

A review of birds in Uganda: records updating the Uganda Atlas and notes on species unrecorded since 1980

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Introduction

This paper is the first update of the Ugandan avifauna since the publication of the *Bird Atlas of Uganda* (Carswell *et al.* 2005) and reviews the status of selected species. It lists eighteen additions to the Uganda list since 2005, some the result of range expansion, but others revealed by advances in identification and technology. Secondly it deals with eight species which were listed in the Atlas in Appendix 1. These had been added provisionally to the list between 2000 and 2005 but some were then still under review by the East African Rarities Committee (EARC). Thirdly, it deals with species known before 1980 then not recorded again until after publication of the Atlas. Finally, it summarizes details of species known before 1980 but not recorded since.

Additions to the Uganda list since publication of the Atlas

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

An adult was photographed and identified by Dick Forsman at Murchison Falls National Park on 15 December 2009. A full description has been provided and a photograph appears in *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 17(2), 2010. Accepted by the EARC. Although a few sight records had been reported previously, no descriptions were received and the species was not on the Uganda list.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*

The Atlas gives an unsubstantiated record from Kidepo in 1972. Recent studies using satellite transmitters attached to captured birds have confirmed that this species occurs in Uganda. An adult trapped on 17 September 2007 on Mallorca, Spain, was tracked using satellite telemetry through Libya, Chad and Sudan, then into Uganda on its journey south to the wintering area in Madagascar (López-López *et al.* 2009). In 2008, four birds trapped in Greece in October were followed on their journey south. One of these was tracked flying over south-west Uganda.

Grey-throated Rail *Canirallus oculeus*

Urban Olsson was able to identify and sound record two individuals in Semliki National Park on 21–22 July 1996. This record was accepted by the EARC. Two earlier records from the same area are catalogued in the Atlas but with no supporting details.

Wattled Crane *Buggeranus carunculatus*

On 2 May 2009 one was located at Kibimba Rice Scheme by Sarah Nachuha Kasozi in a flock of Grey Crowned Cranes *Balearica regulorum*. She contacted Achilles Byaruhanga who photographed the bird next day. It remained until at least 26 June. A

photograph is published on the *NatureUganda* website (<http://www.natureuganda.org/>). Accepted by the EARC.

White-crowned Plover *Vanellus albiceps*

On 10 July 2003 a bird was discovered by Dave Richards on the River Nile in Murchison Falls National Park (see *Scopus* 26: 48-49). Accepted by the EARC. Further records from the same site involved a pair in January 2004, a pair with small chicks on 6 July 2006, and then subsequent annual reports. The species is evidently consolidating its position.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

On 15 February 2007 six birds were identified by Allan Kirby on grassy flats bordering reed beds near the Ishasha River in Queen Elizabeth National Park. A full description and photographs were taken (see *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 15: 98-99). Accepted by the EARC. A second record on 1 January 2009 involved four birds at the same site.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

On 8 December 2010 a knot species found by the author at Lutembe Lagoon was suspected to be a Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*. Some poor and inconclusive photographs were taken, but better ones were obtained by Achilles Byaruhanga on 20 December 2010 and these conclusively confirmed the species, an addition to the Uganda list. The bird was still present on 5 January 2011, but was not seen subsequently. Accepted by the EARC (for more details see pages 84–85 in this issue).

White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus*

An adult in summer plumage was observed at Lutembe Lagoon on 22 November 2002 by Malcolm Wilson, Chris Sharpe, Ian Kerton, Barry Williams and Nathan Eluku. It was seen with a few Grey-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* and about 40 Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*. A full description was taken and the record has been added to the Uganda list. Accepted by the EARC.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*

An adult was discovered in Murchison Falls National Park on 8 June 2011 by Jonathan Rossouw. It was resting on mud flats with a small flock of Grey-headed Gulls, Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* and a single Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* at the confluence of the River Nile and Lake Albert. A splendid image was published in *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 19: 108. Accepted by the EARC.

Black Tern *Chilodnius niger*

A first-winter bird was identified and photographed by Dick Forsman at the Kasinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park on 8 December 2009. It was present in a flock of several hundred White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus*. A photograph is published in *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 17(2). Accepted by the EARC. The main migration of Black Terns is along the West coast of Africa to wintering areas in Namibia.

