African Bird Club

Bulletin of the African Bird Club Vol 11 No 1 March 2004

Birding Cameroon, part 2

Fischer's Turaco in Zanzibar

All *The Birds of Africa*

Sakalava Rail

Confusing antpeckers

Short-toed Eagle and Beaudouin's Snake Eagle Status in The Gambia

Ortolan Bunting in Nigeria

White-tailed Ant Thrush and Bioko Batis in Benin

Sociable Lapwing in Cameroon

Madagascar Flufftail

African Spoonbill breeding in Tanzania

Barn Owl reproduction in Morocco

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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

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http://www.africanbirdclub.org

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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).

ABC BULLETIN VOL.11.1: ERRATUM

As a result of a machine error at the last stage of printing (after the final proofs had been checked), on some pages the degree symbol ° has emerged as a rectangle □. We apologise for this. Our printers offered to pulp the whole print run and re-print, but this would have delayed the distribution of the Bulletin - and we hated the idea of sacrificing all those extra trees.

- Bulletin Editors

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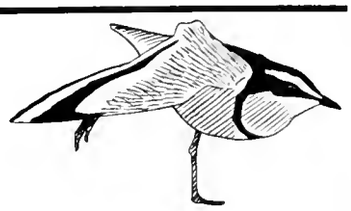


Literature Review

For several years the Club has published a supplement to the March issue of the Bulletin with a more or less comprehensive review of the previous year's literature on African birds. The content has changed slightly over the years, especially in respect of the inclusion or not of details of Short Notes in the various newsletters and local journals. It is certainly thought that most major publications relevant to the Club's area of interest have been noted. It is also known that many people do value this service provided by the ABC.

The cost of this to the Club is substantial and, following a review of Bulletin matters, which took place in the autumn of 2003 and some subsequent discussions, it has been decided to change the means of production and publication. As you will have noticed it is not included with this Bulletin. By the time you read this (or at least shortly afterwards!) there will be a database on the ABC website with all the relevant information included.

There are several advantages to this arrangement aside from the cost saving. It is fully searchable, eg you can insert any selection of words and acquire information on all titles that meet the chosen criteria. All the same information is there as before, ie full reference, address of contact author and short abstract. At present it is only the latest supplement, which has not been printed, that is available. However, it is intended to add the previous literature supplements, but this will take time. Once finished it will be possible to search for all references dating back over ten years in one place. It will thus become a valuable resource.

Peter Lack

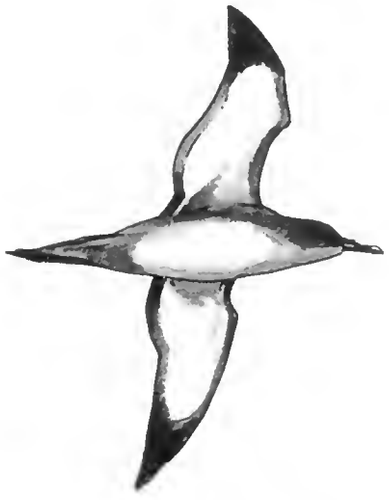
Africa Round-up

General

Balearic Shearwater facing extinction?

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, a relatively poorly known species which only breeds on the Balearic Islands in the western Mediterranean, seems to have experienced a dramatic population decline in the last ten years. Following the breeding season, they move to the Atlantic, mainly to coastal waters of the Bay of Biscay, but some wander south and have been recorded off Morocco and Mauritania. Its distribution along the West African coast is inadequately known, but the species is also likely to occur further south. Population estimates at the breeding colonies have revealed a decline from 3,300 pairs in 1991 to just 1,687 (□240) pairs in 2002. If this estimated 7.8% annual decrease continues, the species can be expected to become extinct in less than 58 years. Major threats include lack of food resources, lack of protection of breeding caves, predation by introduced mammals and oil spills.

Source: Birding World *16, pp 260–263*



Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* by Mark Andrews

Research on massive die-off of Asian vultures continues

Although the causes of the catastrophic population crash of three *Gyps* vulture species in southern Asia were attributed to the drug Diclofenac at an international conference held in Hungary in May 2003 (*Bull. ABC* 10: 75), many questions remain. Vibhu Prakash, principal scientist at the Bombay Natural History Society, cites the following. First, the experimental results from Pakistan suggest that Diclofenac kills birds rapidly, only several days after exposure, whereas birds observed in India appear to suffer prolonged illness, often lasting for several weeks, before death. Second, as Diclofenac is thought to be excreted by mammals within a few days, large numbers of cattle across India would have to be treated shortly before death for vultures to be exposed and to decline on such a massive scale. Third, although the drug is also considered toxic to certain other bird species and to dogs, only *Gyps* vultures appear to be severely affected and dogs have increased at sites where vultures have declined. Finally, lesions more characteristic of infectious disease have been found in several vulture carcasses in India. Investigations therefore continue.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (3), p 9*

Rüppell's Griffon Vulture reaches Europe

Although Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* is considered non-migratory, with only some local movements within the Afrotropics, it has recently been observed in southern Europe, and at least 24 birds were recorded in Spain and Portugal in the period 1992–2003. It is assumed that the dramatic increase of Eurasian Griffon Vultures *G. fulvus* in the Iberian peninsula in the last 15 years may have played a significant role. Indeed, with an increasing number of Eurasian Griffon Vultures wintering in West Africa, chances that the resident Rüppell's Griffon Vultures, especially dispersive immatures, may join them on their return migration have equally increased.

