

African Bird Club



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 10 No 2 September 2003

Daily activity of
birds of São Tome
and Principe

Papyrus
Yellow Warbler
systematics

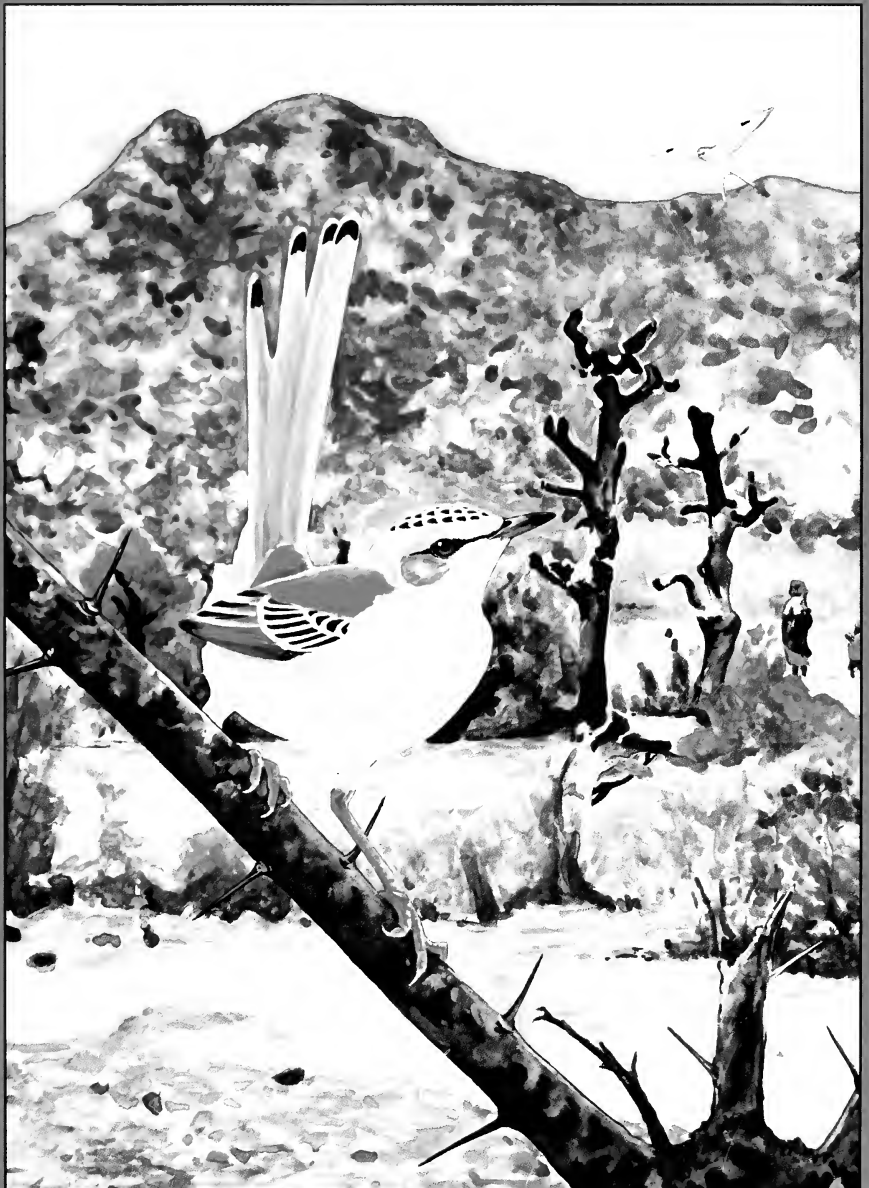
Mauritius Olive
White-eye nest

Rufous-morph
Augur Buzzard
specimen from
Zimbabwe

First West African
nest of Grey-
winged Robin
Chat in Côte
d'Ivoire

Birding
Cameroon, part 1

First record of
Verreaux's Eagle
nesting on the
ground





African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC particularly wishes to thank its Corporate Sponsors for their invaluable financial support in 2003: Avifauna, Birdquest, Naturetrek, Safariwise Namibia, Sunbird, Wildwings and Zeiss.

ABC Council

John Armitage, Phil Atkinson (Chairman), Keith Betton (Vice-Chairman), Flip Bruce-Lockhart (Secretary), Richard Butler, Mark Catterall, Patrick Claffey, Roy Hargreaves, Alistair Henderson, Paul Lascelles, Claire Spottiswoode, Toby Tebbit, Hazell Thompson, Stephanie Tyler and Alan Williams (Treasurer). *President:* Martin Woodcock

Bulletin Editorial Board

Chairman of Board: Vacant

Managing Editor: Guy Kirwan

Assistant Editor: Ron Demey

David Allan, Mark Andrews, Phil Atkinson, Callan Cohen, Lincoln Fishpool, Peter Lack, Rodney Martins, Roger Safford, and Richard Webb.

Membership of the ABC

Membership of the ABC is open to all and costs, per annum, UK£15 *Individual (Africa & Europe)*, UK£17 *Individual (Rest of the World)*, UK£18 *Family (Africa & Europe)*, UK£20 *Family (Rest of the World)*, UK£8 *Student (Africa & Europe)*, UK£10 *Student (Rest of the World)*, UK£25 *Libraries/Institutions*, UK£25 minimum *Supporting Member*, or UK£300 *Life Member*. To join or for further details please write to the membership secretary at the club address below.

ABC Web site

<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

Contact ABC

African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.
email: info@africanbirdclub.org

Further information can be obtained directly from individual council members. Please use the following email addresses or contact them via the club's postal address. With email, replace @... with @africanbirdclub.org, e.g. chairman@africanbirdclub.org will reach the Chairman

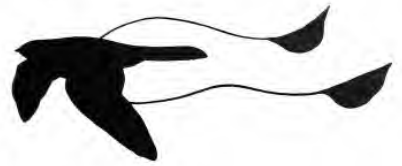
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The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The *Bulletin of the ABC* provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the *Bulletin of the ABC* does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No

material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the *Bulletin of the ABC* and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this bulletin and further details are available from the editor (editor@africanbirdclub.org).



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Front cover plate

*Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* by Mark Andrews*

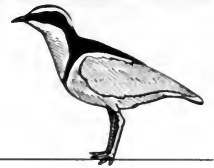
Illustrations

Mark Andrews, Nik Borrow/Birdquest, Michael Hodgson/Birdquest, Martin Woodcock

Photographs

Maarten van den Akker, Rod Cassidy, William S. Clark, Callan Cohen, Martin Dallimer, Paul Ellis, Dennis Hansen, Ron Hoff, Tony King, Nico Laubscher, Tasso Leventis, Rob Martin, Babakar Ndao, Rina Nichols, Marc Rabenandrasana, Hugo Rainey, Jugal Tiwari and Gerrit Visser.

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ABC AGM 2004

The 2004 London meeting and AGM will be held on Saturday 13 March, at the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) offices, 68–71 Newman Street, London W1T 3AH. The nearest Underground stations are Goodge Street, Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road. Details of the speakers, the AGM programme and confirmation of venue will be posted to members in early 2003. In order to save on the considerable postage costs involved, Council proposes to send the AGM programme only to UK-based members. The minutes of the AGM are published in the following Bulletin. Overseas members who wish to receive the AGM agenda should notify the Club Secretary via secretary@africanbirdclub.org.

Update to the Bird Recorders list

The new Recorder for The Gambia is as follows: Solomon Jallow, c/o WABSA, Department of Parks & Wildlife, Management HQs, Abuko Nature Reserve, Abuko, PMB 676 S/K. Tel: +220 375888 (office), +220 472208 (home), 921 551 (mobile); e-mail: habitatafrica@hotmail.com.

ABC sales items

The following items are currently available for sale from ABC. All proceeds from sales are used to promote the aims of the Club, UK registered charity 1053920.

1. ABC Sweatshirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club Working for Birds in Africa', black, navy or bottle green. Sizes: medium, large, extra large and extra-extra large: UK£20.
2. New-style ABC Polo shirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club Working for Birds in Africa', bottle green, navy blue and black. Sizes: large, extra-large and extra-extra large: UK£13.50.
3. New ABC T-shirt featuring Bush Shrikes by Dave Nurney, grey. Sizes: large, extra-large and extra-extra large: UK£13.50.
4. New Ladies and Mens shirts, navy or black, with ABC logo: UK£15.
5. ABC caps featuring an embroidered ABC logo, black, bottle green, red and maroon: UK£7.
6. Fleece, navy, black or bottle green: UK£25.
7. Bodywarmer, navy, with ABC logo: UK£25.
8. ABC bone-china mugs: two designs featuring Carmine Bee-eater or Golden-breasted Starlings by Martin Woodcock: UK£6 or UK£10 a pair.
9. ABC badge featuring Egyptian Plover design: UK £2.
10. White-winged Apalis A4 colour print by Nik Borrow from *Bull ABC 2* (2): signed and numbered limited edition of 50 at UK£7.50; also available unsigned at UK£1.00.
11. Nightjar A4 colour prints by Martin Woodcock from *Bull ABC 2.2*: one print illustrates Mountain and Rwenzori Nightjars, the second depicts Black-shouldered and Fiery-necked Nightjars: UK£1.50 for the pair.
12. Locally designed cards on hand-made paper, produced by the paper-making co-operative of the BirdLife International-supported Kilum Mountain Forest Project in Cameroon. A selection of five cards in a hand-woven wallet: UK£5.
13. *Bull ABC*, volume 1, 1994, number 1 and 2: UK£3 each.
14. *Bull ABC*, volume 2, 1995, number 1 and 2: UK£4 each.
15. *Bull ABC*, volume 3, 1996, number 1 and 2: UK£4 each.
16. *Bull ABC*, volume 4, 1997, number 1 and 2: UK£5 each.
17. *Bull ABC*, volume 5, 1998, number 2 only: UK£5 each.
18. *Bull ABC*, volume 6, 1999, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
19. *Bull ABC*, volume 7, 2000, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
20. *Bull ABC*, volume 8, 2001, number 1 and 2: UK£8 each.
21. *Bull ABC*, volume 9, 2002, number 1 and 2: UK£8 each.
22. *Bull ABC*, volume 10, 2003, number 1 and 2: UK£8 each.
23. Azores Trip Report, Sep–Oct 1997 by Willem Steenge and Theo Bakker, 29 pp covering travel, transport, weather, ferry timetables and fares, itinerary and site guides, many maps: UK£5.
24. *Birds in the Gaborone Area, Botswana* by S J Tyler and W D Borello, 100 pp with detailed species information concerning status and sites where they can be seen, with detailed information on some sites and co-ordinates for all sites: UK£10.
25. Cameroon Trip Report, Dec 1994–Jan 1995 by Richard Webb, 72 pp with sections covering travel, health, weather, references, a detailed itinerary, systematic checklist of 481 species and a 29-page site guide including 25 maps: UK£6.
26. Cameroon Trip Report, Mar–Apr 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle, 22 pp, useful update to previous report, following similar route, with logistics, sites, itinerary and systematic list of 551 species seen: UK£4.
27. Cape Verde Trip Report, Mar 1996 by Theo Bakker and Klaas van Dijk, 37 pp, details and locations of all 61 species seen over 4 weeks, with useful information on travel and accommodation, and many detailed maps and photographs: UK£6.50.

28. Ethiopia Trip Report, Dec 1995–Jan 1996 by Richard Webb, sections covering travel, health, weather, references, a detailed itinerary, systematic checklist of 478 species and site guide for 30 locations: UK£7.50.
29. Ethiopia Trip Report, Oct–Nov 1996 by Jon Hornbuckle, 31 pp, complement to previous report, with logistics, sites, itinerary and systematic list of species seen, including 30 endemics: UK£4.
30. *Ethiopia: in search of endemic birds*, Sep–Oct 1997 by Julian Francis and Hadoram Shirihai, 45 pp, 47 excellent colour photographs including endemics, with logistics, travel tips, detailed itinerary and systematic list of species seen, including identification notes for Degodi and Sidamo Larks: UK£10.
31. Ethiopia/Eritrea Trip Report, Mar–May 1998 by David Murdoch, 280 species seen, short but useful update to our other Ethiopia reports, itinerary and systematic list of all birds and mammals seen, also details of sites in Eritrea: UK£3.
32. The Gambia, 10–17 Sep 1999 by Stuart Sharp, 34 pp including sections on travel/holiday tips, itinerary, brief site descriptions and systematic lists of birds and mammals seen: UK£5.
33. The Gambia, 1–8 Nov 1998 by Gruff Dodd, 26 pp cover trip planning, very detailed itinerary and systematic list of 180 species seen: UK£4.
34. *Birds of Senegambia*, checklist: UK£0.50.
35. Birding Ghana, Feb 1996 by Mindy and Sherif El Din, 39 pp contain sections on orientation, itinerary, some site descriptions, a table of species seen each day, plus extra notes on birding hints and etiquette in Ghana with more site suggestions: UK£6.50.
36. Ghana Trip Report, Jan–Feb 1997 by Simon Plat, 35 pp complement Birding Ghana report, especially for travel by public transport; with checklist of 220 species, detailed itinerary, and site guides, including coast between Accra and Takoradi, Kakum National Park, Subri Forest Reserve, Kumasi, Tamale, Bolgatanga, Wa and Mole National Park: UK£4.
37. Côte d'Ivoire by public transport trip report, Jan–Feb 1995 by Eddie Williams, 28 pp with several maps, 412 species plus extensive mammal list, local information, itinerary and site guides: UK£4
38. Kenya Trip Report, Feb–Mar 1995 by Mike Hunter and Graham Speight, 90 pp with sections covering travel, health, climate, accommodation, references, a detailed itinerary, systematic list of 693 species, and a 50-page site guide covering 48 sites with 28 maps: UK£8.
39. *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Nairobi*, including Nairobi National Park, by Bill Harvey, 32 pp providing a checklist and details of status, frequency, habitat preferences and frequency in Nairobi National Park and Nairobi Arboretum: UK£0.50.
40. Madagascar and the Comores, Oct–Nov 1995 by Jon Hornbuckle, 'How to see all the birds without a hire car', 34 pp list 186 species in Madagascar including 124 endemics, 79 species in the Comores, including 17 endemics, with logistics, itinerary, site notes, one map, systematic list of birds and mammals: UK£4.
41. Madagascar, Nov–Dec 1997 by Chris Bell, Mike Hunter, Dawn Ross and Malcolm Roxby, useful update to previous reports on how to find recently re-/discovered species, with full species list including 123 Malagasy endemics, itinerary, brief site guide: UK£4.
42. Madagascar (with Mauritius and Réunion), winter 1997–98 by Brian Gee, 67 pp, 21 maps, 192 species seen in Madagascar, with logistics (including getting around on public transport) site guides (including Montagne d'Ambre, Tsiribihina River, Kirindy Forest) systematic list, advice on guides etc: UK£9.
43. Madagascar Trip Report, October 1998 by Paul Noakes, 14 pp, three maps, a brief report covering over 90% of the endemics: UK£2.50.
44. Malawi, March 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle, 17 pp, logistics, sites, seven maps, itinerary and systematic list of 306 species seen: UK£3.
45. Malawi and the Luangwa Valley (Zambia), Jul–Aug 1997 by Henk Hendriks, 45 pp, 14 maps, with logistics, site guides, complete systematic list of 370 species, and where to see rare and difficult species: UK£8.
46. Southern Malawi and Luangwa Valley (Zambia), Jan 1999 by Nigel Wheatley, includes maps of major towns and sites, maps of Senga Bay and Zomba, sites visited, other sites, systematic list of birds and mammals: UK£7.50.
47. Namibia and the Cape, Nov 1994 by Jon Hornbuckle, 43 pp, logistics, site notes, one map, detailed itinerary and systematic list of species seen: UK£4.
48. Birding Senegal, 10–29 Nov 1998 by Mindy and Sherif Baha el Din, 26 pp, one map, details of travel, accommodation, detailed itinerary, key habitats and sites, and systematic lists of 282 bird species and mammals: UK£5.
49. KwaZulu-Natal and Transvaal, South Africa, 8–21 Oct 2000 by Mike Hunter, 13 pp covering daily itinerary, brief notes for each site and comprehensive list of 327 species: UK£3.
50. Cape Town to The Richtersveld, South Africa, 4–19 May 2001 by Paul Gascoigne and Helen Pooley, 29 pp covering detailed daily itinerary, accommodation information and comprehensive list of 168 species: UK£4.
51. Western Cape and Namibia, Nov 1999–Jan 2000 by Brian Gee, 69 pp covering good general information, detailed site guide with maps and comprehensive species list: UK£9.

52. Cape Province, South Africa, Feb–Mar 1999 by Gruff Dodd, 42 pp covering trip planning, very detailed itinerary and systematic list of 239 species: UK£6.
53. Eastern South Africa and Zimbabwe, Feb–Mar 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle, 35 pp, logistics, site notes, five maps, detailed itinerary including Wakkerstroom, Mkuzi, Umlalazi, Sani Pass, Hwange and Victoria Falls, with systematic list of 529 species: UK£5.
54. Voyage Naturaliste au Cape Provinces d’Afrique du Sud, Sep–Oct 1997 par Georges et Mireille Olios, 50 pp en Français: renseignements pratiques, documentation, itineraire et principaux sites visites. Liste commente des 246 espèces d’oiseaux vus, aussi mammifères et reptiles, plans des plusieurs sites; also includes an 11- page itinerary plus checklist of the 246 birds and 33 mammals in English: UK£6.
55. Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, Jan–Feb 1996 by Eddie Williams, describes how to visit the prime sites using only public transport, 24 pp, with detailed orientation information, site guides, nine maps and a systematic species list: UK£4.50.
56. Uganda Trip Report, Jun–Aug 1995 by Henk Hendriks, 59 pp, sections covering orientation, references, itinerary, systematic checklist of 473 bird and 36 mammal species, and a detailed site guide with ten maps: UK£6.50.
57. *Where to Watch Birds in Uganda*, by Jonathan Rossouw and Marco Sacchi, 110 pp with a section covering general birding in Uganda, 15 main sites are covered with a map and sections on birding, other wildlife, access, facilities and nearby sites; also a systematic checklist covering status at each site: UK£7.50.
58. *Wakkerstroom Bird and Nature Guide* by Warwick and Michele Tarboton, second edn, Mar 1998, detailed description of this fascinating area on border of Mpumalanga (Eastern Transvaal) and KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and what can be seen there, many illustrations: UK£5.
59. Zimbabwe (including parts of Botswana and South Africa), 18 Feb–5 Mar 2000 by Gruff Dodd, detailed account of trip and systematic list covering 382 species: UK£6.
60. *Birdwatch Zimbabwe*, 1991, by Derek Solomon and Jacko Williams, comprehensive guide with detailed descriptions of all main areas with maps, site guides, accommodation directions, checklist and many line drawings: UK£8.50.

Postage and packing: please send UK£2 for each UK order, and UK£3 for each overseas surface mail order. For overseas airmail please add UK£1.50 for each item ordered.

Orders: payments should be made in pounds sterling by cheque/postal order (payable to African Bird Club) or credit card. Full credit card details are required, please specify Visa, Access, Mastercard or Eurocard; card number; cardholder’s name (as it appears on card); cardholder’s address; expiry date; cardholder’s signature; and amount payable. Please be sure to specify your name and address and the full details of your order including quantity, with size and colour where applicable.

Please send your order to African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK. Enquiries may also be sent to ABC Sales Officer, Moira Hargreaves at the Club’s address or e-mail: sales@africanbirdclub.org. ☺

Advertise in the *Bulletin of the ABC*

All advertisements must be sent prepaid (cheques made payable to the African Bird Club) as camera-ready copy, bromide/film or on floppy disk to:

Alastair Henderson, 34 Dudgeon Drive,
Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4QL, UK

If adverts are sent on floppy disk we can accept Pagemaker 7, CorelDraw10 files or unformatted ASCII text files and uncompressed TIF graphics files. If adverts are prepared on an Apple Mac the diskette should be formatted for PC.

The current rates are as follows and are based on a print run of 1,400 copies. These rates are guaranteed for the March 2004 *Bull ABC*.

Please address all queries to Alastair Henderson at the above address.

African Bird Club Advertising Rates

Black & white

Full-page	£95	(210 x 145mm)
Half-page	£60	(100 x 145mm)
Quarter-page	£40	(100 x 70mm)
Eighth-page	£25	(50 x 70mm)

Colour

Please contact Alastair Henderson on Tel: 01865 454594. E-mail: hendensa@oup.co.uk (or write to the address given above left.)

Copy deadlines

Spring Bulletin	15 January
Autumn Bulletin	05 June



Minutes of the Ninth AGM of the African Bird Club

held at the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA),

68-71 Newman Street, London W1

at 14.00 hrs on 8 March 2003

Present

The following registered their attendance at the meeting: Philip Adlington, Desmond Allen, Phil Atkinson, David Barker, Keith Betton, Richard Bosanquet, Chris Bowden, Mr & Mrs E Burman, Richard Butler, D R Calder, Mark Catterall, Anthony Cheke, Bob Cheke, Julie Childs, Patrick Claffey, Peter Clement, Mark Cocker, Chris Collins, E Cook, Dr J Darch, Simon Davidson, S Ecclestone, David Ebbutt, S John Farnsworth, Lincoln Fishpool, Simon Fogg, Hilary Fry, Mr & Mrs Gordon Gale, Martin Gauntlett, Tony Gibbs, D Grunberg, John Hammick, Moira Hargreaves, Roy Hargreaves, Antony Hazeldine, Richard Hearn, Alistair Henderson, Chris Hendley, Mr & Mrs A Holcombe, Martin Hunnybun, Michael Kings, Marcus Kohler, Russell Leavett, Michel Louette, Stephen Lowe, Rob Lucking, Duncan Macdonald, Duncan McNiven, Andy Merritt, David Murdoch, Anne Nason, William Nicoll, Andrew Owen, Debbie Pain, Eric Pilcher, David Porter, Madeleine Prangley, Bill Quantrill, Rowena Quantrill, Geoff Randall, Nigel Redman, John Regan, Roger Safford, Keith Seaton, Brendan Sloan, Claire Spottiswoode, Simon Tamungang, Toby Tebbit, Tony Todd, John Walder, Trevor Warren, Alan Wilkinson and Alan Williams.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Mark Andrews, John Armitage, Flip Bruce-Lockhart, Guy Eldridge, David Fisher, Jon Gibbons, Frazer Henderson, Guy Kirwan, Paul Lascelles, Steve Lister, Jill Thomas, Richard Webb, Jeff Wisdom, Barbara & Martin Woodcock.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and approved unanimously.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Report of the Council for 2002

In introducing the report, copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Chairman thanked the Bulletin editorial team and welcomed Ron Demey as the Assistant Editor. The Club is keen to continue to increase African membership and to establish more local payment schemes to facilitate this. Nominations for supported membership were invited.

The Chairman thanked everyone who had responded to the Conservation Fund Appeal. WildSounds have made two generous donations since the appeal was launched. Members were encouraged to purchase ABC merchandise as well as goods from WildSounds as this directly benefits the Conservation Fund.

A map showing the distribution of projects supported so far was presented. The Club is keen to raise sponsorship for delegates to attend the PAOC in Tunisia next year and to continue to support quality conservation projects across Africa.

The Chairman paid tribute to the Club's Corporate Sponsors, members, volunteers, Crowes (printers for the Bulletin) and ABTA. He also thanked the two Council members who are stepping down and welcomed Bill Quantrill back onto the Council.

5. Presentation of the Accounts for 2002 and Treasurer's Report

In presenting the accounts, copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Treasurer noted that in

2002 the balance sheet was in credit. The Club holds over UK£11,000 of current assets, although much of this comprises advance membership subscriptions. There has been a small, but persistent decline in membership. Interest rates on deposit accounts are low. Revenue from Gift Aid is increasing and UK members were encouraged to complete declarations if they have not already done so. Expenditure on the Bulletin and on administrative charges have decreased this year. There has been a saving on the cost of holding the AGM, through ABTA allowing us to use their venue. The accounts were approved unanimously.

6. Election of Council

The following were elected to the African Bird Club Council for 2003: John Armitage, Phil Atkinson, Keith Betton, Flip Bruce-Lockhart, Mark Catterall, Patrick Claffey, Roy Hargreaves, Alistair Henderson, Paul Lascelles, Bill Quantrill, Claire Spottiswoode, Toby Tebbit, Hazell Thompson, Stephanie Tyler and Alan Williams.

7. Election of Executive Officers

The following were elected as Executive Officers of the Club for 2003:

Chairman: Phil Atkinson

Vice-Chairman: Keith Betton

Secretary: Flip Bruce-Lockhart

Treasurer: Alan Williams

8. Appointment of Auditor

Mr Stephen Ham ACA was elected as auditor for 2003.

9. Any Other Business

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 14.35 hrs. ☺

**African Bird Club—summary statement of accounts
at 31 December 2002***

Income and expenditure account—year to 31 December 2002

CLUB ACCOUNT	£	£
	2002	2001
Income		
Subscriptions	16,477	16,781
Sales and other revenue	610	1052
Bank and Building Society interest	257	612
Tax refund (Gift Aid)	1,344	709
	18,688	19,154
Less:		
Bulletin costs (including postage)	14,186	14,316
Income before expenses	4,502	4,838
Expenses		
General expenses—stationery, telephones meetings etc.	2,960	3,120
PAOC		53
World Birding Conference		1,410
Finance costs—bank charges, depreciation, accountancy etc	1,459	1,516
Total expenses	4,419	6,099
Surplus for year	83	-1,261

CONSERVATION ACCOUNT

Income		
Donations and Sponsorship	2,330	609
Profit on sales of Club merchandise	1,144	906
Total income	3,474	1,515
Expenditure		
Conservation Awards paid in year	2,317	6,371
IBA book launch		2,300
Balance for year carried forward	1,157	-7,156

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2002

	2002	2001
Fixed assets		
Equipment	292	584
Current assets		
Stock of goods for resale	2,952	2,503
Building Society balance	9,178	7,925
Balance at Bank	2,048	2,128
	14,178	12,556
Less:		
Current liabilities		
Subscriptions paid in advance	6,766	7,195
Life memberships	6,900	6,360
Sundry creditors		21
	13,666	13,576
Net current assets	512	-1,020
Total assets	804	-436
Represented by:		
Accumulated Club Fund B/F	-477	785
Surplus for year	83	-1,262
Conservation Fund B/F	41	7,197
Balance for year	1,157	-7,156
Conservation Fund C/F	1,198	41
	804	-436

* A copy of the full statement may be obtained from the Club Treasurer. ☺

**Corrigenda to
Bull. ABC 10 (1)**

The text concerning Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea* on p 18 is incorrect. Contrary to what is stated in the last sentence of the species account, the subspecies occurring in Nigeria is the nominate, not *nehrkorni* (Urban, E.K., Fry, C.H. and Keith, S. (eds) 1997. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol 5. London, UK: Academic Press; Cheke & Walsh 1996), *contra* Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1973), who erroneously stated that *H. v. violacea* occurs from Togo eastwards. The Benin record of *nehrkorni* is thus the easternmost to date.

Fig 7 on p 21 is a female Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus* (not a male) and Fig 8 is a juvenile Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina* (not a female Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus*). This also affects the text for Black-bellied Seedcracker that appears on p 19, which should read:
Black-bellied Seedcracker
Pyrenestes ostrinus

Not previously recorded in Benin. Although Mackworth-Praed & Grant²² extrapolated that it occurred in the country, no documentation was available. One was mist-netted, a female, on 10 February 2001 (wing length 63 mm, tarsus 19 mm, bill 15.5 mm, tail 49 mm, weight 21.5 g; Fig 7). Uncommon resident in Togo and Nigeria.

On p 56, the line drawing of the Quail-plover *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* was incorrectly attributed to Mark Andrews; it was by Nik Borrow (courtesy of Birdquest), and p 63, the line drawing of the African Green Broadbill *Pseudocalyptomena graueri* was incorrectly attributed to Mark Andrews; it was by Craig Robson. The plate of Sahelian doves, on p45, was also by Nik Borrow. Our apologies to the artists concerned. ☺

Africa Round-up



General

PAOC XI

The 11th Pan-African Ornithological Congress will be held at Djerba, Tunisia, on 21–25 November 2004. The theme will be 'Birds crossing borders—linking people and habitats throughout Africa'. The programme will include sessions on migration, waterbird movements and distribution, trans-frontier parks and conservation, birds in North African tradition and arts, and other topics related to African ornithology and conservation. The pre-registration forms are available to download in English, French and Arabic in the African Birding file vault, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AfricanBirding/files/>

Source: *Hichem Azafzaf* in litt. to *African Birding*, June 2003

Cause of mass die-off of Asian vultures discovered

The most important topic at the Sixth World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls, held in Budapest, Hungary, on 18–23 May 2003, was the catastrophic population crash of three *Gyps* vulture species in southern Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan (see *Bull. ABC* 10: 6). Research into the cause of this crisis pointed to a lethal virus or pesticides, and it was feared that the disease could be introduced into Africa, thus eventually threatening all African vultures. The American veterinarian, J. Lindsay Oaks, and his colleagues have now shown that the cause is kidney failure brought about by Diclofenac, an analgesic and anti-rheumatic drug extensively prescribed for humans, in whom it may cause serious side-effects. In India and Pakistan, the drug has also been widely used to treat livestock, on which the vultures feed. It has

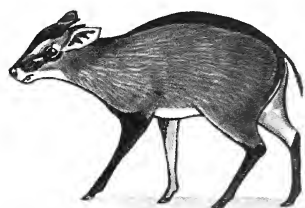
been experimentally proved that this has affected the three *Gyps* species. This is also borne out by the fact that the vultures in Bombay, which fed on corpses put out by the Parsees on their Towers of Silence, disappeared long ago. It remains unclear why other carrion-eating raptors, such as other vulture species, kites and eagles, are not affected. Further research is therefore needed. Martin Gilbert, of the Peregrine Fund, summarised what is known about Diclofenac and is to seek further information. Whether and how its application to livestock can be reduced is the next all-important question to be tackled.

Source: *B.-U. Meyburg* and *R. D. Chancellor* in litt. to *African Birding*, May 2003

Taxonomic position of African passerines

At the International Ornithological Congress held in Beijing, in August 2002, it was reported that picathartes *Picathartes* and rockjumpers *Chaetops* sit on the lowest, i.e. most ancient, 'perch' of the evolutionary tree for Old World passerines and are the sole remnants of an ancient lineage with no apparent relatives. The Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, is now planning to examine where certain south-western African species of uncertain taxonomic affinities, such as Herero Chat *Namibornis herero*, Victorin's Warbler *Bradypterus victorini*, Grassbird *Sphenoeacus afer*, White-tailed Shrike *Lanioturdus torquatus* and sugarbirds *Promerops* spp, should be classified. Evidence from plants and insects suggests that south-western Africa is a 'mausoleum' for relict species and the same may be true for birds.

Source: *Africa—Birds & Birding* 7(6), p 14



Bay Duiker *Cephalophus dorsalis*
by Mark Andrews

Hunting is the major threat to wildlife across the tropics

Habitat loss and hunting have long been recognised as the major threats to wildlife, the former usually being considered to be the most important. In the last ten years, however, conservationists have come to realise that hunting is the major threat across the tropics, especially in forests, where the productivity of edible wildlife is extremely low. Even conservative estimates of the off-take are staggering. For example, it is estimated that 28 million Bay Duikers *Cephalophus dorsalis*, 16 million Blue Duikers *C. monticola* and more than seven million red colobus *Procolobus* spp are taken from the forests of Central Africa every year. Wildlife extraction from these forests is presently six times the sustainable rate. Certain protected key areas are therefore increasingly becoming 'empty forests'. Among birds, large species and Galliformes are the most directly threatened. Whilst 11% of all bird species are currently judged to be at risk of extinction, this includes 25% of the Galliformes.

Source: *Oryx* 36, pp 311–312, 328–329

Late return migration of raptors

Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* equipped with satellite transmitters started the return migration to their breeding grounds in Germany late again in 2003. One adult male was still in Zambia on 9 March, whereas another was on the Zambia/Tanzania border on 14 March. A third male was still in northern Zimbabwe on 11 March. As the return migration takes c7.5 weeks, many adult Lesser Spotted Eagles would once again arrive too late in their breeding area to be able to breed. This puzzling phenomenon has been observed for some years now and researchers are currently unsure of its cause. A Greater Spotted Eagle *A. clanga* from Poland was still in central Sudan on 12 March and may also have arrived too late to breed. For more information see: www.Raptors-International.de or www.raptor-research.de.

