

A NEW SUBSPECIES OF THE RUFOUS SWAMP KAPPLIFP
ACROCEPHALUS RUFESCENS FROM SENEGAL

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At Lake Quiers near Richard-Toll, Senegal, *Acrocephalus rufescens* occurs in the same kind of *Typha* beds as the African Reed Warbler *A. baeticatus*, which has recently been found to be racially distinct (Colston & Morel 1984). In the past, efforts to describe this most northwestern population of *rufescens* have suffered from a lack of comparative material (Morel & Roux 1962). In order to establish the identity of these birds GJM was able to collect single adult females in April and December 1983 and five adult males in April 1984. The specimens were subsequently forwarded to the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH) for appraisal. PRC, who examined the series, confirmed that the birds were greyer-brown, less rufous above than nominate *rufescens* and whiter below than any of the foregoing races in Africa, *rufescens*, *chadensis*, *niloticus*, *foxi* or *orsorgei* and represent a distinct form, for which we provide the name.

Acrocephalus rufescens senegalensis subsp. nov.

Holotype Adult female (in fresh plumage); Lake Quiers, near Richard-Toll, Senegal, 16°25'N, 15°42'W, 10 December 1983. Collected by Dr G.J. Morel, collectors number 10-275A. Lodged in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, B. No. 1984-6-1.

Description When compared with nominate *rufescens* (southern Nigeria to northern Angola) the upperparts are greyer-brown, less rufous in appearance and there is a distinct greyish cast to the head and nape. The ear-coverts, sides of the head and neck are paler ash-brown and the lores are whiter. The underparts are also very pallid looking by comparison, even whiter than the palest race *chadensis*. The chin and throat are pure white, while the breast, belly and undertail coverts are off-white, or very faintly fringed, pale buff on the flanks. Wings and tail are slightly darker brown than *rufescens*.

Colours of soft parts at time of collecting Iris chestnut, legs and feet grey-brown, bill light brown with a paler lower mandible.

Measurements of type Wing (flattened) 74 mm, tail 66 mm, culmen from base of skull 23 mm, tarsus 29 mm, weight 19.5 gms at time of collecting.

Breeding and distribution As this reed warbler appeared almost impossible to secure with mist-nets GJM decided to lure them out of their recess by using a tape recording made of the nominate form in Nigeria. The reaction to the tape was remarkably swift, although GJM soon discovered that the size of the population was rather small in comparison with *A. baeticatus* (which is evidently numerous at Lake Quiers). Judging from the response, one pair was found in about every 0.5-1 ha of *Typha* beds. The female collected on 26 April was in breeding condition with an enlarged ovary

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Table 1 Measurements of *Acrocephalus rufescens senegalensis* and *A. r. rufescens*

	<i>A. r. senegalensis</i>		<i>A. r. rufescens</i>	
	5 males	2 females	10 males	10 females
Wing	74-75 (74.6)	73, 74 (73.5)	69-76 (73.4)	66-73 (70.1)
Tail	68-72 (70.2)	65, 66 (65.5)	64-72 (67.7)	61-69 (65.4)
Bill	21.5-23 (22.1)	21, 23 (22)	20-23 (22.4)	21-22 (21.5)
Tarsus	28-29 (28.4)	27, 29 (28)	28-30 (29.3)	27-39 (28.2)
Weight	20-21 (20.4)	19.5, 23 (21.25)	-	-

Means in parenthesis.

(ovules to 3 mm) and the five males taken between 24 and 26 April had enlarged gonads (4-5 mm), so that the species would appear to have a breeding regime similar to that of *A. baeticatus*, which also breeds there in May-June and like that species, April adults show some degree of wear to their plumage. In West Africa only two localities for *A. rufescens* are shown in Hall and Moreau's Atlas (1970): Lake Guiers, and near Dakar (R. de Naurois, pers. comm.). The Atlas does not show any other records west of 0° along the coast or between Chad and Senegal, and to the best of our knowledge there is only one other record, of a bird caught along the Niger in *Mimosa pigra* at Bamako in November (Lanarche 1981).

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