Fischer's Lovebird *Agapornis fischeri*

First noted at Entebbe Botanical Gardens on 14 Jan 2006, since when further records have come from Gaba, with a single bird on 5 December 2010, three on 3 March 2011,

and a pair on 20 March 2011. Its status as a wild bird is clouded by escapes from captivity.

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachyococyx audeberti*

The first accepted record was a bird described from Lake Mburo National Park on 29 March 2000 by Charlie Williams. Accepted by the EARC. Further records from the same site involved a displaying bird on 24 March 2006 and another single bird on 2 September 2007. An earlier record from Murchison Falls National Park has not been substantiated.

Yellow Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus parvulus*

First documented for Uganda when Guillaume Passavy discovered two individuals on 11 June 2009 in the vicinity of Rhino Camp at Balala Swamp, Arua District. A full description was submitted and accepted by the EARC. It has since been recorded several times in Murchison Falls National Park by Pete Morris, and most recently on the south side of the River Nile at Red Chili camp where a pair was recorded by the author on 25 October 2010. This inconspicuous species has presumably been overlooked.

Boran Cisticola *Cisticola bodessa*

In June 2011 Sheila Taylor realized on regular walks that cisticola song changed in character from that of the regular Rattling Cisticola *C. chiniana* as she ascended Mt Moroto. She sound recorded the song and calls of the birds concerned and concluded that they matched those of Boran Cisticola. These recordings and a description were submitted to the EARC and the species was accepted onto the Uganda list.

Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*

There are several recent reports from Lake Mburo National Park, including a pair on 25 July 2002, a pair with a juvenile 6 February 2003 and three birds on 5 February 2004. The author observed a "shiny" Black Flycatcher there on 12 February 2010, and then a pair from 5 to 7 March 2010, including a singing male. Accepted by the EARC.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

An immaculate male was photographed by Phil Palmer in the Kasenyi area of Queen Elizabeth National Park on 10 March 2006. Accepted by the EARC. The Atlas states, "There have been published records for *F. albicollis* from Uganda, but the position is confused (with *F. semitorquata*) and it has not been reliably reported."

Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha*

On 1 August 2006 a group led by Malcolm Wilson discovered two unidentified "nuthatch" Weavers in Semliki National Park; they appeared to be a pair. After examining photographs made available by the American Museum of Natural History, the Vienna Naturhistorische Museum and the Stockholm Natural History Museum, they identified the birds as Golden-naped Weavers. This record was published in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club Bulletin* 14: 200–202, and was accepted by the EARC. A second record by Herbert Byaruhanga, again from Semliki National Park, involved a female on 16 June 2009. As this species was previously known only from the Ituri Forest in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, these Semliki records extend the range eastwards by 80 km.

Blue-capped Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus cyanocephalus*

A pair was found in the Moroto region of Karamoja on 4 September 2011 by the author and Michael Opiigi. The birds were present in degraded *Acacia* thornbush, habitat similar to that in which the species occurs in neighbouring Kenya, so its discovery was not so surprising. Accepted by the EARC.

Additions to the Uganda list confirmed between January 2000 and 2005

These were all listed within Appendix 1 of the Atlas.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

The Atlas gives a poorly documented record from the west bank of the Nile at Laropi on 2 April 1948. There were no other records until a bird was seen at Kibimba rice scheme on 20 November 2002 by Malcolm Wilson, Chris Sharpe, Ian Kerton and Barry Williams (see also *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 12: 47). Accepted by the EARC.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

A record of three birds at Moroto in May 1966 was considered by Pearson & Turner (1986) as unsubstantiated. The species was accepted for the Uganda list when a bird was recorded at Murchison Falls National Park on 4 October 2000 by Malcolm Wilson. Accepted by the EARC.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

This Palaearctic species is listed for Kidepo Valley National Park but no documentation is available so that a bird seen at Moroto on 7 January 2001 by Malcolm Wilson is the first acceptable record. Accepted by the EARC.

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*

The Atlas gives a record from Lake Mburo on 20 July 1998, when this was considered to be a subspecies of Carmine Bee-eater *M. nubicus*. It was recorded again in Murchison Falls National Park on 17 July 2003, by Brian Finch and group. Two birds were found among a party of about 20 Northern Carmine Bee-eaters and photographs were published in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 15(1).