Source: Bernd Meyburg in litt. to *African Birding*, March 2003

Volunteers needed

Earthwatch Institute (Europe), a UK-based environmental organisation, is looking for volunteers to help in its projects. Earthwatch is operating 130 projects worldwide in 2003, 14 of which concern birds. The organisation's African bird projects include 'African Penguins', 'Europe-Africa songbird migration', 'Tanzanian forest birds', and 'Blue Swallows of South Africa'. For details, see www.earthwatch.org/europe. E-mail: vp@earthwatch.org.uk or write to 267 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7HT, UK.

Source: www.earthwatch.org/europe

Leslie Brown Memorial Grant

In memory of one of the most inspired and productive raptor conservation biologists of recent decades, the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. has made available this grant in 2003, for up to \$2,000, to provide financial assistance to promote the research and/or the dissemination of information on birds of prey. Proposals regarding African raptors receive priority. For

information concerning the grant, contact Dr Jeff Lincer, Director of Research, Wildlife Research Institute, Inc., 9251 Golondrina Drive, California 91941, USA. E-mail: jlincer@tns.net.

Source: Jeff Lincer in litt., *December 2002*

New Internet resource

Birders or ornithologists with a serious interest in taxonomy, distribution and nomenclature may wish to view a new website, put together by John Penhallurick. The site enables you to search for any species of bird and view its English name (with species endemic to a particular country clearly denoted), scientific name, French name, German name, Spanish name, English synonyms, Peters family name, Sibley & Monroe family name, Gill (second edn) family name, as used by Clements, habitat, distribution, threat status (for those species listed in the BirdLife International Red Data Books), criteria for threat status, and annotated synonymy for every generic, subgeneric, species and subspecies name. The author advises that there are a number of explanatory documents on the site that explain what he is doing and why, and he urges readers to view these first. The site should be considered as work in progress and is being expanded working through the Peters order. Updates should be available on a monthly basis. The site can be viewed at either: <http://www.worldbirdinfo.net> or <http://www.worldbirdinfo.bribieisland.net>.

Source: John Penhallurick in litt. to *African Birding*, March 2003

Birds as road casualties

Johannes Erritzoe has compiled a summary of all ornithological papers on birds as road casualties, totalling c300 articles in many languages. His paper 'Bird traffic casualties and road quality for breeding birds—a summary of existing papers with a bibliography' can be viewed on his website, www.birdresearch.dk.

Source: Johannes Erritzoe in litt. to *African Birding*, December 2002

North Africa & North Atlantic islands

Magpie taxonomy

A review paper, by Enno Ebels in *Dutch Birding*, examines the case for recognising some of the more morphologically distinct taxa within the Magpie *Pica pica* complex as species, given the relatively recent but already widely accepted proposal that the North American form of Magpie, *P. [c.] hudsonia* should be considered specifically distinct (primarily based on its very different mitochondrial DNA). One of these forms, *P. [p.] mauritanica* (the Maghreb Magpie), is confined to Morocco and northern Algeria (there are no recent records from Tunisia), and is easily distinguished by its relatively long tail and conspicuous patch of bare blue skin behind the eye (although many birds from southern Spain share the latter feature). The calls of *mauritanica* also appear to differ from European races of *Pica pica*. Clearly much more work remains to be done on this and other morphologically unique north-west African bird taxa.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 25, pp 103–116

Houbara Bustard on the verge of extinction in Tunisia

A five-year study by Mohsen Chammem *et al* on the status and



Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* by Mark Andrews

distribution of Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* in Tunisia, undertaken in 1996–2001, found that the species is on the verge of extinction in the country. This is due to excessive hunting by foreign falconers, habitat destruction by agricultural expansion, disturbance by livestock and petrol and gas exploration, and inclement climate conditions in the area where the species has taken refuge. Houbara Bustard is now only found in the extreme south, where it occurs in suboptimal habitats that are exposed to little human disturbance.

Source: *Alauda* 71, pp 41–47

Protected birds in Egypt killed by Maltese hunters

In March 2003, Maltese customs officials intercepted two suitcases containing over 200 skins of protected birds. Two men, who were returning from a hunting trip in Egypt, were arrested in connection with the find. According to *BBC Wildlife* magazine, Maltese hunters decimate bird populations at Lake Nasser, near Abu Simbel and Lake Qarun in the Faiyum region. *BBC Wildlife* reported that customs in Malta seized a total of 447 birds from Maltese hunters returning from Egypt in 2002. Birds of prey topped the list of birds smuggled by hunters. In one instance, Maltese customs seized 23 Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis*, nine Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* and 11 Eurasian Eagle Owls *Bubo bubo*. In the early 1990s, the Egyptian government banned Maltese hunters from Egypt following a campaign by *BBC Wildlife*.

Source: David Camilleri in litt. to *African Birding*, March 2003

Zino's Petrels threatened

The Portuguese Ministry of Defence has announced plans to construct a radar station at the summit of Pico do Areeiro, Madeira, Portugal, site of the only known breeding colonies of Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma (mollis) madeira*, a Critically Endangered species that numbers just c20–30 breeding pairs. The radar station is part of a wider NATO network, and

considered to be of 'national strategic interest'. SPEA (Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves; BirdLife in Portugal) is very concerned about any development in close proximity to the breeding ledges of Zino's Petrels, and has alerted the Portuguese Ministry of Defence and other governmental agencies to the potential impacts of operating a radar station in this area. In a letter to NATO, BirdLife has called for a full and appropriate assessment to be conducted that takes proper account of the requirements and conservation objectives of the European Union's Birds Directive, because the proposed site is designated as a Special Protection Area and thus has the highest level of protection under European law. Nonetheless, not all knowledgeable commentators are convinced that the new developments will prove a significant threat to the petrels (see *Br. Birds* 96: 260). Readers that do wish to express their concerns about the developments are urged to send polite letters to: The Prime Minister of Portugal, Dr Durão Barroso, Rua da Imprensa à Estrela, 4, 1200-888 Lisbon, Portugal, e-mail: gmapm@mapm.gov.pt; and the NATO Secretary-General, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, NATO Headquarters, Blvd Leopold III, 1110 Brussels, Belgium, e-mail: natodoc@hq.nato.int. Please copy any correspondence to: Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves, Rua da Vitória 53, 3º Esq. 1100-618 Lisboa, Portugal, e-mail: spea@spea.pt.

Source: *World Birdwatch* 24 (4), p 3

West & Central Africa

West African Raptor Centre inaugurated

Africa Nature International, an international organisation created in Europe and Côte d'Ivoire, and working in Africa for 15 years, has announced the creation of the West African Raptor Centre/Centre pour la conservation des rapaces d'Afrique de l'Ouest (AfRap). The centre aims

to contribute to the protection of birds of prey in West Africa by promoting research, as well as educational and conservation activities. AfRap is establishing a scientific and technical centre, based in Côte d'Ivoire, and encourages West African scientists and conservationists to develop an interest in raptor research and conservation. AfRap also supports the development of regional avian veterinarian capacities. Africa Nature International is seeking to establish collaborations with raptor research and conservation institutions. Linking regional graduate students with foreign academic structures is a priority. For more information, contact: g.rondeau@africaonline.co.ci or afnat@afnature.org.

Source: Guy Rondeau in litt. *April* 2003

Environmental NGO wins national award in Burkina Faso...

The non-governmental organisation NATURAMA, BirdLife Partner in Burkina Faso, has been awarded the 'Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Burkinabè' in recognition of its contribution to the management of the environment in Burkina Faso. The President of Burkina Faso presented the award on 11 December 2002, at celebrations to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the country's independence.

Source: *Africa Newsletter BirdLife International* 5(1) p 2

...and in Ghana

The Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS), BirdLife Partner in Ghana, was adjudged the best environmental NGO in Ghana in 2002 by the Ministry of Environment and Science, in recognition of the organisation's contribution to raising environmental awareness. The award was presented during a reception to mark World Environment Day. GWS Community Projects won national and regional awards.

Source: *Africa Newsletter BirdLife International* 5(1) p 4

Action Plan developed for White-necked Picathartes

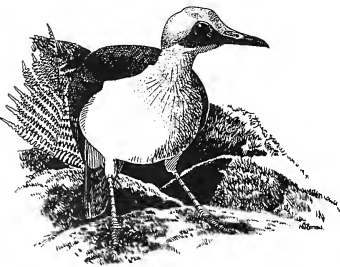
A workshop held in July 2002 brought together representatives from the five White-necked (Yellow-headed) Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* range states (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana) to develop an International Action Plan for the species. The species' population is estimated at fewer than 10,000 individuals and is probably declining as a result of loss and degradation of its forest habitat. The five-year action plan aims to stabilise or increase the populations of White-necked Picathartes through accurate estimation of the population size, distribution and trends of the species, and reducing unsustainable human activities at its main breeding sites.

Source: Africa Newsletter BirdLife International 5(1) pp 11–12

... and for Grey-necked Picathartes

Similar objectives were set for Grey-necked (Red-headed) Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* by a workshop held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in September 2002. The species is known to occur only in Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon and, like its congener, the current population is estimated at fewer than 10,000 individuals.

Source: Africa Newsletter BirdLife International 5(1) p 11



Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* by Nik Borrow (courtesy of Birdquest)

Cameroon Ornithological Club name change

At a meeting of the Management Committee of the Cameroon Ornithological Club (COC), held in July 2002, it was recommended that COC be known as the Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS), which better reflects the main activities of the organisation.

Source: Africa Newsletter BirdLife International 5(1) p 4

Chiffchaff claimed from DR Congo

A record of Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* has recently been reported from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where at least two birds were said to be singing for several days in suburban gardens in the capital Kinshasa in January 1989. This remarkable single-observer claim would constitute the southernmost Chiffchaff in Africa and is best treated as 'unconfirmed' pending further evidence. The only previous record from the country, from Luluabourg (now Kananga), on 20 April 1924, has now been rejected as the skin cannot be traced.

Sources: Vogelwelt 123, p 109 and Paul Herroelen in litt. May 2003

East Africa

Crab Plover breeding in Eritrea

Though long suspected of nesting in Eritrea, the discovery of an almost 90-pair-strong Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* colony north of Massawa, in June 2001, marked the first confirmation of breeding in the country and only the fourth-known site in Africa, following two colonies each in Somalia and Sudan.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 123, pp 46–47

Birds of Eritrea e-mail group

An e-mail group to discuss birds and birding in Eritrea has been created. To join, send an e-mail to: eritreabirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Source: Jugal Tiwari in litt. March 2003

Socotra breeding colony of Jouanin's Petrel

Details of the discovery of a breeding colony of Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* on Socotra, Yemen, in August 2000, have now been published, with photographs. Up to 50 birds were found at the site, where the species appears to breed in July–November. This is the first breeding site ever to be found and described for this pelagic seabird, which is endemic to the north-west Indian Ocean.

Source: Sandgrouse 24, pp 105–108

Socotra Conservation Fund

The Socotra Conservation Fund (SCF) is a newly created non-governmental organisation, whose main aims include conserving the endemic and globally significant biodiversity of, and promoting scientific research into, the archipelago. Other objectives include improving environmental awareness among the people of Socotra and the promotion of ecotourism. Socotra has at least six endemic bird species, 21 endemic reptiles and over 300 endemic plants. For further information see the SCF website: www.socotraisland.org.

Source: www.socotraisland.org

Formation of Socotra Bird Records Committee

A records committee has recently been established to maintain the Socotra Bird List and assess records of rare birds in the Yemen-owned archipelago. Records should be sent to either Omar Al-Saghier (e-mail: omarbio@y.net.ye) or Richard Porter (e-mail: richardporter@dialstart.net). Details of new birds for Socotra, which are also new for Yemen, will be published in *Sandgrouse*, the journal of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Source: Richard Porter in litt. February 2003

Grauer's Rush Warbler Action Plan developed

An International Action Plan for Grauer's Rush Warbler *Bradypterus graueri* was prepared at a stakeholders workshop, held in

Kabale, Uganda, on 7–11 November 2002, which brought together representatives of the four range states where the species occurs. Grauer's Rush Warbler is an Albertine Rift endemic restricted to Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, and is classified as Endangered, with a current global population of fewer than 10,000 individuals. The five-year action plan aims to improve the conservation status of the species through determining its distribution, population size and trends and minimising the impact of human activities that ultimately lead to habitat destruction and alteration at key sites. A Grauer's Rush Warbler Interest Group was inaugurated and will be coordinated by NatureUganda.

Source: Africa Newsletter BirdLife International 5(1) p 17

New form of Udzungwa Forest Partridge described

The recent discovery of Udzungwa Forest Partridge *Xenoperdix udzungwensis* in Mafwemiro forest, a north-western outlier of the Rubeho highland, and 150 km from the species' type-locality has led to the description of a new subspecies, which has been named *X. u. obscurata* by Jon Fjeldså and Jacob Kiure. The newly described form is distinctly smaller than the nominate, lacks the frontal necklace of principally white feathers bordering the lower throat (instead possessing an arc of black spots), has an overall duskier face pattern, only faint traces of ochraceous on the undertail-coverts, less distinctively barred secondaries, scaly patterned wing-coverts and narrower rectrices. The authors of the description consider that the likelihood of further populations of either form being discovered is low.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 123, pp 52–57

Major forest conservation project in Tanzania

A large project, which aims to develop a conservation strategy for the globally important Eastern Arc

Mountains and finance a trust fund for long-term conservation in these mountains, was launched in June 2002 in Dar es Salaam. The Tanzania Forest Conservation and Management Project is funded by the Global Environment Facility and Danish International Development Aid, who committed close to US\$40 million.

Source: Oryx 36, pp 326–327

Greater Flamingo satellite tracking in Tanzania

With assistance from BirdLife Belgium and the Max-Planck Institute at Radolfzell, backpack transmitters were fitted to three Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus [ruber] roseus* in northern Tanzania in 2002. A year later, in April 2003, the three birds were still alive, with two of them presumably part of the same flock, and all three transmitters still working. A map and data concerning their movements can be viewed at <http://home.no.net/stenil1/TZbirdatlas/tzatlas.htm>.

Source: Neil Baker in litt. April 2003

Uluguru Mountains reports available on Internet

A project in the Uluguru Mountains managed by BirdLife Tanzania and BirdLife Denmark, and funded by Danish International Development Aid, has made available its reports at <http://www.africanconservation.com/uluguru>. The Uluguru Mountains, one of the montane blocks in the

globally important Eastern Arc Mountain chain, contain nine species of conservation concern, among which are the endemic Uluguru Bush-shrike *Malaconotus alius* and Loveridge's Sunbird *Nectarinia loveridgei*.

Source: Oryx 36, p 327

Scopus—Journal of East African ornithology

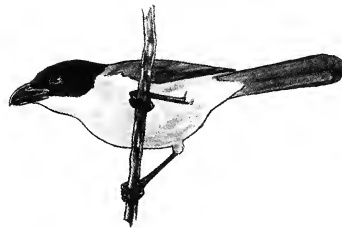
Founded in 1977, *Scopus* publishes original material on all aspects of ornithology from the eastern African region (Sudan south to Mozambique, Rwanda and Burundi east to the Indian Ocean islands). Each volume is published as one or two issues per year or as submissions dictate. Visit <http://www.naturekenya.org/Scopus.htm>. Contributions should be sent to the new editor, Dr Jeremy Lindsell, either by email to jeremy.lindsell@rspb.org.uk or by post c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. If you wish to subscribe to *Scopus*, visit <http://www.naturekenya.org/Scopus.htm>, or send a message to Catherine Ngarachu at eanhs@africaonline.co.ke. Rates for Volume 23 are: East Africa (addresses in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) Nature Kenya/Uganda members Ksh 500/Tsh 5,000/Ush 10,000 / US\$7; non-members Ksh 800/Tsh 8,000/Ush 16,000/US\$11. Rest of the World NK/NU members US\$10; non-members US\$15.

Source: Jeremy Lindsell in litt. to African Birding February 2003

Indian Ocean islands

NatureSeychelles—ABC's Local Partner in Seychelles

ABC is delighted that NatureSeychelles have agreed to be the Club's Local Partner Organisation in Seychelles. Under this agreement, NatureSeychelles manage a scheme for the Club which enables local members to join ABC while paying their subscriptions in local currency. All income raised in this way is used to support local wildlife conservation. NatureSeychelles has



Uluguru Bush-shrike *Malaconotus alius* by Mark Andrews

also raised local sponsorship to enable copies of the Bulletin to be distributed to wildlife clubs based in schools throughout the archipelago. The scheme is supported by the ABC representative in Seychelles, Adrian Skerrett, who has also sponsored a number of local members for their first year of membership.

Rodrigues Warbler under the spotlight...

The globally threatened Rodrigues Warbler *Acrocephalus rodericanus* is endemic to Rodrigues, one of the world's most devastated tropical islands. The species is now restricted to thickets and woodland entirely dominated by non-native trees and shrubs. As previously mentioned in these pages (see *Bull. ABC* 9: 16–24), a population census and habitat study was undertaken in April–June 1999. Using a combination of tape playback of song, and point counts, at least 103 warblers in nine wooded localities were found, and a minimum population of 150 birds estimated. The majority and the highest densities were in habitat dominated by an introduced invasive tree, the rose-apple *Syzygium jambos*, but birds were also found in plantations dominated by mahogany *Swietenia mahagoni*, tecoma *Tabebuia pallida* and Norfolk Island pine *Araucaria cunninghamii*, albeit at much lower densities. Warbler densities were highest in habitat with a dense structure of small branches. At two localities, one supporting a population of warblers and the other prone to extirpation (proven by previous surveys), vegetation structure and composition were similar, hinting that in some currently unoccupied areas, habitat is probably suitable and other factors are operating to preclude colonisation.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 12, pp 211–230

...and Seychelles Scops Owl

The endemic Seychelles Scops Owl *Otus insularis* is a Critically Endangered restricted-range species that is currently only known from



Seychelles Scops Owl *Otus insularis*
by Martin Woodcock

upland forest on Mahé, the largest and highest of the granitic Seychelles. A recent study, published in *Bird Conservation International*, focused on the response of colour-ringed individuals to playback of conspecific calls, to determine factors affecting playback reaction, monitor behaviour and assess the reliability of current monitoring techniques. The authors were able to identify 12 territories of the owl, but males were more frequently detected than females/pairs. A degree of significant seasonal variation in detection rates at fixed points within territories for both males and pairs was evidenced by the work, and generally there was a low probability of detecting individuals in June–August with a higher probability in April and, to a lesser degree, October. Perhaps unexpectedly, response times and owl–recorder distances were not influenced by moon phase or time of playback.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 12, pp 353–364

Ups and downs for Seychelles Kestrels

The first comprehensive survey of the Seychelles Kestrel *Falco araea* since the 1970s has revealed a dramatic decline in numbers on Praslin, where it is at risk of being extirpated. More encouragingly, the

joint Nature Seychelles (BirdLife in the Seychelles)–Aigas Field Study Centre survey found that the population on Mahé has remained stable. Seychelles Kestrel is considered Vulnerable, with a population of fewer than 1,000 individuals, and is the only raptor present in much of the Seychelles, where it is confined to the islands of Mahé, Praslin and Silhouette and some of Mahé's satellites. The species was intensively studied in the 1970s, when the estimated global population was 423 pairs, 370 on Mahé, 36 on Silhouette and a few elsewhere. In 1977, 13 individuals were released on Praslin, where the population had previously become extinct. The birds apparently established well and increased to around 20 pairs in the 1980s, but were thought to have declined during the 1990s. The extensive survey during the 2001–2002 breeding season found no detectable change in the population on Mahé, but on Praslin just four pairs and a single bird were located in late 2002. Of these, two pairs apparently did not attempt to breed and two nests failed. The probable reason for the decline is because the low altitude of Praslin means all the kestrel territories are in lowland areas, where they are at greater risk from alien predators. There may also have been some persecution of birds because of a traditional belief that kestrels are an ill omen. In 2002–2003, predator-proof nest-boxes will be installed in current and recently used kestrel territories on Praslin, and additional boxes will be placed in schools across the islands, in conjunction with an awareness campaign implemented by the Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles. The Aigas Trust, Praslin Development Fund, Jeff Watson, the Seychelles Ministry of Environment and the American Embassy Self-help Grant Scheme support work on the Seychelles Kestrel. For more information on the project, please contact: nature@seychelles.net.

Source: *World Birdwatch* 25 (1), p 9

Southern Africa

Okavango Delta threatened

Botswana's principal Important Bird Area (IBA), supporting huge numbers of waterbirds, and the world's largest Ramsar site, the Okavango Delta, could be irreversibly damaged if plans to construct a weir on the Okavango River, in Namibia, progress. A Namibian power company is investigating the feasibility of generating hydro-electric power by constructing a 6–8 m-high weir at Popa Falls, in Namibia, or slightly upstream of them. The weir would have a devastating impact by trapping sediment being transported downstream, which is an essential element of the ecosystem. This sediment, as studies by the Okavango Research Group (ORG) have demonstrated, plays a key role in maintaining the varied and productive nature of this inland oasis. Such damage has often been reported as a result of similar schemes in the past, such as the Kariba or Cahora Bassa dams and their effect on the Zambezi Delta. The Okavango River brings water and sediment into the system, and these are distributed throughout the swamps by a network of channels. As Professor McCarthy, head of the ORG has stated 'The channels leak water, but retain the sand. As a consequence, channels have a limited life and become less efficient in transporting water as sand accumulates, and eventually they fail and are abandoned. New channels form elsewhere in response.' This constantly shifting allocation of water to different areas is important because of another interesting feature of the delta, the high rate of water evaporation in the region, resulting in 98% of the annual floodwater being lost to the atmosphere each year, leaving the previously dissolved salts in the system. 'The dissolved salts locally accumulate to toxic levels, particularly on islands in the seasonal and permanent swamps. As water shifts elsewhere, following

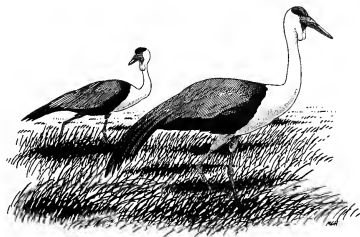
channel abandonment, rain flushes out the toxic salts from affected areas, resulting in ecosystem renewal. The constant shifting of channels spreads nutrients and salts over the whole delta', McCarthy explained. 'Because the sandy sediment is so vital to the functioning of the ecosystem, no structure that will inhibit its movement into the delta should ever be constructed,' he concluded. Currently the power company is undertaking only a preliminary investigation into the feasibility of the scheme, but its potentially far-reaching consequences must not be underestimated. BirdLife Botswana and other conservation bodies both within Botswana and Namibia, as well as tour operators, fishermen and villagers are concerned that the Namibian government seems very intent on the scheme.

Sources: World Birdwatch
25 (1), p 5 and

Stephanie Tyler in litt. May 2003

Wattled Crane more endangered than previously thought

As already reported (cf *Bull. ABC* 10: 10–11) aerial surveys of the Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* population in the Okavango Delta, carried out in 2001 and 2002, found an estimated 1,220 and 1,205 birds respectively, whereas in 1996 the population was estimated at 1,400–



Wattled Cranes *Bugeranus carunculatus* by Michael Hodgson (courtesy of Birdquest)

3,500 birds. Due to the efforts of the International Crane Foundation and the South African Crane Working Group (a working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust formed in 1995), Wattled Cranes were also counted in the major wetlands of Namibia (250 birds), South Africa (235), Mozambique (300), Zimbabwe (200), Zambia (c4,000) and Tanzania (200) in 2001. These counts prove that the species is far more endangered than previously thought.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
7(6), pp 44–45

Man's heavy toll on birds demonstrated in Namibia

The disastrous effects that subsistence inhabitants can have on local wildlife, even in the most remote areas, has been demonstrated by Mark Paxton and Linda Sheehan based on evidence from northern Namibia. As part of a 12-year programme of wetland bird monitoring, they surveyed sections of the Kavango River from 1990 through 2002. They discovered that with people present there were no resident African Fish Eagles *Haliaeetus vocifer*. When people fled the area because of guerilla activity from mid-1999 to mid-2002, fish eagles returned and reached densities of three eagles for every 10 km, a level typical of other Namibian rivers. Species richness rose from 17 species on average with people present, to 37, with a maximum of 48. The increase in overall abundance was equally spectacular: from an average of 321 birds per 10 km to 940, or three times as much, after the local inhabitants had left.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
8(1), pp 14–15

Cape Parrot proposed as separate species

In a recently published (2002) paper, J O Wirminghaus, C T Downs, M R Perrin and C T Symes of the University of Natal proposed to split the currently recognised three subspecies of *Poicephalus robustus* into two species, Cape Parrot *P. [r.] robustus* and Brown-necked Parrot *P.*

fuscicollis, the latter with two subspecies, *P. f. fuscicollis* and *P. f. suahelicus*. The taxa exhibit morphological, biogeographical and ecological differences, *robustus* being the smallest and exclusively inhabiting Afromontane forests. The recognition of the Cape Parrot as a distinct species has major implications for its conservation, as this is a highly threatened taxon (see below).

Source: J. Nat. Hist. 36, pp 361–378

Cape Parrot and CITES

Due to technicalities over the Cape Parrot's *Poicephalus robustus* species status, the Conference of the Parties to CITES opposed South Africa's application to upgrade the species onto Appendix I. The Cape Parrot Working Group will be pursuing a national export ban on the species. Only five birds are known to be in captivity outside South Africa.

Source: Louise Warburton in litt. to African Birding, November 2002

Conservation action plan for Cape Parrot...

A five-year action plan to conserve the Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* and its forest habitat was developed during a three-day workshop held in November 2002 in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, South Africa, that brought together various stakeholders, who varied from national and provincial officials to forestry companies, local community members, academics, ecotourism operators, farmers, researchers, aviculturists and non-governmental conservation organisations. Fewer than 650 Cape Parrots are believed to remain in the wild. The suggestions made included the imposition of stiffer penalties on people who illegally capture, keep and trade in Cape Parrots, improving control over logging operations, the establishment of logging quotas, and the conception of integrated community-based projects that would promote the development of disadvantaged local people through the sustainable use of forest resources.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding

8(1), p 71

...and for Blue Swallow

The establishment of a Blue Swallow Working Group and the development of an action plan for the species were the key outcomes of an international workshop on the Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea*, organised by BirdLife South Africa in June 2002. The species has an estimated global population of fewer than 1,500 pairs and is mainly threatened by continued destruction of its known habitats, mountain grasslands and *Miscanthus* wetlands. The species is an intra-African migrant with breeding populations in South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malaŵi, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania. Blue Swallows arrive on their breeding grounds in September–October and depart for their non-breeding areas in southern Uganda, western Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania in April.

Source: Africa Newsletter BirdLife International 5(1) p 12

Southern Carmine Bee-eaters slaughtered for food

In northern Namibia, Southern Carmine Bee-eaters *Merops (nubicus) nubicooides* are being skewered on sticks and either sold for food or used as bait to catch predatory fish in the Kavango and Zambezi rivers. The nesting holes of the easily located colonies are covered with fishing nets and the trapped birds are stabbed as they emerge. Another capture method consists of pushing a stick into the holes where nestlings are being fed and spearing the birds.

Although it is illegal to kill all but a small number of bird species, little is done by the Namibian authorities to prevent this.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 8(1), p 14

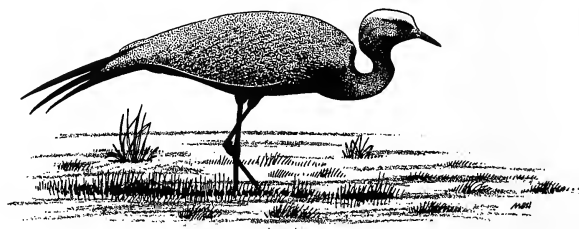
First recovery of Little Stint in southern Africa

On 14 November 2002 a Little Stint *Calidris minuta* carrying a Russian ring was found dead at Bird Paradise, Walvis Bay, Namibia. The bird, a female, had been ringed on 19 July 2001 while breeding at Medusa Bay, on the Taimyr Peninsula in Russia, 11,726 km from where the corpse was recovered. This constitutes the first recovery of a Little Stint in southern Africa.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 8(1), p 17

Bird poisoning continues in South Africa

Poisoning by agrochemicals continues to threaten many bird species in South Africa, especially common species such as guineafowl, ducks and doves, but also birds of prey, cranes and storks. In an incident in spring 2002 in the North-West Province, 1,500 Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* died from the misuse of ethylparathion. On the same farm, 45 White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and five Abdim's Storks *C. abdimii* fell victim to poison. In the Free State, 28 White Storks were found dead, and in the Western Cape more than 31 Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradisea* were reportedly poisoned in 2002. The poisoning of wildlife is being monitored by the Poison Working Group (PWG) of the Endangered Wildlife Trust.



Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradisea*
by Michael Hodgson (courtesy of Birdquest)

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
8(1), p 20

Ban on off-road vehicles on beaches favours shore-nesting birds

According to a report by Cape Nature Conservation and the University of Cape Town's Avian Demography Unit, the ban on off-road vehicles (ORVs) on beaches, instituted with effect from 21 December 2001, seems to have had the desired positive effect on birds. Shore-breeding birds have responded quickly to the ban and several species, such as the Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum* and the Near Threatened African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini*, have again bred successfully in beach areas. Observations over a one-year period strongly indicate that the disturbance by ORVs previously caused the birds to move to less optimal breeding sites.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
8(2), pp 14–15

Ripping of grasslands threatens survival of cranes

Recent trends in South Africa's agricultural sector are seriously threatening the grassland biome, in particular in the Midlands and southern Khahlamba—Drakensberg regions of KwaZulu-Natal. These areas are increasingly being transformed into intensive croplands to produce food for the ever-growing human population. In the process, the natural grasslands upon which species such as cranes, bustards and Blue Swallows *Hirundo atrocaerulea* rely for survival are being reduced and fragmented. Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* breeding sites in KwaZulu-Natal have been reduced from 104 in 1982 to 68 at present, while numbers of Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradisea* have declined to fewer than 1,000 individuals.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
8(2), p 69

Oldest Hartlaub's Gull...

While carrying out field work on Dassen Island, South Africa, in October 2002, Dr Marianne de Villiers spotted a ringed Hartlaub's Gull *Larus hartlaubii*. After coaxing the bird to come closer, she was able to read the ring number with the aid of binoculars. The records of the South African Ringing Unit (SAFRING) revealed that the bird had been ringed on Robben Island on 12 June 1976. With its 26 years and four months this is the oldest Hartlaub's Gull in the SAFRING database.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
8(1), p 76

... and oldest Greater Crested Tern

A ringed Greater Crested (Swift) Tern *Sterna bergii* was found freshly dead on Bird Island, near Lamberts Bay of the Cape West Coast, South Africa, on 16 July 2002. The bird had been ringed as a nestling on 19 April 1980, in Jutten Island, Saldanha Bay, 115 km from Bird Island. Thus it was 22 years and three months, making it the oldest Greater Crested Tern in the SAFRING database. Anyone with information on ringed birds is kindly asked to send this to SAFRING, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa; e-mail: safring@adu.uct.ac.za.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
7(6), p 19

Rescued Southern Ground Hornbills abducted

The Ground Hornbill Research and Conservation Project, started in 1999, aims to manage and coordinate all efforts to conserve the Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus cafer* populations in southern Africa (see *Bull. ABC* 10: 12). It has been harvesting second-hatched chicks, which always die of starvation, rearing them and reintroducing groups back into the wild. Two birds from the group on Mabula Game Reserve, Northern Province, where the project was initiated, flew from their home onto friendly neighbouring farms, as they usually

do in October–November, probably in search of nesting sites. When their radio transmitters suddenly stopped sending signals, a systematic search was organised. Eventually, they were found in good condition in an aviary on a farm 50 km away. Their expensive transmitters, however, had been removed and destroyed.

