
**First record of Sungrebe
Heliornis fulica on Bonaire,
Netherlands Antilles**

On 15 November 2010, I was visiting the Washington-Slagbaai National Park on Bonaire, together with my wife, when at a small pool just north-west of Rincon my attention was drawn to a 'waterbird' swimming below some trees. Using binoculars, identification was straightforward. The bird was smaller than the nearby Blue-winged Teals *Anas discors*, with olive-brown upperparts, greyish-brown underparts, a white chin and



Figure 1. Adult male or non-breeding female Sungrebe *Heliornis fulica*, Washington Slagbaai Natural Park, Bonaire, 15 November 2010 (Peter J. Rozemeijer)

breast, and bold black and white stripes over the head and neck. The bill was rather small, pointed and pale-coloured, whilst the wings were short and pointed. It was clearly an adult male or non-breeding female Sungrebe *Heliornis fulica*.

I immediately realised that this was perhaps the first record for Bonaire and the former Netherlands Antilles, so I tried to take some photographs of the bird. Because it stayed some distance, usually close to the pool's edge under cover, I managed just one photograph that clearly identifies the bird (Fig. 1). The Sungrebe swam to and fro at the pool's edge, bobbing its head like a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*; behaviour typical of the species. Once it climbed onto the bank (which was quite steep), then returned to the water. Eventually, the bird disappeared into some floating vegetation and was not seen again.

Sungrebe is a not uncommon breeding resident in Middle and South America, from Tamaulipas, in north-east Mexico, to south-east Paraguay and north-east Argentina¹. Its range includes Venezuela, the closest point of its range to Bonaire, as well as the Guianas¹. No migrations are known, but Williams *et al.*³ suggested that the species is expanding its range in north-east Mexico. There are several records from Trinidad but none since 1991² and one from the USA, in New Mexico⁴: a female at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, on 13–18 November 2008, a remarkably similar date to the bird on Bonaire.

During our stay on Bonaire southerly winds prevailed, which could have brought birds from the South American continent to the Caribbean. Based on Prins *et al.*³, our record is the first for the former Netherlands Antilles.

References

- Bertram, B. C. R. (1994) Family Heliornithidae (finfoots). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Sargatal, J. (eds.) *Handbook of the birds of the world*, 3. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.
- Kenefick, M., Restall, R. & Hayes, F. (2007) *Field guide to the birds of Trinidad & Tobago*. London, UK: Christopher Helm.
- Prins, T. G., Reuter, J. H., Debrot, A. O., Wattel, J. & Nijman, V. (2009) Checklist of the birds of Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire, South Caribbean. *Ardea* 97: 137–268.
- Williams, S. O., King, S. A., Fettig, S. M., Oldenettel, J. R. & Parmeter, J. E. (2009) A Sungrebe (*Heliornis fulica*) in New Mexico: a first for the United States. *N. Amer. Birds* 63: 4–9.

Peter J. Rozemeijer

Dorpsstraat 323, 1531 HJ Wormer, the Netherlands. E-mail: rozemeije@xs4all.nl.

Received 23 January 2011; final revision accepted 12 March 2011