

## An undescribed *Muscicapa* flycatcher on Sulawesi, Indonesia

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On 20 July 1997 in Lore Lindu National Park in central Sulawesi, Indonesia, BK and PR observed a flycatcher, apparently of the genus *Muscicapa*, which was unlike any known *Muscicapa* species. The bird was at 1,025 m elevation, about 5 km south-east of the Kamarora turn-off, on the main road through the park. The habitat was secondary broadleaf evergreen forest with a few large trees still present. The flycatcher was seen about 10 m up in a tree overhanging the road and observed with binoculars and a 20x spotting scope for 4 or 5 minutes, before it disappeared. Its upperparts were a dull grey-brown, with 2 whitish wing-bars; underparts white, the throat and breast heavily dark-streaked, the throat looking dusky, while the breast showed more white; no crown streaks; no eyering; sides of head as upperparts with no distinct pale or dark markings; its broad bill looked entirely black (however, from directly underneath, PR noted that the basal ¼ looked paler greyish); the wing tip reached halfway down the tail. Through binoculars, the narrow streaks were conspicuous against the whitish breast, but the throat looked a light dusky colour, with the streaks only faintly discernible. The streaks on the throat were somewhat clearer in the spotting scope. The flycatcher made several sallies after insects inside the canopy of the tree. Its plumage appeared rather fresh. The bird appeared smaller than the Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta*, and lacked the distinct pattern on the face of that species as well as its whitish throat. Given the date, it is likely that the bird was a resident species, as the northern migratory species (such as *M. griseisticta*) are on their breeding grounds far to the north then.

On 22 July, at about 650 m elevation, at about km 31 (from Palu), on the road leading south-east from Palu through Lore Lindu National Park, BK and PR found a pair of these flycatchers in trees near the road. At least one of the birds was making some high-pitched calls that were taped. They responded quite well to the tape, giving us extended scope views at 15 m. Again, the entirely plain face with no distinct markings was striking, as was the dusky (but streaked) throat and heavily dark-streaked breast. PR noted a dark vent strap and unstreaked undertail-coverts on one of the pair. The

bill was entirely black. Both birds were in heavily abraded plumage. The habitat was a very patchy remnant of forest.

On 23 July at Dumoga Bone National Park in North Sulawesi, TL, RB and CQ observed a similar bird. It was at about 250 m elevation. The habitat was mixed primary and secondary broadleaf evergreen forest. The flycatcher was approximately 25-30 m up in a tall rather separate tree with a small feeding flock. It frequently made short sallies to catch flying insects. It was a smallish flycatcher (12-13 cm). Overall dull brown-grey upperparts, slightly darker on wings and shoulders. Head very dull greyish, 'plain-faced' without obvious eyering or marked lores. Underparts off-white with obvious (though not very contrasting) streaks on the breast. The streaks seemed to have the shape of elongated rectangles (thus somewhat between 'streaks' and 'spots'). Overall structure compact, not elongated. Although the observers had never seen Grey-streaked Flycatcher, they knew from observations of the even longer-winged Dark-sided Flycatcher *M. sibirica*, that this difference in shape was very distinctive. The wings, therefore, were probably rather short, although this character was not confirmed in the field. The eye appeared large and beady, and the bill dark (but the distance may have been too great for 100% certainty about the latter).

It seems extraordinary that this distinct form, apparently unnoticed until now, should suddenly be observed in 3 widely disparate localities.

We feel that this flycatcher is likely to be an undescribed species. While the streaks on the throat and breast suggest Grey-streaked Flycatcher, the different pattern of streaks and its smaller size indicate that it may be part of the Asian Brown Flycatcher *M. dauurica* complex, which has several tropical resident species: Brown-streaked *M. williamsoni* (Malaysia), Ashy-breasted *M. randi* (Philippines) and Sumba Brown *M. segregata* (Sumba).

A formal description of the species is not possible with this limited information, but this note is presented to call attention to its existence and to facilitate further study.

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