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RED-FLANKED DUIKER *CEPHALOPHUS RUFILATUS* FOUND IN BUGUNGU GAME RESERVE, UGANDA

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INTRODUCTION

The Albert Nile in north-west Uganda was thought to be the south-eastern limit of the range of the red-flanked duiker *Cephalophus rufilatus* (Figure 1) (Kingdon, 1988). Although this species is common and widely distributed in West African savannahs, it is restricted to West and Central Africa. The only records from East Africa are from the West Nile District of Uganda (Spinage, 1986; Kingdon, 1988). The red-flanked duiker was formerly widely distributed in this district but there have been no recent reports of its presence in this now heavily populated area (Kingdon, 1988).

In the IUCN Regional Action Plan for Antelopes (East, 1988), the Ugandan population of red-flanked duiker was assigned to the 'Indeterminate' category due to lack of information for the West Nile District. It was, however, thought to be severely endangered or even extinct in the area and, therefore, the country.

In April 1995, the coordinators of Frontier-Uganda visited Bugungu Game Reserve. An unknown duiker was observed and later identified as a red-flanked duiker. Later in April, Frontier-Uganda took a team of 16 researchers to Bugungu Game Reserve to carry out a basic biological and socio-economic survey of the reserve.

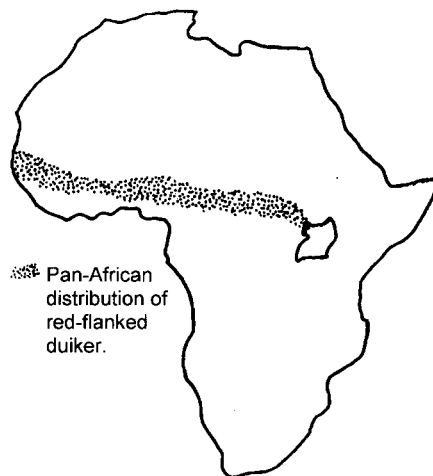


Figure 1. Distribution of red-flanked duiker (reproduced from Kingdon, 1982). The location of Uganda is outlined.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Bugungu Game Reserve is located in the Masindi District of Uganda (31°30'E, 1°55'N) (figure 2.). It is immediately south of Murchison Falls National Park; part of its northern boundary being equivalent to the southern boundary of the Park. To the west is Lake Albert, separated from the reserve by a thin strip of land gazetted as a Controlled Hunting Area. To the south and east is the Budongo Forest Reserve. The reserve lies across the escarpment of the western arm of the Rift Valley, which runs in a NE/SW direction through the centre of the reserve. The land on the top and to the east of the escarpment has a thick vegetation of high grass and is wooded. Below the escarpment the vegetation is more open and

characterised by wooded and bushed grasslands. The foot of the escarpment is less wooded while there is bushland nearer the lake.

