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Editorial

A report was posted on SA Birdnet in July 2013 by a renowned birder claiming to have seen two species in north western Namibia new to Namibia (there was a hint of a third) and indeed new to the southern African subregion. This person also claimed to have visited the site where Angola Cave Chat is known to occur and to have made an overnight foray into Angola to see Swierstra's Spurfowl.

These last claims set alarm bells ringing as some who had seen the Angola Cave Chat were adamant that the vehicle purportedly used could not possibly have accessed the terrain and also that it is not possible to reach the area where Swierstra's Spurfowl occurs in Angola on a single overnight trip unless there is another population of these birds a lot further to the south. This makes the

Suiderhof 05/04/2013 © Johan Fourie

Christus Kirche 06/08/2013 © Dawid van der Merwe

Layard's Tit-Babbler *Parisoma layardi* : North-western Range Extension in Namibia

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Layard's Tit-Babbler is endemic to southern Africa and occurs in western Namibia from the Orange River northwards to the 20th degree of latitude in the Wêreldsend area, in quarter degree square 2013BB (Berruti 1997). Its habitat requirements are, *inter alia,* arid and semi-arid shrublands on rocky hillsides and outcrops (Dean 2005). It also occurs in karroid vegetation away from mountains (Berruti 1997).

In April 2005 and again in October 2005, the author recorded Layard's Tit-Babbler in the Otjihipa Mountains in north-western Namibia. The Otjihipa Mountains are part of the Great Escarpment in the extreme north-western part of Namibia and form the eastern boundary of the Marienfluss Valley. The first sighting was from the bottom of a kloof just before it enters the Marienfluss, in quarter degree square 1712AD. The second was from the 1 836 m high peak, 4 km south of the Kunene River, in 1712BC. On both occasions only one bird was recorded.

The Otjihipa records are 360 km to the northwest of Wêreldsend and at the time were thought to represent an isolated population. However, in May 2012 the author recorded Layard's Tit-Babbler in another locality along the Great Escarpment to the northwest of Wêreldsend. This record was from scrub on the southern slopes of a freestanding mountain, 32 km to the northwest of Puros in 1812DB. The particular mountain is situated on the watershed between the Hoarusib and Khumib Rivers and is part of the Etendeka Mountains. This record is 220 km to the northwest of Wêreldsend, more than halfway between Wêreldsend and the Otjihipa Mountains.

These new records are all from mountainous terrain and represent a considerable range extension for Layard's Tit-Babbler, almost to the Angolan border. As the Serra Cafema Mountains are the continuation of the Otjihipa Mountains into Angola and boast similar vegetation, Layard's Tit-Babbler most probably also occurs there. Layard's Tit-Babbler was probably overlooked in the past between Wêreldsend and the Kunene River due to the remoteness of the area. Its habitat requirements of rocky slopes

(mountainous) which are difficult to access, further contributed to this. It probably occurs all along the western Great Escarpment into south-western Angola.

References

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Short Notes and Interesting Observations

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Captive African Red-eyed Bulbul Chick fed by Free Flying Adults

In Lanioturdus 45 (3) I published a story on an artificially raised African Red-eyed Bulbul being fed by free flying (wild) bulbuls (African Red-eyed Bulbul Behaviour – More Short Notes and Interesting Observations).

I have now been informed of another occurrence of this behaviour. Ulrich Hofmann found a not yet fledged African Red-eyed Bulbul chick which had obviously fallen out of a nest and decided to raise it. During the day this bird was put in a cage in the garden where it too was fed by free flying adult bulbuls that were attracted to its begging calls.

Unfortunately this story does not have a happy ending as the local Gabar Goshawk, (which Family Hofmann had named "Neil" because I had ringed it some months previously), attacked the bulbul chick through the bars of the cage and killed it.

Strange Lappet-faced Vulture Behaviour

Helmuth Stehn of Farm Smalhoek, (where White-backed Vultures were reported eating the believedly poisonous plant *Psuedogaltonia clavata* – see Lanioturdus 45(3)), reported another interesting observation regarding vultures. This time the birds concerned were Lappet-faced Vultures, a pair of which had been frequenting a certain tree adjacent to a farm road. Moulted small feathers and regurgitated hairballs were evident below the tree but there was no sign of nest building. On 18/02/2013 when driving past, Helmuth flushed one of the birds out of the grass and it flew into the tree carrying a snake in its bill. The vulture then took off again without the snake. As the tree had a fairly dense canopy Helmuth was not able to see the snake in the canopy but he did not see it falling out of the tree either.

A number of questions arise from this incident as snakes are not listed as prey for Lappet-faced Vultures and vultures are not known to either carry prey or to store it. Also, did the vulture perhaps kill this snake? Was this a case of kleptoparasitism where the vulture had driven some other predator off its snake kill? Did the vulture just happen upon a dead snake?

Whatever the answer may be this seems to be a rather unique incident.