Source: Dutch Birding *25, pp 289–303*

Constructing a phylogeny for African kestrels

Jim Groombridge and his colleagues have recently investigated a molecular phylogeny for African kestrels using mitochondrial cytochrome *b*-gene sequencing data. Their results supported an Old World origin for typical kestrels and an ancient divergence of the group into the New World, and indicated a more recent radiation from Africa via Madagascar towards Mauritius and the Seychelles. The position of the Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides* within the tree suggested that this taxon has evolved only comparatively recently from African forms. The authors of the study also found that inferred evolutionary relationships, based on plumage pattern and morphology, compared rather well with their molecular results for the African and Indian Ocean kestrels. Finally, the study also investigated the potential link between rates of divergence estimates among relevant taxa to the geological history of Indian Ocean island formation. They found that the arrival of kestrels on Mauritius appeared consistent with the cessation of volcanic activity on the island. The estimated time and route of divergence of the Seychelles Kestrel *Falco newtoni* from Madagascar might also be compatible with the emergence of

smaller islands during Pleistocene sea level fluctuations.

Source: Mol. Phyl. & Evol. *25, pp 267–277*

Wilson's Snipe considered specifically distinct

The American Ornithologists' Union's 43rd supplement on classification and nomenclature considers the North American Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago* [*gallinago*] *delicata*, which was formerly treated as a subspecies of Common Snipe *G. gallinago*, to be specifically distinct. The split reflects a return to an older taxonomy, in which Wilson's and Common Snipe were recognised as separate species, and is largely based on re-analysis of the display vocalisations of the two taxa.

Source: Auk *119, pp 897–906*

Nightjar songs and emargination determined by habitat

In a paper comparing vocal behaviour in two Afrotropical nightjar species, H D Jackson concludes that virtually all nightjars with a whistling song, such as Black-shouldered Nightjar *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* and Fiery-necked Nightjar *C. pectoralis*, occur in forest, woodland and similar enclosed habitats, whilst those with churring songs, such as Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *C. rufigena*, are found in open habitats. The 'whistlers' also have stronger emargination on the leading edge of some primaries than do the 'churrers'. The function of emargination being aerodynamic, birds living in closed habitats would benefit from increased emargination assisting with take-offs and landings. In the Afrotropical nightjars, habitat appears to determine both the type of song and the degree of emargination.

Source: Ostrich *73, pp 173–174*

Road traffic: a major cause of death for Afrotropical nightjars

In a review of the mortality factors affecting Afrotropical nightjars, H D Jackson distinguishes two main categories, natural factors (weather conditions, predators, etc) and human factors (deliberate killing, habitat destruction, incidental effects, etc). Whilst eggs and young seem to be principally affected by the former, adult mortality is mainly caused by the latter. Throughout the Afrotropics nightjars are killed by road traffic in large numbers, and for some species the road toll is now *the* major mortality factor. The author made a subjective assessment of the mortality rate suffered by each species, based on a comprehensive literature search. Nightjars were ranked according to a combination of their predilection for frequenting roads and the number of times that they were found dead on the road, grouping them into six categories of mortality ratings, from unaffected to very high. The level of road mortality was rated as high for Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma*, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *C. rufigena*, Plain Nightjar *C. inornatus* and Standard-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx longipennis*, and as very high for Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*, Square-tailed Nightjar *C. fossii*, European Nightjar *C. europaeus* and Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*.

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

Source: Ostrich *73, pp 147–161*

Wagtail systematics

A study of phylogenetic relationships between ten of the 11 currently recognised species of *Motacilla* wagtails, undertaken by G Voelker, found that Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, which has 13–17 recognised subspecies, 10–11 of which are common Palearctic migrants to Africa, comprises three groups (clades) that share a common ancestor and are not each other's closest relative.

Source: Condor *104, pp 725–739*

Common Whitethroats moving south in response to increasing aridity?

One of the most interesting results of a recent study of trans-Saharan migration strategies, phenology and energetics of Palearctic migrants wintering in West Africa, conducted by Ulf Ottosson and his colleagues in north-east Nigeria, has revealed that Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* may be adapting its behaviour in response to drier conditions of recent years. A comparison of the results of the 1999 and 2000 study, with similar data also collected from the Lake Chad basin in the late 1960s, revealed that Common Whitethroat, which typically winters in arid habitats, may be shifting its wintering range southwards in response to the well-documented increasing aridity of the Sahel zone.

Source: Die Vogelwarte *41, pp 249–262*

Atlas Flycatcher identification

The identification of Atlas Flycatcher *Ficedula* [*hypoleuca*] *speculigera*, a recently proposed split from Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* (see *Bull. ABC* 9: 10), is the subject of a recent paper in *Birding World*. As its name implies, Atlas Flycatcher breeds in the Atlas Mountains, in north-west Africa. On migration, it has been recorded from northern Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, but its wintering range is still inadequately known. Just prior to their return migration (they arrive on their breeding grounds in Morocco in late April), adult males should be separable from Pied Flycatcher by a combination of their large forehead patch, completely (or almost completely) black tail, and larger white greater covert and primary patches. Almost nothing is known

Atlas Flycatcher *Ficedula* [*hypoleuca*] *speculigera* by Mark Andrews

about female and non-breeding plumages. It should be noted, however, that the original phylogenetic and morphological analysis was carried out on only five individuals, and that the authors of the *Birding World* paper were able to examine only eight specimens.

