

A note on the rediscovery of the Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis* in the Pugu Hills, Tanzania

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The Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis* is endemic to coastal forests in Kenya and Tanzania (Keith *et al.* 1992). It has been listed as occurring in the Pugu Hills, Tanzania (Howell 1981, Collar and Stuart 1985, 1988), having been first recorded in 1938 (Moreau 1940). Two further records from this area are reported in Collar and Stuart (1985), in 1955 and 1981. Harvey and Howell (1987) noted that, over the period 1968–1978, many visits to the area by a variety of observers, some using mist-nets, failed to locate Sokoke Pipit.

During the period from June 1994 to May 1995 bird-ringing was carried out in the Pugu Forest Reserve at three localities. Site 1 was in a thicket located south of Minaki High School, site 2 was in natural forest near the water reservoir and site 3 was in secondary forest dominated by exotic *Cassia siamea*. Each site was mist-netted for about one week in every month, using between 10 and 22 mist-nets.

On 29 October 1994 at 08h00 (local time), one adult Sokoke Pipit was caught in the thicket (site 1). The bird, which was in good plumage without any sign of breeding, was weighed, measured, ringed and released.

The vegetation characteristics of the net line were (mean \pm S.D., $n = 21$: shrub height 3.1 ± 1.1 m (range 2.0–5.5 m), shrub density $65.9 \pm 21.8\%$ (range 10–85%) and ground cover $26.2 \pm 17.9\%$ (range 5–70%). The common plants in the study area were *Diospyros* sp., *Landolphia kirkii*, *Milletia puguensis*, *Salacia madagascariensis*, *Serugada sansibariensis*, *Synaptolepis kirkii*, *Uvaria acuminata*, *Cyperus* sp. and *Panicum trichocladum*.

It is clear that the Sokoke Pipit still occurs in the Pugu Hills but is very rare. The situation is similar to recent observations in nearby areas at Vikindu (Mlingwa 1991, 1993) and Dondwe (S. Davies pers. comm. 1994, Collar *et al.* 1994).

In the Sokoke Forest, Kenya, the Sokoke Pipit is common in dense uncleared forest, though earlier reports suggested that it preferred forest edges and glades (Collar and Stuart 1985). As with the 1994 bird, the earlier records from the Pugu Hills were on the edge of thickets, which were considered to be relicts of the original scrubby forest (Collar and Stuart 1985).

Pugu Forest Reserve, 22 km² in area, has less than 10 km² of natural forest, the remaining vegetation being thickets and plantations of *Cassia siamea* and *Eucalyptus* spp. Thickets also extend outside the reserve boundary.

Further work is required to elucidate the species's status and habitat preferences in the area.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, the Institut für Vogelforschung in Wilhelmshaven, Germany, and the GEF Biodiversity Project in Tanzania for sponsoring the study in the Pugu Forest Reserve. I also thank F. Kashamba and G. Baitwa for their assistance in the field. A permit to work in the reserve was given by the office of Natural Resources, Coast Region, for which I am indebted.

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