

## Short communications

### Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris* – overlooked in Uganda?

#### Introduction

The Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris* is a large, distinctive pipit of southern African where it inhabits rocky hills and slopes well covered with trees and shrubs. It is readily identifiable, if seen well, being large, boldly striped and having distinctive yellow-edged wing feathers. There are no published records for Uganda. This paper reports on two birds at Mihingo Lodge adjacent to Lake Mburo National Park, Uganda in November 2016, a single bird at Rwakobo Rock Lodge nearby in May 2017 and some previously unpublished records from the same locations. We suggest that Striped Pipit may be a low-density, overlooked species in suitable habitat in southwest Uganda and adjacent northwest Tanzania.

#### Published distribution

The main range is southeast Africa from southern Kenya through eastern and southern Tanzania, Malawi, southeast Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), southeast Zambia, southeast and northeast Botswana, Zimbabwe, western Mozambique and northeast and eastern South Africa. A second population occurs in Angola and a third disjunct population occurs in western and northwest Tanzania from about Kasanga in Rukwa Region north to Gombe National Park in Kigoma Region and in adjacent Burundi and Rwanda (Tyler 2017).

There are no records in the Tanzania Bird Atlas from the Kagera Region of northwest Tanzania, but a sighting from Rusumo Falls, Rwanda in October 2009 was only 300 m from the Tanzanian border. eBird has one record from Uvubu National Park, Burundi (March 1994), but no records from northwest Tanzania or Rwanda (eBird 2012). Britton (1980) reported no records for Uganda and only one for western Tanzania (Kibondo, March 1961). Clancey (1990) did not mention western Tanzania, Burundi or Rwanda as included in the range of this species.

#### Subspeciation

Clancey (1990) recognized four subspecies, but none in the vicinity of the Albertine Rift that would include northwest Zambia, western Tanzanian, Burundi and Rwandan birds. The most likely of the four is *A.l. angolensis* Bocage 1870 about which he stated “Range: Western Angola from Huambo and Malanje, south to the escarpment of Huila, but precise limits and status uncertain. Clearly uncommon”. This is the form considered to be in Zambia (Dowsett *et al.* 2008).

*The Handbook of the Birds of the World* recognizes two subspecies, *A.l. lineiventris* Sundevall 1850 in southeast Botswana to northeast South Africa and Swaziland, and *A.l. stygium* Clancey 1952 elsewhere (Tyler 2017). The IOC does not recognize any subspecies (Gill & Donsker 2017).

The Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium has three Striped Pipit specimens from the DRC and one from Zambia. These are not categorized to subspecies level, but are all considered to be the same as birds from eastern DRC, western Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda.

## Records for Uganda

Two pipits were seen by SC at Mihingo Lodge, Western, Uganda ( $0^{\circ}36'S$ ,  $31^{\circ}03'E$ , 1330m) on the thatched roof of the dining room on the morning of the 13 November 2016. They flew down to forage in the natural grass/rock area around the swimming pool. Distant photographs indicated their identity as Striped Pipit as the yellow tint to the folded wings was clearly visible (Fig. 1). Later that afternoon no pipits were in evidence, but playback of a recording of their call from the eGuide to Birds of East Africa (2014) immediately resulted in one bird emerging from cover and close photographs were obtained. The record was submitted to eBird in November 2017 and to the East African Rarities Committee (EARC) in February 2017. This record has been fully accepted by the EARC, which formally puts this species on the Ugandan list.

Subsequently, a single bird was seen by SC on the lodge roof at Rwakobo Rock Lodge ( $0^{\circ}31'S$ ,  $31^{\circ}00'E$ , 1290m) on the late afternoon of 8 May 2017 (Fig. 2). It responded to playback, but stayed on the roof. There was no sign of the bird the next morning. This record has been submitted to the EARC for consideration.



**Figure 1.** Striped Pipit, Mihingo Lodge, Western Uganda, 13 November 2016. Photo S. Clark.



**Figure 2.** Striped Pipit, Rwakobo Rock Lodge, Western Uganda, 8 May 2017. Photo S. Clark.

Subsequently it has been found that eBird has records from Mihingo Lodge (3 August 2013) and Rwakobo Rock Lodge ( $0^{\circ}31'S$ ,  $31^{\circ}00'E$ , 1290m; 10 October 2016). Both records were of single birds. Admittedly neither of these records have been vetted by the EARC, but they are from the same localities as the November 2016 and May 2017 records. The lodges are both just outside the boundaries of Lake Mburo National Park, which has many similar rocky hills. It is not permitted to get out of your vehicle in the park and this restriction might contribute to the species being overlooked. It is also possible that the recent records represent a range expansion from the south or west. Both Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii* and Black-collared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* have been recorded in the park in recent years and their nearest recognised occurrences would be northwest Tanzania or Rwanda respectively.

## Conclusion

The Striped Pipit can now be said to occur in Uganda – at least in the vicinity of Lake Mburo National Park. It extends to the north and east the range of the population

that occurs in Zambia, the DRC, western Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda. It should be looked for in other well-vegetated rocky slopes and hilltops in southwest Uganda and northwest Tanzania.

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