Source: Newsletter of BirdLife South Africa 6(1), pp 10–11

Rudd's Lark studied

David Maphisa is undertaking a MSC on the critically endangered Rudd's Lark *Heteromirafra ruddi*, in a three-way partnership between the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, Cape Town, the UK-based Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and BirdLife South Africa, and funded by the RSPB. The study will focus on land-utilisation patterns, habitat use and breeding by the species, and will try to discover how land has to be managed to benefit Rudd's Lark.

Source: Newsletter of BirdLife South Africa 5(4), p 14

Colour-ringed Pale Chanting Goshawks: reports requested

The Pale Chanting Goshawk Ringing Group, launched in 2001, has been colour-ringing Pale Chanting Goshawks *Melierax canorus* in order to determine, among other things, average longevity, period of territory occupation and dispersion. The birds are ringed with yellow rings engraved with black codes that consist of one alphabetic digit (A–Z) and two numeric digits (01–99). To date, 128 birds have been ringed in Limpopo Province, Kalahari region, eastern Great Karoo, Little Karoo and Eastern Cape Province. Anyone seeing a colour-ringed Pale Chanting Goshawk is asked to record the date, location and code, and report these, together with their contact details, to SAFRING, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701. Tel: (021) 650 2421/2. E-mail: safring@adu.uct.ac.za. ☺

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding
8(1), p 16

Daily activity, moult and morphometrics of the birds of São Tomé and Príncipe

Tony King^a and Martin Dallimer^b

De décembre 2001 à février 2002, des inventaires à l'aide de filets japonais ont été effectués dans chacun des trois principaux types de forêt primaire de Sao Tomé, avec une attention particulière pour la forêt primaire de basse altitude. Cet habitat a également été inventorié à Príncipe, ainsi qu'un petit nombre d'autres sites à Sao Tomé et à Príncipe. Au total, 149 oiseaux de 18 espèces ont été capturés pendant l'étude, dont 147 (de 16 espèces) à Sao Tomé et deux (de deux espèces) à Príncipe. La proportion d'oiseaux muant leurs rémiges a augmenté régulièrement au fil de l'étude: à la mi-décembre aucun oiseau n'était en mue, tandis qu'à la mi-février 60% l'étaient. La longueur alaire et le poids sont présentés pour l'ensemble des oiseaux capturés. L'importance de la forêt primaire de basse altitude de Sao Tomé pour les espèces endémiques menacées est mise en évidence; en effet, deux espèces classées comme menacées d'extinction par BirdLife International¹, la Nasique de Bocage *Amaurocichla bocagei* et la Pie-grièche de Sao Tomé *Lanius newtoni*, n'ont été capturées que dans cet habitat. Il faut espérer que le regain d'intérêt au niveau international pour la biodiversité de ces îles pourra aboutir à la conservation efficace de ces forêts exceptionnelles et de l'unique biodiversité qu'elles supportent.

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, off the west coast of Africa in the Gulf of Guinea, have long been known to support a rich endemic flora and fauna⁸. Such high levels of endemism within tiny geographical areas (Peet & Atkinson¹⁰ give São Tomé as 857 km² and Príncipe as 139 km²) lead to many conservation concerns. On São Tomé alone, the IUCN⁷ lists 11 species of breeding landbird as under some degree of conservation threat, all of which are endemic. Despite these concerns, biodiversity research on the islands has been limited, and the biology of many species is still relatively unknown, even among the avifauna^{4,9,10}. The present study aimed to utilise mist-net techniques to provide quantitative data regarding habitat use, daily activity, moult and biometrics of the birds of São Tomé and Príncipe, particularly those endemics found in remaining areas of primary forest.

Methods

Between December 2001 and February 2002, mist-net surveys were conducted within each of the three major primary forest types on São Tomé, described as mossy (>1,400 m altitude), montane (800–1,400 m) and lowland (0–800 m)^{9,10}. Particular emphasis was placed on lowland primary forest, as this is the only habitat type known to support all of São Tomé's endemic species¹⁰. Lowland primary forest on Príncipe was also

surveyed, as were a small number of other sites in both São Tomé and Príncipe (see Table 1).

Fifteen square metres of mist-nets (generally 6 m x 2.5 m, but also 10 m x 1.5 m) with 38-mm mesh were used during the study. Most were set at understorey level (0.5–4.0 m above ground), with a few at midstorey level (3–9 m). No canopy nets were used. Whenever possible, nets were opened at 05.00 hrs (just prior to dawn) and kept open until after 18.00 hrs (dusk), though timing was frequently constrained by logistical factors. Therefore net-effort was quantified in terms of net-hours, rather than net-days, and general capture rates are presented as birds per net-hour. For individual species, capture rates per 100 net-hours are presented.

Captured birds were identified (and occasionally sexed according to plumage characters) using Christy & Clarke⁴. Individuals with large and/or bright gapes were recorded as probable juveniles. Mass was measured using spring balances, to the nearest g for birds weighing less than 65 g or to the nearest 5 g for heavier birds. Wing length was measured to the nearest mm, using a wing-rule and flattening the primaries gently against the rule (i.e. following Svensson¹¹). Other measurements were taken using a pair of dial callipers, but are not presented here. Each bird was assessed for moult of flight (ie primaries, secondaries and tertials) and tail feathers, again

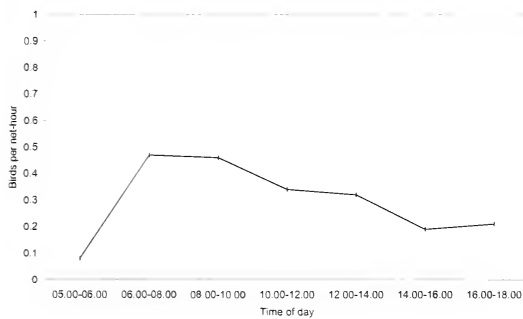


Figure 1. Daily activity patterns, indicated by capture rates per net-hour, of birds in primary forest sites in São Tomé.

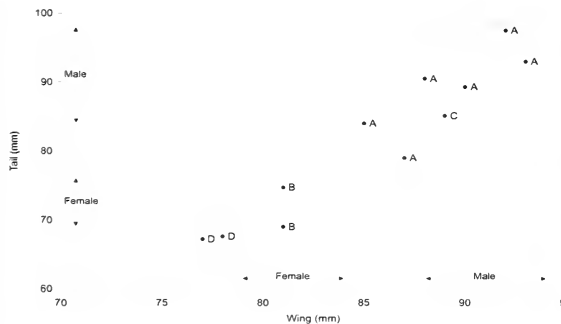


Figure 2. Determination of sex ratios within groups of Giant Sunbird *Dreptes thomensis* based on morphometrics. Data points labelled with the same letter indicate individuals captured in the same mist-net at the same time. Tail length was measured to cloaca. Wing and tail ranges for males and females are taken from Cheke & Mann³. Therefore, groups A and C are likely to consist of all males, group B of females, and group D of juveniles (the latter supported by observation of gape colour). Note that groups C and D were captured within 5 m and 15 minutes of each other.

following Svensson¹¹. Nomenclature generally follows Borrow & Demey².

Results

One hundred and forty-nine birds of 18 species were captured during the study, 147 (16 species) on São Tomé and two (two species) on Príncipe (Table 1). Overall capture rates varied between sites, particularly between the two islands, with high capture rates on São Tomé, and very low rates on Príncipe (Table 1). Although some species exhibited variation in capture rates between habitat types, there were no clear trends in overall capture rates between the habitat types; indeed, much inter-habitat variation in overall capture rates on São Tomé could be attributed to variation in the



3



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Figure 3. View from Mesa de Pico, December 2001; the imposing rugged terrain limits access to much of São Tomé's primary forest (Tony King)

Figure 4. Typical high-altitude mossy forest at Estação Sousa, December 2001 (Martin Dallimer)

Figure 5. Lowland forest along the rio São Miguel, January 2002, home to high densities of endangered endemic species, such as São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagei* (Martin Dallimer)

Table 1. Summary data for mist-net sites in São Tomé and Príncipe, December 2001–February 2002.

Forest type	Coordinates	Site	No. of nets	Total net hours	No. of species	No. of birds	Birds per net-hour
São Tomé							
Mossy primary	00°16'N 06°33'E	MP	2	16	2	4	0.25
Mossy primary	00°16'N 06°34'E	ES	2	42	7	14	0.34
Montane primary	00°17'N 06°36'E	LA	3	30	5	25	0.83
Lowland primary	00°11'N 06°31'E	Q	4	92	8	20	0.22
Lowland primary	00°10'N 06°30'E	QR1	3	9	3	6	0.67
Lowland primary	00°11'N 06°31'E	QR2	4	97	11	37	0.38
Lowland primary	00°09'N 06°30'E	RSM	5	92	6	14	0.15
Montane cultivated	00°17'N 06°37'E	BS	9	167	9	26	0.16
Coastal cultivated	00°16'N 06°28'E	SC	1	1	1	1	1.00
Total			33	545	16	147	0.27
Príncipe							
Lowland primary	01°34'N 07°22'E	RST	4	35	0	0	0.00
Coastal / secondary	01°34'N 07°22'E	PST	2	8	0	0	0.00
Coastal / secondary	01°36'N 07°20'E	PN	3	19	2	2	0.11
Total			9	62	2	2	0.03

Table 2. Capture rates of each species at each site (or grouped site).

Family	Species	Birds per 100 net hours							Total birds captured
		MP/ES	LA	Q	QR1/2	RSM	BS/SC	PN	
Ardeidae	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>						0.6		1
Columbidae	<i>Columba malherbii</i>				0.9				1
Columbidae	<i>Aplopelia larvata simplex</i>			1.1		2.2			3
Alcedinidae	<i>Alcedo (leucogaster) nais</i>							5.4	1
Alcedinidae	<i>Halcyon malimbica dryas</i>							5.4	1
Turdidae	<i>Turdus o. olivaceofuscus</i>	3.5	3.3	2.2	6.6	3.3			15
Sylviidae	<i>Prinia mollerii</i>	1.7	6.7	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.2		8
Monarchidae	<i>Terpsiphone atrochalybeia</i>	1.7		4.4	5.7	3.3	0.6		15
Timaliidae	<i>Amaurocichla bocagei</i>				1.9	3.3			5
Nectariniidae	<i>Anabathmis newtonii</i>	13.9	13.3	2.2	3.8		2.4		22
Nectariniidae	<i>Dreptes thomensis</i>		-	8.7	2.8				11
Zosteropidae	<i>Speirops lugubris</i>	5.2	56.7		11.3		7.1		44
Laniidae	<i>Lanius newtoni</i>			1.1					1
Ploceidae	<i>Ploceus grandis</i>				0.9				1
Ploceidae	<i>Ploceus sanctithomae</i>	3.5	3.3	1.1	2.8	2.2	0.6		10
Estrildidae	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>						1.2		2
Viduidae	<i>Vidua macroura</i>						0.6		1
Fringillidae	<i>Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis</i>	1.7			2.8		1.8		7
All species		31.3	83.3	21.9	40.7	15.2	16.1	10.8	149
All species except <i>Speirops lugubris</i>		26.1	26.7	21.9	29.3	15.2	8.9	10.8	105

Table 3. Time of capture for species with five or more individuals captured in São Tomé (*for mist-nets in which that species was captured).

Species	Birds per 100 net hours*						
	05.00–06.00	06.00–08.00	08.00–10.00	10.00–12.00	12.00–14.00	14.00–16.00	16.00–18.00
<i>Turdus o. olivaceofuscus</i>	0.0	3.7	8.7	2.8	6.3	6.9	6.3
<i>Prinia mollerii</i>	0.0	2.8	5.9	4.6	8.3	0.0	5.6
<i>Terpsiphone atrochalybeia</i>	0.0	2.8	7.4	8.8	0.3	2.5	4.4
<i>Amaurocichla bocagei</i>	0.0	10.5	6.3	0.0	0.0	7.7	11.5
<i>Anabathmis newtonii</i>	3.3	10.4	3.9	6.1	5.6	0.0	2.7
<i>Dreptes thomensis</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.2	0.0	19.0
<i>Speirops lugubris</i>	0.0	6.8	8.7	5.5	13.1	2.0	1.2
<i>Ploceus sanctithomae</i>	0.0	9.8	0.5	10.6	1.0	2.5	2.4
<i>Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis</i>	0.0	18.8	0.0	3.4	1.8	0.0	0.0

capture rates of the most frequently trapped species, São Tomé Speirops *Speirops lugubris* (Table 2).

There appeared to be a general pattern of daily activity; considering only primary forest sites in São Tomé, overall capture rates were very low before 06.00 hrs, highest between 06.00 and 10.00 hrs, and then declined during the rest of the day (Fig 1). Again, however, daily activity patterns of some species did not always follow the general trend (Table 3).

Captions to plates on pages 88 and 89

- Figure 6. São Tomé Pigeon *Columba thomensis* in mossy forest near Mesa de Pico, December 2001. An endemic primary forest specialist that was missed by the mist-net survey due to its preference for the canopy (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 7. São Tomé Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba malherbii*, in the lowland Queijo/Zagaia region, 12 February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 8. Lemon Dove *Aplopelia larvata simplex*, at the lowland rio São Miguel site, 6 January 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 9. São Tomé Prinia *Prinia mollerii*, Bom Sucesso, 15 February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 10. Male São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone atrochalybeia*, Estação Sousa, 22 December 2001 (Tony King)
- Figure 11. Female São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone atrochalybeia* in the lowland Queijo/Zagaia region, 8 February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 12. São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagei* at the lowland rio São Miguel site, 5 January 2001 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 13. Male Newton's Sunbird *Anabathmis newtonii* at Bom Sucesso, February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 14. Presumed male Giant Sunbird *Dreptes thomensis*, in the lowland Queijo/Zagaia region, 7 February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 15. São Tomé Speirops *Speirops lugubris*, Mesa de Pico, 24 December 2001 (Tony King)
- Figure 16. São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni*, in the lowland Queijo/Zagaia region, 8 February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 17. Female Giant Weaver *Ploceus grandis*, in primary forest in the lowland Queijo/Zagaia region, 13 February 2002 (Martin Dallimer)
- Figure 18. São Tomé Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae*, Estação Sousa, 23 December 2001 (Tony King)

The survey period coincided with the start of a major moult period among São Tomé birds; the proportion moulting their flight feathers increased steadily during the survey period, from the first sampling in mid-December, when none was in moult, to a peak of 60% in moult by mid-February (Table 4). Although sample sizes for individual species are low, this pattern appeared fairly constant among all trapped species.

Wing and mass measurements are presented for each species captured; male–female comparisons are possible for two species, both of which exhibited sexual dimorphism, particularly in wing length (Table 5).

Species-specific details are presented in the following species accounts. All notes on moult refer only to flight feathers, unless otherwise stated. For all passerines examined, the sequence of moult of the flight feathers appeared to follow the normal sequence exhibited by most European passerines, as described by Svensson¹¹, the details of which are beyond the scope of this paper. Non-passerines were more variable, and are described individually.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

A single individual of this widespread non-endemic was mist-netted at Bom Sucesso (montane cultivated, BS) on 1 February 2002. There was no sign of moult.

São Tomé Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba malherbii*

Endemic species to São Tomé, Príncipe and Annobón. One was trapped at a lowland ridge-top site in the Queijo/Zagaia region (QR2, São Tomé), on 12 February 2002. The bird was in an unusual state of moult, with all six secondaries on the left wing as pins, as were the first and second primaries and first secondary on the right wing, and all feathers on the left and first (central) on the right of the tail. All other flight and tail feathers were full.

Lemon Dove *Aplopelia larvata simplex*

Three individuals of this species, of which the subspecies is endemic to São Tomé, were mist-netted in lowland primary forest, two at the rio São Miguel (RSM), on 6 January 2002, and one in the Queijo/Zagaia region (Q), on 8 February 2002. The latter individual was in moult (left wing: third primary pin and sixth stage 4; right wing, first secondary stage 2; tail also in moult).



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Table 4. Proportion of birds moulting flight feathers during each distinct sampling period in São Tomé; sample sizes are given in parentheses, site codes are presented below dates.

Species	21–25 Dec 01 ES/MP	29–30 Dec 01 LA	5–9 Jan 02 RSM/QR1	1–5 Feb 02 BS/SC	7–13 Feb 02 Q/QR2	15 Feb 02 BS
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				0.00 (1)		
<i>Columba malherbii</i>					1.00 (1)	
<i>Aplopelia larvata simplex</i>			0.00 (2)		1.00 (1)	
<i>Turdus o. olivaceofuscus</i>	0.00 (2)	1.00 (1)	0.20 (5)		0.29 (7)	
<i>Prinia mollerii</i>	0.00 (1)	0.00 (2)	0.00 (1)	1.00 (1)	0.00 (2)	0.00 (1)
<i>Terpsiphone atrochalybeia</i>	0.00 (1)		0.00 (3)	0.00 (1)	0.90 (10)	
<i>Amaurocichla bocagei</i>			0.67 (3)		1.00 (2)	
<i>Anabathmis newtonii</i>	0.00 (8)	0.00 (4)		0.67 (3)	0.33 (6)	1.00 (1)
<i>Dreptes thomensis</i>					0.73 (11)	
<i>Speirops lugubris</i>	0.00 (3)	0.06 (17)	0.00 (3)	0.33 (12)	0.22 (9)	
<i>Lanius newtoni</i>					1.00 (1)	
<i>Ploceus grandis</i>					1.00 (1)	
<i>Ploceus sanctithomae</i>	0.00 (2)	0.00 (1)	0.50 (2)	1.00 (1)	1.00 (4)	
<i>Estrilda astrild</i>				1.00 (2)		
<i>Vidua macroura</i>				0.00 (1)		
<i>Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis</i>	0.00 (1)		0.00 (1)	1.00 (3)	0.50 (2)	
Total	0.00 (18)	0.08 (25)	0.20 (20)	0.52 (25)	0.60 (57)	0.50 (2)

Table 5. Wing and mass measurements for each species captured in São Tomé and Príncipe, December 2001–February 2002.

Species	Wing (mm)	Mass (g)			range	mean	SD	n	
	range	mean	SD	n					
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	250				1	270		1	
<i>Columba malherbii</i>	170				1	165		1	
<i>Aplopelia larvata simplex</i>	148–153	150	2.6		3	160–200	176.7	20.8	3
<i>Alcedo (leucogaster) nais</i>	58				1	19			1
<i>Halcyon malimbica dryas</i> (juvenile)	128				1	70			1
<i>Turdus o. olivaceofuscus</i>	118–136	125.8	5.4		14	75–95	84.2	4.9	13
<i>Prinia mollerii</i>	52–58	53.8	2.4		6	8–11	9.8	1	6
<i>P. mollerii</i> (juvenile)	49				1	9			1
<i>Terpsiphone atrochalybeia</i> (male)	81–92	83.4	3.6		8	14–18	15.6	1.3	8
<i>T. atrochalybeia</i> (female)	75–81	77.4	1.9		7	13–16	13.7	1.3	7
<i>Amaurocichla bocagei</i>	67–70	68.5	1.3		4	19–21	19.6	0.9	5
<i>Anabathmis newtonii</i> (male)	51–58	54.7	1.9		10	7–9	7.8	0.6	12
<i>A. newtonii</i> (female/juvenile)	46–52	49.6	2.2		5	6–8	6.8	1	6
<i>A. newtonii</i> (juvenile)	48				1	6			1
<i>Dreptes thomensis</i>	81–93	87.3	4.3		9	21–28	24.8	2.2	9
<i>D. thomensis</i> (juvenile)	77, 78				2	17, 18			2
<i>Speirops lugubris</i>	69–77	72.1	1.9		30	15–21	17.3	1.5	31
<i>Lanius newtoni</i>	91				1	27			1
<i>Ploceus grandis</i> (female/?juvenile)	110				1	65			1
<i>Ploceus sanctithomae</i>	68–79	73.7	3.8		9	17–24	21.8	2.5	9
<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	46, 48				2	5, 8			2
<i>Vidua macroura</i> (breeding male)	72				1	15			1
<i>Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis</i>	77–84	80.6	2.6		7	21–26	23.3	1.8	7

Príncipe Kingfisher *Alcedo (leucogaster) nais*

One was captured at Praia da Nova (PN), Príncipe, on 27 January 2002, in a mist-net set among coastal rocks. The taxonomy of this form is disputable, although most recent literature considers it an endemic subspecies of White-bellied Kingfisher *A.*

leucogaster. However, when this individual was handled, the long crest feathers were extended outwards, behaviour more characteristic of Malachite Kingfisher *A. cristata* than *A. leucogaster*⁶. The bird was in moult (sixth primary on both wings 4, sixth secondary on left stage 3; tail also in moult).

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica dryas*
A juvenile of this species, of which the subspecies is endemic to Príncipe, was mist-netted at Praia da Nova (PN) on 26 January 2002. No evidence of moult.

Gulf of Guinea Thrush *Turdus olivaceofuscus olivaceofuscus*

Species endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe, with endemic subspecies on both islands. It was one of the most frequently captured species on São Tomé. Fifteen were trapped, with similar capture rates in each of the three altitudinal zones of primary forest (Table 2). It was the only species to exhibit a consistently high capture rate throughout the afternoon (Table 3). Four were in moult, the first in late December (Table 4).

São Tomé Prinia *Prinia mollerii*

Species endemic to São Tomé. Captured in all three primary forest zones, and also at Bom Sucesso (BS). Though widespread, capture rates were generally low, particularly at lowland sites (Table 2). Of eight birds trapped, only one was in moult (BS, 2 February 2002).

São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone atrochalybeia*

Species endemic to São Tomé. It exhibited high capture rates at all lowland primary forest sites, also being mist-netted in small numbers in mossy primary and montane cultivated areas (Table 2). Particularly high capture rates were obtained between 08.00 and 12.00 hrs (Table 3), but this result may have been skewed by the simultaneous capture of several individuals. Of five mist-netted between mid-December and early February, none was in moult; however, in mid-February, nine out of ten were moulting (Table 4). One (QR2, 11 February 2002) was moulting from juvenile to adult male plumage. Males and females were captured at similar rates, with males being distinctly larger (Table 5).

São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagei*

Species and genus endemic to São Tomé and listed as Vulnerable by IUCN⁷ and BirdLife International¹. Captured exclusively at lowland primary forest sites (Table 2). Though only five individuals were trapped—rio São Miguel, 5 January (one) and 8 January 2002 (two singles);

Queijo/Zagaia region, 12 February 2002 (a pair)—capture rates were notably high during early morning (06.00–08.00 hrs) and late afternoon (16.00–18.00 hrs), with none captured during the period 10.00–14.00 hrs (Table 3). Four of the five were in moult (Table 4).

Newton's Sunbird *Anabathmis newtonii*

Species endemic to São Tomé. The second most frequently captured species during the study, though capture rates were much higher at mossy and montane primary forest sites than at lowland primary or cultivated sites (Table 2). It was captured most frequently during early morning (06.00–08.00 hrs), and was only rarely trapped after 14.00 hrs (Table 3). Males were captured more frequently, and were larger, than females (Table 5). None of the 12 caught in December was in moult, while five of the ten captured in February were in moult (Table 4).

Giant Sunbird *Dreptes thomensis*

Species and genus endemic to São Tomé and listed as Vulnerable by IUCN⁷ and BirdLife International¹. Captured at two sites, both in lowland primary forest in the Queijo/Zagaia region: site Q, 7 February (six) and 8 February 2002 (two) and site QR2, 11 February 2002 (two and one; Table 2). A total of 11 was mist-netted, all in the afternoon (Table 3), in four groups. Comparing our morphometric data (Table 5 and unpubl.) with those of Cheke & Mann³, who demonstrated the species to be sexually dimorphic, it appears that each of these groups was single-sex, with the largest group consisting of six males (Fig 2). Cheke & Mann³ suggested that the species may be polygamous, based on the observation of twice as many males at sites than females. Eight were in moult.

São Tomé Speirops *Speirops lugubris*

Species endemic to São Tomé. The most frequently captured species, but while it was trapped in all altitudinal zones, there was great variation in capture rates between sites (Table 2). At lowland primary forest sites, it was only captured at ridge-top localities in the Queijo/Zagaia region. Two groups, of five and six, were caught in nets at the montane primary site of Lagoa Amelia (LA), contributing to the exceptionally high capture rate at this site (Table 2). There appeared to be a decrease in flight activity in

the afternoon, with most mist-netted between 08.00 and 14.00 hrs, the capture rate declining sharply after 14.00 hrs (Table 3). Seven were in moult, one of 23 mist-netted in December–January, and six of 21 in February (Table 4).

São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni*

Considered Critically Endangered by IUCN⁷ and BirdLife International¹. A single individual of this rare São Tomé endemic was captured in lowland primary forest in the Queijo/Zagaia region (site Q), on 8 February 2002, immediately following heavy rain. The bird was in moult.

Giant Weaver *Ploceus grandis*

Species endemic to São Tomé that is normally associated with disturbed forest. A female was captured on 13 February 2002 at a ridge-top locale in lowland primary forest in the Queijo/Zagaia region (QR2). The bird was in moult.

São Tomé Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae*

Species endemic to São Tomé. Captured in all three altitudinal zones, and in both primary forest and cultivated areas, though capture rates were higher at mossy and montane primary forest sites than elsewhere (Table 2). Most captures were between 06.00 and 12.00 hrs, though there was a strangely low capture rate between 08.00 and 10.00 hrs (Table 3). Six were in moult; none of three captured in December, one of two in January, and all five in February (Table 4).

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

This widespread species was captured on two occasions during the morning of 3 February 2002 at the montane cultivated site, Bom Sucesso (BS). Both were in moult.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

A single male in breeding plumage of this non-endemic was mist-netted at Bom Sucesso (BS), on 1 February 2002. No evidence of moult.

Príncipe Seedeater *Serinus rufobrunneus thomensis*

Species endemic to São Tomé, Príncipe and Carço. Seven individuals of the subspecies endemic to São Tomé were captured, in all three altitudinal zones, and at both primary forest and cultivated sites (Table 2). Capture rate was particularly high in early morning, prior to 08.00 hrs (Table 3). While

neither of those captured in December–January was in moult, four of the five mist-netted in February were (Table 4).

Discussion

This study aimed to contribute to our understanding of the biology of several endemic bird species that occur on São Tomé and Príncipe. Many of these species have received very little detailed study in the past, and ours is one of the very few quantitative studies attempted. Capture rates cannot be directly translated into abundance or density estimates, as other external factors influence mist-net success, but these rates do provide quantitative data on variations in habitat use and daily activity patterns. For example, the contrast between the exceptionally high capture rates encountered in São Tomé and the low capture rates in Príncipe indicates a much higher density of birds at low levels in the primary forests of São Tomé than on Príncipe, although as higher storey species were not adequately sampled by our study, comparison of overall bird abundance in the forests of the two islands is impossible. In addition, the relative influences of chance factors both in general (habitat) and the specific (choice of localities) are also unknown.

The data regarding moult, and the relative influence of chance factors both in general (habitat) and the specific (choice of localities) is also unknown. timing provide an indication of the timing of breeding, as it is generally true that breeding is immediately followed by moult⁵. Therefore, it appears that for most species mist-netted on São Tomé during the study, breeding was complete by late December–January, with a high proportion moulting by early February. Further moult studies throughout the remainder of the year should provide a more complete appreciation of the biology of São Tomé's birds, and future researchers trapping birds there are recommended to collect moult information for this purpose.

The importance of lowland primary forest on São Tomé for endangered endemic species is highlighted by our study, with two species considered globally threatened by BirdLife International¹, São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurocichla bocagei* and São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni*, being trapped only in this habitat. Much of the lowland primary forest of São Tomé and Príncipe has already been lost, and the remaining areas are

threatened by near-future development projects. It is well known that these areas support a rich endemic fauna and flora, and yet almost ten years after the publication of recommendations regarding the threatened biodiversity of the Gulf of Guinea islands⁸, the lowland primary forests of São Tomé and Príncipe remain unprotected. It is hoped that a recent resurgence in international interest in the biodiversity of these islands may stimulate renewed efforts to ensure the long-term conservation of these exceptional forests and their unique biodiversity.

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Systematics, distribution and vocalisations of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris*

Ilya Maclean^a, John Musina^b, Nicodemus Nalinya^b, Simon Mahood^c, Rob Martin^c
and Achilles Byuaruhanga^a

Les auteurs analysent la systématique du Chloropète aquatique *Chloropeta gracilirostris* et présentent quelques notes supplémentaires sur son apparence et ses vocalisations. Cette espèce comprend deux ou trois populations isolées. Le taxon actuellement considéré comme la sous-espèce nominale est connu principalement de la vallée du Rift albertin et de quelques marécages au Kenya occidental. *C. g. bensoni* n'est connu que de la Luapula en Zambie et en République Démocratique du Congo. Il a été suggéré auparavant que la population du Kenya est spécifiquement distincte des deux autres, les spécimens de cette population détenus dans les musées ayant un bec considérablement plus étroit. Ceci n'est toutefois pas confirmé par les mensurations prises sur des oiseaux vivants. Néanmoins, les vocalisations de chaque population semblent différer. Des conclusions quant à l'isolement génétique de ces populations ne peuvent toutefois être proposées sans de plus amples recherches.

Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris* Ogilvie-Grant¹⁵ is among the least adequately protected birds in East Africa⁹. Its habitat is under increasing threat: extensive swamp drainage has occurred to grow crops and, more recently, to permit dairy farming. Existing swamps are often encroached by farmers or degraded by over-harvesting of papyrus, which is used as fuel or in local crafts. These problems have been compounded by the collapse of Lake Victoria fisheries as a result of the rapid invasion of Water Hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes*, forcing local people to seek other forms of livelihood. Elsewhere, a shortage of productive land as a result of rapid population growth has resulted in the same problem. Often the only alternative is to cut papyrus or to reclaim swamps to grow crops.

Currently, Papyrus Yellow Warbler is considered globally threatened and categorised as Vulnerable⁴. However, a recent review of museum specimens prompted the suggestion that two species may be involved¹¹, and that the population endemic to western Kenya is probably Critically Endangered. Its habitat in western Uganda is also under serious threat⁷. Given the difficulties in observing these secretive birds in dense stands of papyrus, comparatively little is known about them. We review current knowledge of the taxonomic status and distribution of the species, and present notes on the appearance and vocalisations of those observed in south-west Uganda and western Kenya in July–August 2002. We also outline the key

identification features in the hope that future attention will be focused on the species and its taxonomic status be clarified.

Distribution and habitat

Papyrus Yellow Warbler is endemic to swamps in East and Central Africa. Some confusion exists over the distribution of what is currently considered to be the nominate race. Irwin & Turner¹¹ suggest that it persists in two widely disjunct populations, whereas Urban *et al.*⁹ consider that its distribution is contiguous. In reality, the situation is not certainly established. It is well known from several localities in the Albertine Rift, with a stronghold in south-west Uganda, Rwanda and northern Burundi. This form has also been recorded from swamps on the western border of Tanzania (with Rwanda/Burundi) and two areas in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo^{8,19,20}. A second population of *C. g. gracilirostris* was discovered in Kenya in the 1960s⁶, where it is known from Lake Kanyaboli and nearby Yala swamp and several swamps on the Kenyan (northern) shore of Lake Victoria². At the time of the discovery, it was assumed that the bird would subsequently be proved to have a largely continuous distribution between Kenya and south-west Uganda. However, the species appears to have a spotty distribution in eastern Uganda, with single sight records from Lake Mburo¹⁶, Lake Nakuwa⁷, Lutembe Bay⁷ and Makokobe swamp, but at these locations it appears to be less common than elsewhere. Despite extensive searches of those

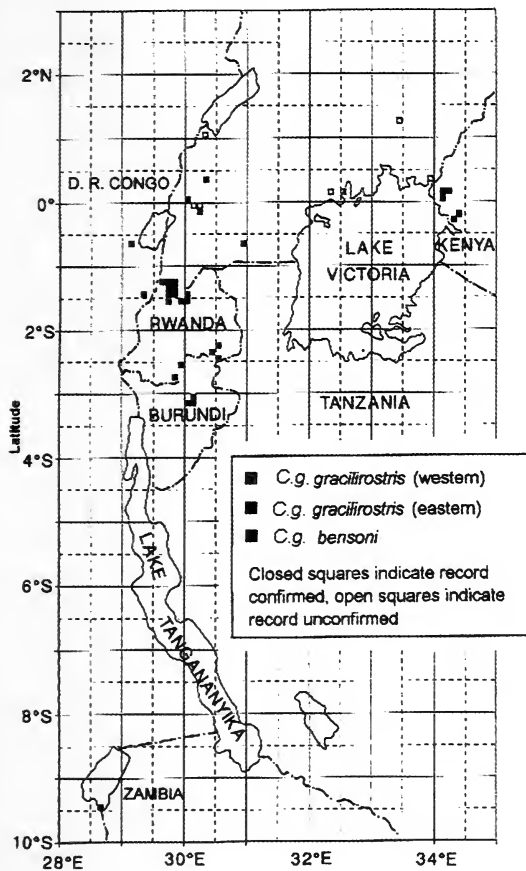


Figure 1. Distribution of the three populations of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris*. Solid squares indicate confirmed records and open squares unconfirmed records.

swamps fringing Lake Victoria, we found none in eastern Uganda, although a more widespread search, particularly in the Lake Kyoga basin, may clarify the extent to which the two populations are indeed disjunct. It is also noteworthy that the similar African Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis* frequently occurs at the edges of papyrus swamps and represents a potential identification pitfall for inexperienced observers.

