

The status of the name '*occidentalis* Chappuis' for the Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowi*

by Robert J. Dowsett & Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

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Del Hoyo & Collar (2014) mentioned a race *occidentalis* of Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowi* Cabanis, 1882. Sinclair & Ryan (2010), in describing the vocalisations of *C. mechowi*, stated that 'in C Africa song is faster and more rapidly delivered (may be undescribed species, tentatively named *C. occidentalis* by C. Chappuis)'. This name is also mentioned on the Avibase website (avibase.bsc-eoc.org/). None of these authors produced a reference in support of Chappuis having made this suggestion in print (A. Elliott, D. Lepage & P. G. Ryan *in litt.* 2015). Thanks to C. Chappuis himself (pers. comm. 2015), we know that this name was mentioned tentatively (as *Cercococcyx mechowi*'*occidentalis*') by Chappuis (2000: 7). Chappuis (1974: 215–216) had merely described the vocalisations recorded in Cameroon/Nigeria. On p. 60 of the booklet accompanying his CDs (Chappuis 2000) he described the vocalisations of *C. mechowi* from north-east Gabon and what he labelled *Cercococcyx* 'x' from south-east Nigeria, thus recognising that this species has different dialects. He mentioned having tried playback in Ghana of the Gabon bird, with no response. Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2014: 197) pointed out that the Sanaga River in Cameroon is the region where the Upper Guinea dialect is replaced by that of Lower Guinea (*cf.* Fig. 1).

That there are distinct differences between the songs of this cuckoo in parts of west-central Africa has long been known. Dowsett-Lemaire (1997: 24–28) discussed this problem, and presented comparative sonograms from the Cameroon–Nigeria border (based on Chappuis 1974), Odzala, Congo-Brazzaville (F. Dowsett-Lemaire) and Bwamba, Uganda (Keith & Gunn 1971). We have heard the song of the Upper Guinea population in Ghana (Ankasa and Tano Ofin), Togo (Assoukoko and Bénali) and Cameroon (Kimbi River and Bakossi), and the Lower Guinea population in Cameroon (Ndongo, Boumba-Bek, Nki and Lobéké), Equatorial Guinea (Monte Alen), Congo-Brazzaville (Nouabalé-Ndoki, Odzala

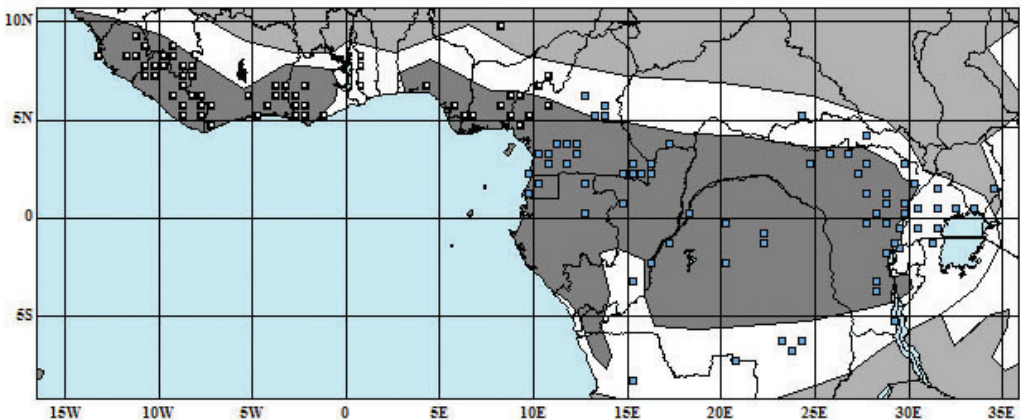


Figure 1. Distribution of Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowi*, a species essentially of the forests of the Guineo-Congolian biome (heavy shading): open squares represent birds known or suspected to belong to the Upper Guinea population which is vocally distinctive (see text).

and Léfini) and Uganda (Bwamba). In addition, we have listened to recordings from several localities in Uganda (Bwamba south to Bwindi) and one from Ghana (Ankasa) on xeno-canto (<http://www.xeno-canto.org>, accessed February 2015).

However, no morphological differences are known to exist between the two populations (e.g. Payne 2005; R. B. Payne *in litt.* 2015). Chappuis (2000: 60) did suggest that birds of the Lower Guinea population (*mechowi*), with the higher pitched voice, are larger than Upper Guinea birds. Chapin's (1928) lone specimen from Upper Guinea (Ghana) was smaller than any of his large Lower Guinea sample, but he found no colour differences and this has not been investigated further. Only two forms have ever received names—nominate *mechowi* (type locality Malange, Angola) and *wellsi* Bannerman 1919 (type locality Biteye, Cameroon)—and both are within the range of the Lower Guinea population. If morphological or molecular differences were to be found, then it is the Upper Guinea population that would require a new name. But it is clear that '*occidentalis* Chappuis' is a *nomen nudum*, and its use should be avoided at present.

Acknowledgements

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Address: Le Pouget, Sumène 30440, France, e-mail: Dowsett@aol.com

Appendix: gazetteer of localities mentioned

Ankasa, Ghana	05°10'N, 02°39'W	Lobéké, Cameroon	02°19'N, 15°46'E
Assoukoko, Togo	08°01'N, 00°38'E	Malange, Angola	09°32'S, 16°20'E
Bakossi, Cameroon	05°05'N, 09°43'E	Monte Alen, Equatorial Guinea	01°40'N, 10°15'E
Biteye, Cameroon	03°01'N, 12°22'E	Ndongo, Cameroon	02°04'N, 14°52'E
Boumba-Bek, Cameroon	02°32'N, 15°05'E	Nki, Cameroon	02°12'N, 14°39'E
Bwamba, Uganda	00°52'N, 30°05'E	Nouabalé-Ndoki, Congo-Brazzaville	02°12'N, 16°12'E
Bwindi, Uganda	01°02'S, 29°41'E	Odzala National Park, Congo-Brazzaville	00°36'N, 14°54'E
Kimbi River, Cameroon	06°36'N, 10°23'E	Tano Ofin, Ghana	06°40'N, 02°10'W
Léfini (Mah), Congo-Brazzaville	03°20'S, 15°30'E		