

Notes on the vocalizations of Plain Martin (*Riparia paludicola*)

Peter Boesman

In the following we briefly analyze and compare voice of the different races of Plain Martin (*Riparia paludicola*). We also try to quantify the extent of any vocal differences using the criteria proposed by Tobias *et al.* (2010), as a support for taxonomic review.

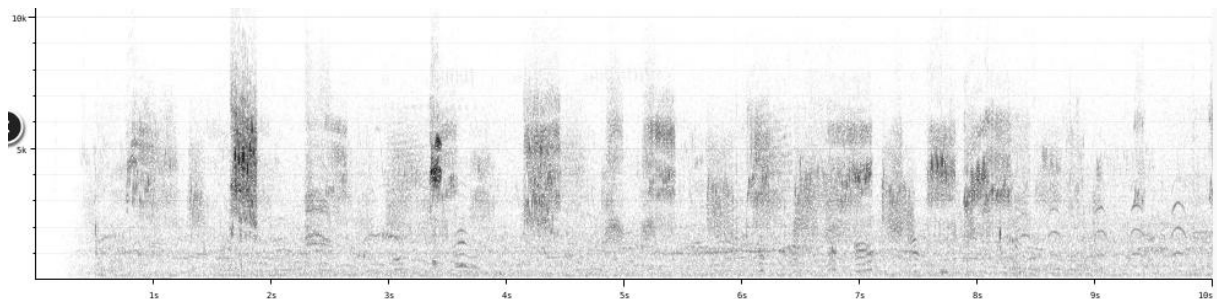
We have made use of sound recordings available on-line from Xeno Canto (XC), Macaulay Library (ML), Avian Vocalizations Center (AVoCet) and The Internet Bird Collection (IBC).

From a quick look at existing recordings of this species complex, it would seem that vocabulary is quite varied, but there are very few recordings available, distributed over the several races. An overview, illustrated with sonograms:

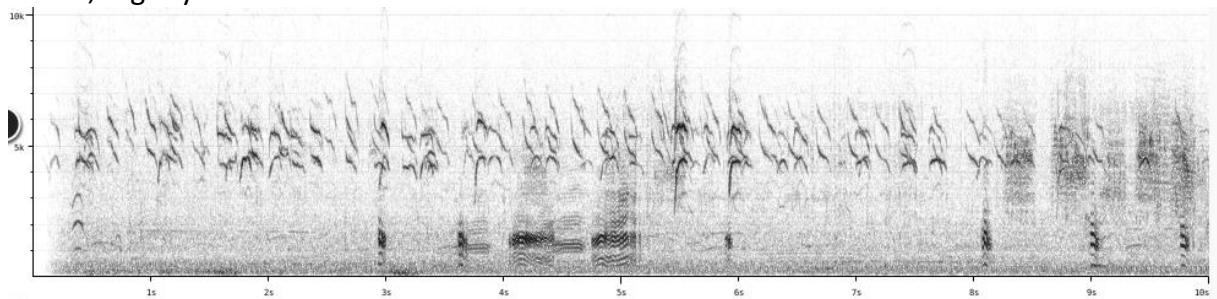
mauritana (W Morocco), *minor* (locally from Senegambia E to Sudan and N Ethiopia), *ducis* (E DR Congo, Uganda and W & C Kenya S to Burundi and N & C Tanzania) and *newtoni* (SE Nigeria and adjacent W Cameroon): No recordings available.

schoensis (Ethiopian Highlands)

* buzzy notes:

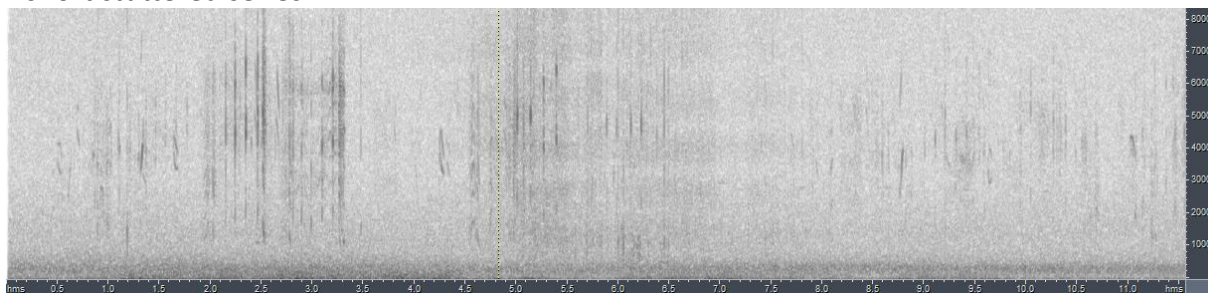


* clear, slightly nasal notes:

