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AFRING NEWS

ABNORMAL EYE COLOUR IN A SOMBRE GREENBUL *ANDROPADUS IMPORTUNUS*

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Introduction

The Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus* has both plumage and eye colour changes as it develops from chick to adult. For the first three months of its life, it resembles an adult but has a paler bill, orange gape, brown eyes and a yellow eye ring (WRJ Dean, unpublished data in Hockey et al, 2005). When it is 3-6 months of age, the gape is yellow and it's eyes are brown (Hockey et al, 2005). From 6-9 months its eyes should have now changed to yellow (Hockey et al, 2005). The eye ring is greatly reduced and it's gape is faintly yellow when it is 9-12 months old (Hockey et al, 2005). By 12-24 months it will resemble an adult (Hockey et al, 2005).

Sombre Greenbul

On the 16 April 2017 a Sombre Greenbul (Ring # BE79158) was captured in a dry river bed on a dry Karoo farm called Modderfontein farm. The farm is in the Kommadagga area of the Eastern Cape (33°11'S; 25°47'E). The left eye is the typical adult eye colour with a white iris and small pupil. However, the right eye has a larger pupil and is greyish blue in colour. Both eyes appeared to be functioning normally when tested and all other measurements were within

normal for this species. The individual appeared to be in good condition other than the unusual iris colouration.

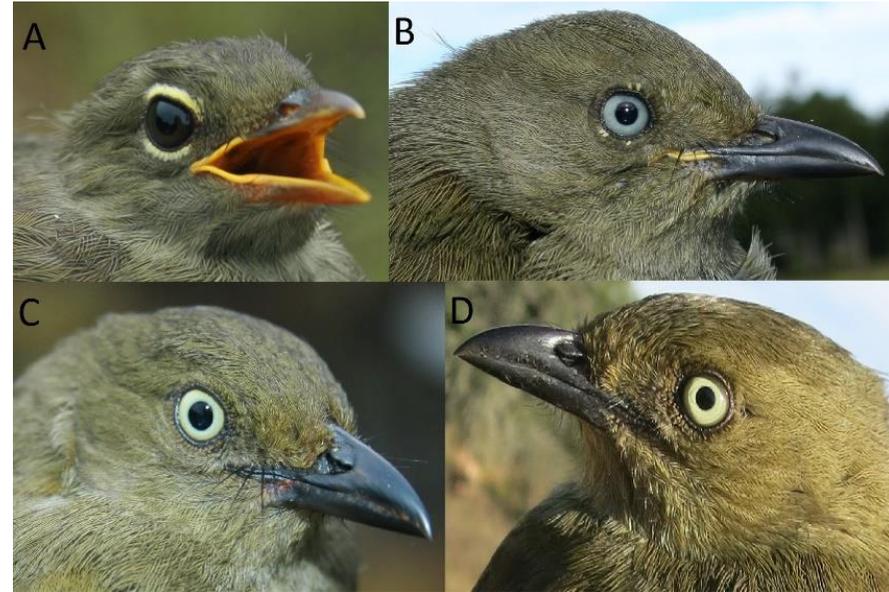


Figure 1: Personal observations of eye colour in the Sombre Greenbul. According to the unpublished data by WRJ Dean (Hockey et al, 2005); **A** is a juvenile approximately 2-4 months old. **B** is a juvenile approximately 9 months old. **C** and **D** are both adults with slightly different shades of off-white irises.

Conclusion

Having seen and heard of this in humans but not in birds, I enquired about other records from SAFRING. However, it appears as if this has not been recorded before. This bird was recaptured on 29 April 2017 at the same site, and the iris colour has not changed at all. It seems to be resident at or near the ringing site so it will be continuously monitored if possible.