A second subspecies, *C. g. bensoni* Amadon¹ is known only from Lake Mweru at the mouth of the Luapula River in Zambia and from Nkole in adjacent Democratic Republic of Congo (Fig 1). Although this population has been known since 1938, it was not afforded taxonomic status until 16 years later. *C. g. bredoi* Schouteden¹⁷ from Nkole,

described the following year, is a synonym of *bensoni*¹¹.

The Zambian and Kenyan populations are apparently confined to papyrus. In the Yala swamp complex of Kenya, Papyrus Yellow Warbler prefers tall, undisturbed papyrus, particularly near water, and is absent from smaller, more isolated swamp fragments (O Nasirwa pers. comm.). In contrast, the western population is not restricted to papyrus, occurring most frequently in mixed patches of papyrus and other wetland vegetation. It has been suggested that this is only true at altitudes above 1,500 m, below this the species being excluded from other types of wetland vegetation through competition with African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*, which is absent at higher altitudes²⁰. In Uganda, we found the two coexisting in *Cladium* swamps at 1,300 m. Moreover, Papyrus Yellow Warbler occurs in many small, disturbed marshes that fringe lakes in south-west Uganda.

Taxonomy

It has recently been suggested that the population in western Kenya is specifically distinct from that in the Albertine Rift¹¹, based on the much narrower, more *Acrocephalus*-like bill of two specimens taken in Kenya⁶. We have examined one of these, in the National Museums of Kenya (Nairobi), a female collected by Peter Britton at Lake Kanyaboli on 8 June 1969 (NMK 852). We consider that this bird's bill may have been pinched by over-tightening the twine around the bill during preparation (Fig 6), a possibility supported by field measurements of one we trapped at Lake Kanyaboli, which had a considerably broader bill than the specimen (Fig 7). However, subtle plumage differences between those we observed in Kenya and in the Albertine Rift and, more importantly, totally different songs lead us to suspect that the two populations may indeed constitute species or at least subspecies. Recordings of the Zambian population and more distinct plumage differences between this population and the other two suggest that it may be specifically distinct.

Description

C. g. gracilirostris (Kenya)

Adult: sexes alike. General structure, apart from the bill, recalls that of a short-winged, slightly heavily built *Acrocephalus* warbler (Fig 8). Crown to hindneck and ear-coverts olive-brown with a

slight greenish wash, grading into a more rufous olive-brown, lacking the greenish tinge on the mantle and rump. Tail darker brown and inner rectrices longer than the outer ones. Secondaries and coverts a similar dark brown. The one we trapped had paler fringes to the feathers, but this may have been a result of wear. Underparts warmish yellow, washed tawny-ochre on flanks and undertail-coverts (Fig 5). Upper breast contrasts with paler yellow throat, although this is only evident under certain light conditions. Red iris contrasting with paler eye-ring and black pupil. Legs and feet dark grey, with long claws adapted for clasping papyrus. In contrast to Irwin & Turner's¹¹ suggestion, the bill of the one we trapped was characteristically *Chloropeta*-like (Fig 7.) and considerably broader than depicted in Urban *et al*²⁰ (see Table 1). The grey upper mandible contrasts with a paler, more pinkish lower mandible. Descriptions and illustrations in Stevenson & Fanshawe¹⁸ and Urban *et al*²⁰ are almost certainly of Kenyan birds.

Immature: readily distinguishable from adults, being tawnier below, and possessing a paler iris and paler throat with some whitish buff. The gape is yellowish as opposed to bright orange and young have tongue spots.

C. g. gracilirostris (Albertine Rift)

Adult: plumage differences between those we observed at Lake Bunyonyi in south-west Uganda and at Lake Kanyaboli in western Kenya are subtle. Based on our observations, the population appears more uniform dull brown on the mantle, rump, tail and wing-coverts than birds in Kenya. Head dark brown, contrasting with paler brown mantle and

rump. Both lack olive tone to head and mantle of Kenyan birds. As in the Kenyan population, underparts warm yellow but flanks and undertail-coverts slightly less tawny-ochre than in Kenya. Warm yellow neck, breast and undertail-coverts contrast with pale yellow throat. Contrast generally more distinctive and clear-cut than in the Kenyan population, contrasting with both underparts and olive-brown ear-coverts. Legs and feet dark grey and claws long. Bill similar to that of the Kenyan population, having a dark grey upper mandible and pinkish lower mandible. Mensural data suggest that the bill may be slightly broader. Eye similar to

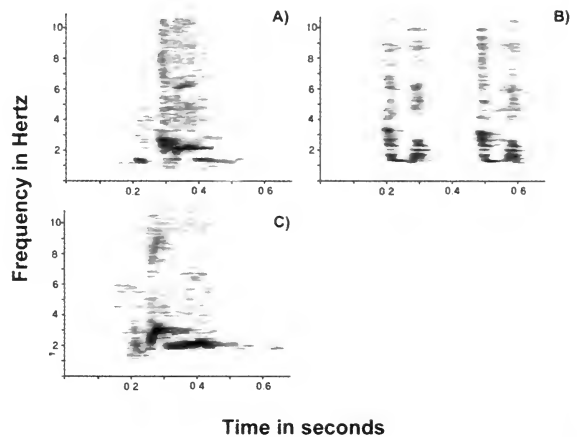


Figure 2. Three phrases of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta g. gracilirostris* recorded at Lake Kanyaboli, western Kenya. Recording by JM using a Audio-Technica AT835b microphone and a Sony MW-750V cassette recorder. Sonograms prepared using Spectrogram Version 2.3 software.

Table 1. Comparison of mean bill and wing measurements (mm) (\pm S.D. where available) of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris*.

Taxon	Location	Number	Culmen	Bill breadth at nostrils	Wing
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ^{11,12}	Albertine Rift	4	16.0	6.1	61.5
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ¹¹	Lake George	1	15.5	6.0	no data
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ¹¹	Lake Kanyaboli	2	16.0 (± 0.00)	3.0 (± 0.00)	no data
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ⁵	Lake Kanyaboli	9	no data	no data	61.6 (± 2.35)
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ^f	Lake Kanyaboli	77	no data	no data	62.3 (± 2.37)
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ^f	Lake Sare	2	no data	no data	62.5 (± 0.71)
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ^f	Usenge	1	no data	no data	62.3
<i>C. g. gracilirostris</i> ^f	Lake Kanyaboli	1	15.1	5.1	59.0
<i>C. g. bensoni</i> ^{11, 12}	Lake Mweru	1	15.5	5.0	54
<i>C. g. bensoni</i> ¹¹	Lake Mweru	1	15.0	5.5	no data

⁵Based on field measurements of one at Lake Kanyaboli in August 2002.

^fBased on field measurements taken by Oliver Nasirwa from Lake Kanyaboli and Yala swamp

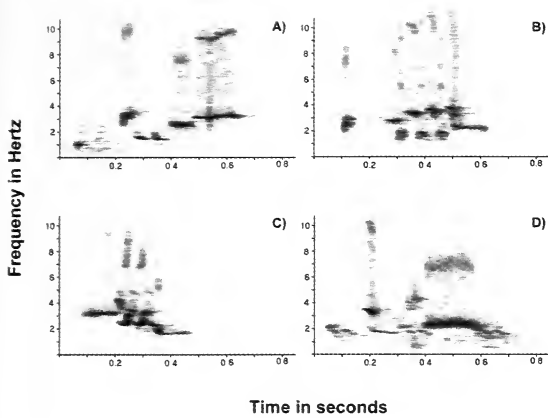


Figure 3. Four phrases of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta g. gracilirostris* recorded at Lake Bunyonyi, south-west Uganda. Recording by AB using a Sennheiser MKE 300 directional microphone and a Sony TCM-5000EV cassette recorder. Sonograms prepared using Spectrogram Version 2.3 software.

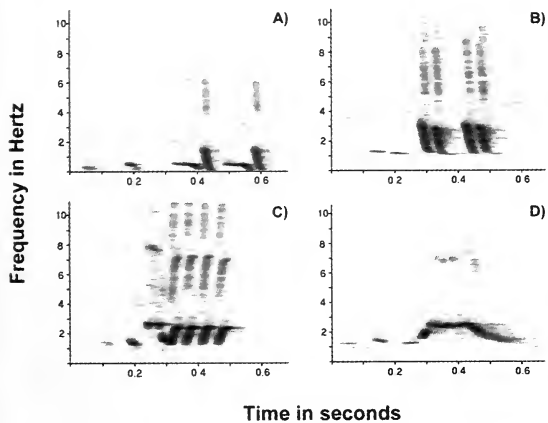


Figure 4. Four phrases of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta g. bensoni* recorded at the Luapula River, Zambia. Recording by Bob Stjernstedt using a AKG microphone with a 30" parabola and a Phillips cassette recorder. Sonograms prepared using Spectrogram Version 2.3 software.

that of the Kenyan population: red iris contrasting with paler eye-ring and black pupil.

Immature: unknown.

C. g. bensoni

Differs from the nominate principally in lacking any rufous or ochre wash to the flanks, rump and tail¹⁹. It appears to be smaller than *C. g. gracilirostris*, has a pale yellow¹¹ or white¹⁴ rather than reddish iris

and slightly paler grey bill and legs¹¹. A photograph of this form is included in Leonard & Beel¹⁴ and suggests that the underparts are much paler yellow, although this could be attributed to lighting conditions. Bill measurements are very similar to those obtained from the Kenyan bird we trapped (Table 1).

Vocalisations

C. g. gracilirostris (Kenya)

The bird has three main phrases, each of which is reproduced in Fig 2.

- A. *Cotchewow*—a slightly metallic whistle repeated every c3 seconds.
- B. *Choweeet Choweeet*—two almost identical metallic whistles repeated every 3.5–4.0 seconds.
- C. *Cheewowow*—a scratchier less sibilant note than (A) repeated every 3–4 seconds.

C. g. gracilirostris (Albertine Rift)

Four main phrases, each of which is reproduced in Fig 3.

- A. *Gwo gwo gwo gwo gwo*—a series of 4–5 sibilant notes uttered every 4–7 seconds.
- B. *Brob brob chrip chrip*—a series of four rattling notes, the first two slightly quieter and lower pitched, repeated every 2–4 seconds.
- C. *Cotrrrrrrreel*—a quick note followed by a rapid slightly higher pitched trill, typically uttered every 3–4 seconds, although gaps of up to 15 seconds may ensue. Males and females often utter this phrase in succession.
- D. A variation on (C) involves a more sibilant *dotdweel* repeated every 2–3 seconds, although longer gaps can ensue.

C. g. bensoni

Four main phrases, each of which is reproduced in Fig 4.

- A. *Thweet-slow-wheee*—a three-part musical phrase, the central part of which is lower pitched.
- B. *Phwit-slrlrlrl-ow*—a three-part musical warble, the middle part a higher pitched trill.
- C. *Ts-lrlrlrleeow*—a similar phrase to (B) but lower pitched and lacking the first part of the phrase.
- D. *Putdrrrrreel*—similar to phrase (D) of the Albertine Rift population, but higher pitched and less sibilant.



Figure 5. Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta g. gracilirostris* specimen in National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi (NMK852); note the twine around the bill, which could be responsible for compressing it (Rob Martin)



Figure 6. Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta g. gracilirostris* at Lake Kanyaboli, Kenya, showing the characteristically *Chloropeta*-like bill (Rob Martin)



Figures 7–8. Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta g. gracilirostris*, Lake Kanyaboli, western Kenya (Rob Martin)

Calls have also been described as (A) *To-tso-woo* (B) *Tee-tschlee-wo* (C) *Tslo-tschlee-wo* and (D) *Tschlee-ow*¹² or as a musical *pee, p-r-r-r (ee as in sweet)*³.

Conclusions

Though we agree with Irwin & Turner¹¹ that the Kenyan population of *C. g. gracilirostris* may warrant taxonomic recognition, our reasons are quite different. The bill widths of *C. g. bensoni* and the Kenyan population of *C. g. gracilirostris* may be

slightly narrower than that of the Albertine Rift population of *C. g. gracilirostris*, but all are characteristically *Chloropeta*-like and do not appear to differ to the extent suggested by Irwin & Turner¹¹. Though the bill of Papyrus Yellow Warbler, irrespective of population, is narrower than its congeners, this is a diagnostic feature of papyrus-dwelling passerines¹².

The distribution of Papyrus Yellow Warbler is poorly known, and further research should

endeavour to clarify the species' taxonomy. Under the Biological Species Concept, it is difficult to determine the taxonomic status of allopatric taxa¹¹. The extent to which the Kenyan and Albertine Rift populations or, indeed, *C. g. bensoni* might be considered distinct under the Phylogenetic Species Concept is uncertain, and awaits analysis of their molecular phylogeny. Nevertheless, our recordings of the songs of the Kenyan and Albertine Rift populations of *C. g. gracilirostris* appear very different from each other and from *C. g. bensoni*, and we encourage other recordists to acquire additional samples of this species' vocalizations to adequately assess the extent to which these differences may relate to dialectical variation or be more substantial and important. The relevance of song as a complement to traditional morphological studies in assigning species rank has been widely acknowledged among taxonomists in recent years (Irwin *et al*¹⁰ and references cited therein). In other warbler groups, songs are considered of primary importance in taxonomy¹⁰ and on this basis, that of the Papyrus Yellow Warbler warrants further investigation.

Acknowledgements

We thank Alfred Owino and other staff and volunteers from the National Museums of Kenya for much useful information and logistical help. Bob Dowsett, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, Lincoln Fishpool and Derek Pomeroy provided useful feedback on drafts of the manuscript. Bob Stjernstedt offered a recording of *C. g. bensoni*, Charlie Williams (RSPB) provided the equipment for a recording of *C. g. gracilirostris* in Uganda and Oliver Nasirwa biometrics of birds caught at Lake Kanyaboli, as well as comments on a draft. ¶

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Appendix 1. List of place names mentioned in the text.

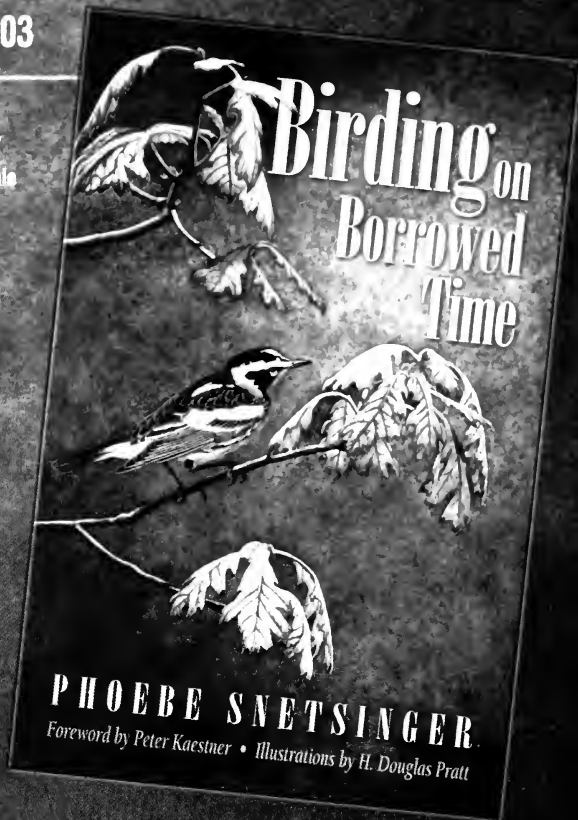
Place	Country	Coordinates	Place	Country	Coordinates
Albertine Rift	various	01°20'S 29°30'E	Lake Victoria	various	01°00'S 33°00'E
Lake Bunyonyi	Uganda	01°17'S 29°55'E	Luapula River	Zambia/ Democratic Republic of Congo	09°26'S 28°33'E
Lake George	Uganda	00°00'S 30°13'E	Lutembe Bay	Uganda	00°12'N 32°34'E
Lake Kanyaboli	Kenya	00°03'N 34°10'E	Makokobe Swamp	Uganda	00°10'N 32°21'E
Lake Mweru	Zambia/ Democratic Republic of Congo	08°55'S 28°45'E	Nkole	Democratic Republic of Congo	09°26'S 28°33'E
Lake Mburo	Uganda	00°40'S 30°56'E	Usenge	Kenya	00°03'S 34°02'E
Lake Nakuwa	Uganda	01°10'N 33°28'E	Yala Swamp	Kenya	00°03'N 34°05'E
Lake Sare	Kenya	00°02'S 34°03'E			

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First observations of a successful nest for the Endangered Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothos*

Rina Nichols and Lance Woolaver

Le Zostérops de Maurice *Zosterops chloronothos* est le moins connu des huit espèces terrestres encore présentes à l'Île Maurice. La reproduction de l'espèce est très mal connue: seulement deux nids ont été bien documentés, et aucun des deux n'a produit des jeunes. En octobre 2000, un nid du Zostérops de Maurice contenant un oisillon d'un jour a été suivi jusqu'à l'émancipation du jeune. Les deux parents couvaient et nourrissaient l'oisillon, qui a quitté le nid à l'âge de 14 jours. Cinq jours après l'envol, le jeune a été vu en train de prospecter des branches à la recherche d'insectes; après trois semaines il se nourrissait de nectar. Il acquit le cercle orbital caractéristique et la longueur de queue adulte à l'âge de 33 jours. A partir de ce moment, il n'y avait plus de différence entre les plumages adulte et juvénile. Les adultes ont progressivement diminué le nombre de nourrissages du jeune pendant les deux mois suivants. Les premiers signes d'agressivité parentale ont été observés 58 jours après l'envol; cette agressivité a continué pendant trois jours consécutifs. La période de dépendance juvénile a duré 61 jours, après laquelle le jeune a quitté la zone natale et n'a plus été observé en compagnie des parents.

White-eyes, Zosteropidae, constitute a large family of passerines present throughout Asia, Australasia, Africa, and western Pacific and western Indian Ocean islands. Of the c85 species, over 30% are of conservation concern¹. Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothos* is one of three threatened white-eyes in the western Indian Ocean and is currently considered Endangered¹. The population has drastically declined from an estimated 340–350 pairs in 1975² to an estimated 93–148 pairs in 2001⁵. The main threats are habitat loss, degradation of native habitat and intense nest predation by introduced mammals^{2,7}. Only 5% of native forest remains on Mauritius, all in a very degraded state⁸. Nesting success of the white-eye is extremely low at 7–17%⁶, and introduced monkeys, *Macaca fascicularis*, and rats, *Rattus rattus*, are a major cause of passerine nesting failures in Mauritius^{2,3,9}.

Observations of Mauritius Olive White-eye breeding biology are extremely rare due to its low numbers, transient nature and elusive nesting habits^{2,10}. The species' monomorphic features makes it very difficult to distinguish male, female and juvenile plumages in the field. Prior to 1998, only two nests had been documented^{10,11} (both predated) and there had been no confirmed sightings of juveniles or fledglings. This paper documents the first recorded successful nest of *Z. chloronothos* and

details for the first time, fledging and juvenile dependency periods, and the role of the adults in parental care, as well as providing the first photographs of a nest and nestling.

Nest

No birds were present in the area when the nest was discovered, which was initially suspected to belong to either the common Mauritius Grey White-eye *Zosterops borbonicus mauritianus* or a Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone bourbonensis desolata* because of its size, materials, nest tree species and height above ground. A newly hatched chick was present in the nest, which was lined with feathers suggesting that it might belong to a pair of Olive White-eye, as *Z. chloronothos* lines the nest with feathers and *Z. b. mauritianus* does not^{2,10}. After four minutes, two adult Olive White-eyes returned to the area, the first landed beside the nest and the other fed the chick.

Location

The nest was found at Combo, an area of c5 km² in the south-east of Black River Gorges National Park. The nest tree was 2 m from an overgrown abandoned road within a small patch (8 m x 7 m) of Guava *Psidium cattleianum*. The nest was 2 m above ground in the fork of a Guava, and was woven to the trunk in the tree's upper part, having



Figure 1. Adult Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothus* brooding the nestling, Combo, Mauritius, October 2000 (Rina Nichols)



Figure 2. Adult Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothus* feeding the nine-day old nestling, Combo, Mauritius, October 2000 (Rina Nichols)



Figure 3. Adult Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothus* preening near its nest, Combo, Mauritius, October 2000 (Rina Nichols)



Figure 4. Adult Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothus* nectar-feeding, Pétrin, Mauritius (Dennis Hansen)

three points of contact. The location and position made it possible to conduct 49.5 hours of observations from the discovery date, on 10 October, until the chick successfully fledged on 23 October 2000. Most observations were conducted after the nestling was three days old. The nest's accessibility also made it possible to band and measure the nestling.

Description

The outer cup was primarily constructed (in order of abundance) of green moss, dried leaves and grass, small twigs, lichen, feathers, spider egg casings, fern leaf scales and a cotton-like plant material. The inner cup consisted primarily of narrow dried grass, grass heads and moss seta. The nest was lined with ten feathers, two of which were body feathers

of the globally threatened Pink Pigeon *Columba mayeri*, four were body feathers of Olive White-eye and the remaining four were not identified. The outer cup measured 63.4 mm in width (w), 80.3 mm in length (l) and 65.4 mm in depth (d). The inner cup was 47.1 mm (w) by 56.4 mm (l) by 39.5 mm (d). The walls were 9.1 mm to 13.6 mm thick. The nest was collected on 29 October, one week after the nestling had fledged and the adults were no longer visiting it. The nest is currently in the possession of Dr Carl Jones, Scientific Director of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, who plans to deposit it in the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK.

Nestling

The nestling was estimated to be one day old when the nest was found on 10 October, and was pink, completely naked and c2 cm long. The gape was bright yellow. No hatched eggshells or unhatched eggs were present in the nest, suggesting that all pieces of eggshell and perhaps even infertile eggs were removed from the nest very soon after the nestling hatched.

Fledging period

Prior to this study, fledging period and parental roles in chick rearing were unknown for this species. The first three days of observations were irregular, as it was not known how the pair would react to observer presence. After three days, observations were gradually increased and appeared to have a negligible effect on the pair. By the seventh day it was possible to distinguish between the adults

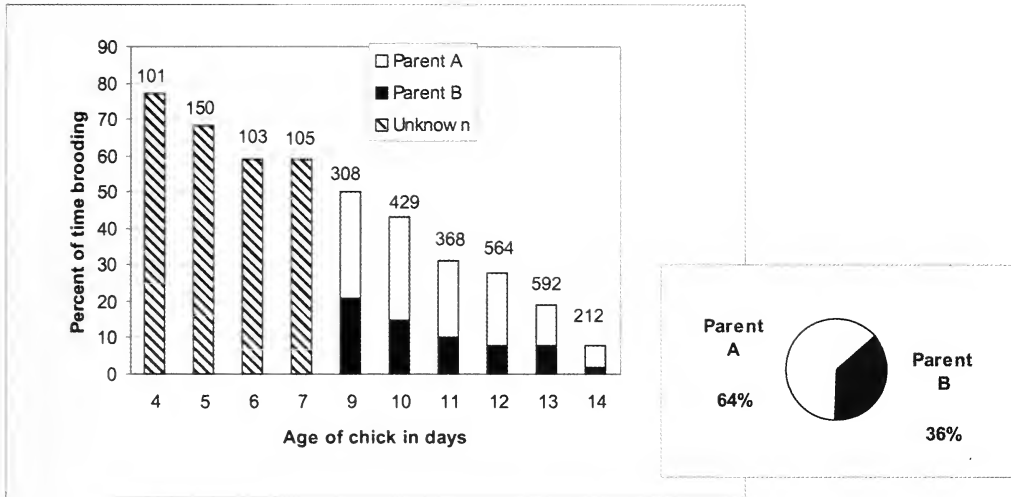


Figure 6. Bar graph depicting percentage of each day the adults spent brooding the nestling between day 4 and fledging on day 14. 'Unknown' refers to observations in which parents A and B could not be separated. The total number of minutes the nest was observed on each day is presented above the relevant bar. The pie chart compares the percentage of time spent by parents A and B brooding the nestling on days 9–14.

Table 1. Growth of a Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothos* nestling at Combo.

Date (age in days)	Bill gape to tip (mm)	Wing chord (mm)	Feathers	Proportion of body covered in pin feathers and down	Comments
15 October 2000 (six)	9.6	14	Body and primaries all in pin	30% of body covered in pin feathers; no down	Banded red (right leg); chick in very good condition
17 October 2000 (eight)	10.5	23	Distal 3 mm of primaries out of pin	40% of body covered in pin feathers; no down	Gape and tongue bright yellow; eyes closed
18 October 2000 (nine)	10.6	28	Distal 5 mm of primaries out of pin	75% of body covered in pin feathers; no down	Eyes closed; first observation of adults removing faecal sac from nest
19 October 2000 (ten)	11.0	31.5	Distal 8 mm of primaries out of pin	90% of body covered in feathers out of pin; 20% of body covered in down	Eyes just opening; nest clean, parents removing faecal sacs from nest
20 October 2000 (11)	—	36	18 mm (50%) of primaries out of pin	90% of body covered in feathers out of pin; 70% of body covered in down	Eyes fully open; nestling still naked and pink on sides under wing

(though sex was unknown) as they sat in different positions and behaved differently while at the nest. Whenever possible the observer distinguished between parent A and B. This permitted observations of the parental roles during chick rearing.

Several white-eyes in the Indian Ocean, including the sympatric Mauritius Grey White-eye, possess a cooperative breeding strategy, with several 'helpers' feeding nestlings at one nest^{2,3,6}. The young of this Olive White-eye pair, and four other pairs observed from 1998 to 2001, were fed and brooded only by the parents³. The fledging period for the chick observed in this study was 14 days. Fledging period in Seychelles White-eye *Zosterops modesta* is 11–16 days⁶. It is probable that Mauritius Olive White-eye also exhibits individual variation in fledging period.

Brooding

Both male and female brooded the nestling. When the nestling was four days old the parents brooded 77% of the time. The proportion of time gradually decreased until by day 14 the parents brooded 8% of the time (Fig 6). Parent A brooded the nestling for two-thirds of the time (Fig 6). It is unknown which sex undertook most of the brooding, but hopefully this can be confirmed by future studies.

Feeding

When the adults arrived at the nest they called to

the nestling with a soft *pip* and the nestling immediately began begging. Both sexes fed the nestling. The parents fed the young a mean 7.8 times per hour when the chick was four days old, and this average peaked at 19 times per hour on day 11 (Fig 7). For Seychelles White-eye feeding frequency varied between seven and 16 feeds per hour⁶. There was a noticeable increase in the number of feeding visits per hour after day 7 by the Olive White-eyes we observed. The most feeds recorded in one hour was on day 11, when the parents fed the nestling 36 times between 14.30 and 15.30 hrs. The nestling was fed equally by both sexes (Fig 7). It was not possible to distinguish species of invertebrate being fed to the chick, except for occasional glimpses of a dragonfly wing and beetle carapace.

Nestling growth

The nestling was banded in the nest on day 6. Mensural data were taken while the nestling was growing (Table 1) from day 8 (when it was removed from the nest for this purpose). Thereafter, measurements were taken while the nestling was in the nest. The primary feathers grew at a rate of 4.5–5.0 mm per day on days 6–11. Feather growth was most noticeable after day 8, coinciding with a marked increase in the number of feeding visits by the adults. The parents were first observed to remove a white faecal sac from the nest on day 9.

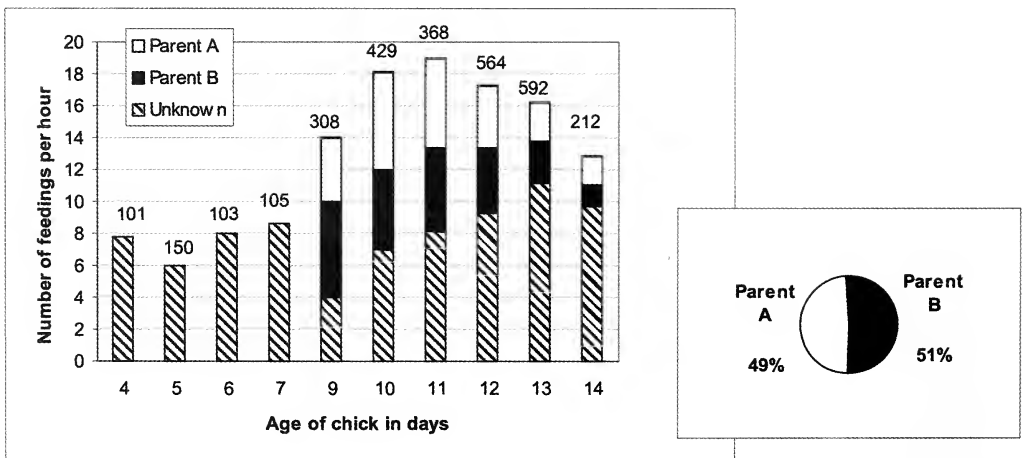


Figure 7. Bar graph depicting the mean number of feeding visits per hour on days 4–14 (when the chick fledged). 'Unknown' refers to observations in which parents A and B could not be separated. The total number of minutes the nest was observed on each day is presented above the relevant bar. The pie chart compares the percentage of time spent by parents A and B feeding the nestling on days 9–14.

The nestling's eyes started to open on day 10 and were fully open next day. Thereafter, no additional measurements were taken. By day 10 the adults were leaving the nestling untended in heavy rain, and the nestling was also first noted self-preening on the same day. By day 12, the olive coloration to the primaries and uppertail-coverts was visible, and the yellow gape was much less pronounced.

Fledging

At 15.30 hrs on day 13 the adults were observed attempting to entice the nestling from the nest. On returning to the area they did not feed the nestling but called to it whilst perched 2 m away. This occurred three times in the afternoon, each time for a minimum of three minutes. The nestling responded actively and perched on the edge of the nest vigorously flapping its wings, but did not leave the nest. On day 14 the enticing behaviour commenced at 08.00 hrs and occurred four times over the next 110 minutes. At 09.50 hrs the nestling moved to a small branch 30 cm above the nest. The primary flight feathers were full and in good condition, but the tail feathers were not yet visible.

Juvenile dependency period

At least one adult remained with the young for the first 30 minutes after fledging, during which time the chick was preened almost continuously by one or both parents. The fledgling was fed seven times by the adults in the first 30 minutes and did not return to the nest. However, an adult returned to the nest on two occasions and sat in the nest for 30 seconds on each visit. The fledgling moved only 5 m from the nest during the first day. It made several attempts to follow the parents but these were unsuccessful. The parents returned to the fledgling every 6–10 minutes. Twice, the adults alarm-called, to which the fledgling immediately reacted, remaining quiet and still until the parents returned.

For the next 1.5 days the fledgling remained perched 10–15 m from the nest in exotic bamboo and Japanese Red Cedar *Cryptomeria japonica*. The adults returned every 10–15 minutes and preened the fledgling every third or fourth visit. The fledgling made very short flights during the first two days. On the third day, the parents and fledgling were found 25 m from the nest in a patch of bamboo. The adults were still feeding the fledgling as frequently as every ten minutes, but also left the fledgling for longer periods of up to 25 minutes.