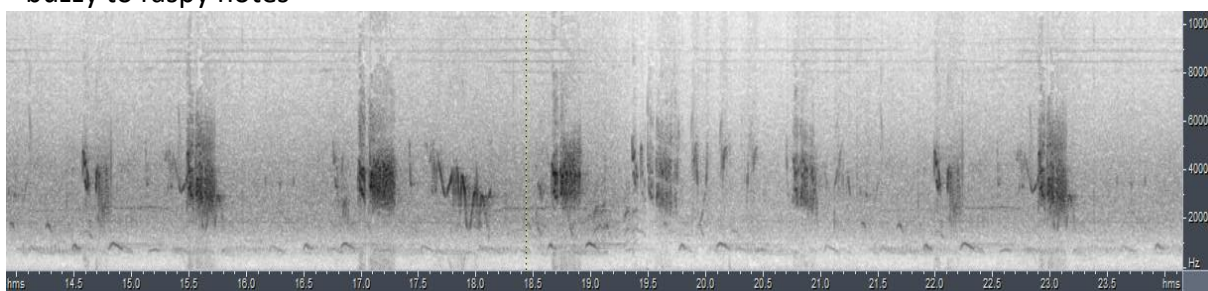


paludicola (W & SW Angola, Zambia, S Tanzania and Malawi S to South Africa)

* short stuttered series



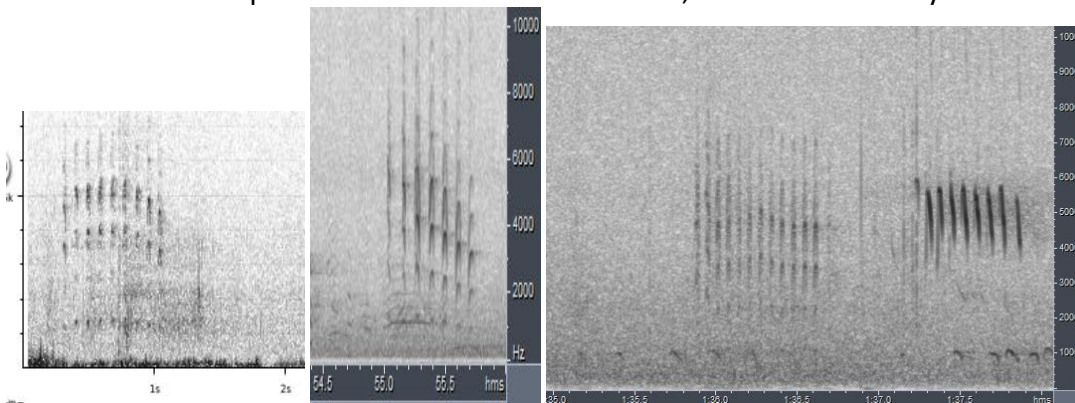
* buzzy to raspy notes



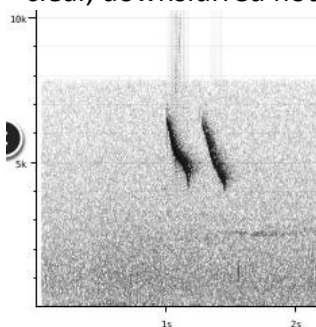
cowani (E Madagascar)

Vocalizations seemingly very different (n=5):

