

Limestone leaf warbler: New bird species discovered

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A diminutive, colorful bird living in the rocky forests of Laos and Vietnam has been discovered by a team of scientists from the Wildlife Conservation Society, Lao PDR Department of Forestry, Swedish University of Agricultural Science, Swedish Museum of Natural History, BirdLife International and other groups.

Named the “limestone leaf warbler” because it breeds in Laos’s limestone karst environments - a region known for unusual wildlife - it is similar to other warblers in this area of Southeast Asia, except for its distinct vocalizations and slight morphological differences.

A description of the new species is published in the journal *IBIS (The International Journal of Avian Science)*.

“The discovery of this [new species](#) is very exciting and underscores the importance of this region of Indochina for conservation,” said Colin Poole, Executive Director of the Asia Program for the Wildlife Conservation Society. “With increased attention from biologists, the Annamite mountain range of Laos in particular is revealing itself as a Lost World for new and unusual wildlife.”

The tiny bird is greenish-olive with a yellow breast and striped crown. Although it looks similar to other warblers, it is smaller with shorter wings and a larger bill than its closest relative the sulfur-breasted leaf warbler.

According to the study, the bird has a loud and distinct call, which is what first alerted the authors that the bird may be new to science.

Scientists presume there are many limestone leaf warblers in this region. But its habitat isn't without threats. Many parts of the species' native forests have been cleared as a result of wood collection. WCS is continuing to work with the Lao Government in an effort to reduce the threats limestone leaf warblers and other wildlife face in this region.

Earlier this year from this same region, a team of scientists from WCS and the University of Melbourne described the bare-faced bulbul - another species previously unknown to science. In 2002 in this same area, Robert Timmins of WCS described the Kha-nyou, a newly discovered species of rodent so unusual it represented the lone surviving member of an otherwise entirely extinct family. Three years earlier, he described a unique striped rabbit in the region also new to science.

Provided by Wildlife Conservation Society

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