“Spotted Bush Warblers”

Three species:

*B. thoracicus*

*B. kashmirensis*

*B. davidi*

“Spotted Bush Warblers” – one species split into three

The Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus* was previously treated as a species with several subspecies, breeding in eastern Russia and adjacent parts of China, as well as in central China and the Himalayas. Analyses of plumage, biometrics, egg coloration, song, mitochondrial DNA and habitat/altitudinal distribution show that this is better reclassified as three species. Two of these were found to occur together in central China, although mainly in different habitats. The species differ much more in song than in appearance. We demonstrate the importance of using multiple criteria in species delimitations, whatever the conceptual base for species delimitation.

The Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus* complex was studied during many years in various parts of its breeding range. We found pronounced differences in song between birds breeding in different areas. We also noted differences in plumage and structure, although these were much less noticeable. Two of these forms were found to breed on the same mountains in several places in central China, although they were largely segregated by altitude (and thus habitat).

We proposed that these forms be treated as three species: *Bradypterus thoracicus* (Spotted Bush Warbler), *Bradypterus davidi* (Baikal Bush Warbler) and *Bradypterus kashmirensis* (West Himalayan Bush Warbler).

We note that taxa that we suggest are best treated as separate species differ in most or all of these aspects, particularly in song and mitochondrial DNA, while the one that we treat as a subspecies differs slightly and only in morphology.

We discuss and stress the importance of adopting an integrative approach, utilising multiple lines of evidence, in species delimitations, irrespective of which species concept is favoured.