Five days after the nestling fledged, the parents and fledgling were observed 50 m from the nest in a patch of exotic Rose-apple *Syzigium jambos*, near the edge of a stream. The fledgling was observed for the first time gleaning branches for insects and invertebrates, mutual preening with the adults and flying with them over several metres. The tail feathers were noticeably longer, approximately half the length of the adult tail. The parents fed the fledgling up to seven times per 30 minutes but occasionally did not feed the young for up to 40 minutes.

For the first two weeks after fledging the adults still continued to feed the young up to five times per 30 minutes. Fifteen days after fledging the white eye-ring of the young was full, confirming that fledgling Olive White-eyes have complete eye-rings within c2 weeks of fledging. The fledgling acquired full adult tail length by 19 days after fledging making it very difficult to distinguish between adult and young plumage at this point. The fledgling continued to beg often, wing flapping and following the adults. On the 21st day after fledging the young was observed for the first time nectar-feeding from *S. jambos*, and was observed feeding alone for up to one hour, albeit with the parents still close by.

After 1 December the adults responded much less frequently to begging behaviour. The fledgling received food less than 50% of the time it begged. However, this did not appear to affect the social dynamics of the trio, as they continued to mutual preen at least once every two hours. On day 58 after fledging the first observation was made of one of the adults chasing the young from the natal area and this behaviour was observed several times during the next few days. By 22 December, after 61 days of juvenile dependency, the fledgling was no longer observed with the parents. The young was observed several times in an area adjacent to the adults' territory. Several searches for the juvenile in and around the natal area in January were unsuccessful, suggesting the young had dispersed further away.

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Specimen of rufous-morph Augur Buzzard

Buteo augur from Zimbabwe

William S. Clark

L'auteur rapporte la découverte d'un spécimen de la forme rousse de la Buse augure *Buteo augur*, souvent considérée comme une sous-espèce (*archeri*) ou une espèce distincte (Buse d'Archer), qui avait été collecté en l'actuel Zimbabwe, loin de sa distribution normale, en Somalie. Il était toutefois identique à certains spécimens de Somalie.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* has a rufous colour morph that in adult plumage has a variable amount of rufous on its underparts and underwing-coverts, from completely rufous to rufous restricted to the flanks and belly; they also show rufous on the upperside of the secondaries. The underparts and underwing-coverts of normal pale-morph adult Augur Buzzards are completely white.

Rufous-morph Augur Buzzards occur primarily in northern Somalia², where they were described as 'Archer's Buzzards'. Clark² discussed why Archer's Buzzard should not be considered specifically and concluded it to be a subspecies of Augur Buzzard. I now consider it to be a rufous colour-morph of Augur Buzzard and not a subspecies. A subspecies should occupy a geographic range exclusive of individuals of other subspecies. Adult Augur Buzzards with a variable amount of rufous on their underparts, from none (typical Augur Buzzard) to some to much, have also been collected in the same locations in Somalia as adults with completely rufous underparts².

Thus, it was with great interest that I found a specimen of a rufous-morph Augur Buzzard (Fig 1) in the collection of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (TM 40131). It had been collected in present-day Zimbabwe. The specimen tag contained the following information: *Buteo jackal* or *Buteo augur*. Location: Vumba, 4300' Southern Rhodesia. Adult female. 8 Sept. '14. L 22°", W 16°", TL 7°" Iris: greyish-brown, Bill: Black, lower mandible base pale yellow-green. P. A. Sheppard.

This specimen is within the range of Augur Buzzard but not far from the range of the similar Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus*. As in adult plumage the latter also shows much rufous on the underparts and also has a rufous tail, could this specimen be of an adult Jackal or adult hybrid Augur/Jackal? Both of these possibilities can be eliminated by the specimen's lack of black on the throat, belly and

underwing-coverts shown by all adult Jackal Buzzards. A hybrid would show some black in these areas.

I compared a photograph of the Zimbabwe specimen with rufous-morph Augur Buzzard (Archer's Buzzard) specimens collected by Archer & Godman¹ in Somalia deposited in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and others from Somalia in the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHM). Its underparts appeared exactly like two adult males, AMNH 534359 and NHM 1923.8.7.7383, and an adult female, AMNH 534355. Further, its uppertail was identical to that of AMNH 534355.

One would expect that the genetic signal for rufous underparts of this morph of Augur Buzzard would spread beyond the core area of northern Somalia. Therefore, it is not surprising that rufous-morph Augur Buzzard specimens have also been collected in nearby Ethiopia and Kenya², and live buzzards have been seen in Djibouti². But, it is remarkable that this specimen occurred so far from the core area. A final question is: can or should these rufous-morph adult Augur Buzzards still be called 'Archer's Buzzards'?

Acknowledgements

I thank the curators of the Transvaal Museum (Pretoria), Natural History Museum (Tring) and American Museum of Natural History (New York), especially Alan Kemp, Robert Prŷs-Jones and Paul Sweet, for permission to examine specimens. Ron Demey, Bob Dowsett and Iain Robertson made helpful comments on earlier drafts. 🐦

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Figure 1. Rufous-morph Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* (Archer's Buzzard) specimen in the Transvaal Museum, collected in present-day Zimbabwe, far from its usual range in Somalia (William S. Clark)

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BIRDING THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE TO COST IT.....

First West African nest of Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, in Côte d'Ivoire

Hugo Rainey^a and Terry Oatley^b

Les auteurs rapportent la découverte d'un nid du Cossyphes à sourcils blancs *Cossypha polioptera nigriceps* au Parc National du Mont Sangbé, en Côte d'Ivoire de l'ouest, le 12 juin 2002. Le nid était situé à 50 cm du sol dans une fente d'un tronc d'arbre d'environ 50 cm de diamètre et consistait en une coupe assez peu profonde bordée de mousse. Il était tapissé de brins d'herbe et de fines tiges, et contenait deux œufs de couleur brun-olive. Ceci constitue la première description du nid de cette espèce en Afrique de l'Ouest. Le nid de la sous-espèce nominale a été décrit pour la première fois en Zambie en 1998.

Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera* has a disjunct range in Africa, being confined to a number of widely scattered locations, from Sierra Leone and east Guinea to western Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria to western Central African Republic, south Sudan to north-west Tanzania, and in Angola and north Zambia/south Democratic Republic of Congo^{1,9,10}. Its breeding biology is poorly known^{9,10} and although the nest of the nominate race has been recently described from Zambia³, it has not yet been documented for the subspecies *nigriceps* in West Africa. The nest was found (but not described) in Uganda, in June and October, from where the eggs were described as olive-green¹⁴. The only breeding data from western Africa are from Yekepa/Nimba, north-east Liberia,

where birds in January had enlarged gonads, whereas those in October–November had much smaller gonads^{4,7}. A recently fledged juvenile was caught in March at the same location⁷. Although the species has been reported as breeding in Sierra Leone⁶ and Côte d'Ivoire¹⁵, no details have been presented.

On 12 June 2002, during avian inventory field work in Mont Sangbé National Park, western Côte d'Ivoire, HR found a nest of this species at c700 m altitude, in a forested ravine between two ridges of Mont Sangbé, on the north side of the mountain (07°55'N 07°17'W). It was identified as that of a Grey-winged Robin Chat, as an adult flew off the nest when HR passed the tree in which it was placed. The nest was 50 cm above ground within the cleft of a tree trunk, c50 cm in diameter, and consisted of a moderately shallow cup with a rim of moss. It was lined with grass and narrow plant stems, and contained two uniform olive-brown eggs (Fig 1). This compares with Charge's³ observation of three



Figure 1. Nest of Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, Mont Sangbé National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, June 2002 (Hugo Rainey)



Figure 2. Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, Mont Sangbé National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, June 2002 (Hugo Rainey)

greenish-turquoise and slightly mottled eggs in a nest consisting of a small cup of moss lined with black vegetable fibre and located 0.5–1.0 m from the base of a sandy bank. Unfortunately no measurements of our observation were taken, as the significance of the find was unknown at the time. The wet season in this park is in June and water was plentiful. The steep-sided valley ensures that even in the dry season this area has permanent water (S Diakite pers comm). A few days before, on 9 June, an adult Grey-winged Robin Chat was trapped 10 km south of this site (07°52'N 07°20'W, also within the park), at 750 m (Fig 2). The long white supercilium meeting the rufous neck-sides identified the bird as being of the subspecies *nigriceps*, which occurs from Sierra Leone to west Cameroon^{1,11}.

These observations appear to be the most easterly of the Upper Guinea population; the previous most easterly records being from Mont Tonkouï to the south-west (07°27'N 07°39'W)^{2,13,15}, a range extension of 32 km. Other authors have commented that it is common in highland forest, its preferred habitat in Upper Guinea^{2,7,15}, and our observations suggest that this may be the case in Mont Sangbé National Park. Prior to our trapping the bird, singing individuals had been heard at two different locations at c700 m.

Mont Sangbé National Park covers 95,000 ha and consists of generally rugged terrain with many peaks above 700 m; the vegetation is mostly savanna woodland with some small patches of forest⁸. Recent surveys have noted 364 bird species in the park^{5,12} including rare and threatened species such as Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii*, Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami*, Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*, Black-headed Bee-eater *Merops breweri*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*, Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, Yellow-headed Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* and Emerald Starling *Lamprolornis iris*.

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Dowsett, Ron Demey and Peter Holt provided comments and checked references. †

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Birding Cameroon, part 1

Northern Cameroon: Guinea Woodlands to Sahel

Michael Mills and Callan Cohen • Photographs by Ron Hoff

Cameroon, straddling the border between West and Central Africa, is the sudden focus of a birding revival. Once the domain of only the most dedicated of birders, the avian riches of Cameroon are finally beginning to receive the popular attention they deserve. This renewed interest has undoubtedly been due to Nik Borrow and Ron Demey's thorough new field guide to West Africa¹ (whose nomenclature has been followed here) and Claude Chappuis' bird vocalisation compilation for the region², as well as the discovery of new stakeouts for some of its harder-to-find species.

Cameroon is certainly a strategic destination to explore: its range of habitats stretches from rain forest to the edge of the Sahara and encompasses two of Africa's Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs), defined by BirdLife International as the continent's hotspots for restricted-range endemic birds⁴. The Cameroon Mountains EBA, a string of forested volcanic peaks, holds 26 highland species that are found nowhere else, including **Mount Kupe Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus kupeensis* and **Bannerman's Turaco** *Tauraco bannermani*, both of which have community-based conservation projects dedicated to protecting their habitats. At the base of these mountains are vast humid lowland forests, comprising the Cameroon and Gabon Lowlands EBA. Though harbouring only six endemics, caves deep within these forests are home to one of the world's most enigmatic creatures: the **Red-headed Picathartes** *Picathartes oreas*, probably Cameroon's most celebrated bird. North of these forest zones, the climate becomes drier and gives way to Sudan-Guinea savanna. This biome extends both into West and Central Africa and holds 45 biome-restricted species, including **Adamawa Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*, **Violet Turaco** *Musophaga violacea* and **Dybowski's Twinspot** *Euschistospiza dybowskii*. In the far north, the land descends into the Sahel biome, providing convenient access to the species found in this dry band, which abuts North Africa's Sahara desert. This combined diversity makes it the richest country for birding in West Africa, with c915 species having been

recorded. Cameroon surely offers some of the most exciting birding experiences on the continent.

This article, the first in a two-part series, overviews the essential birding sites of northern Cameroon, most of which have also been defined as Important Bird Areas³, focusing on the key species and their habitats. We make our way north from the vicinity of Ngaoundéré, central Cameroon's largest city on the cool Adamawa Plateau, downslope to the broad-leaved woodlands of the Bénoué plains, and finally to the Sahel at Waza National Park in the extreme north.

For practical access details to these sites, a number of reports are available on the Internet, including our own tour reports and annotated checklists (www.birdingafrica.com). Also available free of charge is our detailed guide to birding in Cameroon for independent travellers (write to cameroon@birdingafrica.com).

Ngaoundaba Ranch

Situated on the wooded Adamawa Plateau overlooking a crater lake, Ngaoundaba Ranch offers a picturesque introduction to northern Cameroon's varied avifauna. Cool, forested gullies crisscross lightly wooded uplands, holding an extraordinary number of localised and charismatic birds. Steep-sided banks provide great vantage points for viewing the canopy of the sheltered forests. Multi-coloured flocks of seedeaters rove along the rank forest edges. Among the more abundant **Black-crowned Estrilda** *nonnula* and **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** *E. melpoda*, search for family parties of **Black-bellied Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rara* and shy pairs of picture-perfect **Dybowski's Twinspot**. **Brown Twinspot** *Clytospiza monteiri* prefers the moister, ranker areas, particularly along the margin of the crater lake, whereas the scarce **Yellow-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia hypogrammica* can be found drinking at shaded pools.

Easier to spot in the gallery forest canopy are gaudy groups of **White-crested Turaco** *leucolophus* and **Ross's Turacos** *Musophaga rossae*, though both are likely to be heard before being seen. **Bamenda Apalis** *Apalis bamendae*, the only one of Cameroon's



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endemics to be found in the north of the country, and retiring **Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus scandens*, are also usually located by voice. Also watch for the little-known **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksii* along the forest edge, which may oblige by hawking insects at eye level, but beware of confusion with the very similar **Lesser Honeyguide** *I. minor*, which is also present. **Blackcap Babbler** *Turdoides reinwardtii* chatters alongside its plainer cousin, **Brown Babbler** *T. plebejus*. The cool, shady understorey is home to several special skulkers, including **Grey-winged Cossypha** *polioptera* and **White-crowned Robin Chats** *C. albicapilla*, which betray their presence with their melodious songs. The premier prize, however, is the curious **Spotted Thrush Babbler** *Ptyrticus turdinus*, a shy bird of uncertain taxonomic affinities that can prove elusive at the best of times. The unique black-and-yellow **Oriole Warbler** (Moho) *Hypergerus atriceps*, familiar to birders that have visited The Gambia, prefers thick tangles in the midstorey, particularly around the many palm fronds. In passing, you may spot **Green-backed Woodpecker** *Campethera cailliautii*, **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* or a **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica* sitting motionless on its perch.

More bird activity can often be found in the surrounding woodlands, which host large mixed-species flocks. Among the most conspicuous birds are the typically vociferous **Western Grey Plantain-eater** *Crinifer piscator* and **Senegal Parrot** *Poicephalus senegalus*, and restless bands of **Yellow-billed Shrike** *Corvinella corvina*. Starling flocks are a key feature of the avifauna here and should yield not only **Purple Lamprotornis** *purpureus*, **Bronze-tailed** *L. chalcurus* and **Splendid Glossy Starlings** *L. splendidus*, but also the highly localised and particularly exquisite **White-collared Starling**

Grafisia torquata, the latter one of the most special of the Guinea woodland endemics. **Senegal Eremomela** *Eremomela pusilla*, **White-shouldered Black Tit** *Parus (leucomelas) guineensis*, **Splendid Sunbird** *Cinnyris coccinigaster*, **Red-shouldered Campephaga** *phoenicea* and **White-breasted Cuckoo-shrikes** *Coracina pectoralis*, **White Helmet-shrike** *Prionops plumatus*, **Grey-headed Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti*, **Black Wood-hoopoe** *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*, **Brown-backed Woodpecker** *Dendropicos obsoletus* and the inconspicuous **Spotted Creeper** *Salpornis spilonotus* are all regular in the feeding flocks. **Blue-bellied Roller** *Coracias cyanogaster* is scarce, but has been recorded more regularly in recent years. Near the entrance to the ranch, where the woodland is particularly stunted, watch out for **Red-winged Warbler** *Heliolais erythroptera*. The bare, oft-burnt ground provides ideal habitat for Heuglin's **Wheatear** *Oenanthe (bottae) heuglini* and supports a small breeding population of **Brown-chested Lapwing** *Vanellus superciliosus*, an inconspicuous African plover that has an east-west migration across Africa. Tall-grassed areas, particularly around the lake, hold **Whistling Cisticola** *Cisticola lateralis* and **Marsh Tchagra** *Antichromis minutus*, whereas **Double-spurred Francolin** *Francolinus bicalcaratus* is fairly common where the grass is sparser. If you are exceptionally lucky you may find a **Schlegel's Francolin** *Francolinus schlegelii*, one of the ranch's most sought-after species, quietly scurrying through the grassy understorey.

For those who venture out after dark, a spotlighting session may prove very rewarding. **African Scops Owl** *Otus senegalensis* is common, and **White-faced Owl** *Ptilopsis leucotis* and **Spotted Eagle Owl** *Bubo africanus* are present in small numbers. Nightjar diversity is impressive: **Freckled Caprimulgus** *tristigma*, **Long-tailed** *C. climacurus* and **Plain Nightjars** *C. inornatus* occur, but these pale in comparison to spectacular **Pennant-winged Macrodipteryx** *vexillarius* and **Standard-winged Nightjars** *M. longipennis*. The latter frequently displays near the ranch entrance, and may be flushed from its day roost in burnt, rocky areas. The elusive **Bronze-winged Courser** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* also occurs: listen for its eerie call.

Bénoué National Park

North of Ngaoundaba the road winds its way down the escarpment of the Adamawa Plateau onto the

Captions to plates on pages 112 and 113

- 1 African Swallow-tailed Kite *Chelictinia riocourii*
- 2 Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius*
- 3 Little Green Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*
- 4 Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans*
- 5 Violet Turaco *Musophaea violacea*
- 6 White-collared Starling *Grafisia torquata*
- 7 African Moustached Warbler *Melocichla mentalis*
- 8 Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster*

seemingly endless, woodland-cloaked Bénoué plains. Low population pressures have left extensive areas intact, some of which have been incorporated into Bénoué National Park. The richest birding habitat is a broad band of gallery forest that follows the wide Bénoué River along the park's eastern border. **Black-headed Gonolek** *Laniarius erythrogaster*, dainty **Red-winged Grey Warbler** *Drymocichla incana*, **White-cheeked Oliveback** *Nesocharis capistrata*, **Black-bellied** and **Bar-breasted Firefinches** *Lagonosticta rufopicta*, and **Oriole Warbler** frequent the dense tangles. Larger stands of trees may shelter a roosting **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* or **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens*, **Vieillot's Barbet** *Lybius vieilloti*, a striking **Bearded Barbet** *L. dubius* or a dazzling pair of **Violet Turaco**. Here, too, one may find one of Africa's most attractive doves, **Adamawa Turtle Dove**, which can be seen drinking at pools along the riverbed. The undisputed highlight, however, is the eye-catching **Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius*, which actively chases insects along the exposed sandbars.

In the surrounding woodlands, mixed-species flocks regularly hold **Fine-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera punctuligera*, **Yellow-bellied Hylia** *Hylia flavigaster*, **Senegal Batis** *Batis senegalensis*, **Pygmy Sunbird** *Hedydipna platura* and **Cabanis's Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi*, while the stately **Abyssinian Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus abyssinicus* can be seen pacing along determinedly. Harder work may be rewarded with **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus*, **Blue-bellied Roller**, **Red-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia phoenicoptera*, **Black-faced Firefinch** *Lagonosticta larvata*, **Streaky-headed Seedeater** *Serinus gularis* or **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza affinis*. Warblers abound in the rank grassy areas, with **African Moustached Melocichla** *Melocichla mentalis* and **Red-winged Warblers**, and **Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythropus*, **Winding** *C. galactotes*, **Croaking** *C. natalensis*, **Short-winged** *C. brachypterus*, **Rufous** *C. rufus* and **Dorst's Cisticola** *C. dorsti* all possible. **Stone Partridge** *Trilopachus petrosus* can often be seen scurrying from the roadside, whereas the secretive **White-throated Francolin** *Francolinus albogularis* prefers extensive grass cover, and **Four-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles quadricinctus* favours bare areas, often feeding in the road. With a touch of good fortune one may find an **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis*, **White-fronted Black Chat**

Myrmecocichla albifrons, the scarce **Rufous-rumped Lark** *Pinarocorys erythropygia* or the rare **Emin's Shrike** *Lanius gubernator*.

The extreme north: Waza and Mora

Lying on the edge of the Sahel, close to the border with Chad, Waza and Mora are the hottest and most arid areas in the country. While the majority of Cameroon's endemic species are found in the forests of the south, the extreme north holds some of Africa's most special species. The sparse grasslands near Mora are arguably the best place on the continent to search for the nomadic **Quail-plover** *Ortyxelos meiffrenii*, a long-legged relative of the buttonquails. Its camouflage is so effective that it can walk undetected between a group of birders, although, if surprised, it usually takes flight to reveal the white flashes in its primaries. Its superb camouflage is only outdone by **Golden Nightjar** *Caprimulgus eximius*, whose discovery here in March 2003 (see p 124) is one of the most exciting recent finds to be made in Cameroon. It remains to be seen whether this silver-and-gold gem is a regular visitor to this area. The highly localised **Cricketer Warbler** *Spiloptila clamans*, only discovered here in the last decade, may be found in the small bushes.

Lying just to the north, the town of Waza and the adjacent national park are also a focus of most visits to the region. Desert transformed temporarily to marshlands, the floodplain's waters from last season's rains whittle away to small pools under the sun's parching rays, but still attract a profusion of birdlife. It is worth spending time at the waterholes and surrounding *Acacia* thickets, both in Waza National Park and south of the town along the main road. Most conspicuous are an array of storks, including **Yellow-billed Mycteria** *ibis*, **African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus*, **White Ciconia** *ciconia*, **Woolly-necked** *C. episcopus*, **Saddle-billed Ephippiorhynchus** *senegalensis* and **Marabou** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*, and impressive flocks of **Black-crowned Crane** *Balearica pavonina*. Large congregations of migrant **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* assemble, with smaller numbers of other waterfowl, whilst wading birds are represented by the likes of **Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis*, **African Wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus senegallus* and various Palearctic migrant species. The waterholes also entice impressive numbers of granivores to drink, usually dominated by heaving swarms of **Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea*. Other

small finches regularly seen include **African Silverbill** *Lonchura cantans*, **Black-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda troglodytes*, colourful **Cut-throat** *Amadina fasciata*, **African Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza atricollis* and **Zebra Waxbill** *Amandava subflava*, **Sahel Paradise Whydah** *Vidua orientalis* and **White-rumped Seedeater** *Serinus leucopygius*. Doves thrive in this region and **African Mourning** *Streptopelia decipiens*, **African Collared S.** *roseogrisea*, **European Turtle S.** *turtur* and **Black-billed Wood Doves** *Turtur abyssinicus* are all regular. Just after dusk watch for flocks of **Four-banded Sandgrouse**, and once it is dark you may be fortunate to see **Long-tailed Nightjar** drinking on the wing.

With such a super-abundance of food, raptor numbers are always impressive. Best of all are the intra-African migrants that are present in the dry season: **Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis* and the remarkable **African Swallow-tailed Kite** *Chelictinia riocourii*. This is one of the only places in Africa where the latter may be fairly common and small groups can be seen flying gracefully overhead. Bird hunters, such as **Gabar** *Micronisus gabar* and **Dark Chanting Goshawks** *Melierax metabates*, and **Red-necked Falco** *chicquera* and **Peregrine Falcons** *F. peregrinus*, run amok among the birds around waterholes, often putting swirling masses to flight. Eagles are well represented and the diverse mammal community supports healthy populations of vultures: watch overhead for flocks of **African White-backed Gyps** *africanus* and **Rüppell's Griffon Vultures** *G. rueppellii*, and the occasional **Lappet-faced Torgos** *tracheliotus*, **White-headed Trigoiceps** *occipitalis* or **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*. Dense *Acacia* thickets, which are scattered throughout the region, offer the most diverse birding and a good selection of Palearctic migrants and resident species. The diminutive **Sennar Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus punctifrons*, which combs the finer *Acacia* branches for insects, is highly sought after. **River Prinia** *Prinia fluviatilis*, only recently confirmed for the area, is actually quite common in *Acacia* on alluvial soils. The species' call is clearly different from **Tawny-flanked Prinia** *P. subflava*, which occurs in the adjacent woodlands. **Masked Lanius** *nubicus* and **Isabelline Shrikes** *L. isabellinus* sit and wait for their prey to pass, while **Clapperton's Francolin** *Francolinus clappertoni* actively scratch in the bare earth. **White-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis albirostris* is easily found around their large, messy nests, and **Yellow-**

crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* skulks in the thickets. Open country, usually lightly grassed with scattered bushes, should yield a whole suite of other species. Within Waza National Park, watch for **Arabian Bustard** *Ardeotis arabs* stalking among the lightly grassed floodplains, particularly in the early morning. Although this species extends widely across the Sahelian region, Cameroon is one of the only places where it can reliably be seen. **White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis* is more widespread, together with **Chestnut-bellied Starling** *Lamprotonis pulcher*, bold **Black-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus tectus*, ever-busy **Rufous** *Cercotrichas galactotes* and **Black Scrub Robins** *C. podobe* and dainty **Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus*.

In the second part of the series we will explore the endemic-rich highland forests of the south, as well as the lowland haunts of **Red-headed Picathartes**.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Nik Borrow and Mark Andrews for interesting discussions that contributed to our own knowledge of Cameroon's birds. ☺

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Photospot: The endemic Ethiopian race of the African Goshawk

Michel Louette

Under the Biological Species Concept, eight species of *Accipiter* breed in sub-Saharan Africa. The point of view that all African Goshawk *A. tachiro* populations belong to one biological species may be compared to that for Shikra *A. badius*, the only other strongly polytypic African *Accipiter*. The latter's two African populations differ slightly from each other in migratory and transitional moult strategies, but markedly from some of the Asian races³. Populations of the widespread African Goshawk are even more geographically distinct in size and plumage characteristics (intensity of coloration and pattern) than those of Shikra⁶. This variation is, in part, individual but mostly related to age and sexual dimorphism. *Birds of Africa*¹ grouped all populations into one species, whereas *Handbook of the Birds of the World*⁴ recognised two, although Kemp, in a subsequent work, also treated them as a single species⁵. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire² stated that the southern and eastern *tachiro* group 'can be every bit as much a forest bird' as the equatorial *toussenelii* group. These authors also remarked that both do have a similar, peculiar display flight (*contra Birds of Africa*¹ and Kemp⁴).

Louette^{8,9} observed that morphological characteristics of this bird vary according to habitat (and apparently also according to the presence of the similar Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *A. castanilius*!). In evergreen forest habitat, African Goshawks are rather small, with colourful adults in both sexes, the females being quite 'masculine' in this respect. Louette⁸ concluded, from a detailed study of specimens, that size and plumage morphology follow a west-east cline in West Africa (the presence of the smallest birds in the West being the reason for unsubstantiated claims that Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk occurs there). In the larger eastern and southern African woodland races, the female is more cryptically coloured.

African Goshawk is the only *Accipiter* with endemic circum-African island (Pemba, Bioko) and Ethiopian montane races. These three subspecies, like the evergreen forest-belt birds,

show enforcement of colourful advertising plumage and loss of sexual plumage dimorphism, and are also rather small (this is especially true for the island birds, the Ethiopian race takes a more intermediate position). A habitat-related trade-off in morphological characteristics comes to mind as an explanation (possibly also, in part, character displacement). This may be the result of adaptation to a relatively closed environment in which the needs for sexual attraction overrule the benefit of crypsis in the female⁷.

The monotypic Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk, on the other hand, is only present in the Lower Guinea forest region. It has been claimed to occur in Upper Guinea and in Ethiopia, but without proof. The photograph included here, which was taken on 29 April 2003, at Wondo Genet, Ethiopia, by Paul Ellis, clearly shows the following characteristics, all typical of the adult of the endemic race of African Goshawk *A. t. unduliventer* in comparison with adult Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk:

- Smallish head (noticeably broader in *castanilius*)
- No bare yellow skin in front of the eye
- Throat grey, not white
- Barring on breast rufous-brown, not dark grey (note that the barring in *castanilius* is erroneously described as 'chestnut' in *Birds of Africa*¹)
- Flanks rufous, not dark red
- Back grey, not blackish
- Feet plain orange, not overlaid with blackish green (colour in museum skins).

The tail pattern fits both species. The Ethiopian race of African Goshawk, *A. t. unduliventer* (of which *A. t. croizati*, described from a few specimens, also from Ethiopia, is probably a synonym, though *Birds of Africa*¹ and *Handbook of the Birds of the World*⁴ mention it as a different race) is rarely mentioned in the literature and no photographs of the bird in life were previously known to me. The bird depicted here is probably a male, the female being slightly less colourful and more bulky. ♀

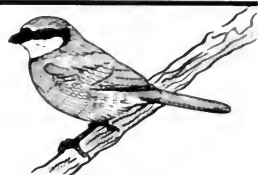
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African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro unduliventer*, Wondo Genet, Ethiopia, 29 April 2003 (Paul Ellis)



Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*: a new species for sub-Saharan Africa

Callan Cohen^{a,b} and David Winter^b

Les auteurs rapportent les observations d'un Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* au West Coast National Park, au nord de Cape Town, Afrique du Sud, en décembre 2000, mars–avril 2002 et octobre 2002–mars 2003. L'oiseau (probablement le même individu) a été filmé en vidéo; il était parfois partiellement ou presque entièrement en plumage nuptial. En Afrique l'espèce avait déjà été signalée du Maroc (en août 1980) et de Djibouti (en février 2001). Quelques aspects de l'identification de l'espèce en plumage internuptial sont examinés.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* breeds in north-east Siberia and winters from Australasia west to Pakistan, with scattered records in the Middle East². Here we report on Africa's first sub-Saharan record, discussing its identification with reference to photographic evidence acquired over two winter seasons. Prior to this sighting, the only mainland African record was of an adult at Agadir, Morocco on 27 August 1980⁵, although another has apparently since been discovered, in Djibouti, in February 2001⁶.

On 24 December 2000, we located a suspected Great Knot from the Seeberg hide in West Coast National Park, Langebaan, c100 km north of Cape Town, South Africa. The bird, in non-breeding plumage, was foraging on *Zostera*-dominated tidal mudflats alongside Red Knots *C. canutus*. Its identification was not confirmed at the time. Almost 15 months later (on 18 March–30 April 2002), a Great Knot showing similar features was found by T Hardaker, J Graham and V Head at exactly the same locality. In this instance, the bird was in partial breeding plumage, as were the associated Red Knots, prior to northward migration. We were able to obtain digital video images of these birds using a Sony digital camcorder (Zeiss 10x lens) magnified through a Kowa TSN1 telescope (30x wide angle lens) and these are presented here. Subsequently, there were a few sight records of a Great Knot in the same place for a third consecutive season (17 October 2002–29 March 2003; M Mills, T Hardaker, T Gous, A Hester and B van

der Walt), presumably involving the same individual. During the earlier part of the season the bird was in almost full breeding plumage.

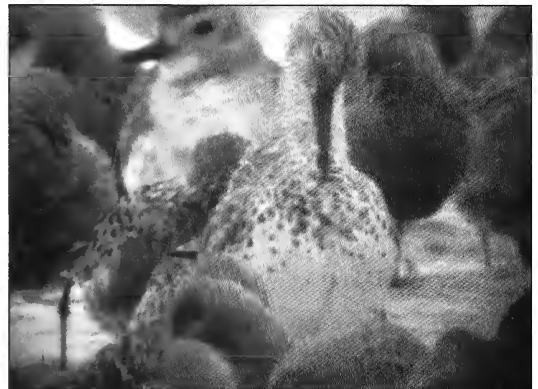
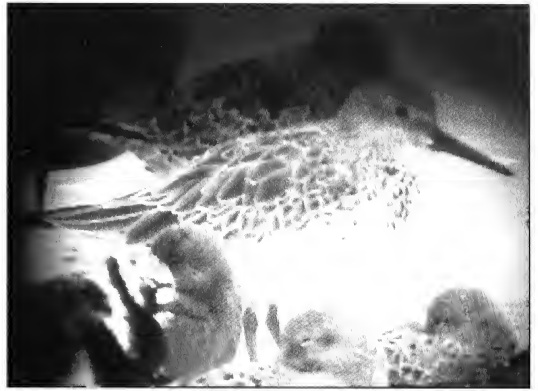
Though it is highly distinctive among *Calidris* species in breeding plumage, in non-breeding plumage Great Knot closely resembles Red Knot^{1–3,5}. We reviewed our field observations and video footage from December 2000 in an attempt to confirm the identification of the bird (in non-breeding plumage) as a Great Knot. In direct comparison to the surrounding Red Knots, its larger size and substantially longer and deeper based bill (Fig 1) were striking. It also had heavily streaked upperparts (Fig 2), especially on the crown and hindneck (Figs 1, 3). The supercilium was partially obscured in front of the eye by the large diffuse loreal patch, and the supercilium was weaker behind the eye than a typical Red Knot (Figs 1–3). The arrowhead streaking on the flanks was less extensive and darker than in Red Knot (Fig 2) and there was distinct black spotting on the breast-sides (Figs 1–2), though the video from March 2002 demonstrates this spotting to be much more extensive, as the bird had begun to acquire its breeding plumage (Figs 4–5). In addition, the bird possessed a marked primary projection beyond the tail. Though we were initially cautious in reaching conclusions, this combination of features confirms the December 2000 bird as a Great Knot and is probably the same individual as recorded subsequently.



