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## First photographs of Mount Kupé Bush-Shrike *Telophorus kupeensis* in the wild

by Callan Cohen and Michael Mills from Bulletin of the African Bird Club volume 9.2, August 2002

The striking Mount Kupé Bush-shrike ***Telophorus kupeensis*** is one of the world's rarest birds and a flagship species for bird conservation in West Africa. Described by William Serle from the slopes of Mount Kupé in 1951, it went undetected until its rediscovery there in 1989 by Duncan McNiven. Concern for the tiny population due to continued forest destruction prompted the launch of the Mount Kupé Forest Project by BirdLife International in 1991. Now run by WWF, the project involves the local community in forest conservation, education and ecotourism development.

Mount Kupe Bush-Shrike  
(Callan Cohen and Michael Mills)



The project led to a number of surveys and studies of the critically endangered Mount Kupé Bush-Shrike. Only seven pairs were found despite years of intense work, but exploration of adjacent mountains recently led to the discovery of small numbers at two nearby forest sites. Nonetheless, despite the many ornithologists and birders visiting the area, probably no more than 25 individuals of this elusive species have ever been found. Recent records from the nearby Bakossi Mountains by Chris Wild, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and Bob Dowsett prompted us to visit the area in March 2002. Although the visit was brief, two pairs were located in the Edib region. One pair was observed for nearly three hours foraging in the mid-strata of primary forest, and extensive sound-recordings and videotape were obtained. The videograb images presented here are the first photographs of the species in the wild; the only other photograph is of a mist-netted bird in the hand.

Mount Kupe Bush-Shrike  
(Callan Cohen and Michael Mills)



The highlands of Cameroon are one of Africa's most important Endemic Bird Areas, harbouring 25 endemic bird species (another two occur on Bioko/Fernando Po, a tiny offshore territory of Equatorial Guinea). These include many elusive and charismatic species such as the bush-shrike, Mount

Cameroon Francolin ***Fringilla camerunensis*** and Bannerman's Turaco ***Turaco bannermani***. The little-explored Bakossi Mts potentially hold the largest population of the bush-shrike, as well as a large number of other montane Cameroon endemics such as White-throated Mountain-Babbler ***Kupeornis gilberti***. Access difficulties have preserved this extensive wilderness area that is only now starting to receive the conservation attention that it deserves.

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