



Biodiversity Observations

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EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER *FICEDULA HYPOLEUCA* – THE FIRST CONFIRMED RECORD FOR THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SUBREGION

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ADDITION TO SOUTHERN AFRICAN BIRD LIST

EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER *FICEDULA HYPOLEUCA* – THE FIRST CONFIRMED RECORD FOR THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SUBREGION

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On Sunday, 18 December 2016, I received a phone call from my dear friend/co-atlaser/citizen scientist Zenobia van Dyk from Bushmanskloof, near Clanwilliam, which is in pentad 3205_1905, in the Western Cape. She had taken photographs of a strange-looking flycatcher had been spotted by guests (Figures 1 and 2). We speculated that it might be a Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* and were very excited at the prospect. The sighting was also reported to Trevor Hardaker by Christiaan Viljoen, a guide at Bushmanskloof Wilderness Reserve, and he drove to Bushmanskloof from Cape Town. For me, lunch with my guests felt much longer than the actual two hours.

Upon my arrival at Bushmanskloof the bird was nowhere in sight. Zenobia and I scanned all the trees. Then a bird flew in, and low and behold ... There she was! ... Tiny, elegant and very skittish ... She would fly to a new perch every few seconds ... We scanned through Zenobia's book. The bird did not match Collared Flycatcher but it certainly was in the *Ficedula* family. This left three other candidates ... Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*, Atlas Pied Flycatcher *F. speculigera* and European Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*. We eagerly awaited Trevor's arrival and for his call on the identification of this beauty.



Figure 1. *Ficedula* flycatcher, subsequently identified by Trevor Hardaker as European Pied Flycatcher. Bushmanskloof Wilderness Reserve, pentad 3205_1905, Western Cape, South Africa. Photographer © Zenobia van Dyk

It was a long 24 hours wait until Trevor's Rare Bird Report finally came through by email ... European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. "It would appear that we have a new bird for the southern African subregion. The clinching detail seems to be the extent of white tips to the bases of the primaries in this bird (not reaching as close to the edge of the wing as they would in Collared or Semi-Collared Flycatchers) while the tail pattern, although apparently variable in these species, also supports the ID of the bird. Obviously, the call was also very useful in the original diagnosis. The bird appears to be a rather worn first year bird and possibly a female bird" This is quoted



from Trevor Hardaker's email to the South African Rare Bird Network (SARBN) on 19 December 2016.

Zenobia and I were over the moon with excitement and joy but yet humbled to welcome this rare visitor to our country. May your journey to our beautiful Cederberg Mountains be a safe and recurring one, Ms Flycatcher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Bushmanskloof team are grateful to Trevor Hardaker to travelling to make the identification. We can all be grateful to the guest who asked: "What bird is that?". The photographs were contributed by Zenobia van Dyk.

Figure 2. Another angle on the Ficedula flycatcher, subsequently identified by Trevor Hardaker as European Pied Flycatcher. Bushmanskloof Wilderness Reserve, pentad 3205_1905, Western Cape, South Africa. Photographer © Zenobia van Dyk