Source: Birding World *16, pp 252–256*

New evidence of sympatric speciation from the indigobirds

A growing body of empirical and theoretical work supports the theory of sympatric speciation, but few examples are available in which all the essential components of the process are well understood. The African indigobirds *Vidua* spp are host-specific brood parasites. Their nestlings are reared along with host young, and mimic the mouth markings of their respective hosts. As adults, male indigobirds mimic host song, whereas females use these songs to choose their mates and the nests they parasitise. These behavioural mechanisms promote the cohesion of indigobird populations associated with a given host, and provide a mechanism for reproductive isolation after a new host is colonised. The authors of a recent paper in *Nature* have demonstrated that all indigobird species are similar genetically, but are significantly differentiated in both mitochondrial haplotype and nuclear allele frequencies, which support a model of recent sympatric speciation. In contrast to the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, in which only female lineages are faithful to specific hosts, host switches have led to speciation in indigobirds because both males and females imprint on their hosts.

Source: Nature *424, pp 928–931*

Parasitic Weaver is a viduid finch

Morphological and behavioural features of Parasitic Weaver *Anomalospiza imberbis*, also known as Cuckoo Finch, support the molecular evidence that it is a viduid finch (Viduidae) and not a weaver (Ploceidae). Analysis of mtDNA sequence data suggests that *Anomalospiza* and *Vidua* are each others' closest relatives and their common ancestor was a brood parasite. The genetic distance between the two genera indicates that brood parasitism originated c17–20 million years ago. Viduidae are most closely related to estrildid finches (Estrildidae), and are not closely related to the weavers. Parasitic Weavers are brood parasites on *Prinia* and *Cisticola* warblers.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *123, pp 113–125*

ARKive: an important new conservation initiative

In May 2003, ARKive was launched by David Attenborough. The project's aim is to be 'the Noah's Ark for the 21st century', gathering the world's finest wildlife films, photographs and sound recordings in one safe place and making them available online, using the latest in digital technology, via the website www.arkive.org. ARKive plans to become an invaluable tool for conservation. Eventually, the site will include information on the c11,000 animal and plant species threatened with extinction. A special area of the website, www.planetarkive.org, is aimed at 7–11 year olds to make learning about nature an enjoyable experience. At www.arkiveeducation.org, teachers and parents can download free materials to help teach children about the richness of, and threats to, the natural world.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (3), p 11*

World Parks Congress launches African Protected Areas Initiative

At the Fifth World Parks Congress, held in Durban on 8–17 September 2003, the African Protected Areas Initiative (APAI) was officially launched. The Congress takes place every ten years and is the most authoritative gathering of conservation professionals, administrators, scientists, politicians and other stakeholders to review the state of protected areas, and to address their needs for the coming decade. APAI aims to enhance the conservation of biodiversity and management of protected area systems in Africa and to place protected areas high on the political agenda. A Trust Fund for African Protected Areas is intended to serve as a major endowment to ensure a permanent and sustainable source of co-financing for the management of protected areas. About one-third of the world's c44,000 protected areas are in Africa, but these are at risk as never before due to political instability, civil strife and the explosive growth of rural-based populations.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (3), p 2*

Fourth International Hornbill Conference

The Ground Hornbill Research & Conservation Project, Three Cities Game Lodges, South Africa, and the Hornbill Research Foundation, Thailand, will host the Fourth International Hornbill Conference at Mabula Game Lodge, South Africa, on 7–9 November 2005. The scientific programme will cover two days, followed by a one-day workshop for the Hornbill Specialist Group of IUCN and BirdLife International. The principal theme of the conference is 'The Active Management of Hornbills and their Habitats for Conservation'. There will also be a general session to report on other aspects of hornbill biology, and a separate workshop by the IUCN and BirdLife Hornbill Specialist Group to identify conservation priorities. For further details, contact any of the addresses below

(preferably e-mail): Hornbill Conference 2005, c/o The Ground Hornbill Project, Mabula Game Lodge, Private Bag X 1655, Bela-Bela, Limpopo Province, South Africa; fax: +27 14 734 0013; e-mail: hornbillconference2005@yahoo.co.uk.

Source: Alan Kemp in litt. *January 2004*

Leslie Brown Memorial Awards

The Leslie Brown Memorial Award 2002 went to Ruth Tingay to fund her genetic analyses of the historical and contemporary Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaetus vociferoides* populations, the results of which will be used to guide conservation planning for this Critically Endangered raptor. Ruth earned her MSc from the University of Nottingham, UK, for her work on the breeding strategies of the Madagascar Fish Eagle and was awarded a PhD scholarship in 2000 to further her research on the population dynamics and conservation genetics of the species.

In 2003, the Leslie Brown Memorial Award went to Odette Curtis, an MSc student at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa, for a study to examine the situation of conflict between the welfare of tree-nesting raptors and the activities of alien-tree clearing initiatives (specifically, the Working for Water Project), using the Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus* population of the Cape Peninsula as a test-case scenario. Odette previously worked on various raptor projects at the 'Fitztitute'.

