morphological characters for defining species and species groups. *Molecular Phylogenetics & Evolution*. 48: 396–407.
- Reichenow, A. 1879. Neue Vögel aus Ost-Afrika. *Ornithologisches Centralblatt*. 4: 114.
- Reichenow, A. 1905. *Die Vögel Afrikas*. Vol 3. 880pp. Neudamm: J. Neumann.
- Stresemann, E. 1947. *Laniarius nigerrimus* (Rchw.): a mutation of *Laniarius ferrugineus sublacteus* (Cassin). *Ibis* 89: 518–519.
- Turner, D.A., Finch, B.F. & Hunter, N.D. Remarks concerning the all-black coastal boubous (*Laniarius* spp.) of Kenya and southern Somalia. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 131: 125–128.
- Van Someren, V.G.L. 1922. Notes on the birds of East Africa. *Novitates Zoologicae* 29: 1–246.
- Van Someren, V.G.L. 1932. Birds of Kenya & Uganda, being addenda and corrigenda to my previous paper in *Novitates Zoologicae* XXIX, 1922. *Novitates Zoologicae* 37: 252–380.
- Zimmerman, D.A., Turner, D.A. & Pearson, D.J. 1996. *Birds of Kenya and northern Tanzania*. London: Christopher Helm.

**Donald A. Turner**

P.O. Box 1651, Naivasha 20117, Kenya

**Brian W. Finch**

P.O. Box 15568, Mbagathi, Nairobi 00503, Kenya; Email: birdfinch@gmail.com

**Nigel D. Hunter**

P.O. Box 24803, Karen, Nairobi 00502, Kenya; Email: nigelhunter@timbale.org

*Scopus* 32: 47–49, June 2013

Received 23 May 2012

## Remarks concerning two sympatric seedeaters *Poliospiza* spp. in northwestern Kenya

Two seedeaters (included in *Crithagra* in the 2009 Kenya checklist (Bird Committee 2009)), *Poliospiza (gularis) elgonensis* known as the Streaky-headed Seedeater, and *Poliospiza (reichardi) striatipectus* known as the Streaky-breasted Seedeater are rare or scarce wanderers (or residents) in areas between 1600 and 2000 m around the Tambach and Kongelai escarpments in northwestern Kenya.

Taxonomically these two forms (*elgonensis* and *striatipectus*) have generally been treated as the northernmost races of two species largely centred in southern Africa, and it was only fairly recently that Zimmerman *et al.* (1996) had questioned this position, but they felt that, although there appears to be considerable variation in the ventral streaking, all Kenyan birds seem assignable to either *striatipectus* or *elgonensis*, and