Notes on the vocalizations of Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*)

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In the following we briefly analyze and compare voice of the different races of Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*). 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).

With eighteen subspecies, many confined to single islands, this is obviously a very complex group, to say the least. This note is therefore rather a preliminary analysis, based on available recordings, which per race are often just a few or less.

An overview of vocalizations per race (some already grouped):

*R. r. intermedia/rufifrons* (Australian Rufous Fantail): Song is a high-pitched series of notes with a seesawing pattern.

*R. r. louisiadensis* (?) (SE New Guinea Island birds): Song is a more loosely given whistled song, much lower-pitched than previous.
R. r. russata (+ rufofronta, commoda, granti) (Solomon Fantail): Song is a series of high-pitched notes, with ascending or descending patterns.
R. r. *utupae* (+ *melanolaema*) (Santa Cruz Islands Fantail): Song is a series of staccato emphatic high-pitched notes, in a narrow frequency range.

*utupae*

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R. r. *saipanensis* (+ *mariae*) (Micronesian Fantail): Song is very different from above groups, a series of rich whistles descending in pitch. Most notes are sharply upslurred.

*saipanensis*

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Guam (*race uraniae*??) Song slightly different, as upslurred notes seem to break up in 2 distinct notes, but kept within this vocal group.
**R. r. versicolor** (Yap Fantail): Song starts with some short staccato notes which gradually become longer changing into some sweet whistles.

**R. r. kubaryi** (Pohnpei Fantail): a series of high-pitched staccato notes

**R. r. torrida** (Gilolo Fantail): a series of high-pitched staccato notes without a clear pattern
Given that we have very few recordings of several races and that there is a fair amount of variation in song, a reliable analysis at present is difficult.

We have tried to compare and quantify the vocal differences of all groups with a rough estimated score in a comparison table:

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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Rufous Fantail <em>intermedia/rufifrons</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>SE PNG birds <em>louisadensis</em>??</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solomon birds <em>russata, rufifronta, commoda, granti</em> etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz Islands Fantail <em>utupae, melanolaema</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Micronesian birds (saipanensis, mariae) &amp; Guam</td>
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<td>Yap Fantail <em>versicolor</em></td>
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<td>Pohnpei Fantail <em>kubaryi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gilolo Fantail <em>torrida</em></td>
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</table>

Some groups are convincingly vocally different (e.g. group 1 (Australia), group 2 (SE PNG) and group 5 (Micronesia)), others much less so (partially due to the fact that the Solomon group stays quite a mixed bag, and as a consequence, e.g. Gilolo and Pohnpei Fantail seem to fall within the range of vocalizations of the Solomon group).

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**References**


**Recommended citation**