Source: Wingspan *12 (2), pp 6–7*

BP Conservation Awards

In 2003, the BP Conservation Programme has made awards, ranging from US$7,500 to US$75,000, to 32 conservation projects in 21 countries, among which was a project aimed at the recovery of Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani* in Uganda. The awards support pioneering projects that are addressing conservation issues of global importance, have strong local support and are being led by students at the under-graduate or post-graduate level.

Source: Birding World *16, p 264*

CCA Ecological Journal

Conservation Corporation Africa (CCA) have just published Vol 5 of their Ecological Journal. It is a substantial publication in 15 sections each relating to one of their tourist lodges or camps. Nine are in southern Africa (Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa) and six in Kenya and Tanzania. The idea of this publication is to provide an outlet for observations and short studies made by the various rangers and guides going out from these lodges every day with tourists. Articles cover mainly birds (which will be noticed in ABC's Literature Review) and mammals, but plants, reptiles and folklore are included as well. In addition to the articles there are many short notes and under each lodge there is a piece on 'Interesting Mammal' and 'Interesting Bird' and sometimes 'Interesting other things' observations made over the last year or so. There is a lot of information here, much of which is unlikely to reach any other publication. An excellent idea of CCA to make this material available, which one can only hope will stimulate other groups to do likewise. There are certainly observations being made in many areas of Africa, and elsewhere, which remain in notebooks or observers' minds and never see the light of day.

Source: Conservation Corporation Africa, P Bag X27, Benmore 2010, South Africa, Internet: www.ccafrica.com

North Africa & North Atlantic Islands

Second Bald Ibis newsletter

Updates for the wild Moroccan and semi-wild Birecik (Turkey) populations of Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, along with details of the work in central Syria concerning the recently relocated population found there are provided by the second issue of the electronic newsletter (dated May 2003) of the International Advisory Group for this species (see *Bull. ABC* 9: 10). There is also news of recent captive-breeding and release efforts, recent publications on the species, and a variety of other news, including a 2002 visit to the last-known colony site in Algeria, where birds were last definitely sighted in 1986 or 1987 (although three birds were reported 100 km further south in 1996), and the possibility, once the political situation improves, of searching for the species in Somalia, from where there is an unconfirmed report of a colony in the early 1990s. The only confirmed report from Somalia was in 1920, but the recent rediscovery of Northern Bald Ibis in Syria proves that other such, apparently surprising, possibilities cannot be eliminated. The newsletter, which is issued in PDF format, is available on request from Chris Bowden, e-mail: chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk.

Source: Chris Bowden in litt. *August 2003*

Northern Bald Ibis doing well in Morocco

In 2003, 85–90 pairs of Northern Bald Ibises *Geronticus eremita* of the Moroccan colony bred, rearing 100 flying young. In 1997, the population was confined to Souss-Massa National Park, which was designated in 1991 specifically to protect the species' nesting and feeding areas, and had fewer than 50 pairs (after 38 full-grown birds had died from unknown causes in May 1996). In 2001, plans for the construction of a holiday resort in the immediate vicinity of the colony (see *Bull. ABC* 9: 9) seemed to condemn the species to extinction. However, the plans were withdrawn and although 40 ibises died from still unexplained causes in 2002, the future of the species looks somewhat brighter again. Due to the conservation programme initiated in 1994/95 by the UK-based Royal Society for the Protection of Birds,

on behalf of BirdLife International, ibis numbers have indeed been slightly but steadily increasing. Conservation measures have included the employment of local staff as wardens and the construction of drinking points to provide clean water close to the breeding cliffs. The main causes of breeding failures have been loss of eggs to predators and poor chick survival as a result of starvation and predation.

Sources: Br. Birds *96, p 529*, Ibis *145, pp 419–431 and Chris Bowden* in litt. *October 2003*

Search for Slender-billed Curlew in Tunisia in January 2003

In January 2003, a search for Slender-billed Curlew Numenius tenuirostris was organised in Tunisia by the local BirdLife International partner Association 'Les Amis des Oiseaux', supported by the Convention on Migratory Species Agreement on Eurasian Waterbirds. Tunisia was traditionally within the wintering area of the species, with 35 records in the last hundred years, most of them between 1970 and 1995. As previous efforts to locate the species on the coast of southern Tunisia had met with little success, c60 wetlands were now surveyed in the north-east. Although northern Tunisia experienced its wettest winter for twenty years resulting in large areas of potentially suitable habitat, no Slender-billed Curlews were found. However, surveys of other waterbirds were carried out and a public awareness campaign was organised.

Source: H. Azafzaf in litt. *January 2004*

Yellow-legged Gulls with orange rings

The Service of Fauna of the Environmental Council of the Government of the Balearic Islands commenced a colour-marking project of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus* [*cachinnans*] *michahellis* in spring 2003. Birds are marked with a metal ring and an orange plastic ring with a four-digit code in black, visible from a distance. The code is a combination letter-number-letter-letter. Yellow-legged Gulls have been recorded along North African coasts south to Senegambia, rarely further south. Any sightings of marked birds should be reported to: Jordi Muntaner, Conselleria de Medi Ambient, Avda. Gabriel Alomar i Villalonga 33, 07006 Palma; e-mail: jmuntaner@sgtmaoti.caib.es, or Manolo Suárez (head ringing coordinator of GOB), Verí 1, 07001 Palma; e-mail: BOT@telefonica.net.

