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# First records for Angola of Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*, South African Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera* and Red-tailed Leaflove *Phyllastrephus scandens*

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**Primeiros registos para Angola do cuco-de-garganta-amarela *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*, andorinha-sul-africana *Petrochelidon spilodera* e chiricuata-de-cauda-vermelha *Phyllastrephus scandens*.** Desde o resumo de Dean sobre as aves de Angola em 2000, 13 novas espécies foram acrescentadas à lista de Angola. Aqui fornecemos descrições para mais três espécies registadas no extremo norte do país durante 2011. O cuco-de-garganta-amarela *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* foi visto e o seu som gravado em floresta húmida a cerca de 30 km a noroeste de Quitexe, na província do Uíge; A andorinha-sul-africana *Petrochelidon spilodera* foi visto sobre o rio Luele na lagoa Carumbo na província da Lunda Norte, juntamente com andorinhas-estriadas-grandes *Cecropis cucullata*; e a chiricuata-de-cauda-vermelha *Phyllastrephus scandens* verificou-se ser comum em floresta pantanosa na região da lagoa Carumbo. Todas as três espécies provavelmente ocorrem regularmente no país, sendo a andorinha uma ave migratória de passagem ou um visitante da época seca.

**Summary.** Since Dean's summary of Angolan birds in 2000, 13 new species have been added to the Angolan list. We provide descriptions for three additional species recorded from the far north of the country during 2011. Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was seen and sound-recorded in rainforest c.30 km north-west of Quitexe in Uíge province; South African Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera* was seen over the Luele River at Lagoa Carumbo in Lunda Norte province, in the company of Greater Striped Swallows *Cecropis cucullata*; and Red-tailed Leaflove *Phyllastrephus scandens* was found to be common in swamp forest in the Lagoa Carumbo area. All three species probably occur regularly in the country, with the swallow being a passage migrant or dry-season visitor.

Since the publication of Dean's (2000) summary of the Angolan avifauna, 13 new birds have been added to the Angolan list; 12 species as summarised by Mills & Dean (2007) plus European Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (Simmons *et al.* 2009). Two other species have been reported, but should be treated as unconfirmed. Crowned Cormorant *Phalacrocorax coronatus* was claimed from the Kunene River mouth on the border with Namibia and the adjacent sea (Paterson *et al.* 2009), but Reed Cormorant *P. africanus* was excluded only on the basis that the birds were observed along the coast, despite reports that Reed Cormorant is regular in northern coastal Namibia and is sometimes observed at sea (Hockey *et al.* 2005), and none of the diagnostic plumage differences were mentioned. In addition, Bob-tailed Weaver *Brachycope anomala* was reported from northern Angola (Sinclair 2007), although the habitat and altitude where the observation was made is more compatible with Compact Weaver *Ploceus superciliosus* (Fry & Keith 2004) and the

author could not distinguish it from this species when questioned (I. Sinclair *in litt.* 2011).

Due to the paucity of ornithological work conducted during the long civil war period from 1974 to 2002 (Ryan *et al.* 2004) and the lack of bird records from many parts of the country (Dean 2000), further surveys are likely to reveal more new species, especially in border areas. Here we report three new species for the country, all from the far north-east or north-west (see Appendix for a full list of new species subsequent to Dean 2000).

## Yellow-throated Cuckoo

Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* is described as very rare in lowland forest in the Upper Guinea region, and rare to frequent in the Central African forests of Cameroon, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, south-west Sudan and south-west Uganda (Irwin 1988). It inhabits primary forest canopy, forest edges, clearings, secondary and gallery forests, and, occasionally,

densely wooded savanna (Irwin 1988). There is no previous record from Angola (Dean 2000).

On 6–10 October 2011 MSLM explored forests on the northern escarpment of Angola in the provinces of Kwanza Sul and Uíge, together with M. Rogerson and C. Hines. Approximately 30 km north-west of Quitexe (07°57'S 15°02'E) in Uíge province, they found an active logging concession with access to substantial tracts of lowland rainforest. They established camp at 07°44'50"S 14°50'04"E (650 m altitude) and conducted preliminary bird surveys in the surrounding forest on 8–9 October.

