

MISIDENTIFICATION OF A MARSH WARBLER *ACROCEPHALUS PALUSTRIS* IN MALAWI  
 Benson & Benson (1977: 255) report a specimen of an Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* handled at Zomba on 11 December 1974. At the request of R.J. Dowsett, who was concerned by claims for the occurrence of both this species and Upcher's Warbler *H. languida* in Zambia, the description and photograph, which are on file in the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, have been re-studied by Dr D.J. Pearson. As a result, he (pers. comm., 14 March 1978) has concluded that the bird is not a *Hippolais* at all, but a Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, already well known in Malawi. A copy of Dr Pearson's commentary has been deposited in the University Museum with the description and photograph. The salient points, indicating *A. palustris* rather than any *Hippolais*, are:

Description: brownish olive upperparts, yellowish underparts (ruling out any *Hippolais* except perhaps Icterine Warbler *H. icterina*, but fitting well with autumn *A. palustris*); dark greenish brown iris; dark flesh coloured tarsi; wing 64 mm (ruling out any *Hippolais* except *pallida*, but fitting also a small *palustris*), tail 48 mm (fitting *palustris* better than *pallida*).

Photograph: relatively large feet, typical of *Acrocephalus* not *Hippolais*; second primary tip equalling the fourth or perhaps exceeding it, fitting *palustris* but never *pallida*, with inner web notch falling between pp. 7 and 8, much too high for *pallida* but normal for *palustris*; tip of second primary pointed as in *palustris*, not rounded as in *H. pallida* or *languida*. Dr Pearson also showed the description and photograph to G.C. Backhurst, who independently concluded that the bird was an *Acrocephalus palustris*.

Thus, so far there is no evidence for the occurrence of *Hippolais pallida* in Malawi (nor do I know of any published record from Zambia). Moreau (1972: 97) quotes the occurrence of *pallida* in the Rukwa Valley, south-eastern Tanzania, so that it may occur at least occasionally in Malawi as well as Zambia.

#### REFERENCE

BENSON, C.W. & BENSON, F.M. 1977. *The birds of Malawi*. Limbe, Malawi: D.W.K. Macpherson (sponsor).

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Received 3 November 1978.

Scopus 2: 99, December 1978

SPECIES-PAIR ASSOCIATION OF STONECHAT AND BLACK-LORED CISTICOLA IN SOUTH-WEST TANZANIA Mixed-species flocking in birds has been the subject of a considerable body of literature. Less attention has been directed, however, at the regular consorting of a pair of species in twos or small groups rather than in true flocks. One of the most familiar of such associations in the Palaearctic region is that between the Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* and the Coal Tit *Parus ater*. In English mixed woodlands these two birds are not only members of foraging flocks with other species in the winter but also frequently occur close together in small numbers during the breeding season.

Two Palaearctic migrants, the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and the Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*, apparently associate in this way in Africa (Tree 1972, Harpum 1978) although there is no inform-

Scopus 2: 99-101, December 1978



Benson, C. W. 1978. "Misidentification of a marsh warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* in Malawi." *Scopus* 2, 99–99.

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