

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* at Lutembe Bay, Uganda

Lutembe bay is a sheltered shallow bay on the northern shores of Lake Victoria near Entebbe International Airport with scattered mud islands often covered by water hyacinth. It has many Palaearctic migrants, particularly huge congregations of gulls and terns. Interesting species such as Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* and Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* have been found as vagrant visitors by diligently searching the masses of terns, ducks and waders.

On the late afternoon of 8 December 2010 I observed a *Calidris* wader which recalled a Red Knot *C. canuta*, a species with which I am familiar in the UK. I informed my teammate Henry Seguya and we managed to get our boatman to paddle us a bit closer. The bird appeared to be an adult in non-breeding plumage and its general size and dark spotting on the breast sides led me to think that it might be a Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*. Unfortunately it became nervous and flew to another island and we were unable to pursue it before darkness fell. I was, however, able to take some record shots. I circulated the best of four poor photographs to a few birding colleagues for their opinion, and the general consensus favoured Red Knot rather than Great Knot.

I returned to Lutembe on the 20 December 2010, together with Achilles Byaruhanga and Michael Opiyi and after some three hours of searching the bird was located on a muddy island in a group of other waders: Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, Little stints *Calidris minuta*, Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* and Curlew sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*. Good photographs were captured by Achilles which showed clearly that the bird was a Great Knot.



Among several comments on the new photograph, the following is a quote from Dick Forsman, "This image clearly shows that the bird is a Great Knot, not a Red Knot as has been suggested. The proportions..... suggest Great Knot, with a big body and a comparatively small head, a rather long and slightly decurved bill (longer than Red Knot), which is rather deep at the base but tapers clearly towards the tip. The most striking plumage feature is the spotted side of the breast, which is typical for Great Knot

compared to Red. The facial pattern also differs. In Great Knot the pale supercilium is broken in front of the eye by the dark loreal marking and does not reach the base of the bill, while in Red Knot the supercilium is brighter and reaches the bill, and the dark loreal stripe is more clearly defined."

This constitutes the first record of Great Knot for Uganda and East Africa. There are a few recent records from southern Africa: from South Africa where a bird returned to Langebaan Lagoon in four successive winters 2000–2003 (Cohen & Winter 2003), from Mozambique in December 2004 and (3 birds) September 2008, and from Namibia in November 2008 (Engels 2009).

Acknowledgement

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References

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White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis* in Tanzania

There is only one documented record of the White-throated Swallow for East Africa. Britton (1980) lists the species on the basis of “a male collected over the open waters of Lake Jipe, NE Tanzania, on 25 July 1957”. There have now been further reports from Tanzania. Two records have been accepted by the East African Rarities Committee as the second and third for Tanzania:

A bird photographed by NEB at the Kapunga rice scheme on the southern edge of the Usangu Flats (approx. 8°40' S, 34°05' E) on 10 July 1995. It was feeding along the concrete irrigation channels and perching on emergent rushes.

Six birds found by David Moyer at Ihefu Swamp on the eastern Usangu Flats (8°21' S, 34°32' E, 1016 m) on 22 September 1997, one of which was photographed.

More recently, on 20 August 2004, NEB & EMB watched at least 11 birds in three groups along a short stretch of the Manonga River, upstream from Lake Kitangire at 4°04' S, 34°14' E in the Eyasi Basin. They were perching on fish traps and feeding over the slow-moving river. Then on 31 July 2006 John Whittle and Paul Oliver watched a single bird on the Mara River, in Serengeti NP west of Kogatende Ranger Post. JW was familiar with this species from many visits to South Africa.

These new records probably reflect an increase in observer effort rather than any significant extension of the non-breeding range, but the latter cannot be ruled out. The dates suggest northward post-breeding movement as would be expected for this southern African breeding species. In Zambia it is a locally common intra-African migrant and non-breeding visitor from March to mid December, with far fewer records in northern than in central areas (Dowsett *et al.* 2008).

References

- Britton, P.L. (ed.). 1980. *Birds of East Africa*. Nairobi: East Africa Natural History Society.
- Dowsett, R.J., Aspinwall, D.R. & Dowsett-Lemaire, F. 2008. *The Birds of Zambia*. An atlas and handbook. Liege, Belgium: Tauraco Press and Aves a.s.b.l.

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