On the early morning of 8 October MSLM observed two young *Chrysococcyx* cuckoos that were very buffy below, but did not check the colour of the feet, so although he suspected that they were Yellow-throated Cuckoos he had some doubts. However, in the early afternoon of the same day, he heard the distinctive song of a male Yellow-throated Cuckoo in the distance. A short bout of playback of pre-recorded song attracted a male Yellow-throated Cuckoo that called strongly overhead, permitting him to make sound-recordings and providing all three observers with reasonable views of its bright yellow throat bordered by green. Part of the recording can be downloaded at <http://www.birdsangola.org/downloads.htm>.

This record is the first for Angola and, given the sighting of the two juveniles, the species almost certainly breeds here. Interestingly, the species' only known host, Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus griseigularis* (Mills *et al.* 2007) was also seen several times in the area. Other host species are thought to include members of the genus *Illadopsis* (Brosset & Erard 1974); both Brown Illadopsis *I. fulvescens* and Scaly-breasted Illadopsis *I. albipectus* were found at the same locality. Anyone visiting lowland forest in northern Angola should be alert to the potential presence of this species.

### South African Cliff Swallow

South African Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera* breeds primarily on the inland plateau of South Africa in August–April, and spends the non-breeding period in the lower Congo Basin of Central Africa, with most records at this season from the western Democratic Republic of Congo (Earlé 1987, Keith *et al.* 1992, Earlé

1997, Spottiswoode 2005). It has been observed on passage in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Malawi (Earlé 1987, 1997, Dowsett *et al.* 2008). Despite Sinclair & Ryan (2003) showing the species as occurring throughout the eastern two-thirds of Angola, and Spottiswoode (2005) listing it for the country, there was as yet no record of South Africa Cliff Swallow (Traylor 1963, Dean 2000), despite being expected to 'occur on passage in eastern Luanda Norte, Luanda Sul and Moxico' (Dean 2000).

Between 29 April and 5 May 2011 we visited the Lagoa Carumbo area, Luanda Norte province (07°48'S 19°57'E; 840 m), north-east Angola, as part of a biodiversity inventory team (Huntley 2011, Mills & Dean *in press*). For five days MSLM conducted bird surveys in the areas surrounding our base camp (07°45'11"S 19°57'24"E; 790 m) on the banks of the Luele River, including open grassland en route to Capaia (08°20'S 20°14'E; 950 m), *c.* 70 km to the south.

During this period, large numbers of swallows (Hirundinidae) were present in the area, including mixed-species flocks composed mostly of Greater Striped Swallow *Cecropis cucullata*. At around midday on 30 April MSLM was observing one such flock drinking from the Luele River near the base camp, among which he spotted a rufous-rumped, square-tailed swallow which appeared to have black speckling on the throat, matching the description of South African Cliff Swallow (Keith *et al.* 1992). Unfortunately the bird disappeared before he could confirm its identity, so he returned to the same place at midday on 1 May. This time he had prolonged close views of at least two South African Cliff Swallows. Their undertails could be observed clearly and showed no white, the upper breasts had dark markings forming a faint breast-band, and they were stocky compared to Red-throated Cliff Swallow *P. rufigula*, the only congeneric previously recorded in the area (Dean 2000). On 2 May, while travelling between Lagoa Carumbo and Capaia, he observed another South African Cliff Swallow flying over open grassland on a flat sandy plateau, with a large flock of mostly Greater Striped Swallows (07°51'51"S 20°02'26"E; 1,000 m).

On 5 May, at Capaia, MSLM observed a large flock of Red-throated Cliff Swallows, on which he could clearly see the white patches in the undertail. They were also slimmer than the South

African Cliff Swallows seen at Lagoa Carumbo and lacked the dark markings on the breast.

These are the first two records of South African Cliff Swallow for Angola, although given its breeding and non-breeding ranges the species can be expected to occur regularly on passage throughout eastern Angola, and it is not impossible that some are resident in north-eastern Angola in May–August. Observers should check for the species in mixed flocks with Greater Striped Swallow, with which they seem to associate (Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* 1993; MSLM pers. obs.).