Source: Alain Fossé in litt. *to AfricanBirding, October 2003*

Blue Tits from North Africa and the Canary Islands a separate species

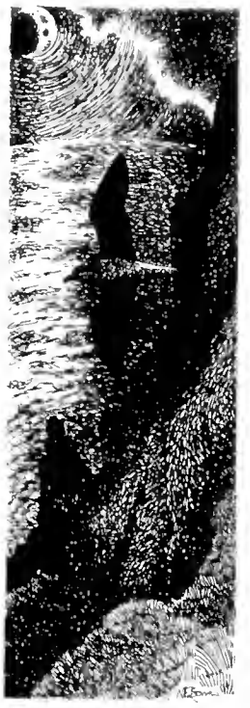
Analyses of molecular data from Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, undertaken by W. Salzburger, J. Martens and C. Sturmbauer, suggest that it actually comprises two species: 'Eurasian' Blue Tit *P. caeruleus* (the European/Middle Asian clade) and 'African' Blue Tit *P. teneriffae* (the North African and Canary Islands clade). The latter can also be distinguished from their European relatives by differences in plumage (darker blue crown, grey-blue mantle), morphology (eg wing/tail ratio) and call.

Source: Mol. Phyl. & Evol. *24, pp 19–25*

Maltese hunters shoot protected birds in Egypt

Maltese hunters, posing as tourists, decimate birdlife in several areas from Port Said in the north to Abu Simbel and Lake Qarun. In 2003, customs in Malta found c700 skins of protected birds, 23 mammals and three reptiles on the return of three hunters from Cairo. The value of the haul was estimated to exceed 70,083 Euros. Bird species included Black-shouldered Kites *Elanus caeruleus*, Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis*, Long-legged Buzzards *Buteo rufinus*, as well as pelicans, storks and bee-eaters.

Source: David Camilleri in litt. *to AfricanBirding, August 2003*



Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

New colony of Zino's Petrel found

The known world population of the Critically Endangered Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* increased from c30 pairs to c45 pairs when 15 occupied nest burrows were discovered at a new site in Madeira National Park in 2003. The new colony, situated in the Pico do Areeiro area, is much more accessible than the three that were previously known, which are located on inaccessible mountain ledges. Introduced Black Rats *Rattus rattus* and feral cats are the main threats to the species.

Sources: Br. Birds *96, p 529* and www.birdlife.net

Latest news from the Cape Verdes

The fifth supplement to *The Birds of the Cape Verde Islands* (Hazevoet 1995) principally offers data brought to the author's (C J Hazevoet) attention since 1999, and contains information on breeding birds and scarce and rare migrants. The latter sections present records for 64 species, of which 15 are new to the archipelago (many previously reported in *Bull. ABC*'s Recent

Reports) and have now been accepted on the country list: Garganey *Anas querquedula*, Blue-winged Teal *A. discors*, Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (first Western African record), Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*, Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*, Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*, Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (first Western African record), Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, Plain Swift *Apus unicolor*, Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* and Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala*.

The situation of several endemic breeding birds appears to be far from promising. Some are on the brink of extinction (e.g. Cape Verde Purple Heron *Ardea* [*purpurea*] *bournei*), whilst others may already have gone (eg Cape Verde Red Kite *Milvus* [*milvus*] *fasciicauda*). Thus far, projects to safeguard the rarer endemic birds have had little or no effect, conservation has not been a priority of the Cape Verde government, and environmental awareness among the local population is minimal or absent. The author concludes that we can only hope that attempts to raise local interest in these issues will be rewarded.

Source: Arq. Mus. Bocage *3 (19), pp 503–528*

West & Central Africa

First evidence of linkage between Lesser Flamingo populations

While recently reviewing the recovery records from the ringing of 8,000 juvenile Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* at Lake Magadi, Kenya, in 1962, Dr Brooks Childress discovered that one of those ringed was found dead near Laayoune, Western Sahara, c6,197 km to the west, in 1997, providing the first evidence of a link between the large East African population and the much smaller Western African population.

Historically, the three distinct geographical groups of Africa's Lesser Flamingos (the third is in southern Africa) have been thought to be genetically isolated, due to the great distances between them, the apparent lack of stopover places and the flight speed of Lesser Flamingos (50–60 km/h). Recently, however, based on several unexplained large increases in the southern African breeding population when environmental conditions were favourable, it has been hypothesised that at least some interchange between the southern and East African populations takes place, but this has never been documented.

Source: Dr. Brooks Childress in litt. *to AfricanBirding, August 2003*

European Honey Buzzard wintering strategies and range

Amongst the most important findings of a recent study of the life history of European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* wintering in south-east Nigeria is that the birds are rather closely associated with lowland rainforest and moist woodlands. If such an association is proved correct, it may indicate that the species has a much smaller wintering range than heretofore supposed (just 25% of the breeding range) and one that is significantly impacted by habitat destruction. There also appears to be some differences in the wintering areas of different age-classes, with young birds more frequently reaching Central Africa. The author of the study, Rob Bijlsma, also speculated that those Honey Buzzards which oversummer in Africa may have experienced adverse conditions during either the previous breeding season or moulting period.