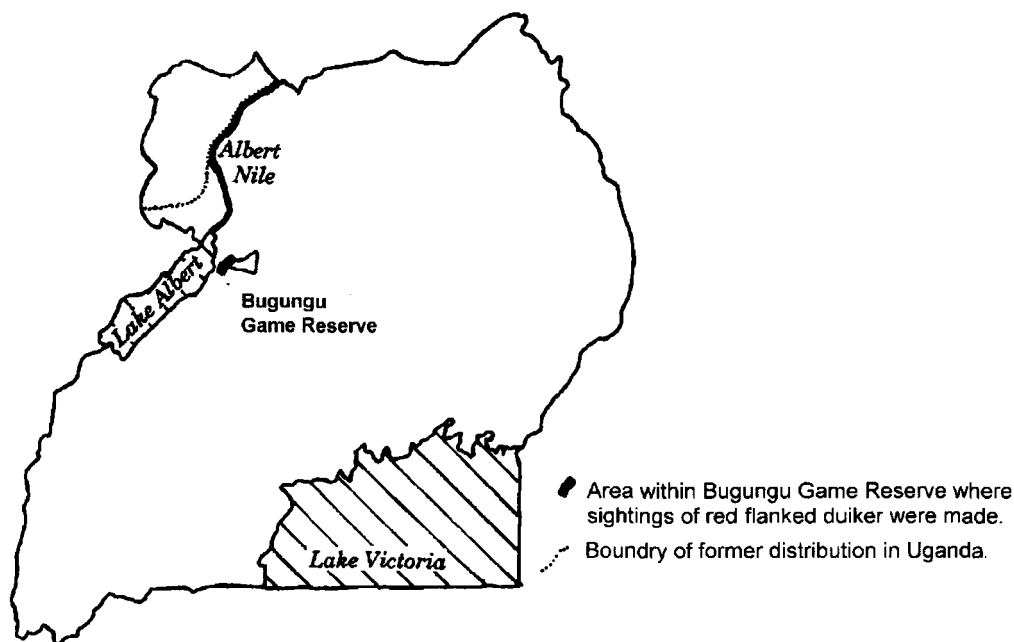


Figure 2. Location of recent sightings of red-flanked duiker and extent of this species' former distribution (from Kingdon, 1988).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unfortunately, no photographs of this duiker were obtained. Indeed most of the sightings were so brief as to leave the observer with time only to note its small size and the colour of its hindquarters. There were three opportunities for 2–3 min. observations when the following features were noted:

The duiker was small, about 40 cm shoulder height, and had a distinctly round back. There was a dark grey stripe down the centre of the face and white under the chin, contrasting sharply with the rest of the face, which was a dull brown. The flanks were red/brown and there was a dark grey band down the centre of the back. The dark band became quite broad over the rear flanks and continued down onto the rear, giving it a dark-brown appearance from behind.

All observations were made in bushland or bushed-grassland, which is also a significant factor in identification since most species of duiker are found only in forest habitats (Wilson, 1994). Small red-brown duikers that occur in this region include red forest duiker *Cephalophus natalensis*, black-fronted duiker *C. nigrifrons*, and Weyn's duiker *C. weynsi*.

These species are all found exclusively in large forest blocks and the nearest appropriate habitat is Budongo Forest, 12 km south-east beyond the escarpment. The common duiker *Sylvicapra grimmia* (primarily a savannah species) and the yellow-backed duiker *C. sylvicultor* (which occasionally occupies open bushland) both occur in this region, but are much larger than the animal described above and have a considerably different pelage colouration (Estes, 1994). The only other candidate for confusion is Gunther's dikdik *Madoqua guentheri*, a pygmy antelope of similar size to the red-flanked duiker but which has a conspicuously elongated nose, grey-brown flanks and a distinctive large preorbital gland, all of which contrast with the observed features. Bugungu Game Reserve also falls quite far outside the Ugandan range of this dikdik, which is restricted to the semi-arid savannah of the northeast (Kingdon, 1988).

The field description of shape, size and colouration (especially for the facial area) match most closely Kingdon's (1982) description of the red-flanked duiker. In addition, no other antelope of similar size is likely to occur in this habitat and area. Hence the author's conclusion that a new population of red-flanked duiker has been found.

Twenty-one separate sightings of this species were made during 20 weeks over an area of approximately 160 km² (figure 2). In most cases, just one individual was seen but on three occasions a male-female pair was observed (females were identified by their lack of horns). More detailed information on the location of the sightings has been published in a report to the Ministry of Wildlife, Tourism and Antiquities (Allan, 1996), a copy of which is held in the Makerere University Institute of Environment and Natural Resources (MUIENR) Library.

All observations were made in the open habitats of the Rift Valley floor; the rest of Bugungu Game Reserve lies on top of the Rift Valley escarpment where the vegetation is dominated by either dense shrubs or tall grasses. This thick and disturbed vegetation on the northern margins of a large forest (Budongo) is a habitat type normally favoured by red-flanked duiker (Kingdon, 1982). However, it is also a habitat in which direct observations of small antelope are effectively prevented by the poor visibility. A lack of records for this area should not be taken to indicate an absence of this species. It is quite possible that a much larger population of the red-flanked duiker is present in Bugungu than was indicated by the infrequent sightings made in the bushland.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of a previously unknown population of the red-flanked duiker is of significance in establishing the current status of duikers in Africa (Wilson, pers. comm.). This new location for the species constitutes a range extension of approximately 50 km to the south of the previously recognised south-easterly limit (the Albert Nile) (Kingdon, 1988). It is also the only known surviving population in Uganda, and thus greatly increases the importance of Bugungu Game Reserve as a protected area both to the country and to East Africa.

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