

April 18th - 24th 2007

LESSER SHRIKEBILL

Scientific Name: *Clytorhynchus vitiensis*

Fijian Name: Digisau



Appearance:

19cm long

Dull brownish plumage, darker on the back with a lighter underside & a grayish tinge to the belly

Blue-grey legs

Bill is basically black, with a wedged-shape and with a slight hook at the tip

Often white or grey edge to the bill, although this may vary geographically and perhaps between sexes

Juvenile shrikebills have all dark

probing into curled leaves, pulling tangled vine tendrils apart and tearing off loose bark

They frequently join the mixed feeding flocks of insectivorous birds

Their nests are built at about two to three meters off the ground in fairly thick foliage, and can be built with rootlets, fine plant stems and particularly vine tendrils. The nests are deeply cupped and lined with fine fibers.

Distribution:

There are 12 sub-species recognised in the region, and although it is a regional endemic, it has a curious discontinuous distribution

In Fiji, its distribution is widespread across the whole archipelago including Rotuma but is absent from many islands where one may expect it to be found

It is probably now extirpated in the Mamanucas and the Yasawas

It is widespread in Tonga but discontinuously distributed and its range has decreased significantly

It is absent from Samoa, but occurs in American Samoa only on the 3 islands of *Manu'a* In Wallis & Futuna, it is restricted to *Futuna* and *Alofi*

Similar Species:

The Shrikebill's featureless plumage makes it readily confusable with the Wattled Honeyeater, another common regional endemic. However, the honeyeater has a distinctive voice, and down-curved bill

The Shrikebill can also be confused with the female Black-faced Shrikebill, a much rarer bird but the Black-faced can be distinguished by its considerably heavier bill with a horn-coloured tip

In Fiji, it would be good to also compare the Shrikebill species to the Golden Whistler

These characteristics, of course, are only dis-



characteristics and subtle color variations are the distinguishing features for recognizing different subspecies in the region

Habitats:

Essentially a forest bird, but also frequents well-wooded areas or thick scrub

Feeds on insects and probably a little on fruits

They can be found feeding at any height, but usually close to larger tree limbs

Shrikebills have a characteristic scavenging method, in that they noisily investigate dead vegetation,

Remarks:

Of all regional birds, the Lesser Shrikebill has caused more taxonomic problems, and this is because of the great individual variation in both size and plumage

The shrikebill varies from common to rare in different part of its range

Its discontinuous distribution across the region, and the known extirpation in some is indicative of the increase threats faced by this species

Direct threats may include increasing human presence, leading to habitat loss and introduced predators

Conservation Status:

Regional endemic. At Risk in Tonga and of conservation concern in American Samoa

Source:

BirdLife International Fiji Programme
A Guide to the Birds of Fiji and Western Polynesia including American Samoa, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Wallis & Futuna written by Dick Watling and illustrated by Chloe Talbot Kelly.

<http://www.imes.ch/Islands/117.htm#655>