Source: Die Vogelwarte *41, 240–248*

Significant forest increase at Kilum-Ijim, Cameroon

A recent study of changes in forest cover, using satellite imagery and aerial photographs, has revealed that a significant portion of the forest at Kilum-Ijim, Bamenda Highlands, Cameroon, has regenerated since 1988. This can be attributed to the long-standing BirdLife project, started in 1987, which works with local people for the sustainable use of the forest and the improvement of agricultural practices. The study found that between 1958 and 1988 more than 50% of the montane forest was lost, with almost 40% disappearing in 1984–1988. Between 1988 and 1995 the forest started to recover on the eastern (Kilum) side but, as deforestation proceeded on the western (Ijim) side, the overall forest areas continued to shrink. Since 1995 regeneration has started in the west, so that the rate of regeneration (2.3% per annum) has significantly exceeded the rate of deforestation. The forest is important for the survival of the endemic and Endangered Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* and Banded Wattle-eye *Platysteira* [*peltata*] *laticincta*.

Source: World Birdwatch *25(3), p 3*

Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

Birds return to Ascension Island

Due to a feral cat eradication programme, Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Masked Booby *S. dactylatra* and White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* returned, in 2002, to nest successfully for the first time in more than 100 years on Ascension Island.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (2), p 3*

East Africa

Important conservation programme for Socotra

A five-year programme for 'Sustainable Development and Biodiversity Conservation for the People of the Socotra Islands' has been signed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and key stakeholders, including two Yemeni ministries. It aims to assist the government of Yemen with several initiatives, including management of protected areas and support for the local economy through ecotourism and sustainable fisheries. UNDP, the government of Italy and the government of Yemen will collectively contribute over US$5 million to finance the programme. Although relatively small in size, the Socotra islands contain no fewer than 22 Important Bird Areas and have six endemic species, two of which have been classified as Vulnerable: Socotra Cisticola *Cisticola haesitatus* and Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*. For more information, visit www.socotraisland.org.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (2), p 7*

...and for Arabuko-Sokoke forest

Nearly US$1 million has been awarded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for on-going conservation work at Arabuko-Sokoke forest, coastal Kenya. Through conservation projects undertaken since the early 1980s and its designation as a protected area, this biodiversity hotspot still exists, whilst virtually all of the surrounding forests have been cleared. Sustainable nature-based businesses have been established, and in 2001 local communities earned cUS$37,000 from nature guiding, bee-keeping and butterfly farming. Although rural livelihoods and biodiversity conservation have improved, there has been a steady degradation of the forest through unmanaged and mostly illegal exploitation. The three-year USAID-funded project, 'Enhanced sustainability at Arabuko-Sokoke Forest through improved natural resources management by and for stakeholders', will build on BirdLife's earlier conservation successes in this forest. Arabuko-Sokoke has been ranked as the second-most important forest for bird conservation on mainland Africa. Two of the six globally threatened bird species found there are known from only one other site: Sokoke Scops Owl *Otus ireneae* and Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golandi*, which are classified as Endangered.

Source: World Birdwatch *25 (3), p 4*

Oldest-known Lesser Flamingo found at Lake Bogoria

On 13 July 2003, Robert Ndetei of the Kenya Wildlife Service and John Githaiga of the Department of Zoology, University of Nairobi, found a dead ringed Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* at Lake Bogoria. The bird was ringed as a nestling on 30 October 1962 by Leslie Brown and Alan Root, who took advantage of an unusual breeding event at Lake Magadi, Kenya, to ring 8,000 juvenile Lesser Flamingos. With its age of 40.7 years, this bird is believed to be longest-lived Lesser Flamingo known to date.

Source: Dr Brooks Childress in litt. *to AfricanBirding, September 2003*

Indian Ocean islands

What price the future of the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher?

Dave Currie *et al* have recently assessed conservation options for the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina*, which is almost exclusively restricted to the 10 km^2 island of La Digue and is considered the second-rarest endemic bird in the Seychelles. Recent research into the species' habitat requirements was conducted in parallel with an assessment of the suitability of medium-sized islands within the inner Seychelles archipelago for avian ecosystem restoration. Predator eradications on several islands have led to a reduction in the range of alien predators, and future eradications are planned. The authors of the study consider that, in the medium or longer term, it will be necessary to engage in translocations to increase numbers of the flycatcher and secure its long-term future. Two medium-sized islands currently (or shortly will) appear suitable, namely Denis and Curieuse, both of which have limited predators, whilst translocations to Praslin or Silhouette might also be possible, but would require more rigorous, anti-predator management efforts.

Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina* by Michael Hodgson courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *13, pp 97–114*

The breeding avifauna of Cosmoledo Atoll, Seychelles

Scientists have only rarely visited Cosmoledo Atoll, which is part of the Aldabra group, but information has now been published concerning the breeding seabirds of this series of raised coral islands. Based on a four-day visit in June 1999, the atoll has globally significant populations of Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra melanops*, Red-footed Booby *S. sula rubripes* and Sooty Tern *Sterna*

fuscata nubilosa. Small numbers of Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* also breed, as well as five species of landbirds: Madagascar Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata*, Madagascar Cisticola *Cisticola cherina*, Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris* [*sovimanga*] *buchenorum*, Madagascar White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatanus menaiensis* and Pied Crow *Corvus albus*. Although currently uninhabited, the islands have been colonised by exotic fauna and flora, including cats and rats, the product of previous inhabitants. Given its recent designation as an Important Bird Area, the authors recommend that formal protection be granted to Cosmoledo.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *13, pp 151–174*

Pied Crow predates birds on Aldabra

On Aldabra Atoll, a Pied Crow *Corvus albus* was found to regularly catch and eat Madagascar Turtle Doves *Streptopelia picturata*. The crow appeared to take advantage of a situation created by man. Food and water provided by the staff of the local research station attracted large numbers of doves, which were soon joined by Pied Crows. One dominant crow realised greater rewards could be had and started grabbing unsuspecting doves. Other crows would join to finish off the prey, but only the dominant individual appeared to have learned to catch birds. In one instance it also caught a Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* in the same manner. This is apparently the first report of Pied Crows systematically killing wild birds.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *8 (5), p 14–15*

Madagascar Soundscapes

To support BirdLife International's project 'Saving Madagascar's fragile wetlands', WildSounds has reissued the CD 'Madagascar Soundscapes' (reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 6: 72–73) and will donate 100% of the purchase price (UK£8.99) to conservation. The CD contains vocalisations of 26 bird species (plus lemurs and frogs), many of which are endemic or nearly so, incorporated in three soundscapes from, respectively, the east coast, Nosy Mangabé, and the far south.

Source: www.wildsounds.com

Southern Africa

Oldest European Storm-petrel

A freshly dead European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* was picked up at Saldanha Bay, Western Cape, South Africa, on 27 July 2002. It was ringed as an adult in Scotland, UK, on 15 July 1975, 27 years and 12 days before, making it the oldest European Storm-petrel in the SAFRING database. The distance between the ringing and recovery sites is 10,391 km. The previous record was 25 years, four months and 18 days, for a bird that was also ringed in Scotland and recovered in Eastern Cape. The species occurs in southern African waters mainly in November–April, and most ring recoveries are made in these months. The find in July is therefore doubly remarkable, as the bird should have been on its breeding grounds.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *8 (5), p 12*

Slaty Egrets surveyed in the Okavango Delta

Some 36,000 waterbirds were counted at sample sites in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, in January 2003, by a survey team consisting of volunteers from BirdLife Botswana, the Department of Wildlife & National Parks, the RSPB (BirdLife partner in the UK) and the Foundation Working Group for International Waterfowl and Wetland Research (WIWO, The Netherlands). The main survey target was Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*, a Vulnerable species, which numbers fewer than 5,000 individuals and is largely restricted to the wetlands of northern Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Birds were mainly found at roosts and the highest single count was of 153 flying to roost in a large reedbed at Xaxaba, in the Boro floodplain, close to where a breeding colony was discovered in the late 1980s. The latter area was subsequently destroyed by a fire and still hasn't recovered. The breeding biology of the Slaty Egret is poorly known, and the effects of aerial spraying of pyrethroid insecticides over the delta in 2001 and 2002 are unknown. The spraying, used to eliminate tsetse flies from the delta, is believed to have killed approximately two-thirds of all invertebrates, with unknown consequences for birds and other wildlife. The delta is also threatened by plans to dam the Okavango River near Poppa Falls in Namibia.

Source: Stephanie Tyler, BirdLife Botswana, in litt. *October 2003*

Raptor special

The latest issue of *Honeyguide*, the journal of BirdLife Zimbabwe, is entirely devoted to raptors. Within its 264 pages are papers on falconry in the country, the breeding biology and ecology of the African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*, surveys of the Taita Falcon *Falco fasciinucha* in the 1980s, the importance of two species of hyrax in the diets of three eagle species, as well as a broad spectrum of short notes. Anyone interested in supporting the work of BirdLife Zimbabwe should contact the organisation via birds@zol.co.zw.

Source: Honeyguide *48, pp 121–264*

White-winged Flufftails and peatlands

Barry Taylor has recently discovered a significant population of White-winged Flufftails *Sarothrura ayresi* in Mfabeni peatland, in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, South Africa. The discovery clearly establishes the Natal coastal plain as an important distribution centre for the species. The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) has established, together with Barry, that all ten of the important sites in South Africa for the species are within four peatland eco-regions, which could perhaps serve as a

template to determine the flufftail's broader distribution. The distribution of the White-winged Flufftail is not only restricted to the upland wetlands of southern Africa. The species is now known to occur in the coastal wetlands of Maputaland, KwaZulu-Natal. There is a strong correlation between the distribution of the White-winged Flufftail and mires dominated by *Carex* sp mixed with *Phragmites australis*, *Typha capensis* and, often, *Cyperus fastigiatus*. Further research is required to determine the extent of the White-winged Flufftail's dependency on mire habitat in South Africa.

Source: Barry Taylor

Blue Cranes take to the water

Among the many short notes concerning interesting bird behaviour contained in one of the most recent issues of *Promerops*, the magazine of the Cape Bird Club, there is a short account, illustrated with photographs, of a pair of Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradiseus*, which nested in the Western Cape in 2002/03. To escape predation, the pair nested on an island within a comparatively deep dam lake. Once the chick had hatched this enforced the family to swim to the mainland on a regular basis to feed.