Figures 1–3. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, West Coast National Park, Langebaan, South Africa, December 2000 (Callan Cohen)

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Trevor Hardaker, John Graham, Vernon Head, Michael Mills, Tertius Gous and Andrew Hester for sharing their records, and to David Fisher, Peter Ryan and Ian Sinclair for commenting on the video footage. David Hoddinott kindly volunteered his telescope for the ‘digiscoping’ in 2002.



Figures 4–5. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, West Coast National Park, Langebaan, South Africa, March 2002 (Callan Cohen)

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Figure 6. Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Andropadus latirostris congener*, Pobé, Benin, 23 March 2001 (Maarten van den Akker)



Figure 7. Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus ansorgeanus*, Lokoli, Benin, 29 September 2001 (Maarten van den Akker)



Figure 8. Juvenile White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens ruthae*, Lokoli, Benin, 13 April 2001 (Maarten van den Akker)



Figure 9. Adult White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens ruthae*, Lokoli, Benin, 15 September 2001 (Maarten van den Akker)



Figures 10–11. Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*, north of Mora, Cameroon, 25 March 2003 (Rod Cassidy)

First records for Benin of Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Andropadus latirostris*, Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus* and White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens*

Maarten van den Akker

L'auteur rapporte la découverte de trois espèces nouvelles pour le Bénin: le Bulbul à moustaches jaunes *Andropadus latirostris*, le Bulbul crinon *Criniger barbatus*, et le Gobemouche à sourcils blancs *Fraseria cinerascens*, capturés dans des filets japonais et photographiés en 2001, dans les forêts de Pobé et Lokoli au sud du Bénin.

The avifauna of Benin has been the subject of only scant study and is still relatively unknown. This is particularly true of the forest species. The forests of the south were previously investigated by Brunel², and more recently by Anciaux¹ and Waltert & Mühlenberg⁷. Financial support from the Netherlands Committee of IUCN and the Centre Béninois pour le Développement Durable has made possible a more extensive study of the occurrence of forest birds in the country.

Despite the absence of large areas of tropical forest, the more recent studies^{1,7} and my own work⁶ indicate that more forest birds than might be expected still occur in the scattered remnant patches of Guinea-Congolese forest. The three species presented here are further additions to the Benin list, which was considerably extended by these studies (P M Claffey pers comm).

The remnant patches vary from 2 ha to 100 ha for the small sacred forests, and from 150 ha to 4,500 ha for the larger forest reserves, such as at Niaouli and Lama. Pobé Forest (06°57'N 02°40'E) which was investigated by Brunel², is a semi-deciduous forest of 150 ha, 3 km west of the Nigerian border. This small remnant comprises a dry part but with a natural spring, from which a small stream flows, giving permanent humidity and growth. Surveys were undertaken here in 1997 and between 2000 and 2002.

On 23 March and 1 June 2001, single Yellow-whiskered Greenbuls *Andropadus latirostris* congener were mist-netted (Fig 6). Both had very clear yellow malar stripes. Head and upperparts were dark grey-olive and the tail dark brown. The breast was pale olive, and they had brown-olive flanks and lower breast, and a pale white belly. Wing lengths were 84 mm and 83 mm, and weights 28 g and 31 g.

The species is common in both Togo and Nigeria^{3,5}.

Lokoli Forest (07°03'N 02°16'E) is a marshy forest, which was ornithologically little known until 2000. It covers 500 ha and is the only forest in southern Benin with relatively high densities of forest birds and mammals. Water from a natural spring near the village of Cana, 8 km from the forest, creates a marshy and inaccessible habitat, thus providing some protection for the remaining wildlife. Surveys were undertaken here in 2000–2002.

On 29 September 2001, a Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus ansorgeanus* was mist-netted (Fig 7). This large greenbul had a grey-brown head and a white chin becoming pale yellow on the throat. The primaries and secondaries were olive-green, the tail olive-yellow and it had a conspicuous red eye. Wing length was 97 mm and weight 45 g. The species is reportedly rare in Togo³, but not uncommon in Nigeria⁵.

On 30 March, 13 April and 15 September 2001, single White-browed Forest Flycatchers *Fraseria cinerascens ruthae* were mist-netted (Figs 8–9). Those on the first two dates were immatures, which could be confused with immature alethes, of which Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe diademata* has been recorded in Ware Maro Forest Reserve (P M Claffey pers comm) whilst Brown-chested Alethe *A. poliocephala* has been recorded in Nigeria⁵ but not in Togo³. Both had dark brown upperparts, with brown spots on the head, mantle, and greater and median coverts. The breast and flanks were brown-white and belly grey-white. A very small white supraloral spot was visible. Wing lengths were 80 mm and 73 mm, and weights 20 g and 18.5 g. On 15 September 2001, an adult was mist-netted (Fig 9). This individual had dark brown

upperparts, and pale brown median and greater coverts and primaries. The chin, throat, belly and undertail-coverts were white and the breast barred dark brown. There was a clear white supraloral spot. Wing length was 75 mm and weight 19 g. Whilst the species is not uncommon in Nigeria⁵, it is unknown from Togo.

These observations represent the first documented records of these species in Benin, while White-browed Forest Flycatcher is an addition to the Dahomey Gap list.

Acknowledgements

I thank L.D.C. Fishpool and R.J. Dowsett for assistance with the identification of the immature White-browed Forest Flycatchers, and P.M. Claffey for additional information and comments on a first draft of this note.

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The first Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* in Cameroon

Ian Sinclair, Rod Cassidy, Alvin Cope, Hannes van Aswegen, Rob Leslie and Barrie Rose

Un Engoulevent doré *Caprimulgus eximius* a été observé et photographié dans le nord du Cameroun, le 25 mars 2003. Ceci constitue la première mention pour le pays.

Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* is confined to the Sahelian belt, where it is variously described as being uncommon to rare¹, locally uncommon to fairly common³, uncommon and perhaps even rare⁴, common and widespread⁵, and not uncommon⁶. It rarely reaches south of 12°N and, like many remote-area nightjars, there is generally very little known about the species, it having rarely been seen and perhaps never tape-recorded², and only a few nests discovered.

On 25 March 2003, at 06.30 hrs, together with Michael Mills, Ron Hoff and Dollyann Meyers and while searching for Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* 4 km north of Mora, in northern Cameroon, a male Golden Nightjar was flushed. It quickly resettled close by and was observed for c20 minutes (Figs 10–11, p 122). The area was a beige

gravelly plain bisected by wadis, sparsely vegetated with short stunted *Acacia* and *Combretum* spp, and short, yellow grass. Before we flushed the bird, we had speculated that this constituted ideal habitat for the nightjar, and that a visit at dusk could be productive. When the bird was flushed from directly underfoot, it flew up from the gentle slope of a wadi and settled away from the wadi's centre, within the sparse shade of a leafless *Acacia*, where the bird melted into its background and was hardly visible to the naked eye from 5 m. Its yellow, patterned plumage blended so well with the ground and yellow grass as to render the bird almost invisible. This was the most perfectly camouflaged of any nightjar we have seen. It was flushed once more in an attempt to photograph the wing pattern. This time it settled closer to the wadi's centre,

partly within the shade of a sparsely leaved *Combretum* shrub. The broad white band on the upperwing was bordered boldly with black, making the wing pattern in flight very distinctive.

The area was searched again on 11 April at 05.45 hrs, just before sunrise. No nightjar calls were heard and the bird was not relocated.

This is the first record of Golden Nightjar in Cameroon and we advise birders visiting the area north of Mora, well known for Quail-plover *Oryxelos meiffrenii* and Cricket Warbler, to also search for this species, especially in uncultivated areas.

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Sharpe's Starling *Cinnyricinclus sharpii* new to Zambia, and its status in eastern Africa

R.J. Dowsett^a, P.S.M. Berry^b and D. Foot^c

La découverte inattendue de quelques Etourneaux de Sharpe *Cinnyricinclus sharpii* en novembre 2002 dans les Monts Mafingas en Zambie (la première donnée pour le pays) pose la question du statut de cette espèce peu commune, en particulier en ce qui concerne la population très isolée au Mont Rungwe, à 100 km au nord-est, en Tanzanie du sud.

Sharpe's Starling *Cinnyricinclus sharpii* is associated with Afromontane forest, ranging from Ethiopia to Tanzania. In the latter it occurs north of 07°S in the west (Kungwe Mahare) and of 05°S in the east (the Usambaras), with the exception of an isolated population on Mount Rungwe (09°07'S 33°42'E), in the south-west. Its discovery even further south, in north-eastern Zambia, was unexpected.

PSMB and DF, together with J & C A Coppinger and B R Jackson, were in the Mafinga Mountains, at the headwaters of the Luangwa River very close to its source (09°57'S 33°21'E), on 21 November 2002. In riparian evergreen forest at 1,970 m they found a party of four Sharpe's Starlings, and had very good, clear views for c30 minutes of one bird in particular that was perched in the canopy. The upperparts were uniformly blue-black, with a violet sheen in good light. Chin, throat and chest were white, with the abdomen buff or pale rufous. The iris was strikingly pale. In other respects these birds resembled Amethyst Starlings *C. leucogaster* in shape and behaviour

(including wing-flicking). The voice was very distinctive, with high-pitched tinkling notes and squeaks (well represented on Chappuis's CDs)². A few days later the observers were able to consult Zimmerman *et al*³ and all agreed that the birds were definitely Sharpe's Starlings.

Although known from as close as Mount Rungwe in Tanzania (some 100 km to the north-east) the species' status there is unclear, with very few records. Since Fülleborn collected it there in October 1894¹⁰, the species has been reported only sometime in the period late October to mid-November 1962 (collected by G Heinrich, specimen in Yale Peabody Museum), late October 1971 (quite common, in song, with four specimens collected by RJD, R Stjernstedt and T O Osborne) and 19–27 August 1980 (seen by F P Jensen, in song). Previous visits to the Zambian side of the Mafingas (between July and December) have never located Sharpe's Starling^{1,4,7}. Intensive work on the Nyika Plateau in neighbouring Malaŵi and extensive surveys of all of the montane forests of northern Malaŵi and adjacent Zambia never

revealed the species³. Though usually considered resident, in Rwanda (Nyungwe) it was found to be apparently an intra-African migrant, with no observations in October–December (reappearing 3 January)⁶, specimens from there being taken between 30 June and 21 August¹¹. In eastern Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) too there appear to be no published records in November–February^{8,9,12}. The species has been recorded in northern Tanzania in all months, with no obvious evidence of movements of any importance (N Baker *in litt*). One of the Rungwe specimens from 1971 was a juvenile with incomplete skull ossification, so possibly the Zambian birds represent post-breeding dispersal in the latter part of the year. On the Nyika Plateau, the migratory Amethyst Starling breeds in October³, and in Zambia as a whole some 60% of more than 100 egg-laying records are for that month³. Possible movements in some populations of Sharpe's Starling would repay investigation.

Acknowledgements

PSMB and DF thank their companions in the field, John & Carol Coppinger and Bryan Jackson, for originating the Mafinga visit and for their invaluable observations. RJD thanks Bob Stjernstedt and Tim Osborne, as well as the National Museums Board of Zambia, for supporting field work in 1971. Helpful information was provided by Neil Baker, the late Gorman Bond and Flemming Pagh Jensen.

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Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*: the first record for Seychelles

Adrian Skerrett^a and Lesley Roest^b

L'auteur documente la première mention pour les Seychelles du Busard pâle *Circus macrourus*, un mâle de première année observé sur l'Île Platte du 25 janvier au 30 mars 2002. La mention a été acceptée par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois (SBRC). Auparavant, le seul busard observé aux Seychelles était le Busard des roseaux *C. aeruginosus* (deux mentions acceptées). Il y a néanmoins une observation d'une femelle adulte du Busard cendré *C. pygargus* ou Busard pâle.

On 25 January 2002, a large raptor appeared on Platte Island, at the northern end of the

runway, where it was noted by Lesley & Eric Roest, who are resident on the island. It remained on

Platte until 30 March 2002, often hunting feral chickens, which when caught were generally eaten on the runway. LR contacted AS on 18 March 2002 to report the presence of this raptor, which she considered to be a Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*. Thus, AS telephoned the Islands Development Company, managers of Platte, and arranged travel for himself and Gérard Rocamora to Platte on a supply plane scheduled for 22 March 2002, and were also able to observe the bird.

Description

A fairly large raptor with long narrow wings, slim body and long, and relatively narrow tail. Easy, light, graceful, buoyant flight. Pale orangey-buff underparts without visible streaking. Uniform dark brown upperwing and white rump. Primary 'fingers' from above darker than upperwing, being almost blackish. Underside of primaries very boldly barred black on pale grey and the pale, so-called 'boomerang' shapes, were clearly visible around the primary-coverts to almost halfway down the 'arm' when overhead. Broad creamy collar with dark blackish-brown margins. No obvious darker trailing edge to wing, the ground colour of the rear of the wing appearing mainly pale grey, only very slightly, if at all, darker near trailing edge. Axillaries unbarred. Tail barred dark and pale grey with no rusty coloration. Yellow bill. Yellow eye noted by E & LR. No call heard.

Identification

Obviously a harrier by general shape and flight, and obviously not Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, the only harrier previously recorded in Seychelles, due to several features including the white rump and orangey underparts. Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* was eliminated by a combination of head pattern (pale collar with dark brown lower margin) and underwing pattern (particularly the absence of a dark trailing edge and the heavily barred primaries), features that are consistent with first-winter Pallid Harrier. Eye colour indicated a male, females having a brown iris.

Status and distribution

Pallid Harrier breeds from Ukraine and south-west Russia east to Lake Balkash, north-west China and possibly northern Mongolia, wintering south mainly to sub-Saharan Africa, but also to Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka east to southern China and occasionally eastern China. It is considered Near Threatened², the world population having declined drastically to no more than 20,000 pairs in the early 1990s¹.

First accepted record

The record has been accepted by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) as the first record of Pallid Harrier for Seychelles. An earlier report of an adult female harrier at Bassin Cabri, Picard, Aldabra, on 4 March 2000 was accepted by SBRC as either a Montagu's Harrier or Pallid Harrier. The distribution of Montagu's Harrier overlaps substantially with Pallid Harrier and the former might be considered equally likely to appear as a vagrant in Seychelles or perhaps even more so, given that its global population is more than twice that of Pallid Harrier¹. SBRC has also accepted two records of Western Marsh Harrier.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the Islands Development Company and Justin Moustache for providing free air transport to Platte Island for AS and Gérard Rocamora, and for agreeing to keep the flight on the ground long enough for the bird to be located and the identification confirmed. 🙏

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ABC Conservation Fund

The ABC Conservation Fund supports small conservation projects in Africa. To date, Conservation Awards totalling over UK£10,000 (US\$15,000) have been made. These awards embraced a wide range of activities in five countries, from environmental education projects to research on endangered species.

ABC Conservation Awards are available to African individuals or institutions, or to individuals normally resident in an African country, and the Club welcomes project proposals for funding up to a maximum of UK£750 (US\$1,125). Further information on the Conservation Fund and guidelines on how to write a good project proposal can be found on the ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>) or obtained from the Club address below.

ABC Expedition Award

The ABC Expedition Award is a recent initiative. One award of UK£1,000 (US\$1,500) will be made annually. The closing date for the next award is January 2004. Full details can be found on the ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>) or obtained from the Club's address below.

Further information...

For further information about the African Bird Club Conservation Programme, please write to Stephanie Tyler, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK, or by e-mail to conservation@africanbirdclub.org



Update

An additional recipient of an ABC Conservation Award at the end of 2002 was Simon Musila of the National Museums of Kenya Ornithology Department. Simon received UK£750 to assist a study of the elusive Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa lendu*, in Kakamega Forest, in western Kenya. This scarce flycatcher has a very restricted range in montane forests. In Kenya, it occurs only in North Nandi Forest and Kakamega. Simon has now examined the distribution, population size and habitat selection of Chapin's Flycatcher in Kakamega Forest and will provide a report of his work soon. ABC is most grateful to Olle Host of Avifauna for donating funds from Avifauna for this study.

Recent awards

Three new conservation awards have been made in 2003. Dawit Berhane has received UK£800 to study Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina* in Eritrea and to prepare inventories for several Eritrean IBAs. Nickson Otieno of the National Museums of Kenya Ornithology Department has received UK£720 to survey the population size and density of Abbott's Starling *Pholia femoralis* in the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest Reserve, to determine the species' habitat preferences within

the forest and to identify its nesting and breeding requirements. Another main aim of his project is to determine the patterns and intensity of tree logging in the forest, and the overall effect of this on the bird's population. Abbott's Starling is a little-known, rare East African endemic frugivore that is restricted to highland forest canopy at altitudes of 1,800–2,600m. Its tiny population is thought to be declining throughout the species' range, mainly due to anthropogenic activities that have led to the loss and degradation of much of its habitat. The third award, a small grant of UK£100 went to Dale Hanmer and BirdLife Zimbabwe to purchase ringing equipment for a study of the winter altitudinal migration of two species of robins in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

The 2003 Expedition Award, of UK£1,000, went to Ilya Maclean and NatureUganda for a project on papyrus endemics that aims to gain a better understanding of the status and degree of threat facing these bird species. Field research will be conducted in Kenya and Uganda, and will focus on resolving the taxonomic status of the Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris* and on determining how human activities impact bird species endemic to papyrus. 🐦

Recent Reports



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These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; records are mostly from 2002 and 2003, with a few from earlier dates. We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R.J. Dowsett's (1993) *Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists* (in: R.J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds*. Tauraco Research Report 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

Angola

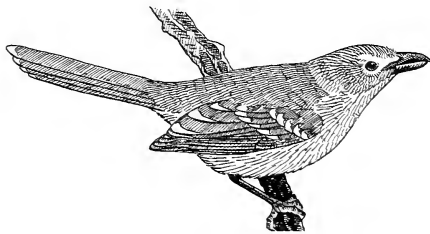
The following records from this rarely visited country are from February 2003, with a few from March 2001 and May 2002 (full dates are provided for the two latter

months). Grey-striped Francolin *Francolinus griseostriatus*, an Angolan endemic, was seen at Quiçama National Park (two, 18 March 2001; four, 10 May 2002) and Kumbira, a forest 7 km south of Conda, Cuanza Sul, on the road to Seles (several pairs, 6 February 2003). Lesser Gallinule *Gallinula angulata* was abundant on the Queve River floodplain on 26th. Fourteen Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*, a rare Palearctic visitor, were recorded at Luanda Bay on 9th, with six in the same area on 28th. Red-crested Turaco *Tauraco erythrolophus* was found to be common in the Gabela and Kumbira areas. Two Gabon Coucals *Centropus anselli* were at Kumbira on 6th. Hundreds of Fernando Po Swifts *Apus [barbatus] sladeni* were breeding in buildings in Luanda on 28th. In Quiçama NP, Loanda Swifts *A. [borus] toulsoni* (usually treated as a dark-rumped morph of Horus Swift, but possibly constituting a separate species) were seen on 18 March 2001 (two) and 10 May 2002 (four). Records of Hairy-breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hirsuta* (fairly common at Kumbira),

Long-legged Pipit *Anthus pallidiventris* (two at Sumbe, Cuanza Sul) and Slender-billed Greenbul *Andropadus gracilirostris* (one at Kumbira) on 25th apparently constitute southerly range extensions. Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela*, an endangered Angolan endemic, was observed at Kumbira on 6th (one) and 25th (one). The rare and local Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri* was found to be fairly common at Seles on 26th. White-fronted Wattle-eyes *Platysteira albifrons* were seen at Quiçama NP on 18 March 2001 and 10 May 2002 (several), and at Seles on 26 February 2003 (two). Records of Rockrunner *Achaetops pycnopygius* inland at Seles (one) and Bare-cheeked Babbler *Turdoides gymnogynis* inland at Sumbe (fairly common) on 26th constitute northerly range extensions. Monteiro's Bush-shrike *Malaconotus montei* was fairly common at Kumbira on 6th and 25th. The little-known endemic Gabela Bush-shrike *Laniarius amboimensis* was common at Kumbira. Seven Gabela Helmet-shrikes *Prionops gabela*,



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- Figure 1. Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Seawater Farms, Massawa, Eritrea, 20 October 2002 (Jugal Tiwari)
- Figure 2. Albino Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Seawater Farms, Massawa, Eritrea, 20 December 2002 (Jugal Tiwari)
- Figure 3. White-collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*, Harena mangrove, Eritrea, 6 December 2002 (Jugal Tiwari)
- Figure 4. Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri*, Lake Kinkony, Mahajanga, Madagascar, 9 May 2003 (Marc Rabenandrasana)
- Figures 5–6. Locust Finches *Ortygospiza locustella*, Rockwater Fish Farm, near Jos, central Nigeria (Tasso Leventis)
- Figures 7–8. Eurasian Griffion Vultures *Gyps fulvus* killed in Senegal (Babakar Ndao)
- 8



Monteiro's Bush-shrike *Malaconotus monteiri* by Mark Andrews

another Endangered Angolan endemic, were seen on the road between Kumbira and Seles on 6th. Southerly range extensions were noted for **Slender-billed Weaver** *Ploceus pelzelni* (common on the Queve floodplain on 25th) and **Compact Weaver** *Ploceus (Pachyphantes) superciliosus* (small groups near Kumbira on 6th) (IS).

Azores

Records from the period September–November 2002 additional to those reported in the last Recent Reports include the following. The first **Bermuda Petrel** *Pterodroma cahow* for the Azores (and the Western Palearctic) was trapped on an offshore islet on 17 November (see photographs in *Birding World* 16: 22). The small influx of **Double-crested Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax auritus* eventually numbered at least 17 individuals. On Flores, ten **American Black Ducks** *Anas rubripes*, at least one **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* and six **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were found in the last week of October (with up to ten of the latter probably present in the Azores during that month). **Lesser Scaups** *A. affinis* were found on São Miguel, at Lagoa das Furnas (two) and Lagoa Azul (one) on 29–31 October, and on Terceira (two) on 2–3 November. A **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*, apparently the second for the Azores, was on Flores on 5 October, with an immature **Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus hudsonius* ('American Marsh Hawk') on the same island on 21 October–2 November. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* was seen on Corvo on 17 October. The fourth **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* for the Azores was at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 26 October.

Nearctic waders in October–early November included a **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* (Terceira, 16–26 October), **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla* (up to four on Terceira, Flores and São Miguel), a **Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri* (Terceira, 16 October), **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* (11 on Terceira and two on Corvo, 8 October; two on Pico, 12–13 October; one on Flores, 2 November; up to three on Faial, 2–8 November), **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* (two on Flores, 3–4 October; one on Corvo, 5 October), a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* (Terceira, 26 October), **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* (one on Flores, 4 October; one on Corvo, 6 October; one on Terceira, 27 October–3 November), **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* (one on Flores, 1 October; one on São Miguel, 11–13 October, with up to four there on 26 October; one on Terceira, 26 October; one on Faial, 8 November) and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* (Terceira). A first-winter **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* was in Horta Harbour, Faial, on 20 October. A small tern considered to be a juvenile **Least Tern** *Sterna antillarum* (rather than a Little Tern *S. albigrons*) stayed at Santa Cruz, Flores, from 30 September until 23 October. A **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzovorus* was photographed at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, on 5 October (per TC; per *Birding World* 15: 421–423, 462–463 & 500 and *Dutch Birding* 24: 370–381).

Records from the period December 2002–March 2003 include the following. Single **Great Northern Divers** *Gavia immer* were reported

from Ponta Delgada, São Miguel (28 December), Cabo da Praia, Terceira (2 January) and Praia da Vitoria, Terceira (20 February). **Double-crested Cormorants** were seen throughout the period at various sites, with up to four on Faial, up to three at Mosteiros, São Miguel, and five on the islets off Madalena, Pico. A **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* stayed at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, from 23 December until 6 January. A **Little Egret** or **Snowy Egret** *E. thula* was at Porto Pim, Faial, on 28–30 March, and a **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* on Praia Islet, Graciosa, on 18 March.

A confiding but apparently wild male **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* stayed at Terra Nostra Garden, Furnas, from 12 October 2002 until the end of March at least; a female was at Santa Cruz de Graciosa on 3–6 February. A female **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* was seen at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, on 4 January, 16 February and 21 March. Also there were a male and female **Ring-necked Duck** and a female **Lesser Scaup** on 4 January. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was at Lajos airport, Terceira, on 2 December. Four **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* were discovered at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 2 January.

Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were (still) at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 2 January, with **White-rumped Sandpipers** there on 1 December (one) and 2 February (two). Single **Spotted Sandpipers** were at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, on 16 February and 21 March. Gull records from Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, include the second **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* for the Azores (a first-winter) on 19 February, a first-winter **Bonaparte's Gull** on 19–21 February, a first-winter **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides* on 18 February, and a first-winter **Glaucous Gull** *L. hyperboreus* on 20 February (and an adult in Horta Harbour, Faial, on 17–18 December). **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were found in Horta Harbour, Faial, on 17–21 December (two) and 12–25 January (up to five), and at Praia da Vitoria,

Terceira (up to 33) in February. An adult **Common Gull** *L. canus* of the North American subspecies *brachyrhynchus* ('Short-billed Gull') photographed at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 19–22 February, will be the first for the Azores (and the Western Palearctic) if accepted. Up to seven **American Herring Gulls** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* were seen on São Miguel and four on Terceira in February. A first-winter **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* was at Mosteiros, São Miguel, on 25 December. The first **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* for the Azores, a first-winter, was photographed at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 18–21 February (per *Birding World* 16: 13, 57, 105–106 & 152 and *Dutch Birding* 25: 58, 134 & 188).

Botswana

Records from the period October 2002–March 2003 include the following. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellatus* was reported from the Guma Lagoon area, in the west of the Okavango Delta, in February. During waterbird surveys in the delta in January–February, 278 **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* were seen entering mixed roosts at dusk. Up to 400 **Woolly-necked Storks** *Ciconia episcopus* were observed in Moremi Game Reserve in early January. A male **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* in eclipse plumage was on the Boteti River near Maun during the surveys; the fifth record for the country. Single **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were seen on the Chobe River, at Kasane sewage ponds, on the Okavango River near Etsatsa Island (on 7 February) and at Letsibogo Dam in the east (on 16 February). Single **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus* were observed in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, at Nata Sanctuary and at Tale Pan (*ST*). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was at Winteroord, northern Tuli Block, on 9 March (*CBR*). Two **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were near Maun and a **Corn Crake** *Crex crex* was in the northwest of the delta; both are rare in Botswana. A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was at Mohembo, in

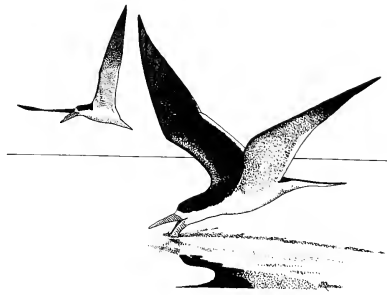
the north, during February. Some 54 **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* were noted in the delta, whereas on the Chobe River a **Grey Crowned Crane** *Balearica regulorum* was seen (*ST*). A notably large flock of 210 **Wattled Cranes** was seen c50 km north-east of Gumare, in the delta, on 19 April (*CBR*). Flocks of 102 and 78 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were seen in the north and south of the delta, as well as several smaller groups of 3–6 birds, in early January.

A **Black Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* was observed at Dopotta, northern Tuli Block, on 3 October; this is only the second record for Botswana (*CBR*). In the south, six **European Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* were trapped in December and February at Phakalane sewage ponds near Gaborone, where the species is regularly recorded from November to March (*ST*). A flock of 60 **Sharp-tailed Starlings** *Lamprotornis acuticaudus* was c25 km north-east of Beetsha, on the northern side of the Okavango Delta, on 22 April (*CBR*). **Common Mynas** *Acridotheres tristis* continue to spread, with records from established areas in Lobatse and Gaborone, and now also in Mahalapye (*ST*). Twelve **Parasitic Weavers** (Cuckoo Finches) *Anomalospiza imberbis* were at Nxamaseri, northern Botswana, on 9–14 October (*CBR*). An influx of **Lark-like Buntings** *Emberiza*

impetuani into eastern Botswana occurred from March, with a few records from the north where the species is uncommon; the combination in these areas of low rainfall and late rains, producing seeding grass, is presumably the cause of this influx (*ST*).

Cameroon

The following records are from the period November 2002–April 2003. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was at Ngaoundaba on 31 March–3 April; a similarly coloured individual (the same?) was observed there in 1992 and March 2001. Three **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* were observed on a lake near the Sanaga River at Edea on 18 March; this appears to be an unusual record for Cameroon, as most records are from the extreme north. A **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* flying over Mount Kupe on 11 March would appear to be the first record for the mountain, as well as being quite far south. A pair of **Ovambo Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter ovampensis* was found at Ngaoundaba on 3 April; there are few records of this species from Cameroon. A juvenile **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila (rapax) nipalensis* was well watched in Waza National Park on 24 March; unknown in the country before 1978, this species is now regularly observed in the far north. A male **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* was noted in the Mora area, in the far north, on 25 March; there are few records for Cameroon (*NB*). Two **Saker Falcons** *Falco cherrug* were claimed at Nyasosso, Mount Kupe, on 5–6 April, where one unsuccessfully tried to take a domestic chicken at the village edge; the species is a rare vagrant (*IS*). **Scaly Francolins** *Francolinus squamatus* were particularly vocal in Bénoué National Park; this species would appear to be an addition to the park list. A **Long-toed Lapwing** *Vanellus crassirostris* was found in Waza NP on 26 March; there are few records in Cameroon. A **Black Spinetail** *Telacanthura melanopygia* was seen at Korup, where it is rare, on 8 March (*NB*). A flock of c45



African Skimmers *Rynchops flavirostris* by Nik Borrow (courtesy of Birdquest)

Scarce Swifts *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* was soaring over Kodmin, Bakossi Mountains, on 1 November, at an altitude of c1,450 m; the species was previously only known from Mount Cameroon and Mount Manenguba (*DNA*). A colony of **Bristle-nosed Barbets** *Gymnobucco peli* was found on Mount Kupe; this is apparently only the third year that the species has been recorded on the mountain (*NB*). Two **Black-billed Barbets** *Lybius guifobalito* were in woodland adjacent to the Bénoué River, Bénoué NP, on 27 March; this constitutes only the second record for Cameroon (and Western Africa), the first being from Waza NP, in February 1993 (*IS*). A **Rufous-rumped Lark** *Pinarocorys erythropygia* was observed in the Bénoué area on 28 March; there are few records for the park or even for Cameroon. A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*, apparently of the subspecies *cinereocapilla*, was in Waza NP on 26 March; this form has not been previously reported from the park, although one was apparently seen there in 2002. Several cisticolas showing the characteristics of **Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* were observed in the Mora area; these appear to be the first reported from the country, though the species is known from the Lake Chad basin in Nigeria and Chad. Also there were two **Cricket Warblers** *Spiloptila clamans*, a species only discovered in Cameroon in December 1995. On Mount Kupe, a **Forest Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus flavifrons* was seen on 12 March and a female **Johanna's Sunbird** *Cinnyris johannae* on 16th; these are apparently new records for the site. A male **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* was found in the Mora area on 25 March and a male **Emin's Shrike** *L. gubernator* at Ngaoundaba on 2 April. A pair of **Mount Kupe Bush-shrikes** *Malaconotus kupeensis* was seen on the Shrike trail on 13 March and an individual heard at Kodmin on 15th. A **Maxwell's Black Weaver** *Ploceus albinucha* was observed in Korup on 6 March; this is a rare species in the park (*NB*).