Ansorge's Greenbul *Andropadus ansorgei*

The only acceptable record involves a bird seen on 2 August 2001 at Buhoma in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park by Nik Borrow (see *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 9: 140–141). Accepted by the EARC. The nominate race *ansorgei* breeds discontinuously from Sierra Leone to the Democratic Republic of Congo, while the subspecies *kavirondensis* breeds in Western Kenya. The lack of Uganda records is perhaps due to confusion with the more widespread Little Grey Greenbul *A. gracilis*.

Pale Wren Warbler *Calamonastes undosus*

On 19 September 2000 one was discovered in grass and acacia scrub in Lake Mburo National Park by Malcolm Wilson and party (see *Scopus* 23: 44–45). It is known across the border in North-West Tanzania, so its arrival was not unexpected, but to date this is the only Uganda record. Accepted by EARC.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Added to the Uganda list in November 2001 when a small party was found at Kibimba

rice scheme by Malcolm Wilson. The species has since consolidated its range and is now found throughout most towns and villages of Uganda, with records received from the north-west, south-west, south, east and central regions. Indeed, only the far north-east has yet to provide records.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

The first Uganda record of this West African species involved eight birds found in Semliki National Park on 26 December 2002 by David Gee and Fay Enright. Accepted by the EARC. This was followed by a sighting in the same area on 7 June 2003 by K.D. Dijkstra and Godfrey Bakyesiima, and then further records in 2005, 2006 and January 2011.

Species known from before 1980, and for which there are recent post-Atlas records

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*

There are two or three old records, the last from Kidepo in 1966. Recent evidence has shown the species as still present in Kidepo. A fine photograph was taken there by Byekwaso Blasio on 24 May 2010 and a single bird was seen by Lotuk Benard in April 2011.

Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius*

Included in the Atlas on the strength of two specimens from the Achwa River on the Uganda-Sudan border, the first undated, the second collected on 9 December 1913 (Jackson & Sclater 1938). There are several recent records of single birds from the River Nile in Murchison Falls National Park. Photographs have been published – the most recent taken on 13 March 2011 by John Lofgreen, and which appears on the *Nature Uganda* website.

Forbes's Plover *Charadrius forbesi*

One was photographed at Lake Nabugabo on 27 May 2010 by Fred Hodgson. Accepted by the EARC. This was the fourth record for Uganda, the third having come from the same site on 20 February 1971. The following year (2011) an adult was recorded at the same site by the author and Ian Little.

Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

A bird found and identified by the author at Entebbe on 4 September 2010, and photographed together with a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* and a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, represents the second Ugandan record. Accepted by the EARC. The first record was from Entebbe Airport on 25 September 1966 (Pearson 1972).

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*

There have been several recent reports from Kidepo Valley National Park, and near Moroto, the most recent concerning two birds flushed in the park by the author on 25 April 2011 (see *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 18(2)). Old records from Karamoja are given by Jackson (1926) and Jackson & Sclater (1938).

African Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*

A group led by Harriet Kemigisha had excellent views of a bird in the Semliki Valley on 24 January 2011. A full description has been received. This represents only the

second record for Uganda, the first involving a female collected at Ntandi in the Bwamba Forest, Semliki Valley on 8 December 1968 (Friedmann & Williams 1971).

Red-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus atroflavus*

There have been several recent records from Semliki Valley, including a report by Phil Gregory (*Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 18(2)). The Atlas gives records from Bwamba Forest in 1963 and Ntandi in 1967.

African Piculet *Sasia africana*

Records from Semliki include a report by Phil Gregory (*Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 18(2)) and most recently by Harriet Kemigisha and group of two pairs on 24 January 2011. These are the first since the earlier records, all from Bwamba in the 1960s.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Birds were trapped and ringed by the author at Gaba on 19 November 2010 and 20 March 2011. Five birds trapped at the same site between 19 November and 2 December 1967 (Pearson 1972) and one trapped there on 4 December 2000 by Malcolm Wilson represent the only other unequivocal Uganda records.

Black-backed Cisticola *Cisticola eximius*

Records in recent years from grasslands in Murchison Falls National Park have included those from the warden, this author and Derek Pomeroy. Apart from an anonymous Murchinson Falls National Park report this species had not been recorded in Uganda since Jackson & Sclater wrote in 1938.

