



A new species of African Forest Robin from Gabon (Passeriformes: Muscicapidae: *Stiphornis*)

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Abstract

We describe a new species of forest robin from the Gamba Complex in southwest Gabon. This common bird, *Stiphornis pyrrholaemus* sp. nov., inhabits primary lowland forest and forages on or near the ground like the other members of the genus *Stiphornis* of central and western Africa. Unique phenotypic features of the new species include the male's bright orange chin, throat, and breast, creamy yellow belly, olive green back and rump, and gray flanks. Mitochondrial sequence divergence corroborates our assessment based on its distinct physical characteristics that this is a new species, and suggest that *Stiphornis erythrothorax* is likely the most closely related congener.

Key words: African forest robin, *Stiphornis pyrrholaemus*, Gamba Complex, Moukalaba–Doudou National Park

Introduction

The tropical rainforests of central Africa remain one of the least scientifically explored regions of the world due to their remoteness, inhospitable environment, and density of forest cover. Yet, intensive logging and industrialization have begun to reduce and fragment this immense region of dense humid forest, savannah, and wetlands (Laporte, et al. 2007). Documenting the flora and fauna of this region, particularly the biologically diverse Gamba Complex of Protected Areas in Gabon, is a primary conservation priority.

In 2000, the Smithsonian Institution's Monitoring and Assessment of Biodiversity Program (SIMAB) and Shell International started to develop relationships among industry, governments and researchers that foster a more environmentally friendly approach to resource development and extraction, while promoting the conservation of biodiversity. With support from Shell Foundation and Shell Gabon, SIMAB enlisted biologists to help with the biodiversity assessment in the Gamba Complex of Gabon (Fig. 1). As part of this team, ornithologists from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and National Museum of Natural History (USNM) conducted five surveys from 2001 to 2003 in the Gamba Complex (Angehr, et al. 2006).

During these surveys, specimens of forest robin (*Stiphornis*) were obtained from two sites: Rabi Oil Field and our camp in the southwestern part of Moukalaba–Doudou National Park (Fig. 1). Upon comparing the materials with existing museum specimens, it became apparent the birds from these two sites were phenotypically different from the known species of *Stiphornis*. Beresford and Cracraft (1999) suggested that the genus *Stiphornis* is composed of four distinct species: *S. erythrothorax* Hartlaub, *S. gabonensis* Sharpe, *S. sanghen-*