Acknowledgements

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References

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds) 2005. Roberts Birds of Southern Africa. 7th edn. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

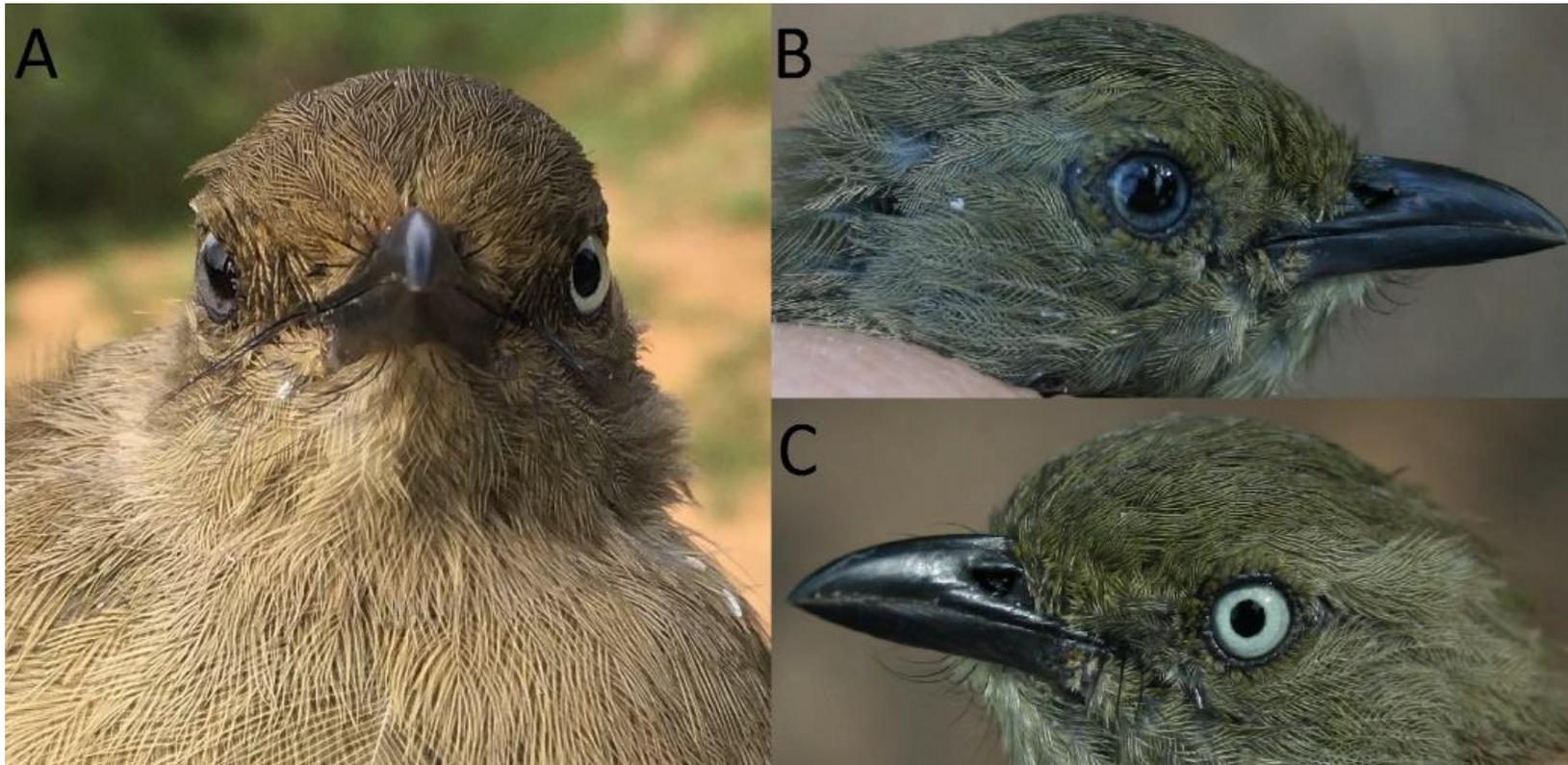


Figure 2: **A** The unusual Sombre Greenbul (Ring # BE79158). **B** is a close-up of the right eye and **C** is a close-up of the left eye (submitted to Birdpix 36931).