* a nasal stuttered phrase of short overslurred notes, like a short whinny

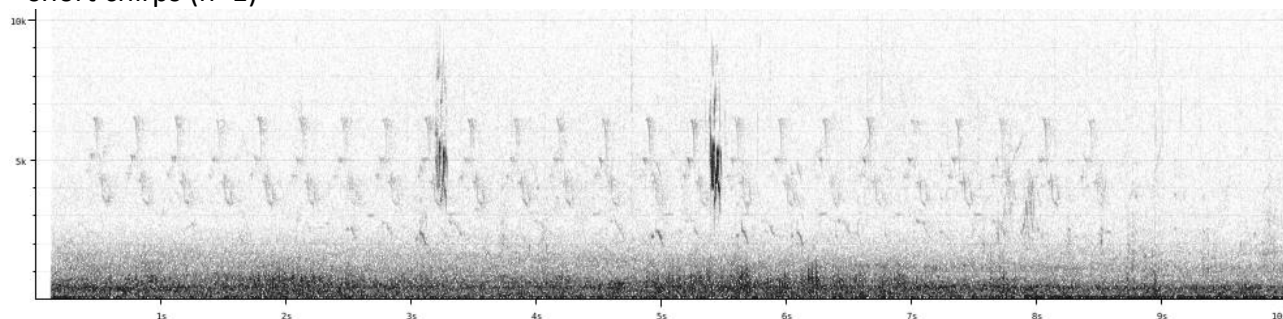


* clear, downslurred notes

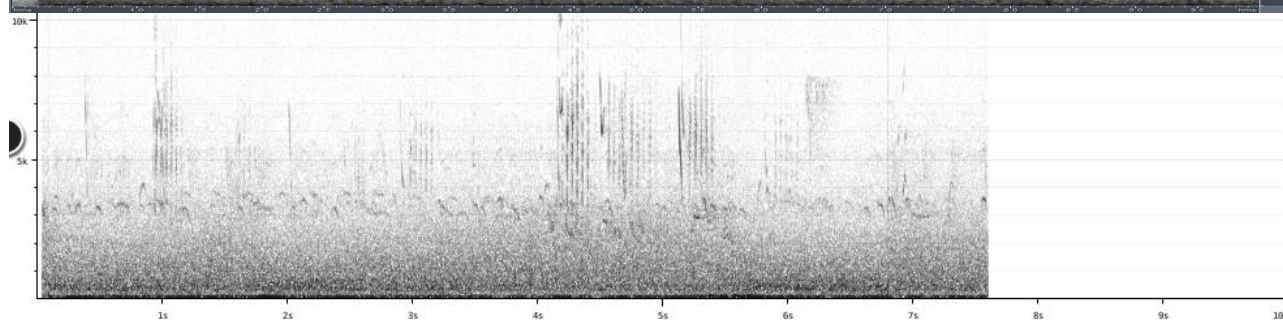
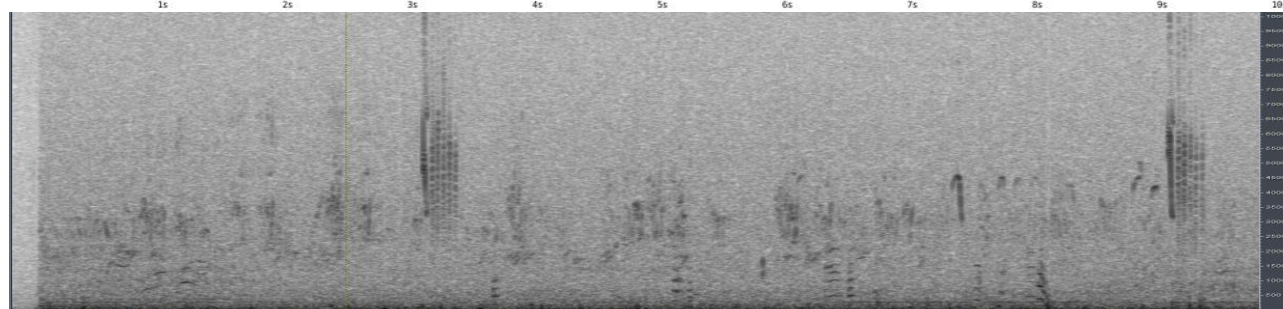
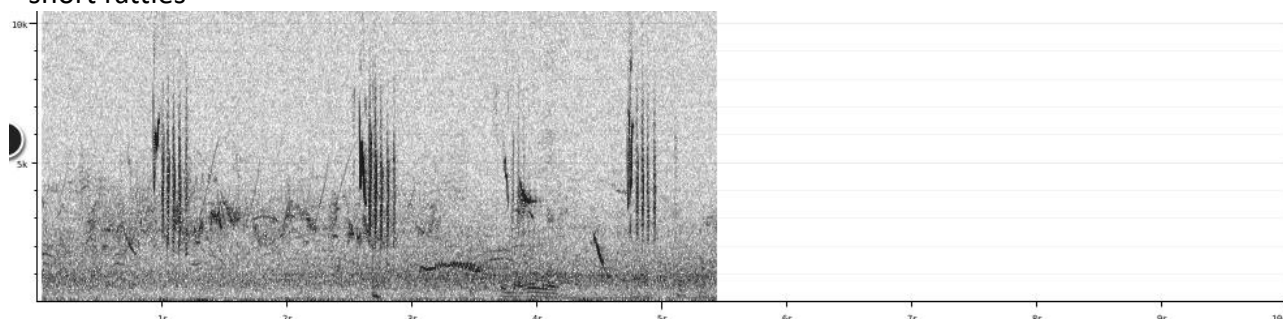