Rock-loving Cisticola *Cisticola aberrans*

There are recent records from Kidepo Valley National Park, with sightings and photographic evidence by the author, Achilles Byaruhanga and Harriet Kemigisha from 2010 and 2011. There was just one earlier record, also from Kidepo (Elliott, 1972).

Red-fronted Warbler *Spiloptila rufifrons*

Confirmed as being present in Kidepo Valley National Park, most recently by the author on 25 April 2011. The only older record involves a bird seen in Karamoja in November 1965 (Mann 1971).

Pale Prinia *Prinia somalica*

Seen by the author in Kidepo Valley National Park on 17–20 January 2010 and 25 April 2011. Otherwise known only from a single bird collected on Mt Moroto in 1963 (Friedmann 1966).

Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa lendu*

There have been several recent records from Bwindi Impenetrable National Forest. Otherwise known in Uganda from a single bird collected in Bwindi in 1960 (Keith & Twomey 1968).

Orange Tufted Sunbird *Cinnyris bouvieri*

Recorded fairly regularly in recent years. It was considered scarce in the Atlas which could report no records since 1972.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*

A bird was photographed in Kidepo Valley National Park in March 2010, and three

birds were seen there on 25 April 2011. Considered rare and local by the Atlas which mentions records from Kidepo in August 1966.

Notes on species recorded in Uganda before 1980 but not since

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare with just two records, from Queen Elizabeth National Park January 1969 and Muko, Kabale, January 1970.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*

Square-bracketed in the Atlas as unproven, but a record by Chapin (1932) of three birds at Katwe near Lake Edward in January 1927 appears to have been overlooked.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Now very scarce. Birds were shot in western Uganda at Lake Nakivali in November 1925 and at Lake Mogishu in December 1938, and there were sight records from Queen Elizabeth National Park in January 1966, December 1969 and (up to 4) during December/January 1970/71 (Pearson & Turner 1986).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

The only definite record is from Butiaba, Lake Albert, on 13 November 1901 (Jackson 1926).

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*

The Atlas gives only three records, all before 1935; at the north end of Lake Kyoga, on Lake Bunyonyi and at Lake Kayumba where a male was collected on 20 November 1933.

Chestnut-flanked Goshawk *Accipiter castanilius*

A single male was collected in Bwamba Forest on 1 April 1963 (Friedmann 1966).

Shelley's Francolin *Francolinus shelleyi*

The only record is of three females collected at Murema, south-west Uganda, by Doggett in April 1903, now in the Natural History Museum, Tring.

Orange River Francolin *Francolinus levaillantoides*

Few Uganda records. Seen on Mt Moroto in 1913, and three birds were collected there in May 1963 (Friedmann 1966). Then seen in hilly country in Kidepo Valley National Park in August 1966 (Elliott 1972).

Little Crake *Porzana parva*

The sole record is of four females collected by G.F. Archer, with three others seen, in a swamp near Butiaba on 6 December 1901 (Jackson & Sclater 1938).

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

There is a single old record of one at Entebbe on 20 March 1915 (Meinertzhagen 1922).

Pallas's or Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

The only record is of a first summer bird that remained at Entebbe between 16 April and 25 September 1966 (Pearson 1971, Mann 1971).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

Known only from a sight record from Entebbe dated 6 August 1950 which was accepted by Britton & Brown (1974).

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*

Known from a few specimens collected between Kampala and Jinja early last century (van Someren 1916, 1932, Jackson & Sclater 1938). A report from West Nile in April 1966 is unsubstantiated.

Bates's Nightjar *Caprimulgus batesi*

There are just three definite Uganda records of this Central African rain forest species, the last being a bird collected at Nkarara (now in Semliki National Park) in July 1967 (Friedmann & Williams 1968).

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Due to confusion with other swifts this species is undoubtedly overlooked. A bird collected at Mt Moroto and assigned to the race *brehmorum* represents the only reliable record (Pearson & Turner 1986).

Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*

The Atlas gives just two old specimen records from south-east Uganda as definite: Bosoga November 1984 (Jackson 1902) and Mudama (Jackson & Sclater 1938).

