

Hanmer, D. 1977. Migrants at Nchalo, Malawi?
Safring News 6: 2-5.

Howells, W.W. 1971. Breeding of the Coppery Sunbird at
Salisbury, Rhodesia. Ostrich 42: 99-109.

Dale Hanmer replies:-

INTRA-AFRICAN MIGRATION OF OUR BUSH BIRDS

I would agree with Richard Brooke that bush birds are probably not continuously resident in one particular small area because of the possibility of insufficient food sources in some months. I feel that it may not be possible to equate behaviour in a small area with overall behaviour in southern Africa, nor to equate behaviour with that occurring in tropical lowlands where a more equable climate may provide food over most of the year.

Brooke gives a 12% residence rate for a small area (218 ha) near Salisbury but at Dichwe Forest (40 ha) near Mangula, Rhodesia, Talbot (1976/77) seems to have 33% apparently resident, or at least present both summer and winter. Cooper (1972) found about a 20% resident rate for the Zambezi valley between Kariba and Zumbo (which I think is rather low). My own work in the lower Zambezi, between Dona Anna and Chinde (Hanmer 1976) gives a residence rate of 52% for the not so small area (7 000 ha) round the village of Mopeia and 72% for the whole area. For the lower Shire valley, sighting figures have not yet been computed but it appears from my trapping figures that about 50% of the species netted are resident in the small area (300 ha) about my home. For the whole valley, residence rates are probably as high or higher.

I feel it is a bit sweeping to suggest that all Black Cuckoo-shrikes, Coppery and Purple-banded Sunbirds from the Rhodesian and Zambian plateaux, come to the lower Shire for the non-breeding season. I should expect most of them to be found in the Zambezi valley and on the coastal plains of Mocambique, although birds from eastern Zambia might well join highland Malawian birds in the Shire valley. Unfortunately, the literature at my disposal is scanty and equivocal on the subject. Cooper (1972) found the Black Cuckoo-shrike in the "middle" Zambezi only in the non-breeding season but the two sunbirds were found in the breeding season. Talbot (1976/77) found the Black Cuckoo-shrike and Coppery Sunbird in Dichwe Forest in the non-breeding season (although they might have been in transit) but the Purple-banded Sunbird was apparently present only during the breeding season. Hanmer (1976) found both the Black Cuckoo-shrike and the Purple-banded Sunbird to be resident in the lower Zambezi (with no noticeable influx in the off-season). Admittedly the Purple-banded Sunbird concerned was the sub-species which is supposed to be resident on the Mocambique coast (Clancey 1971). The Coppery Sunbird did not, apparently, occur in the area. Benson and Benson (1977) states that the Black Cuckoo-shrike in Malawi migrates from above 1 000 m to low valleys during the winter and that the Coppery Sunbird migrates from above 480 m to (apparently)

the Shire valley in winter, but this was taken from my personal communication to the authors. The Purple-banded Sunbird is presumably supposed to be a resident as no mention is made of movement, but I had not sent my observations to the authors before publication of "Birds of Malawi". Furthermore, the sub-species concerned in Malawi (and discussed in Hanmer 1977) is the "resident" form of the coastal plains of Mocambique. Clancey (1971) found both the Black Cuckoo-shrike and one sub-species of the Purple-banded Sunbird to be regular migrants from elsewhere in southern Africa, to southern Mocambique during the non-breeding season but he does not mention any movements in the Coppery Sunbird which is apparently marginal in southern Mocambique, along the Zambezi River near Tete and at the Zambezi/Shire confluence.

I would suggest that most highland Black Cuckoo-shrikes from South Africa, Rhodesia, Zambia and Malawi, over-winter anywhere in the Zambezi valley, the Shire valley and along the Mocambique coast. Coppery Sunbirds (which may breed in the "middle" Zambezi) go to the lower Zambezi and lower Shire rivers, as do highland Purple-banded Sunbirds which also go to the coast of Mocambique during their non-breeding season.

It would be very interesting if long term sighting/ringing studies could be carried out in the Zambian Luangwa and Kafue valleys, the Rhodesian Zambezi, Honde, Sabi/Lundi and Lusitu valleys and the Limpopo and Komati valleys in South Africa as well as on the Kwazulu coast, to monitor "migration" movements or to record increased/decreased numbers in various months. Perhaps one day it can be done.

References

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