chinensis (S Tadjikistan, N Afghanistan, Pakistan and N India E to Myanmar, S China (S Yunnan) and Indochina, also Taiwan)

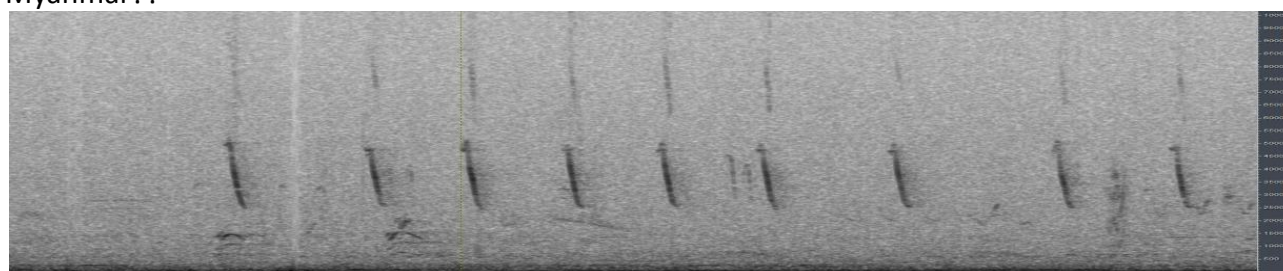
* short chirps (n=1)



* short rattles



Myanmar??



tantilla (N Philippines (Luzon)): No recordings available.

This is obviously a very incomplete picture of the vocalizations of all races.

Most striking is the different voice of race *cowani* from Madagascar, which seems to consistently utter very different vocalizations compared to all other races (it is unclear which are equivalent homologous vocalizations in other races, we can therefore only tentatively score the short whinny based on pace and number of notes (allow 3) and the clear downslurred notes based on note length (allow 2)).

At least mainland African races *schoensis* and *paludicola* share buzzy notes, which seem to be lacking in Asian race *chinensis*: we have three near-identical recordings of *chinensis* of short rattles, which we haven't found in other races. Several cuts of *chinensis* with a multitude of calls (also of other birds, and it is far from clear which calls are from Plain Martin) do not have buzzy calls. These strengthen the idea that *chinensis* is vocally distinctive.

We have very few or no recordings of several of the African races. We are thus fully aware that it is a bit speculative to conclude that mainland African races have several calls, of which some are distinctly buzzy, while *chinensis* has no buzzy calls and among its calls a distinct short rattle. This vocal difference could be given tentatively a score of about 3, but we need more recordings of all races to confirm this statement.

This note was finalized on 12th July 2016, using sound recordings available on-line at that moment. We would like to thank in particular the sound recordists who placed their recordings for this species on XC and ML: Peter Boesman, Fernand Deroussen, Albert Lastukhin, Linda Macaulay, Arnold Meijer, Rory Nefdt, Mike Nelson, Craig Robson, Lynette Rudman and Thomas Schulenberg.

References

Tobias, J.A., Seddon, N., Spottiswoode, C.N., Pilgrim, J.D., Fishpool, L.D.C. & Collar, N.J. (2010). Quantitative criteria for species delimitation. *Ibis* 152(4): 724–746.

Recommended citation

Boesman, P. (2016). Notes on the vocalizations of Plain Martin (*Riparia paludicola*). *HBW Alive Ornithological Note* 412. In: *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/1253813> on 4 December 2016).