
THICK-BILLED FLOWERPECKER- A FIRST RECORD FOR BALI

by
Martin Hale

(received 10 January 1996)

On 21 June 1994 I spent the morning birding at Luhur Temple, north of Tabanan, Bali (8°22'S, 115°13'E). This was my first birding on Bali, and since I was seeing a number of species that were unfamiliar to me, I was recording a description for each new species seen, and then consulting Mackinnon and Phillips (1993) for identification.

After I had been birding for a couple of hours I obtained very good views of an unfamiliar Flowerpecker *Dicaeum* sp. The plumage and structural features observed fitted well with the description and illustration of Thick-billed Flowerpecker *D. agile* in Mackinnon and Phillips (1993), and the bird was thus identified as this species. The habitat was the edge of disturbed forest at an altitude of ca. 830m.

At this stage I was unaware that this represented a first record for Bali. This was subsequently pointed out by Victor Mason.

The descriptions of Thick-billed Flowerpecker given in the various field guides that cover the region are somewhat lacking in detail. It was not until I had had a chance to view specimens at the British Museum of Natural History, Tring, that I was able to fully confirm the identification,

Description:

- ✎ . A small Flowerpecker, about 5 inches in length. CP
- ✎ . Upper parts: Brownish, the wings of a similar colour, with an olive "wedge" in the remiges. The upper tail coverts also olive.
- ✎ . Under parts: Dirty white, with some streaking on the breast. Bare parts: Iris reddish. The bill was thick, unusually so for a Flowerpecker.
- ✎ . No call was heard.

The bird was observed for about one minute, through 10x40 binoculars, at 10 to 15 metres range, the bird about 10 feet up, on a tree, at the forest edge. The light was good.

Identification:

The above description, in general terms, fits published descriptions of adult Thick-billed Flowerpecker, although the size estimate is on the high side. An immature would be expected to show less distinct streaking, and the belly and undertail coverts faintly tinged yellow (King *et al*

1975).

I am not aware of any field guide that mentions bright olive-green margination to the secondaries for Thick-billed Flowerpecker, which creates an obvious olive-green "wedge" in the remiges (see, however, Roberts 1991, and Lekagul & Round 1991, *ed*), or that mentions olive-green upper tail coverts. These features were however consistently shown in specimens. Further, one specimen of the west Java race *finschi* showed bright olive-green margination to all of the remiges and some of the wing coverts, as well as showing olive-green uppertail coverts.

The apparently characteristic habit that this species has of wagging the tail from side to side when perched was not noted. Neither were the whitish-tipped tail feathers which this species should show, although Lekagul and Round (1991) state that this latter feature is difficult to see.

Six other species of Flowerpecker are currently recorded from Bali, namely Orange-bellied *D. trigonostigma*, Plain *D. concolor*, Scarlet-headed *D. Trochileum*, Blood-breasted *D. sanguinolentum*, Red-chested *D. maugei*, and Yellow-vented *D. chrysorrheum* (Mason and Jarvis 1989, Green 1991).

Adult males of the above species are clearly ruled out from this record. Adult females of Orange-bellied, Scarlet-headed, Blood-breasted and Red-chested show an orange, red or yellow wash to the rump, whilst females of Plain and Yellow-vented closely resemble the male. No adult female of any of these species, with the possible exception of Yellow-vented, shows an obvious olive-green "wedge" in the remiges. Also, none, with the exception of Yellow-vented, show the streaked underparts exhibited by this bird, although a greyish wash to the breast of female Blood-breasted of the Sumba race *wiilhelminae* might appear as indistinct streaking under some circumstances. This latter race also shows a bill shape tending towards the rather thick, short bill of Thick-billed, as do some specimens of Red-chested (*pers obs*). Bill shape otherwise rules out all other species considered above anyway.

Of immatures of the species listed above, immature Orange-bellied is rather like the female but without yellow or orange. Immature Plain has a fleshy or yellowish bill, a feature that is indeed shown by immatures of many species of flowerpecker. Immature Scarlet-headed has an orange patch on the rump. Immature Yellow-vented has pale yellow under tail coverts, but does show greyish underparts with dull greyish brown streaks. Furthermore the iris may be red-orange. However, the rather thin bill shown by this species clearly rules it out, (King *et al.* 1975, Mackinnon and Phillips 1993). No information is available for immatures of Blood-breasted and Red-chested, although it seems unlikely that either would show a red iris.

Distribution:

Thick-billed Flowerpecker occurs widely in Asia. Within Indonesia it is known from Sumatra and Java, and the Lesser Sundas east to Timor (Mackinnon and Phillips 1993, V. Mason *in till*).

Although considered resident within its' known range its' occurrence on Bali is not unexpected. Indeed Mackinnon and Phillips (1993) state that it could occur.

Acknowledgements:

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BAILLON'S CRAKE, A NEW SPECIES FOR BALI

by
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On 31 March 1995, while on a Bali Bird Walk in an area of ricefields between Ubud and Sayan, 08°31'S, 115°16'E, excellent views were obtained of a Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, which stood for 20 seconds motionless on an intervening grassy bund before slipping into the contiguous green growth, some 30 cm in height. Conspicuous were the small size, grey breast, white streaking on the mantle, and white barring on the underparts, and the lack of a supercilium (*cf* White-browed Crake *P. cinerea*).

Baillon's Crake is stated by MacKinnon & Phillips (1993) to be 'mostly a scarce winter visitor in lowlands and hills, rare south to Java, and not recorded in Bali', while White & Bruce (1986) mentions records in Wallacea from Flores and Seram. Its occurrence in Bali was to be expected.

This observation was shared with Maria & Hans Soderstrom, Philippe Deymes, Steve Last and Brian Greeves.