Notes on the vocalizations of Arafura Fantail (*Rhipidura dryas*)

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

Three groups are mentioned in HBW (Boles 2016):
1. “squamata group” (also including *henrici*, which sometimes merged with *squamata*) in S Moluccas and W Papuan Is
2. “elegantula group” (with *reichenowi* and *hamadryas*) in E Lesser Sundas
3. “nominate group” (including *streptphora*, *semicollaris*, *sumbensis*, *celebensis* and *mimosae*) in S New Guinea, C Lesser Sundas and Australia

Vocally these three groups are not readily recognized (from a quick look at sonograms). It would seem that recordings from Alor, Timor-Leste, Wetar and Pantar (which basically coincides with the race *semicollaris*) have the most distinctive song, consisting of short, fast rising series of 3 notes repeated a few times:
Other races in western Lesser Sundas have the more typical song shared with eastern races: Some examples:
Sumba (sumbensis) = group 3
Flores Sea = group 3
Damar island (elegantula) = group 2
Maluku (squamata) = group 1
N Australia (dryas) = group 3

It is thus quite striking that semicollaris, about in the middle of the distribution of the nominate group, is vocally so different. Of all other races, based on the few recordings available, dryas seems to be the most deviating (slightly higher-pitched and more emphatic). Which actually indicates that all vocal variation is within group 3 (nominate group).

It would thus seem that the proposed grouping based on morphological (?) characteristics, is not supported by a similar differentiation vocally. From this short analysis, we can at most conclude that race semicollaris (spread over several islands) is vocally the most distinctive.
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References


Recommended citation