### Red-tailed Leaflove

Red-tailed Leaflove *Phyllastrephus scandens* (= Leaflove *Pyrhurus scandens*) is a Central and West African forest species that favours thickets and forest near water, especially swamp forest (Keith *et al.* 1992). Although it has never been recorded in Angola (Traylor 1963, Dean 2000), it is known to occur close to the Angolan border in southern Democratic Republic of Congo (Schouteden 1964). While the species can be difficult to see (MSLM pers. obs.), its loud and distinctive call



**Figure 1.** Red-tailed Leaflove *Phyllastrephus scandens*, Capaia, Angola, 5 May 2011; the pale grey head, generally pale underparts and russet tail are characteristic of the species, which was found to be common in swamp forests of the Lagoa Carumbo area in the north-east of the country (Jorge Palmeirim)

**Figura 1.** Chiricuata-de-cauda-vermelha *Phyllastrephus scandens*, Capaia, Angola, 5 de maio de 2011; a cabeça cinzento-clara, partes inferiores de forma geral pálidas e cauda avermelhada são características da espécie, que se verificou ser comum nas florestas pantanosas do nordeste do país (Jorge Palmeirim)

usually betrays its presence (Keith *et al.* 1992, Sinclair & Ryan 2003).

During the aforementioned biodiversity inventory expedition to Lagoa Carumbo we heard Red-tailed Leaflove daily in swamp forest, either along the Luele River near Lagoa Carumbo or along the Lóvuva River at Capaia. In addition, MSLM saw one along the Luele River and PVP & JP mist-netted another along the Lóvuva River (Fig. 1).

These are the first records of Red-tailed Leaflove for Angola. It has probably remained unrecorded because historical ornithological work in this area consisted of only two collecting trips (Dean 2001, Mills & Dean in press), and the species' favoured swampy habitat is difficult to access. We suspect that it is more widespread in Lunda Norte, and that the species may occur in any patches of swamp forest in the province.

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**Appendix.** Additions to Dean's (2000) species list for Angola.  
**Apêndice.** Adições à lista de espécies para Angola de Dean (2000).

Species	Reference	Date	Locality
Northern Royal Albatross <i>Diomedea (epomorpha) sanfordi</i>	Lambert (2001)	2 Nov 1985	Adult off Namibe (15°14'S 11°40'E)
Spectacled Petrel <i>Procellaria (aequinoctialis) conspicillata</i>	Lambert (2001)	11 Oct 1985	One off Namibe (15°09'S 11°37'E)
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaeton aethereus</i>	Lambert (2001)	29 May 1968	Adult off Namibe (15°49'S 10°41'E)
White-tailed Tropicbird <i>Phaeton lepturus</i>	Lambert (2001)	28 Apr 1986	Adult off Cuanza Sul (10°57'S 11°22'E)
Lesser Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila pomarina</i>	Meyburg <i>et al.</i> (2001)	26 Feb 1994	Satellite-tagged immature west of Mupa, Cunene (16°11'S 15°14'E)
European Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Simmons <i>et al.</i> (2009)	25 Jan 2009	One, Baía dos Tigres, Namibe (16°36'S 11°43'E)
Red Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Lambert (2001)	21 Oct 1974	79 adults off Namibe (15°26'S 11°30'E)
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Lambert (2001)	15 Oct 1986	Adult in partial breeding plumage at Luanda
Greater Crested Tern <i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	Dean <i>et al.</i> (2002)	no date	Regular in far south-western Namibe province
Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Lambert (2001)	9 Oct 1988	Adult in breeding plumage at Luanda
Lemon Dove <i>Columba larvata</i>	Mills & Dowd (2007)	23 Sep 2005	Kumbira forest, Cuanza Sul (11°09'S 14°17'E)
Yellow-throated Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx flavigularis</i>	this study	8 Oct 2011	Male 30 km north-west of Quitexe, Uíge (07°45'S 14°50'E)
Pink-billed Lark <i>Spizocorys conirostris</i>	Mills (2006)	8 Aug 2005	Two near Xangongo, Cunene (16°44'S 15°08'E)
South African Cliff Swallow <i>Petrochelidon spilodera</i>	this study	1 May 2011	Lagoa Carumbo, Lunda Norte (07°45'S 19°57'E)
Red-tailed Leafhopper <i>Phyllastrephus scandens</i>	this study	30 Apr 2011	Lagoa Carumbo, Lunda Norte (07°45'S 19°57'E)
Singing Cisticola <i>Cisticola cantans</i>	Dean <i>et al.</i> (2003)	10 Mar 1958	Female collected by G. Heinrich 60 km north of Sombo, Lunda Sul (08°44'S 20°59'E)