Canary Islands

Records from the period October 2002–April 2003 include the following. A **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* flew past the La Gomera ferry on 22 March (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 185). A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was at Rosa del Taro, Fuerteventura, on 15–18 March, and an **American Bittern** *B. lentiginosus* at Erjos Ponds, Tenerife, on 28 February; the latter is thought to be the same individual (which constituted the second record for the archipelago) observed at the same locality in December. The **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmi*, first reported (and photographed) at Erjos Ponds, Tenerife, on 23 August (see *Bull. ABC* 10: 55–57) was seen again on 19 February and remained until at least 26 April. Two **Black-crowned Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* flew past Punta de la Enrocadiza, Fuerteventura, on 12 March. Up to two **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* were present at Rosa del Taro, Fuerteventura, on 15–26 March (*TC*). A **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* was at Playa Barca, Fuerteventura, on 1 January (*DR*). The escaped **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* was still at Costa Calma, Fuerteventura, in March (*TC*). A **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* was noted at Playa Barca, Fuerteventura, on 2 January (*DR*). The **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus [ruber] roseus*, first seen on 2 October at Salinas de Fuencaliente, La Palma, was still present on 11 November. Up to seven **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* were at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, in mid-March. Long-staying Nearctic ducks included a female **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Los Silos Reservoir, Tenerife, from 8 February until at least 23 March, a first-winter male **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife, from 8 November until at least 19 February, with a female **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* also there from 29 December until at least 29 March. Vagrant raptors included a **Long-legged**

Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* at Barranco de la Torre, Fuerteventura, on 11 February, a pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* near Gran Tarajal, Fuerteventura, on 15 March and a **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* at Tiscamanita, Fuerteventura, on 13 November.

Up to three **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* stayed at Rosa del Taro, Fuerteventura, on 16–26 March, with one at Las Peñitas on 26th. An adult **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni*, discovered at Erjos Ponds, Tenerife, on 17 February, was last reported on 9 March. At Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife, four **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* were seen on 21 October. A **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus* at Triquivijate, Fuerteventura, on 12 February, was only the second for the island. Records of rare gulls included an adult **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* at La Bombilla, La Palma, on 19 April and at Tazacorte on 22 April, four adult **Slender-billed Gulls** *L. genei* at Risco del Paso, Fuerteventura, on 12 February, with one still present on 15 March, an adult **Audouin's Gull** *L. audouinii* at Salinas del Carmen, Fuerteventura, on 11 February (up to four had been seen earlier in the month), a first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* at Roquito del Fraile on 15 November and two first-winters on the beach between Los Cristianos and Las Americas, Tenerife, on 19 February, with at least one still there on 22 March, and a second-winter **Glaucous Gull** *L. hyperboreus*, the second for Fuerteventura and the eighth for the Canary Islands, at Punta de Jandia on 18 January (*TC*; per *Dutch Birding* 25: 188). A **Common Guillemot** *Uria aalge* was noted at Arrecife, Lanzarote, on 6 December (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 135). **Laughing Doves** *Streptopelia senegalensis* were around La Lajita, Fuerteventura, and at Barranco de Rio Cabras in March (*TC*). A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was found in the hills south-west of Costa Calma, Fuerteventura, on 1 January (*DR*). A male **Bluetthroat**

Luscinia svecica was at Rosa del Taro, Fuerteventura, on 16–26 March, with another at the same site on 15–18th. A male **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* was present in Puerto de la Cruz Botanical Gardens, Tenerife, on 25–27 March at least. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* was reported from Erijos Ponds, Tenerife, on 9 March. On Gran Canaria, a **Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* was seen at Punta de la Aldea on 24–31 December; the only previous record for the archipelago was one on Fuerteventura in autumn 2000 which proved to be an escape (TC).

Egypt

Records from the period October 2002–March 2003 include the following. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was at Lake Qarun on 29 December (HD). A **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* was at Abu Simbel on 18 March (per *Birding World* 16: 107). A total of 65 **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* was at several localities along the Nile between Luxor and Aswan on 20–21 October (per *Dutch Birding* 24: 372), with 32 at Luxor on 19 March. At Salathein, 31 **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* and a **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* were observed on 21 March (per *Birding World* 16: 107). A late pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was at Gabel Asfar on 25 December (HD). An immature **Imperial Eagle** *Aquila*



Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* by Mark Andrews

heliaca was north-west of Naama Bay on 13 November (per *Sandgrouse* 25: 77). A **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* was observed just south of Aswan on 5 October and another on an island in the local nature reserve next day (SD). At El Gouna, 300 **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were seen on 16 March (per *Birding World* 16: 107). A **Three-banded Plover** *Charadrius tricollaris* was found at El Gouna golf course on 13 March; this appears to be the fourth for Egypt (and the Western Palearctic; TH per AS). Two **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* were on the Nile between Luxor and Kom Ombo on 4 January (per *Birding World* 16: 13). Seven **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyptes minimus* were found along the Bilbeis–Abassa road, in the eastern Nile delta, on 26 December (HD). A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was at Hurghada on 16 March (per *Birding World* 16: 107). **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyaetus* were noted at Lake Qarun on 29 December (at least 14), north of Ras Gharib on 31 December (62), at Hurghada on 1 January (five) and at Zafarana on 2 January (four; HD). In total, 21 **Greater Crested Terns** *Sterna bergii* were seen between Ain Sukhna and Ras Gharib on 31 December, with ten in the Hurghada area on 1 January (HD), and 28 at El Gouna on 21 March (per *Birding World* 16: 107). At least 200 **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* were in the Lake Qarun area on 29 December (HD). At Aswan, two **African Collared Doves** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* and a **European Turtle Dove** *S. turtur* were present on 1–3 January (per *Birding World* 16: 13). Also there was an **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* on 5 October (SD). Six **White-breasted Kingfishers** *Halcyon smyrnensis* were counted at Gabel Asfar on 25 December, and 20–25 along the Bilbeis–Abassa road, with 60 **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis*, on 26 December. A **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* was at Wadi el Natrun on 27 December (HD).

A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* was also at Wadi el

Natrun on 27 December (HD). **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* were noted at Aswan on 4 October (one; SD) and at Abu Simbel on 18 March (two; per *Birding World* 16: 107). Five **Moustached Warblers** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* were at Lake Qarun on 29 December (HD). A **Ménétries Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* was at Aswan on 1–3 January (per *Birding World* 16: 13), a **Cyprus Warbler** *S. melanothorax* at the Wadi Hagul road on 3 January, and an **Asian Desert Warbler** *S. [nana] nana* north of Hurghada on 2 January (HD). Two **Orphean Warblers** *S. hortensis* and a first-winter **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* were at Giftun Village, Hurghada, on 30 December, a late date. The pair of **Hooded Crows** *Corvus corone cornix* reported on 25 December 2001 (cf *Bull. ABC* 10: 58) were in the same territory at Giftun Village, Hurghada, and five together were presumed to be a family party with the previous year's young (per *Sandgrouse* 25: 77). A female **Dead Sea Sparrow** *Passer moabiticus* was at Abu Simbel on 18 March (per *Birding World* 16: 107). A **Desert Sparrow** *Passer simplex* was claimed at Farafra Oasis on 14 February, after a major weather system with strong south-westerly winds had arrived two days earlier; all previous Egyptian records are from the Gebel Uweinat area, in the extreme south-west (SD).

Eritrea

Three species that would appear to be new for the country were observed in 2002. Seven **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis*, first seen on 26 November, stayed for almost two months at the Seawater Farms, Massawa. A dead specimen was subsequently collected. A **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was photographed at the same locality on 20 October (Fig. 1). Also there, a **Long-toed Lapwing** *Vanellus crassirostris* was seen on 28 July.

In October 2002, 60 **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were counted along 550 km of coastline from

Massawa to Asseb; two nests were found in January 2003. The **White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* photographed at the Seawater Farms, Massawa (cf *Bull. ABC* 10: 55, Fig. 4), stayed from 9 September until 25 November 2002. An albino **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* was photographed at the Seawater Farms on 20 December 2002 (Fig. 2). Eight **White-collared Kingfishers** *Halcyon chloris* were seen at Harena mangrove on 6 December 2002 (Fig. 3); this species is rare in Eritrea (*JT*).

Gabon

Two **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were at Mondah Bay, on 3 March 2003. A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* was claimed from Libreville, on 14 March; the bird, which appeared to be exhausted, was found at night, in the car park of a supermarket in the city centre; this would be the first record of the species in Gabon. A **Zenker's Honeyguide** *Melignomon zenkeri* was reported from M'Passa reserve on 6 March (*VS*).

The Gambia

An immature **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was seen near Kerr Jaïn, North Bank Division, on 28 November 2002 (*BN*). A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* was disturbed whilst roosting at Pirang Shrimp Ponds, Western Division, on 16 February 2003; all previous records of this scarce trans-Saharan migrant are from the Upper River Division. A **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus* was observed at length at Marakissa, Western Division, on 10 February; this is a rare species in The Gambia (*CR*).

Ghana

The following records are from February 2003. A **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was seen at Mole National Park on 11th. On the same day, 12 **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba* were at Sakumo lagoon. An **African White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* was near Kakum NP on 5th. A dark-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was at Mole NP on 10th,

with a **Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera* there next day. A **Little Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvatica* was observed in Shai Hills Reserve on 14th. Also at Mole NP were two **Black Cuckoos** *Cuculus clamosus* on 9th, and two **Pel's Fishing Owls** *Scotopelia peli*, c200 **Plain Martins** *Riparia paludicola* and a **Rufous Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* on 10th. A **Mosque Swallow** *Hirundo senegalensis* was at Kumasi on 7th, and three **Lemon-bellied Crombecs** *Sylvietta denti* were found there the previous day. **Piapiac** *Prilostomus afer* is now known from Accra; six were seen there on 3rd. A **Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver** *Ploceus preussi* was at Kakum NP on 5th (*RC*).

Guinea

During a preliminary survey of the Pic de Fon Forest Reserve, in the south-eastern Simandou Range, organised by Conservation International in November–December 2002, 233 bird species were recorded, of which six were new for the country: **Fraser's Eagle Owl** *Bubo poensis*, **Cassin's Spinetail** *Neafriapus cassini*, **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksii*, **African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, **Forest Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucosticta* and **Cameroon Indigobird** *Vidua camerunensis*. In addition, a number of species were observed which are rare or poorly known in either Guinea or West Africa, including **Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri*, **Lyre-tailed Honeyguide** *Melichneutes robustus*, **Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike** *Lobotos lobatus*, **Yellow-bearded Greenbul** *Criniger olivaceus*, **Grey-winged Robin Chat** *Cossypha polioptera*, **Black-headed Rufous Warbler** *Bathmocercus cerviniventris*, **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica*, **Dusky Tit** *Parus funereus*, **Emerald Starling** *Lamprolornis iris* and **Dybowski's Twinspot** *Euschistospiza dybowskii* (*RD* & *HR*).

New data on the distribution and status of a range of species were collected during a training in field



Yellow-headed Picathartes
Picathartes gymnocephalus
by Nik Borrow (courtesy of
Birdquest)

ornithology organised for Guinean and Liberian nationals by Guinée-Ecologie, a local non-governmental organisation, in February–April 2003. A surprising discovery was that of **Yellow-headed Picathartes** *Picathartes gymnocephalus* in a small patch of gallery forest at the 'Grandes Chutes' south of Kindia; this constitutes the most westerly site to date for this threatened species. **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*, found at the same locality on 4 April (three males together), was an addition to the Guinean list (*RD*).

Kenya

A pair of **Fox Kestrels** *Falco alopex* was found in Shaba Game Reserve on 20 November 2002; this appears to be outside the species' main range in Kenya. Also there, a **Friedmann's Lark** *Mirafra pulpa* was recorded near the Maktau gate; there are few recent records of this species. A trio of **Mountain Illadopsis** *Illadopsis pyrrhoptera* was observed in Kakamega on 26th (*NB*).

Madagascar

The sightings of **Sakalava Rail** *Amauromis olivieri* undoubtedly constitute the most sensational report for this issue of 'RR'. The species was photographed at Lake Ampandra, Besalamy District, on 29 November 2002 (*IR*) and at Lake Kinkony, in the lower Mahavavy

River basin, south-west of Mahajanga, on 23–24 April and 8–9 May 2003 (Fig. 4) (MR). These sightings appear to be the best of this Critically Endangered species since those of Rand's expedition in March 1931.

Madeira

Records from the period September 2002–February 2003 include the following. A peak of 21 **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis* flew past Porto Moniz in two hours on 8 October, with a **Sooty Shearwater** *P. griseus* also past there on 11th. Twenty-one **Fea's Petrels** *Pterodroma (mollis) feae* were reported from the Porto Santo ferry on 16 October. A first-winter **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was in Funchal on 20 October, a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* at Ponta do Sol on 17 September, and four **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* in Funchal Harbour on 19 September. A first-winter female **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* was observed at Paul da Serra on 12 October. At Tanque Reservoir, Porto Santo, were a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on 19 September, and a **Curlew Sandpiper** *C. ferruginea* and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* on 16 October. **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were in Funchal Harbour on 15–19 October (one) and 19–25 February (up to five).

In October, small numbers of **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* and **Greenfinches** *Carduelis chloris* were reported; the latter is supposedly an accidental visitor. Seven **Siskins** *C. spinus* were on Mont do Pereiro on 14 October (per *Birding World* 15: 423 & 462 and 16: 57).

Malaŵi

Records from the period May–December 2002 include the following. A female **Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter rufiventris* was seen with a begging juvenile near Zovo-Chipolo, Nyika Plateau, on 25 November. A pair of **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* was in montane grassland near the

Zambian Resthouse, Nyika Plateau, on 27 May. Two males and a female **Fischer's Sparrow Lark** *Eremopterix leucopareia* seen drinking at a pool between Salima and Senga Bay on 1 December constitute a small southward range extension. A male **White-headed Sawwing** *Psalidoprocne albiceps*, observed near Dzalanyama Forest Lodge on 2 June, constitutes the most southerly record in Malaŵi and a strange date, for the species should normally have left the country by then (WM). **Cholo Alethe** *Alethe choloensis* was sighted in the forest atop Soche Mountain in November; it may now perhaps be easier to see this Endangered species here than in the fast-disappearing forest on Cholo Mountain, though it may only be a question of time, as the forest is being cut down on Soche Mountain too (MVB). Three **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* were near Manyenjere Forest, Nyika Plateau, on 25 November; a rare visitor. Two flocks of ten and six **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus africanus* were on herds of Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*, near Kazuni Camp, Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve, on 28–29 November. A flock of more than 100 **Parasitic Weavers** (Cuckoo Finches) *Anomalospiza imberbis* was seen in a dry dambo, several kilometres north of the Bua River, on 22 November (WM).

Morocco

Records from the period October–December 2002 include the following. At Layoun, 35 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* were seen on 23 October, and 100 **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were at Oued Massa on 7 December (with 50 at Lac du Sidi Bourhaba on 30 November). A **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* was observed between Layoun and Boujdour on 28 October. Forty **Great Bustards** *Otis tarda* were noted at Asilah on 11 December. At least 2,000 **Audouin's Gulls** *Larus audouinii* were at Dakhla in October and a flock of c250 was on a beach north of Agadir on 10 December. At Merja Zerga, 26 **Marsh Owls** *Asio capensis*

were counted emerging from their well-known roost on 29 November. Twenty **Plain Swifts** *Apus unicolor* were at Layoun on 23 October, with another three at Awfist on 28th. A **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* was at Dawra on 29 October and 20 **Desert Sparrows** *Passer simplex* were at Merzouga on 3–4 December (per *Birding World* 15: 463 & 500).

In January–April 2003 the following were reported. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was at Oued Massa on 3 March and 10 April. Two **Great Egrets** *Egretta alba* were at Ouarzazate on 2 February and three at Larache on 31 March. At Oued Massa, 52 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* were counted on 4 February. A feeding flock of 115 **Northern Bald Ibises** *Geronticus eremita* was regularly seen in the Tamri area during the whole period. Five **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were at Oued Massa on 3 March, with a female **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* also there on 10 April. **Barbary Falcons** *Falco (peregrinus) peregrinoides* were seen at Tazzarine, on 5 April, and at Boumalne, on 7 April. A female **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* was at Oued Ziz on 12 February. A **Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata* was at Missour on 12 April. Gull records included several colour-ringed **Audouin's Gulls** at Oued Massa/Tamri on 3–5 March, a **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* at Mehdiya on 15 April, a **Common Gull** *L. canus* at the Souss estuary on 8–11 April, with a subadult **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucooides* also there on 8 April.

Approximately 30 **Laughing Doves** *Streptopelia senegalensis* were seen in the Massa area on 4 February. A flock of 10 **Great Spotted Cuckoos** *Clamator glandarius* was 51 km east of Freija (in the Souss valley) on 6 February. An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* was at Erfoud on 7 April, a **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* at Oued Souss on 3 April, and two late **Redwings** *T. iliacus* at Azrou on 16 April. Four **Iberian Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus [collybita] ibericus* were claimed from the Marrakech area on 6 April. A

male **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* was in the company of Chaffinches *F. coelebs* at Oukaïmeden on 23 February (VS; per *Birding World* 16: 57, 107 & 152 and *Dutch Birding* 25: 128–137).

Mozambique

In March 2003, a **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* was seen 20 km off Bazaruto Island on 23rd, and a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* at Gorongosa on 27th. At Pungwe wetlands, north of Beira, a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* and a **Locust Finch** *Ortygospiza locustella* were observed on 25–26th (per CV).

Namibia

In February 2003, a **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was seen hunting for insects at dusk at Halali, Etosha National Park, on 13th. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was observed at Swakopmund, at the mouth of the river, on 22nd (VS).

Nigeria

A real surprise was the find, on 27 October 2002, of a pair of **Locust Finches** *Ortygospiza locustella* with three fledglings at Rockwater Fish Farm, near Jos, central Nigeria. A few days later another pair was found nesting close to the site of the first pair; these birds successfully fledged four chicks (Figs 5–6). On 18 December, a flock of 15 was seen at the same site. The nearest known population of this species is in south-eastern Cameroon. Details of the sightings and the breeding records will be published elsewhere.

In November 2002, a **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* was found at Alagarno, in the extreme north-east, on 11th, and a flock of 27 **Preuss's Cliff Swallows** *Hirundo preussi* at Amurum, Jos, on 15th. A family group of **Sennar Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus punctifrons* was seen at Sambisa on 4th, quite far south of their usual range. Still in November, four **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were at Amurum Forest Reserve, Jos Plateau, where they were regularly seen for at least a week;

these appear to be the first in Nigeria for a long time (RM & JW).

São Tomé & Príncipe

During a birding trip in February 2003, a juvenile **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* was seen on the mudflats at Santo Antonio, Príncipe, on 16th; this species is considered a vagrant to the islands. In the forests above São Miguel, four pairs of **São Tomé Short-tails** *Amaurocichla bocagei* were seen (and others heard), as well as three pairs of **São Tomé Fiscals** *Lanius newtoni* (easily located by their loud, far-carrying piping calls). **São Tomé Grosbeak** *Neospiza concolor* was also found there and its strongly whistled call tape-recorded (NB).

Senegal

Records from the period July–December 2002 include the following. Nineteen **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were present at Ndiäël Faunal Reserve on 5 December. A **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* was at N'Dayane, south of Dakar, on 27 November (RC). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* with almost entirely white underparts was noted near Toubakouta on 17 October; there are few records of the species in Senegal (BN). An adult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was east of Diourbel on 13 December and three subadult **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* were at a carcass south of Saint Louis on 27 November (RC). The latter are regularly victims of poisoning (Fig. 7; cf also *Bull. ABC* 9: 148–149) or killed for the pot (Fig. 8); a juvenile ringed as a nestling in France was shot in the Toubacouta area six months later, on 7 December 2001. Seven **Short-toed/Beaudouin's Snake Eagles** *Circaetus gallicus/beaudouini* were counted in a patch of savanna of 3 km² near Toubakouta on 27 October, and four **Brown Snake Eagles** *C. cinereus* were seen together near Madina Djikoye, Toubakouta, on 6 November. A **Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* was observed near Keur Lahine, Toubakouta, on 15 November; this eagle has dramatically decreased in the area since the 1980s. Two **Denham's Bustards** *Neotis denhami* were recorded near Toubakouta in October and two more in November; in certain years with few rains in the north, there is an influx of this declining species into the south. **Savile's Bustard** *Eupodotis savilei* is still present in the Guinguiné area, although decreasing; it is more common towards the Gambian border (BN). At a seasonal lake in Ndiäël Faunal Reserve c5,000 **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were roosting on 23 November (RC). **Four-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles quadricinctus* were observed coming to drink, at dawn and dusk, at pools formed by public taps in Kaolack town, in July–August, and in Guinguiné, north-east of Kaolack, in October–November (BN). **Adamawa Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia hypopyrrha* were regularly seen (at least four birds) at Niokolo-Koba National Park on 15–17 December (RC). A juvenile **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus* was at Popenguine Reserve on 28 November (RC). About 20 **Great Spotted Cuckoos** *Clamator glandarius* were seen migrating north near Madina Djikoye, Toubakouta, in mid-July; this is an unusually large number of a species that has notably decreased since the 1970s (BN). A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* was found at Niokolo-Koba NP on 16–17 December (RC). Six **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** *Merops hirundineus* and c20 **Northern Carmine Bee-eaters** *M. nubicus* were observed at the Djikoye River, near Madina Djikoye, Toubakouta, on 21–25 December; these species are rare in the area (BN). In Delta du Saloum NP, a **Lesser Honeyguide** *Indicator minor* was seen on 13 December. Two **Little Grey Woodpeckers** *Dendropicos elachus* and three **Sennar Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus punctifrons* were found south of Marigot Three on 7 December. Two **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weavers** *Plocepasser superciliosus* were nest-building south

of Thiès on 19 December. Two **Zebra Waxbills** *Amandava subflava* were at Djoudj NP on 25 November (RC).

Seychelles

Records from the period September 2002–March 2003 include the following. Four **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes* at sea between Astove and Desroches on 23 December, and one c1.5 km from the entrance to the lagoon of Desroches the next day, were the third and fourth records for Seychelles. The allegedly first **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* for Seychelles was reported from Bird Island in October 2002 (*Bull. ABC* 10: 61); subsequently, however, a record of this species at the Inter-Island Quay, Mahé, on 21 September, which will represent the first for Seychelles if accepted, was received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee. A **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* was on Desroches on 8 November–24 December. The report of five adult **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* at La Passe, La Digue, on 11–15 March, represents the first for Seychelles. A first-year female **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* at Anse Forbans, Mahé, on 19–25 December, was the third for Seychelles.

In late 2002 an exceptional number of **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* was reported: one on Aride on 28–30 November, up to seven on various dates in December on Platte Island, one on Desroches on 11 December, two on Alphonse on 18th and one on La Digue on 26th; the majority appear to have been first-years, with at least two adult females (interestingly, no adult male has ever been recorded in Seychelles); the species was first recorded in the archipelago in 1995, since when there have been nine records. Other falcon records include a first-year and two adult pale-morph **Eleonora's Falcons** *Falco eleonorae* on Alphonse on 18 December, a first-year **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* at La Passe, Silhouette, on 6 November and another on 4 December.

An immature **Madagascar Pratincole** *Glareola ocularis* was at the Inter-Island Quay, Mahé, on 21–25 October and two at Lemuria golf course, Praslin, on 25–27 October; these are the second and third records for Seychelles. **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Lemuria golf course, Praslin, on 15 November, and at a playing field adjacent to the Inter-Island Quay, Mahé, on 6 December–1 January were the fourth and fifth reports for Seychelles. A male **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* stayed at Victoria, Mahé, from 19 December to 1 February. An adult **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* on Aride on 17–27 October was the fourth report for the archipelago. Two adults and a first-year **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* at Anse l'Islette, Mahé, on 23 December represent the fifth record for Seychelles. **Black-naped Tern** *S. sumatrana* was reported from Aride Island on 27 December.

Other noteworthy records include a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* at Grand Anse, Mahé, on 20 December, an **Asian Lesser Cuckoo** *C. poliocephalus* at Côte d'Or, Praslin, on 26 December, an immature **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* at Victoria, Mahé, on 19 November–6 December, five **Broad-billed Rollers** *Eurystomus glaucurus* at various locations around Aldabra on 6 November–20 December, and a first-year **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* at La Passe, Silhouette, on 11–21 November (AS).

South Africa

Seabird sightings from pelagic trips out of Cape Town in the period November 2002–June 2003 include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (two in early November, one in March, one on 1 June), **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche salvini* (formerly treated as a race of Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*; an immature in late March), **Thin-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri* (two on 1 June) and **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinoctialis) conspicillata* (one or two, February–March), with the best find being that of a **Streaked Shearwater**

Calonectris leucomelas on 9 March, apparently the third for southern Africa (JG, AG, THa, PR, IS & BW).

Records from the period November 2002–May 2003 include the following. Two **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon rubricauda* flew up the Kowie estuary, at Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, on 3 January, with another at St Francis Bay on 8 January. A **Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was at Knysna Lagoon, Western Cape, on 18 November. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was noted on 14–15 December at Mkhombo Dam, c120 km north-east of Pretoria, North Province; this species is seldom seen in South Africa. In Western Cape, a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was found at Strandfontein on 22 April, and a **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* at Rondevlei on 20 March; the latter species had not been seen at this site in recent years. A **Slaty Egret** *E. vinaceigula* was at Marievale, Gauteng, on 3 February, and another at Zeekoevlei, Memel, north-eastern Free State, on 18–21 March.

Sightings of **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* included one flying over Pretoria, Gauteng, on 2 December, one in the Hennops River area, west of Pretoria, on 4 December, 7–10 staying on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain, Western Cape, in January–March, and one in the Dinokeng Conservancy near Pretoria on 16 February. The resident pair of **Bat Hawks** *Macheiramphus alcinus* at Agatha, Limpopo Province, produced a chick, which was seen on 1 February. An adult **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was feeding on a dead fish at Kleinemonde Beach, north of Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, on 20 December. Another was claimed near Berg River, Western Cape, on 23 February. An adult male **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* was at Mkhombo Dam, North Province, on 30 November, and single **Eurasian Marsh Harriers** *C. aeruginosus* were in the Ceres area, Western Cape, on 9 January, at

Marievale, Gauteng, on 19 January and at Mkhombo Dam, North Province, on 1 February. A possible **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* was claimed near Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga, where it stayed for several weeks from early November. Two female **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* and a juvenile (Western) **Red-footed Falcon** *F. vespertinus* were at Paarl, Western Cape, on 13–19 December. An adult male **Amur Falcon** was near Beaufort West, KwaZulu-Natal, on 18 April.

At least one, possibly two, **White-winged Flufftails** *Sarothrura ayresii* were present north of Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga, on 16 December; the call of this rare and seldom-seen species was clearly heard before brief views of a female were enjoyed. A dead **Corn Crake** *Crex crex* was discovered in suburban Pretoria, Gauteng, on 27 November; it had collided with a powerline. Another **Corn Crake** was flushed from grassland at Mkhombo Dam, North Province, on 13 December. **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were seen at Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, Northern Cape, on 1–6 January (one), at Marievale, Gauteng, on 14–16 March (three), at Bullfrog Pan, Gauteng, on 17 March–6 April (up to three), and at Thulazihleka Pan, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 17 March (one). A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was at Bokkomsbaai, near Mossel Bay, Western Cape, on 12 November, and another at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, also in November. Three **Burchell's Coursers** *Cursorius rufus* were noted at Rustenberg Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 10 May; the *Atlas of Southern African Birds* (1997) shows no records north of Pretoria, but this nomadic species is known to move into new areas in very dry years. A **White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* was present at Mkhombo Dam, North Province, on 1 March; this is an uncommon species in the north of the country. A **Caspian Plover** *C. asiaticus* was found on the stony plains just south of the Tanqua Karoo National Park, Northern

Cape, on 8 November. About 12 **Caspian Plovers**, some in breeding plumage, were in the St Francis Bay area, Eastern Cape, on 7 February. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was at Richards Bay Estuary, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14 December. The **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* found in October at West Coast National Park, Western Cape, was relocated on 29 March (for details, see pp 120–122). **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were found in Eastern Cape at Mondplaas, near Jefferey's Bay, on 21–23 February (2–6) and near Aston Bay on 21–22 February (one); in North-West Province at Spitskop Dam on 9 February (one) and 23 February (two, with a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*); in KwaZulu-Natal at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park on 8 March (one), at Ensumo Pan in Mkuzi Game Reserve on 9 March (one), at Bloodriver Vlei near Vryheid in early March (one), and at Thulazihleka Pan, Richards Bay, on 16 March (one). A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14 December, with four there on 22nd. In Western Cape, one stayed at West Coast National Park from December to early March. A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* was observed in Hluhluwe Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14 December. A **Red (Grey) Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was at Strandfontein, Western Cape, for about a week from 27 January, with two long-staying **Red-necked Phalaropes** *P. lobatus*.

Franklin's Gulls *Larus pipixcan* were noted in Western Cape at Haarder Bay, Onrus River, on 3 November (one) and 29 November (one), at Paarl Bird Sanctuary on 8 February (two in full breeding plumage, with one still present (one), at Stellenbosch (one) and at Macassar Sewage Works, Cape Town (one), on 8 March, with one still present at the latter site on 17th. In KwaZulu-Natal one was at Umgeni River mouth, Durban, on 15 November. At Onrus, Western Cape, in early November, another dark-headed gull, which appeared to

be a **Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus* in full breeding plumage, was observed. In Eastern Cape one was still at Driftsands Reclamation Works, Port Elizabeth, on 10 December; it was first found there in August. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* was at Spitskop Dam, North-West Province, on 7 December. Interesting tern records included three **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* at Jacobsbay, West Coast, Western Cape, on 25 May, a **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* at Umgeni River mouth, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, in early January, and a **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* at West Coast National Park, Western Cape, in late January.

Thousands of **European Swifts** *Apus apus* were seen on 27 December between Koringberg and Malmesbury, Western Cape, where they were the most common swift by far (per CC, AM & CV). A bee-eater claimed to be a **Rosy Bee-eater** *Merops malimbicus* was seen well by several observers at Cape Recife, near Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, from 27 April to 4 May; this is a strange record as the species has never been reported south of the Democratic Republic of Congo and does not seem to be kept in captivity (PW). An **African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* was at Theewaterskloof dam, Franschhoek, Western Cape, on 3 May; the species is known as a rare vagrant in the south-west. A **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* was recorded in the Buffelsdrift Conservancy, near Pretoria, Gauteng, on 23 March. A **Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* was seen in Claremont, Cape Town, on 2 May. Two adult **Southern Grey-headed Sparrows** *Passer diffusus* were feeding three young in a garden in Noordhoek, Western Cape, on 26 December (per CC, AM & CV).

Tanzania

In total, 930 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were counted on Nyumba ya Mungu Dam, northern Tanzania, in February 2003 (compared to 863 in January 2001 and 726 in January 1995) (NBa).

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* is no longer confined to the coast: males were seen in a village near Lake Manyara and along the road to Arusha in November 2002 (DW).

Records from Zanzibar, from late November 2002, include the following. Several **Variable Sunbirds** *Cinnyris venustus* were present in gardens and scrub in the north-east of the island; the species is not listed in Pakenham's *The Birds of Zanzibar and Pemba* (1979). **Indian House Crow** *Corvus splendens* was abundant and appeared to have replaced Pied Crow *C. albus* completely, while **House Sparrow** was present at coastal lodges of the north-east (DW).

Tunisia

Records from the period November 2002–March 2003 include the following. Twelve **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus [ruber] roseus*, ten **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea*, and 27 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were counted in the region of Douz, Tozeur and Nefta, south Tunisia, on 20–23 March (HA). Also in the Douz area c760 **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were counted on 2 December (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 56), at least 4,000 on 13 February (per *Birding World* 16: 107) and 1,360+ on 20–23 March (HA). A flock of 22 **Eurasian Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* was found near Enfida on 28 November (per *Birding World* 15: 500). Approximately 3,500 **Mediterranean**

Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* were on the coast near Sfax on 6 December and three **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Thyna saltpan on 8 December (per *Birding World* 15: 500).