Singing Bush-Lark *Mirafra cantillans*

The Atlas mentions specimens collected at Kumi, April 1913, and Soroti, November 1917, and it was recorded in Kidepo Valley National Park in August 1966 (Elliott 1972). Other more recent records have been received, but with insufficient supporting detail.

Pink-breasted Lark *Mirafra poecilosterna*

The Atlas gives a single record, a male collected north of Moroto in January 1913.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis*

Recorded early last century from Mt Moroto and Mt Napak (van Someren 1921, 1922), and listed anonymously for Kidepo Valley National Park.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

The only record is of a bird feeding with Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* at Entebbe on 4 December 1966 (Pearson 1972).

Sassi's Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus lorenzi*

The only record is of a specimen collected in the Bwamba Lowlands in Semliki on 17 June 1967 (Friedmann & Williams 1968).

Yellow-throated Nicator *Nicator vireo*

Three were collected in Bwamba Forest in July 1945 (van Someren & van Someren 1949) and several more specimens subsequently (Friedmann 1966, Friedmann & Williams 1971). Although recent sight records have been reported from Semliki no descriptions have been offered.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

The Atlas gives just two specimen records, both from Moroto in 1917: one in January (van Someren 1921), the other, in December, examined at the American Museum of Natural History and bearing a Meinertzhagen & Turner label.

Forest Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucosticta*

Known from a single bird collected in Bwamba Forest on 23 July 1960 (Keith & Twomey 1968). Recent reports from Semliki Valley have not been accompanied by adequate description.

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes*

The only record is of a bird seen in Kidepo Valley National Park on 15 October 1969 by A.P. Zeigler (Pearson & Turner 1986).

Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata*

There were confirmed records in the 1960s from the West Nile region (J. Mackenzie-Grievies) and from the Queen Elizabeth National Park (see Britton 1980).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

One was collected at Mweya in Queen Elizabeth National Park on 24 November 1970 by M.P.L. Fogden (Pearson & Turner 1986).

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*

The only satisfactory records are from the southeast. Birds were trapped and ringed at Kachong'a and Lake Bisina in late March 1971; another was seen at Lake Bisina on 2 April 1972 (Rolfe & Pearson 1973).

Turner's Eremomela *Eremomela turneri*

A specimen collected in the 1930s from Nyondo Forest, Kigezi, on the Uganda/Democratic Republic of Congo border (Jackson & Sclater 1938) is the only record.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Found to be common in the Cheptui and Chebonnet valleys of northwest Elgon between December and March 1971–1972, mainly at 2500–3000 m. Two were also trapped and ringed on 19 December 1971 at Lake Bisina, thought to be on passage (Rolfe & Pearson 1973). There appear to have been no records since, although a Finnish-ringed bird was recovered in central Uganda on 29 December 1976 (Dowsett *et al.* 1988).

Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis*

The only record concerns a pair of the race *slatini* collected at Hakitengya in the Semliki Valley in October 1946 (van Someren & van Someren 1949).

Wailing Cisticola *Cisticola lais*

Known only from Mt Moroto where it was collected by Lynes (1930) and six more specimens (including three juveniles) were taken in May 1963 (Friedmann 1966).

Grey-headed Batis *Batis orientalis*

Because of confusion with Black-headed Batis *B. minor*, the only unequivocal record is of a male collected on Mt Moroto on 12 May 1963 (Friedmann 1966).

Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*

The only records concern a pair of the race *salvadori* collected at Sebei, Mt Elgon, in February 1890 (Sharpe 1891) and birds of the race *emini* in Arua district (Jackson & Sclater 1938).

Fiery-breasted Bushshrike *Malaconotus cruentus*

Several specimens were collected from the Bwamba lowlands in the Semliki Forest between 1957 and the late 1960s (Williams 1957, Friedmann 1966, Friedmann & Williams 1968). It has not been recorded since.

Red-eyed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis*

Seen and collected in Bwamba lowlands July–September 1944 (van Someren & van Someren 1949), and collected again there in November 1971 (Friedmann & Williams 1971).

Red-bellied Malimbe *Malimbus erythrogaster*

The only definite record concerns a specimen collected from Bwamba Forest in the Semliki Valley (van Someren & van Someren 1949). Reports from Budongo Forest remain unsubstantiated.

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