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assistance in the field. F. Dowsett-Lemaire and R.J. Dowsett are thanked for their unpublished records of *P. xavieri* and L.D.C. Fishpool for comments on the manuscript.

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### First documented records of Green-throated Sunbird *Nectarinia rubescens* for Nigeria, with a discussion of the distinctive race *crossensis*

On the evening of 4 July 1995, MTEH observed a sunbird perched on a treetop in the middle of the village of Buru in Taraba State, Nigeria (7°1'N 10°53'E). Buru is situated in an area of relict forest and derived savanna whose annual precipitation (2563 mm at Abong, 15 km west of Buru: Bawden & Tuley 1966) is due to orographic rainfall generated by the Mambilla Plateau, a few kilometres to the east. On its southern flank, the village abuts directly onto the forest; in other directions it is surrounded by derived savanna. Though the sunbird was over 50 m away, a 30 × 80 telescope permitted adequate views in the last rays of sunlight. In its warm, chocolate-brown coloration it closely resembled a male Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Nectarinia senegalensis* or Buff-throated Sunbird *N. adelberti*. Like *N. senegalensis*, it had an

iridescent emerald-green forehead, but unlike that bird its throat and breast were the same brown as the rest of the body. The only other distinction from *N. senegalensis* noted was that this bird appeared a little more compact in shape, and may have been slightly smaller. The overall colour and the lack of contrast between the throat and breast and the rest of the body eliminate all species except Green-throated Sunbird *N. rubescens*: it was a male of the subspecies *crossensis*, which lacks the green throat of the nominate race (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1973).

On 26 October 1996 JCB saw a sunbird in a tree of 3–4 m height, in a small patch of sub-montane woodland at c. 900 m elevation at Anape, 6 km west of Obudu Cattle Ranch Hotel, Cross River State (6°26'N 9°23'E). When seen initially from both below and above it appeared uniformly dark and was first considered a Copper Sunbird *N. cuprea*. However, as it moved down in the tree and into sunlight, a metallic green forehead and crown became apparent. A thin moustachial stripe running from the gape to below the eye was also noted, and was considered to be of a more turquoise-green coloration than the green of the head. Upper- and underparts were a uniformly dark chocolate-brown. The bird had a noticeably upright posture and was larger than a nearby male Preuss's Sunbird *N. preussi*. These features, combined with the lack of any green on the throat and breast, were indicative of *N. r. crossensis*. The bird was observed for c. 30 s before it moved into other trees further down the hillside.

A third sighting of *N. r. crossensis* was obtained still further west, in the Afi River Forest Reserve (6°19'N 8°59'E) near Buanchor, by RD and the Nigerian Important Bird Areas team, on 7 December 1997. The bird was feeding in a large flowering tree in the company of other sunbirds, including Green *Anthreptes rectirostris*, Blue-headed *N. cyanolaema*, Johanna's *N. johannae* (one male) and Buff-throated *N. adelberti* (two males).

There appear to be very few published records of *N. r. crossensis*, which was formerly known only from a small area of adjacent western Cameroon. The first adult male was collected just west of Bamenda (5°55'N 10°10'E), on 26 May 1948 (Serle 1950); the second at Mamfe (5°45'N 9°20'E), on 10 March 1953, together with a female that appeared not to differ from the female *N. r. rubescens* (Serle 1963). We have been unable to find any other literature records from western Cameroon referring explicitly to *crossensis*. The limits of this race's range remain unknown. The nominate form is found to the south at Mundemba (Rodewald *et al.* 1994, A.A. Green *in litt.*), Kumba (Serle 1953, 1965), Mt Kupe and the Bakossi Mts (R.J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.*) and, to the east, at Kounden (Louette 1981) and Bamale (Serle 1963). There is a sight record (race unknown) from Baro (Green & Rodewald 1996), 60 km south of Mamfe and 50 km north-east of Mundemba.

Green (1990) reported sighting several Green-throated Sunbirds at the Kam River, Gashaka-Gumti Game Reserve (now NP), in February 1988 (no subspecies mentioned), although this record was omitted by Elgood *et al.* (1994). Our three

records confirm its presence in Nigeria, apparently at the north-western edge of its range.

The validity of *crossensis* as a separate race was considered unproven by White (1965) and Eisentraut (1973), presumably because of the limited number of specimens. Louette (1981) first suggested that *crossensis* might be a hybrid between *N. rubescens* and *N. adelberti*, but later accepted it as valid (Louette 1982). The observation of *N. adelberti* in the same tree at Afi River is therefore interesting, although it does not necessarily invalidate Louette's (1982) opinion that they are a typical allospecies pair. Indeed, at Afi River, both possibly reach the extreme limits of their respective ranges, and at least *N. adelberti* is known to make seasonal movements (Grimes 1987, Elgood *et al.* 1994). Although the glossy forehead suggests otherwise, the possibility of *crossensis* being either an eclipse plumage, or derived from one, can not, as yet, be entirely ruled out. Eclipse plumages are indeed known to be very variable in some other sunbirds (Skead 1967). In view of the above, the precise delimitation of the ranges of *N. r. crossensis*, *N. r. rubescens* and *N. adelberti*, and their relations, behaviour and vocalisations would be worthy of further research.

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