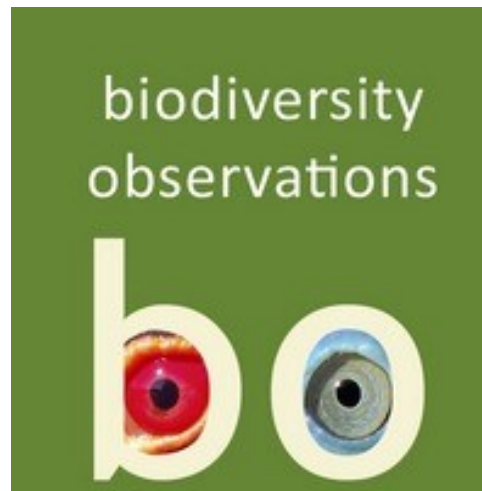


First record of African Dusky Flycatcher on Robben Island

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Observation

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Abstract

An African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* was observed on 23 May 2024 on Robben Island, Table Bay, South Africa. This brings the total number of bird species recorded on Robben Island to 166; the number reported since 2000 is 135.

Introduction

Robben Island (33°48'S, 18°22'E) is a World Heritage Site located in Table Bay, Western Cape, South Africa. The island is c.11 km from the port of Cape Town; the shortest distance to the mainland is c. 7 km. It has an area of 507 ha and a perimeter of c. 10 km (Quintana et al. 2021). The ebb and flow of biodiversity since 2000 on Robben Island was outlined by Quintana et al. (2021).

Observation

We visited Robben Island on 23 May 2024 to conduct a survey of African Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* over the afternoon spring high tide. Before the count started there was time to create a [SABAP2](#) checklist (Lee et al. 2022). At 11h10 we noticed a bird in the top of a pine tree overhanging Boundary Road near the Battery. The bird was identified as an African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* (Figure 1). It did not call but was photographed once before it flew off. The bird had no streaking on the forehead, an indistinct eye ring, light streaking on the chest, and the wing tip hardly reached the undertail



Figure 1: African Dusky Flycatcher on Robben Island on 25 May 2024. Curated in the BirdPix section of the Virtual Museum as record [281944](#). Photo by D. Oschadleus.

coverts. These features eliminate the Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, a migrant species that has been recorded on the island as a vagrant (Sherley et al. 2011). At the same locality we also saw a Fiscal Flycatcher *Melaenornis silens*, a rare visitor to the island. HDO also observed a Cape Batis *Batis capensis* pair calling in Springbok Avenue, not far from the site where it was originally found (Paijmans & Bolton 2017). Thus three insectivores that are unusual for the island, were seen in a short space of time!

Discussion

The African Dusky Flycatcher was not recorded on previous checklists (Crawford & Dyer 2000, Sherley et al. 2011), nor in SABAP2 (https://sabap2.birdmap.africa/coverage/pentad/3345_1820), nor in eBird (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1069986/illustrated-checklist>). As far as is known, this is the first record of the species for the island. Local movements have been described for this flycatcher (Hockey et al. 2005), but this is probably the first 'ocean' crossing for this species. While it has been recorded in Bloubergstrand, it is much more common on Table Mountain (which is further from Robben Island than is Bloubergstrand).

Sherley et al. (2011) produced an annotated checklist of bird species recorded on or around Robben Island between 2000 and 2011. African Dusky Flycatcher is the sixth species to be added to this list since it was published: Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (Sherley & Robinson 2012), Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (Rueda & Sherley 2013), African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* (van der Westhuizen et al. 2014) European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* in 2016 (Braimoh & López Gómez 2016) and Cape Batis *Batis capensis* (Paijmans & Bolton 2017). This record brings the total number of bird species recorded on Robben Island to 166, and the number reported since 2000 to 135.

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