In December 2002, five **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* were noted in two south-western oases (CCA); the first (possibly ship-assisted) were recorded in 1991 in Bizerte, north Tunisia; in 2001 the species was found in the Douz region, in the south (HA). An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* was found in the Douz region during a survey on 20–23 March (HA). A few pairs of **Desert Sparrows** *Passer simplex* were in Kebilia National Park and at the Bir Soltane road in early December (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 63).

Uganda

In November 2002, two species were seen that would appear to be new for Uganda. The first was a **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* at Kibimba rice scheme, 140 km east of Kampala, on 20th, the second a **White-eyed Gull** *Larus leucophthalmus* in breeding plumage at Lutembe bay, between Kampala and Entebbe, on the 24th (MW).

In December 2002, a third species new to the country was found when a group of eight **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** *Estrilda melpoda* was seen just outside Semliki National Park, at c700 m altitude, on 26th (BG); in East Africa, this species was previously known only from the Bujumbura area in Burundi, c550 km to the south (Stevenson, T. & Fanshawe, J. 2002, *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa*).

Zambia

Records from the period January–June 2003 include the following. January was a very busy month. **Black-rumped Buttonquail** *Turnix hottentotta*, **Yellowbill** (Green Coucal) *Ceuthmochares aereus* and **Short-tailed Pipit** *Anthus brachyurus*, along with the usual specials of the area, were reported from Mwinilunga at the start of the

month. **African Hobby** *Falco cuvieri* was seen in Mweru Wantipa National Park and a **Shoebill** *Balaeniceps rex* at Lake Tondwa on 1st. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* and three **Spur-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus spinosus* were at Kasaba Bay on 2nd. **White-winged Starlings** *Neocichla gutturalis* were near Nsama on 3rd. On 5th, a group of c25 **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* was reported near Muyombe, with another group in the same area the next day, along with **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* and a **Shelley's Sunbird** *Cinnyris shelleyi*. On 6th, a **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* of the subspecies *calidus* was seen in the centre of Lusaka. Around 7th, **Cardinal Quelea** *Quelea cardinalis* was seen near South Luangwa National Park. On 12th, a **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* was found in the park. Bird counts in Lochinvar on 10th produced massive numbers, as usual, and a few rarer visitors: 465 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, 2,020 **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides*, 1,490 **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca*, 21 **Slaty Egrets** *E. vimaceigula*, 1,732 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus*, a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*, a **Blue Quail** *Coturnix chinensis*, a **Black-rumped Buttonquail**, two **Corn Crakes** *Crex crex*, 425 **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus*, a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*, two **Grey Plovers** *P. squatarola*, 651 **Long-toed Lapwings** *Vanellus crassirostris*, 23,670 **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*, 370 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa*, a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* and seven **Eurasian Curlews** *N. arquata*. On 16th there was also a **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* and an **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum*. A long-staying **Slaty Egret** was present at the Livingstone sewage ponds on 17th, and a boat trip produced **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* and **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis*. On 18th, a **European Honey Buzzard**, a **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*



Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*
by Mark Andrews

and two **Booted Eagles** *Hieraaetus pennatus* were seen west of Livingstone. In Western Province, **Southern Brown-throated Weavers** *Ploceus xanthopterus* were found breeding on 13th, and on 26th 11 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* and a (Western) **Red-footed Falcon** *F. vespertinus* were found. In Mazabuka yet another **European Honey Buzzard** was seen, along with a **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* and three **Ospreys**.

In February good records came from South Luangwa National Park, with **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* on 4th and another **Striped Crake** on 10th. In Western Province there were reports of two **Lesser Kestrels**, nine **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *Larus fuscus*, a **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti*, two **Shelley's Sunbirds** *Cinnyris shelleyi* and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* on 9th, with another **Thick-billed Cuckoo** on 14th. A white-morph **Booted Eagle** was in Lusaka on 15th. Displaying **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens* near Choma on various dates was unusual for that area.

In March, another **Peregrine Falcon** of the subspecies *calidus* was seen, this time in Western Province. In the same area a huge concentration of waterfowl was found, with thousands of **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor*, **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *D. viduata*, **Knob-billed Ducks** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* and **Red-billed Teals** *Anas erythrorhynchus*, and hundreds of **Spur-winged Geese** *Plectropterus gambensis*, **Yellow-billed Ducks** *Anas undulata* and **Hottentot Teals** *A. hottentota*. A **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* was observed in the Luangwa Valley on 20th. In Livingstone, **Cape Teals** *Anas capensis* appeared, reaching a total of six near the end of the month. The last days of the month saw widespread reports of **Lesser Grey Shrikes**. On 30th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was photographed near Ndola.

In April, a **Spur-winged Lapwing** was seen on 22nd near Lake

Tanganyika. A **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was near Batoka on 14th. **Dusky Lark** *Pinarocorys nigricans* was common in Livingstone on 30th. An **Osprey** was seen on 6th and another on 26th near Senanga. Both **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* and **Lesser Grey Shrike** were still passing through there on 20th. In May, the best record came from Bangweulu: apart from a good number of **Shoebills** and lots of other waterbirds, a **Cape Vulture** *Gyps coprotheres* was seen on 16–17th.

In June, a **Tit-babbler** *Parisoma subcaeruleum* was in Choma on 3rd. A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen in the Luangwa Valley on 10th, and **Dusky Lark** was there around the same time. There were c100 **Slaty Egrets** in Liuwa National Park, with up to 54 in a single flock on 18th, and 35 **Saddle-billed Storks** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*. There were also c250 **Wattled Cranes** and 400 **Grey (Southern) Crowned Cranes** *Balearica regulorum*. After a few records from 20 April, good numbers of **Rufous-crowned (Purple) Rollers** *Coracias naevia* arrived in June. The 'new sunbird' on the Muchinga escarpment was seen again in Mutinondo at the end of the month (per CB).

Zimbabwe

Records from November 2002–January 2003 include the following. A **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens* was seen in Bvumba Botanical Gardens, south-east of Mutare, Manicaland, on 15 November; no records of this species from the east were accepted in the *Atlas of Southern African Birds* (1997), although Irwin (1981, *The Birds of Zimbabwe*) mentioned that it is known from the Nyamkwarara Valley; one was apparently seen in the Burma Valley, also in the east, in August 2002 (AC). A **Böhm's (Streaky-breasted) Flufftail** *Sarothrura boehmi* was observed at Monvale wetland, Harare, on 3 January, and a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* at Balla Balla waterhole, Hwange National Park,

on 29–30 December. **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were seen at Chizarira on 1 January and at Goshu Park, Marondera, on 2nd and 4th. At Wamba wetland, Honde Valley, **Marsh Tchagra** *Antichromus minutus* was recorded on 6–9 January and **Lesser Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes minor* on 8–9th. A **Green (Twinspot) Indigobird** *Vidua codringtoni* was at Bvumba on 12 January (per CV). ☞

Records were collated by Ron Demeijer from contributions supplied by Dennis Ndeh Anye (DNA), Hichem Azafzaf (HA), Neil Baker (NBA), Carl Beel (CB), Nik Borrow/Birdquest (NB), Chris Brewster (CBR), Chris Cameron (CCA), Anthony Cizek (AC), Tony Clarke (TC), Callan Cohen (CC), Richard Cruse (RC), Sandy Darling (SD), Ron Demeijer (RD), Hugues Dufourny (HD), Brian Gee (BG), John Graham/Zest for Birds (JG), Anne Gray (AG), Tomas Haraldsson (TH), Trevor Hardaker/Zest for Birds (THa), André Marx/Pretoria Bird Club (AM), Warren McClelland (WM), Ross McGregor (RM), Babakar Ndao (BN), Marc Rabenandrasana (MR), Hugo Rainey (HR), Adam Riley (AR), Detlef Robel (DR), Iain Robertson (IR), C. Rose (CR), Peter Ryan (PR), Andreas Sandberg (AS), Valéry Schollardt (VS), Ian Sinclair (IS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Jugal Tiwari (JT), Stephanie Tyler (ST), Colin Valentine (CV), Mark Van Beirs/Birdquest (MVB), David Warden (DW), Barry Watkins (BW), Phil Whittington (PW), Jared Wilson (JW), Malcolm Wilson (MW) and from Birding World, Dutch Birding and Sandgrouse.

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Stonechats. A Guide to the Genus *Saxicola*

Ewan Urquhart, illustrated by Adam Bowley, 2002. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 320 pp, 14 colour plates, 16 pp of colour photographs, 17 distribution maps, numerous line drawings, sonograms. Hardback. UKE37.

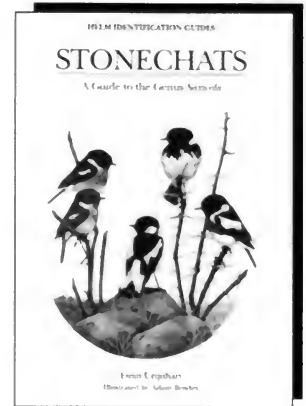
Taking 320 pages to cover only 14 species, this book has the luxury of much more space for detail concerning each than do the majority of its stable mates in the Helm Identification Guides series. And a lot of detail there is—thus, the three species recognised as the Common Stonechat complex receive 80 pages of text between them, Whinchat *S. rubetra* 28 pages and even Réunion Stonechat, here treated as a species, *S. tectes*, six pages.

Seven of the 14 species of *Saxicola* recognised by this book occur in the African region, three as seasonal migrants. These include the five already mentioned, plus Canary Island Stonechat *S. dacotiae*, and *S. bifasciata*, here given the English name Buff-streaked Bushchat. The introductory sections run to c25 pages and, in addition to sections on 'How to use this book', 'Sequence and taxonomy', 'English names of birds' etc, there is also a nine-page section entitled 'A molecular phylogeny of stonechats and related turdids'. Authored by Michael Wink and four collaborators, it amounts to a separate, technical paper on the systematic relationships of the genus based on analyses of mitochondrial cytochrome-*b* gene data. Leaving aside the question of how much the general readership of this book is going to acquire from, for example, Table 1, which covers two pages with lists of 'parsimony informative characters in the analysed data set of turdids', one wonders why the authors chose to publish this in full

here rather than in a refereed journal. (A summary of the main findings has appeared recently in *British Birds*.) Yes, a synopsis, including a dendrogram of the phylogeny would, with more explanation of the terms used, be useful and informative, but its presence here seems disproportionate, rather like, say, including the Nairobi bus timetable in a guidebook to Kenya. It is also unnecessarily confusing, as different specific names are employed for two species from those adopted elsewhere in the book. Although this is mentioned in a footnote on the first page of the chapter, this assumes you will have read the footnote before attempting to relate cladogram to text. I hadn't...

The 14 colour plates are of a high quality. While some birds are perhaps a little dumpy and angular, overall they are extremely attractive, full of character and accurate. Having few species to depict, there are plenty of illustrations per species; flight views, subspecific variation, breeding and non-breeding plumages, immatures, wing and tail patterns etc. There is sufficient space too for lengthy legends as the distribution maps are placed with the text, not opposite the plates.

The species accounts are subdivided into sections on taxonomy, identification, description, distribution and status (including range maps), breeding, habitat, food, voice (including sonograms in some cases), movements, behaviour, moult and conservation. There is an enormous amount of information here, so much so that it is sometimes hard to find the main points. Indeed, such extensive extracts from source papers are given that one almost wished that summaries were provided. For example, within the five-page discussion as to whether Buff-



streaked Chat / Bushchat *S. bifasciata* actually belongs in *Saxicola* (conclusion: maybe), ten paragraphs commence with the words 'Tye states...' or similar and four begin 'Clancey argued' etc. I found it hard to keep in mind the various points at issue over the course of the section and wonder if the argument might have been clearer had these points been presented in tabular form.

The main departure from conventional species treatments comes in the 'Common Stonechat complex' mentioned above. A lengthy introduction provides the justification, building upon Sangster *et al.*, for recognising three species; European Stonechat *S. rubicola*, Siberian Stonechat *S. maura* and African Stonechat *S. torquata*, as well as for the scientific names used. Within the African Stonechat, 15 African and two Malagasy subspecies are recognised, differing mainly in the extent and location of chestnut on the breast and flanks of males. These patterns are illustrated for both Malagasy and 13 of the 15 African forms and, equally helpfully, their distributions are shown separately on the distribution map. The author admits that this treatment is provisional and, following Sibley & Monroe², suggests that *S. torquata albofasciata*

of Ethiopia may warrant species rank. It is, accordingly, illustrated as such and complete plumage descriptions are given. The basis of this, however, seems solely to rest on a lack of any chestnut on the breast of the adult male. This doesn't seem entirely convincing, however, given both how little chestnut there is in males of some of the other races and that first-year male *albofasciata* also has chestnut fringes to breast feathers.

A 16-page section of colour photographs follows the species accounts. With five or six photos per plate, this welcome addition depicts all species in a mixture of perched and hand-held poses. The quality of the photographs and their reproduction is high and the legends direct one to key features. African Stonechat only receives one page, however, with only three subspecies illustrated, one of which is a fairly long-distance shot of the contentious *albofasciata*. There follows an extensive and up-to-date bibliography.

This is an extremely attractive, well-produced book, written by someone who is clearly passionate and deeply knowledgeable about his subject. It is, unquestionably, going to remain the standard work on stonechats for a long time to come. It cannot, however, be described as an easy read; both the style and the wealth of detail ensure that it is not for the fainthearted.

Lincoln Fishpool

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and genomic fingerprinting. *Br. Birds* 95: 349–354.

A Guide to Endemic Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea

Jose Luis Vivero Pol. 2001. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Shama Books. 80 pp. 40 colour photographs. Paperback. US\$15. Available from the publishers at PO Box 8153, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, or New Line Press, USA.

This well-produced book begins with eight pages of general information on the endemic avifauna of these two countries, very briefly covering conservation, distribution, threats and taxonomy. It continues with a double spread for each of the 30 endemic bird species recognised. All but White-throated Serin *Serinus xanthopygius* are illustrated with one or two colour photographs, although only the wing of Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala* is shown, as this is all that is known of the species. The photographs vary in quality, but to have compiled such a collection is an impressive feat, and immediately makes this a valuable book. Species accounts include a brief description, and paragraphs on habitat, distribution, general habits, breeding habits, threats, IUCN status category and references. A distribution map is given for each species, showing the range in relation to the highland areas. As a whole, this book is a useful compilation of material on a group of species which are sought-after by birders, in several cases threatened, and missing from most current field guides.

Roger Safford

Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume 7

Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and Jordi Sargatal (eds). 2002. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. 613 pp, 70 colour plates, 317 colour photographs. Hardback. UK£110.

Volume 7 of this series is the last covering non-passerines and has a distinct Neotropical bias, although there is still plenty to interest Africa aficionados (given that it includes

barbets and woodpeckers). Following a now familiar format, an essay prefaces the volume proper. Herein, Errol Fuller writes authoritatively on the subject of bird extinctions since 1600. Unsurprisingly, island endemics account for around 90% of recent extinctions, with the Mascarene Islands faring particularly badly, given 13 losses since Man first started visiting the islands. The family accounts follow the tried and tested format, with a general introduction to family systematics, morphology, habitats and behaviour, lavishly illustrated by top-quality photographs. Species accounts are concise and succinct, accompanied by a distribution map and full-page colour plates, all of which, incidentally, are superb. Overall, this volume reflects the high standards set by its predecessors and, given the amount of information presented, represents excellent value for money.

Rob Lucking

Échassiers, Canards, Limicoles et Laridés de l'Ouest Africain

Olivier Girard, illustrated by Jean Chevallier, Serge Nicolle and Olivier Girard. 2003. L'île d'Olonne, France: Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage. 220 pp, 28 colour plates, 119 distribution maps. ISBN 2-910399-59-1. Paperback. €20.

This is the second, enlarged edition of the booklet published in 1998, which was generally well received (see review *Bull. ABC* 6: 72). The primary aim of this pocket guide (12 x 19 cm) remains the same, to serve as an identification aid for West African field workers conducting waterfowl counts and who generally lack more comprehensive guides covering the sub-region, delimited by southern Mauritania and Chad in the north, and Congo-Brazzaville in the south. It illustrates and presents the main identification features of 129 species of waterbirds, now also including gulls and terns (both groups entirely lacking in the first edition), in addition to pelicans, cormorants, herons, storks, ducks and waders. Rare species and va-

grants have deliberately been omitted. All species are shown perched and in flight, with the key identification marks pinpointed with arrows and a succinct description facing the plate. An improvement over the first edition is that additional information on plumage, voice, behaviour, habitat, distribution and confusion species is provided for all species in the section following the plates, and not only for those that may present identification problems. This accounts for most of the 84 additional pages in this edition. The distribution maps have been corrected and updated and, although smaller than in the first edition, they are now more accurate and also more pleasing through the use of colour. The useful introductory chapter giving practical tips on how to conduct waterfowl counts, on counting techniques and means to collect and disseminate data, and on what to do with ringed birds, is basically unchanged, but the section on ringing centres has been expanded and updated, and now also includes e-mail addresses.

Both the colour plates and the text are clear and accurate. The 22 plates of the first edition have remained the same, but four have now been given a pale blue background, making white birds such as spoonbills and egrets stand out more clearly. This background works so well that it could have been profitably used for a few more plates, such as those of storks. The five new plates, of gulls and terns, all have coloured backgrounds. Quite sensibly, the main illustrations of Palearctic wader species depict individuals in non-breeding (winter) plumage, with a thumbnail picture illustrating breeding (summer) plumage. Palearctic plovers and Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, however, are only depicted in breeding plumage—an inconsistency that should be corrected. In his review of the first edition, Patrick Claffey expressed the wish to see a list of Asian and American vagrants included, as this would draw attention to their possible occurrence. The author has not

fulfilled this wish—perhaps something for the third edition?

This guide, one of the very rare works on African birds written in French, is highly practical and perfectly serves its purpose. It is therefore to be hoped that it will continue to find its way to all those African field workers for whom it is intended.

Ron Demeay

Bird Song of The Gambia & Senegal: An Aid to Identification

Clive Barlow, John Hammick and Pat Sellar. 2002. Three CDs (265 species), with 20-page companion booklet. Available from Mandarin Productions at www.mandarinproductions.com or email vfjo@yahoo.co.uk. UK £24.99.

When I went to The Gambia, in 1991, the only field guide available was *A Field Guide to the Birds of West Africa* by Serle *et al.* Now anyone visiting the country has a choice of the much-improved equivalent of that book or a field guide covering just The Gambia and Senegal. There are also various videos, audiocassettes and CDs that give the prospective visitor the full multi-media experience before setting foot in either country.

This set of CDs has been produced to complement the recent field guide and this is readily apparent from just looking at the box. It comprises three CDs and covers 265 species described in the 'companion' field guide. Each CD is a different colour, making it easy to select one and no doubt after time you wouldn't look at the number on the CD, but would just use the colour to select it.

For each track the accompanying booklet lists the following: the plate number and page number of the species in *Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal* by Barlow *et al.*; the recordist; what month(s) the recording(s) was made in; and what division in The Gambia, or which other country the recording was made in, or if it was made from a bird in captivity. The booklet also states that the use of captive birds

was made in collaboration with accredited research authorities. In my view an improvement would be for the booklet to include a brief summary of the circumstances 'behind' each track. Typically, we are uninformed as to whether the recording concerns a bird in song, calling, giving a flight call and/or an alarm call. The exceptions are the indigobirds, where we are told what species they are mimicking.

In an effort to give some understanding of the quality of the recordings I set out the following definitions and then categorised each track according to these. The rating system I used was as follows. **Poor**—impossible to distinguish the bird in question. **Average**—possible to distinguish the bird if you know what it sounds like. **Good**—background noise is noticeable but you can still tell which is the subject bird. **Very Good**—background noise does not obscure the subject bird at all. **Excellent**—no discernible background noise whatsoever. Using these definitions, I rated none as poor, ten as average, 60 as good, 169 as very good and 26 as excellent. Of necessity this rating is an average for the track as a whole and some tracks might be of variable quality and possess an overall rating that is the average.

The tracks vary in length from 14 seconds for Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus* to 181 seconds for Cameroon Indigobird *Vidua camerunensis*. Indeed, there are four long tracks for Cameroon Indigobird covering its mimicry of different species. Sometimes the length of the track is out of all proportion to the vocalisation of the species, for instance 91 seconds for Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis* appears excessive, whereas other species could usefully have had longer recordings included—I suspect that material of the appropriate quality just wasn't available.

The producers state that these CDs should not be used for tape luring, but it is probably naïve to think that such activities will not occur given the generally high standard of the recordings. Casting

that point aside, I wish I had had access to these recording all those years ago when I visited The Gambia, as they would certainly have made the bewildering array of noises one is confronted with in such places as Abuko easier to sort out. Indeed, I suspect that I would have seen more species than I did had I been able to listen to these CDs before going. In conclusion, I would recommend anyone planning a trip to either of the countries in question to buy this at the same time as you acquire the identification books—you won't regret the purchase.

Roy Hargreaves

Ecological Journal Vol. 4

Duncan Butchard and Chris Roche (eds.). 2002. *Benmore, South Africa: Conservation Corporation Africa. 288 pp, numerous colour and black-and-white photographs, line drawings, and maps. Paperback. ISBN 0-620-29384-5. SA Rand 165.*

With this annual 'in-house' publication Conservation Corporation Africa aims to provide an opportunity for rangers and trackers from safari lodges in East and southern Africa to have their observations of interesting animal behaviour published in an accessible format. Although a lot of material in this issue concerns Leopards

Panthera pardus, Lions *P. leo*, African Elephants *Loxodonta africana* and other large mammals, observations of smaller animals (for example insects and amphibians) and birds are also included. All articles and short notes are arranged in a lodge-by-lodge sequence, with material from 15 lodges in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. An 'annual environmental review' features at the beginning of each section, followed by short notes and a summary of the most interesting animal and bird observations of 2001 for each site. Among the short articles on birds are 'Owls at Klein's Camp, Serengeti', 'Birds in Maasai ritual', 'Bird monitoring at Phinda, Maputaland', 'Status of regionally threatened birds at Nxabega, Okavango Delta' and 'Bird of prey nest survey at Matetsi, Zambezi River, Zimbabwe'. Contributions have been collated and edited by naturalist and author Duncan Butchard and former ranger Chris Roche, who have produced a highly readable and liberally illustrated publication aimed at a broad spectrum of readers. The book is for sale at CC Africa lodge gift shops and from the company's wildlife website (www.wildwatch.com).

Ron Demey

Numbers and distribution of wintering waterbirds in the Western Palearctic and Southwest Asia in 1997, 1998 and 1999: Results from the International Waterbird Census

Niels Gilissen, Lieuwe Haanstra, Simon Delany, Gerard Boere and Ward Hagemeyer. 2002. *Wetlands International Global Series No. 11. Wageningen, The Netherlands. 182 pp, and 75 maps.*

This well-presented report summarises the results of three years of waterbird counts, undertaken as part of the long-term site-based monitoring scheme for waterbirds in the non-breeding season, organised by Wetlands International. Totals of 22 to 23.5 million waterbirds of more than 230 species were counted over the three census years. Clear maps are presented for 51 species, summarising their average January distribution. The region covered by the ABC is only represented by Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, where disappointingly few data were collected, the most noteworthy being the 24,542 Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus [ruber] roseus* in Algeria in 1999. For further information see www.wetlands.org.



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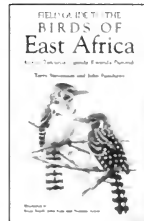
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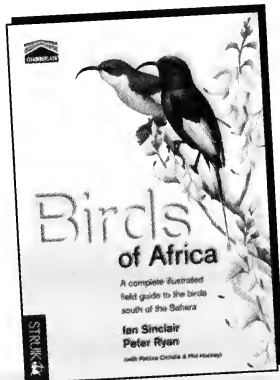
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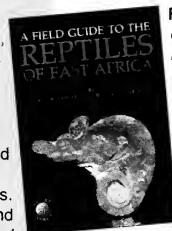


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Ian Sinclair & Pete Ryan (with Patrice Christy & Phil Hockey)
(October 2003) 712 pages. Softback

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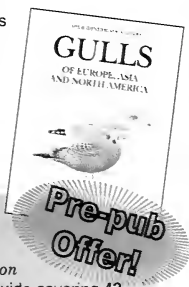
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First record of Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* nesting on the ground

Mark D. Anderson and Nico Laubscher

L'Aigle de Verreaux *Aquila verreauxii* niche normalement sur des plateformes rocheuses ou, occasionnellement, dans des arbres ou sur des structures artificielles. Les auteurs rapportent la première observation de nidification à terre, dans un bois d'*Eucalyptus* sur le terrain d'une exploitation agricole près de Fraserburg, Northern Cape Province, Afrique du Sud. Après qu'un coup de vent eut jeté le nid à terre, les aigles ont continué à nicher au sol pendant cinq années consécutives. Les trois premiers oisillons sont tombés victimes de mammifères carnivores, mais après que le fermier eut construit une clôture contre les prédateurs, deux oisillons ont été élevés.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* typically constructs a large stick nest on a cliff ledge or a sheer boulder outcrop⁶, occasionally in a tree^{3,4} and sometimes on an artificial structure, such as a microwave tower or electricity pylon^{1,2,5}. Here we provide the first published record of the species nesting on the ground.

For several years a pair of Verreaux's Eagles has nested on 'Kruis van Bloemfontein' farm (31°44'S 21°52'E), east of Fraserburg, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. In 1992, the pair nested in a *Eucalyptus* grove c300 m from the homestead. That year and in the three subsequent years strong winds blew the nest down.

However, in 1996, the pair built a large, flat nest on the ground between two *Eucalyptus* trees (Fig 1). Over the following five years, the birds used this ground nest, each year maintaining and adding to the structure. Animal tracks to the nest indicated that during the first two years (1996–97) the young were predated by a Cape Clawless Otter *Aonyx capensis* and during 1998 by an African Wild Cat *Felis lybica*. On 18 August 1999, the landowner, Gerrit Visser, constructed a small, 1 m-high, predator-proof fence (c10 x 14 m) around the nest and in that year and the next the chick successfully fledged. In 1999, it fledged on 15 October.

During the breeding period, though disturbance was kept to a minimum, it was possible to photograph the nest at close quarters. Rock Hyrax *Procapra capensis* remains were visible in the nest. Only still-born lambs were fed to the chicks. Post-breeding, the nest area was cleared of prey remains by Gerrit Visser. During 2001 the pair built a new nest in a different *Eucalyptus* (c200 m from the ground nest). This nest, perhaps sturdier, was not blown down. A chick fledged that year (G Visser

pers comm) and in 2002 an immature was observed during September near the nest (NL pers obs).

Acknowledgements

Gerrit Visser has gone to great lengths to conserve his breeding Verreaux's Eagles. We thank him for some of the information presented here and we also commend him for his efforts to conserve these eagles and his property's other wildlife. ?

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Figure 1. Remains of the Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* nest on the ground between two *Eucalyptus* trees, 'Kruis van Bloemfontein' farm, Fraserburg, Northern Cape Province, South Africa (Nico Laubscher)



Figure 2. The small, predator-proof fence that was constructed around the eagle nest (Gerrit Visser)



Figure 3. Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* nestling (Gerrit Visser)

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Obituary

Stuart Keith 1931–2003

As one of the three main editors of *The Birds of Africa*, Stuart Keith's name will always be particularly associated with African ornithology, and although he had a wonderful knowledge in this field, he was a world birder *par excellence*. He was the first person to see more than 4,000 species, and his eventual life list topped 6,500.

He was born in Hertfordshire in 1931 and, after spending the duration of the Second World War in Canada with his family, returned to England, where he was educated at Marlborough. He saw service in the Korean War as an infantry officer before going to Oxford, where he read Classics. His interest in birds had been awakened even before arriving in Canada, and he spent his army leave in Hong Kong, so had established a long life list well before embarking on a career. Undecided what to do about the latter, the decision was made easier following an extensive birding trip round the USA with his brother in 1956, and he resolved to study ornithology. Thus, he became a research associate of the American Museum of Natural History in 1958, and thereafter lived in America.

His wide experience of Africa dates from the early 1960s, when he was collecting birds in East Africa for the museum, becoming deeply interested in the distribution and taxonomy of African birds, and in their vocalisations. He had a very good ear and a retentive memory, which not only ensured his mastery of field identification, but also prompted him to start recording bird song. He published several papers on new distributional records, and described a new subspecies of White-crowned Starling *Spreo albicapillus* from northern Kenya. Further publications followed in 1968, and the next year he was senior author of a valuable study of the avifauna of the Impenetrable Forest in Uganda. In 1971 he published his groundbreaking recordings of African forest birds, featuring 95 species, and also made a feature-length film about African birds, which he narrated and showed round America. The same year, he travelled extensively in Madagascar with Don Turner and Alec Forbes-Watson, and recorded the voice of the endemic



flufftail, *Sarothrura insularis*, which was hitherto unknown, and published a fascinating paper in *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* He had, prior to this, authored an in-depth review of the genus *Sarothrura*.

He was also very active in birding in America, and in 1969 formed an information exchange with a group of friends, which soon became the American Birding Association (ABA), of which he was the first president, and a director until 1990. ABA now has over 20,000 members. In 1993 he was awarded the Eisenmann medal of the Linnean Society of New York in recognition of his achievements.

In 1980 he commenced his long association with *The Birds of Africa* (BoA) project, Leslie Brown's brainchild of the 1970s. Following Leslie's death, Stuart became one of the three editors with Emil Urban and Hilary Fry. He was, with Hilary, a major contributor to the text, drawing on his broad field experience and his knowledge of field

characters and vocalisations to produce eminently readable and lively accounts. He had always been a keen collector of recordings of African birds, and listened to these constantly while writing his texts.

Despite suffering ill health for many years, he remained a keen and determined traveller, and always revelled in finding new birds. Once, when he was staying with my wife and I in Kent, I took him to see a Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*—new for his British list—and, although not at all well and finding walking very difficult, he insisted on getting to the bird. I also recall his look of glee when we both had the same lifer together in Ghana, and turned to each other with the snap identification. His birding was not without other problems. On one occasion, a hippopotamus *Hippopotamus* charged him, and on another he almost lost a leg to a fur seal *Arctocephalus* on the Pribilofs, and needed 32 stitches. More recently, he told me that while twitching the first Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* for California, his driver fell asleep and they wrote the car off in a ravine in the only place for hundreds of yards where they didn't face certain death.

Although deeply serious about his birds, and expected other people to match his own high standards, Stuart had a great sense of humour and a dry wit, which was delightful. He published a number of popular and humorous articles, and once during one of the biennial editors meetings of *BoA* in London, we spent some time inventing new cisticola species while discussing the relevant plates for Vol 5. They included Whining, Whiffing, Whingeing and then the least impressive species, the Piffing. The names were more fun than the plates.

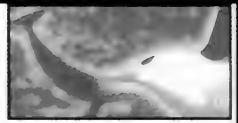
Early in 2003, Stuart had all but finished reading proofs for Vol 7, and I had sent him colour photocopies of the plates, on which his criticism was very valuable. These, however, arrived after he had left on a long-planned birding trip to Micronesia with his wife, Sallyann, and a small party of relatives and friends. He saw his last lifer, the Caroline Islands Ground Dove *Gallicolumba kubaryi*, on the day before he died of a stroke on the island of Chuuk (Truk), on 13 February 2003. ☹

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The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. and Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened birds of Africa and related islands: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, eg Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, eg the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The material published is divided into *Papers*, *Short Notes*, *News & Comment*, *Discoveries*, *Reviews*, *Literature Gleanings*, *Recent Reports* and *Letters*. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

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Two copies should be submitted. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

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Preferred names

With the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *Birds of Africa* Vols 1-6. For species not yet covered, please use appropriate regional handbooks and checklists eg Roberts for southern Africa, Zimmerman *et al* for East Africa and Dowsett & Forbes-Watson for all non-*Birds of Africa* species, eg from the Malagasy region. Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should, if possible, follow those on standard or readily available maps.

Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in *The Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.



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The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact Paul Lascelles, the Country Representative Coordinator, at the club address or email: reps@africanbirdclub.org.

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The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£25 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£25 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right.

Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes Clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

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