



First Records of the Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* (Cretzschmar, 1826) (Passeriformes: Cisticolidae) in Algeria

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Abstract: The cricket warbler *Spiloptila clamans* was recorded for the first time in Algeria in October 2022 in the region of Timiaouine, the extreme south of Algeria. The breeding record of this species is considered the first for Algeria and the second for North Africa (after Morocco). This record is a new addition to the avifauna of Algeria.

Key words: *Spiloptila clamans*, birds, North Africa, new breeding record

Introduction

The family Cisticolidae contains 26 genera and 167 species (GILL et al. 2021), including the cricket warbler *Spiloptila clamans* (Cretzschmar, 1826) which is the sole member of the genus *Spiloptila*. It is widespread in the Northern Afrotropics realm, mainly in the Sahel zone, breeding commonly from Southern Mauritania and Northern Senegal east to Sudan and Western Eritrea. It is largely resident but making some migrations, which are apparently governed by the local rains (SHIRIHAI & SVENSSON 2018). The species inhabits the sub-Saharan dry thorny scrub vegetation and grassy areas, with some northward extension into more arid Saharan habitats or some southward spread into savanna (BEAMAN & MADGE 2010).

In Algeria, the family Cisticolidae is represented by the Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola jundis* (LEDANT et al. 1971, ISENMANN & MOALI 2000). The present study reports the presence and breeding of *S. clamans* in Algeria for the first time.

Materials and Methods

The present study was carried out in the extreme south of National Park of Ahaggar, between 11th and 16th October 2022, in order to explore the birds of the region. The study area spanned from the region of Bordj Badji Mokhtar (21°19'57"N 0°57'34"E) to Tawendert (20°23'07"N 2°27'27"E).

The Ahaggar Region is the largest mountain range in the extreme south of Algeria and is located in the heart of the world's largest desert, the Sahara Desert. Due to its 450,000 km² area, the Ahaggar connects the Tanazrouft Desert to the west and the N'Adjers Tassili to the east. It stretches from around In Salah to the borders with Mali and Niger, between 23° N and 5° E. The Ahaggar Massif was declared a national park on November 3, 1987 by decree no. 87-232.

Results

We report the first record of cricket warbler for Algeria. On 12 October 2022 around 3.00 p.m., two



Fig. 1. Nest containing three nestlings of cricket warbler *Spiloptila clamans* in an *Acacia* tree.



Fig. 2. Juvenile of cricket warbler *Spiloptila clamans* in the south of Algeria.

individuals were observed 40 km in the north of Timiaouine (20°42'14"N 1°41'16"E) and a few moments later we found a nest in *Acacia* tree with three nestlings; an additional juvenile was found underneath the tree (Figs. 1 and 2). On the next day, in the same locality, we found two additional individuals; another individual was noted to catch an insect 5 km north of Timiouine (20°28'18"N 1°47'44"E). On the next morning, another group of five individuals was found in *Acacia* trees 20 km south of Timiaouine (20°31'2"N 2°2'40"E) and about three families of cricket warblers were observed in a section of 3 km in the valley of Tawendart (20°25'29"N 2°23'44"E).

During the trip, we also recorded other Saharan breeding birds such as fulvous babbler *Turdoides fulva*, Sudan golden sparrow *Passer luteus*, desert sparrow *P. simplex*, trumpeter finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, southern grey shrike *Lanius meridionalis elegans*, black scrub robin *Cercotrichas podobe* and desert lark *Ammomanes deserti*.

Discussion

We report the first records and breeding data of cricket warbler from Algeria, which is now the second species of the family Cisticolidae recorded in the country (LEDANT et al. 1971, ISENMANN & MOALI

2000). In North Africa, CHARLTON (2011) made the first observation of breeding cricket warbler, a pair feeding two of probably three or more young birds on 19 September 2007 in Oued Jenna, Morocco. In February 2008, PETTERSSON et al. (2008) confirmed its presence in the south of Morocco.

The breeding of this species was recorded between June and September in Mauritania and in October in the south of Morocco (ISENMANN et al. 2010, AMEZIANE et al. 2011). The timing and duration of breeding depends on the start date and the intensity of the rainfall between October and early July in the following year (QNINBA et al. 2011, BERGIER & THEVENOT 2019).

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