

Submission 173: Rufous Scrub-bird *Atrichornis rufescens*, Whian Whian Conservation Area, North-eastern NSW, 4 May 2013. Submitted by Stephen Baker.

Verdict: Not Accepted

cc: Richard Noske, Birds Queensland;
Roger McGovern, NSW Ornithological Rarities Committee Chairperson.

This submission relates to a report of a Rufous Scrub-bird along the Boggy Creek Track, approx. 1km from Rummery Park in the Whian Whian Conservation Area in the Nightcap Range National Park, NSW, during a Birds Queensland organised field trip to the area. This record was then reported in the Birds Queensland Newsletter, drawing attention from both local bird watchers in NSW and Rufous Scrub-bird researchers as this species was not known from this area. The Birds Queensland Rarities Appraisal Committee was eventually asked to assess the record even though the scrub-bird was reported from NSW. Results from this assessment have been shared with the NSW Rarities Committee and the Rufous Scrub-bird researchers.

The submission relates to a single Rufous Scrub-bird call heard from grass; this call was compared to a call of the Rufous Scrub-bird call on the Morcombe and Stewart eGuide and identified as a Rufous Scrub-bird. In the 'Description of bird' section, the people present agreed that the call heard was similar to the Rufous Scrub-bird "Often heard call 2" on the Morcombe and Stewart eGuide; however in the 'Other comments' section the call is described as a warning call. It should be pointed out that the "often heard call 2" and a "warning call" are not the same calls. All six Committee members agreed that there was insufficient information to support this submission and voted not to accept the record.

One committee member pointed out that the elevation of the location within Whian Whian Conservation Area is around 375 m (calculated from Google Earth). Higgins et al. (2001) state that although Rufous Scrub-bird formerly inhabited lowland areas near Lismore, NSW, "it has now become extinct in areas below at least 400 m asl, and possibly below 600 m asl, since European settlement."

Additionally the submission does not consider other rainforest bird species whose calls might be confused with those of the Rufous Scrub-bird. Given the significance of a record of Rufous Scrub-bird at the reported location, it is vital that no doubt about the identification exists. An identification that is based on a single call, with no attempt to differentiate the call heard from other species potentially responsible for making it, does not satisfy this requirement.

References

Higgins, P.J., Peter, J.M. and Steele, W.K. (eds) 2001. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol. 5. Tyrant-flycatchers to Chats*. Oxford University Press: South

David Stewart
Chairperson
Birds Queensland Rarities Appraisal Committee

Stephen Baker

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Whian Whian Conservation Area, Rummery Park, Boggy Creek Track, approx. 1km from Rummery Park.

4 May 2013

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