Source: Promerops *254, p 17*

Foraging behaviour of Green Wood-hoopoe studied

A study undertaken by Andy Radford, from the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, recently shed some light on the feeding behaviour of Green Wood-hoopoes *Phoeniculus purpureus*. Males of this cooperative breeder, which are larger than females and have longer bills, forage along larger branches and devote much time to probing under bark and in broken-off ends of branches. Females mostly peck. The differences in feeding technique are supposedly the result of the difference in bill length and shape, and are interpreted as a means of reducing competition for food. A Green Wood-hoopoe is more likely to forage alongside an individual of the opposite sex than next to one of the same sex, and it is also more aggressive towards group members of the same sex. Social status also influences foraging behaviour, as dominants seem to exclude subordinates from prime feeding areas. To satisfy their daily food demands, subordinates therefore spend more time foraging away from the main group.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *8 (5), p 13*

Internet resources

African Bird Club
The ABC website underwent a major revamp in September 2002 and has a new look, with much of the information now updated. News from the African region is added weekly and there is a new section dedicated to the Pan-African Ornithological Congress. Payment for membership can now be made online and sales goods and trip reports ordered. A section has been added concerning books about African birds, with information on each major field guide and a list of its pros and cons, ideal for anyone contemplating a trip but unsure as to which field guide to buy.

In addition, ABC is planning a new venture, jointly with Birding Africa, to build a new resource centre for African birders. Over the next year or so we will be collating information about birding in different African countries and launching a new joint website which will provide much useful information for birders in and visiting each country. We will be requesting offers of help in compiling country information in the near future!

BirdLife International (www.birdlife.org) has revised and updated its website, which includes pages of current news, information on BirdLife's campaigns, and a datazone where facts on Important Bird Areas and threatened species are stored.

Fatbirder (www.fatbirder.com) is a gateway to a whole world of birding, including information on every country in the world and links to more than 15,000 other birding websites. If you travel abroad, you may be able to locate a helpful local birder, at www.birdingpal.com, who would be willing to show you the birds in his or her area.

For bird records from **The Gambia**, visit www.gambiabirding.org. Information on birds in **Tanzania** can be found on the updated website of the Tanzania Bird Atlas: http://tanzaniabirdatlas.com.

The site of the **World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls** (WWGBP) www.Raptors-International.de contains information on the working group's activities, publications etc. The WWGBP has created several Yahoo Discussion Groups, such as 'Raptor Conservation' (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Raptor-Conservation), 'Spotted Eagles' (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Spotted-Eagles), 'Vulture Conservation' (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Vulture-Conservation) and 'Satellite Telemetry" (http://www.egroups.com/group/SatTelOrn).

The **Tropical Biology Association** (www.tropical-biology.org) runs courses in tropical ecology and conservation, and in 2003 celebrated ten years of activities.

New bibliographic database for ornithologists
The BOU, AOU, and Birds Australia are proud to announce the replacement of **Recent Ornithological Literature** (ROL) with the new **Worldwide Ornithological Literature** (OWL). OWL is an indexed bibliographic database of citations from the worldwide scientific literature that

pertain to the science of ornithology. OWL deals almost exclusively with serial publications. The new database is accessible at www.BIRDLIT.ORG at no charge.

OWL's scope will be more than just the "recent" literature of ornithology. Eventually, the goal is to have the online database go back 50 or more years for citations to the serial literature. OWL also asks for citations for all recent **doctoral dissertations** and those papers published in obscure serials not usually covered in OWL. Anyone interested in helping should contact **Jay Sheppard**, Managing Editor (**JMSheppar@aol.com**) or **Bob Dowsett**, Afrotropical Coordinator (**Dowsett@aol.com**), for a list of journals needing abstractors and other information. Abstractors should ideally have access to a computer and their assigned journals.

Over 1,100 serials have been cited in ROL/OWL since 1990. In a sample, 24% were exclusively ornithological in scope, 73% were not, and 3% were undetermined. Bibliographies from 40 *Birds of North America* life-history accounts were evaluated. Of the 5,442 total citations, 66% were serials. A comparison revealed that 59% of the serial citations should have been found in *Biological Abstracts* and approximately 96% should have been found in the ROL. These numbers are only for comparative purposes, as many papers preceded both indexes by decades, if not a century or more. The commercial abstracting services charge a considerable fee for their services, whilst OWL is free to any internet user. The database will be expanded with the addition of the old ROL supplements to the *Ibis*, *Auk* and *Emu* printed over the past 20 years. By the end of 2004, we expect to have a searchable database of 75,000–100,000 records.

In the 21st century, any previously published scientific information that cannot be later found is literature that may be lost to science. We must be able to find all those papers published in our field of interest regardless of where in the world one is working. Please consider helping abstract. This is not an exceptionally time consuming endeavour. You will be helping generations of ornithologists to come.

Source: Bob Dowsett in litt. *December 2003*

Requests

Research into Peregrine and Barbary Falcons

The genetics of the genus *Falco* is currently being researched by a team headed by Anne-Marie Drieux-Dumont. The aim is to investigate the evolutionary history of the morphologically variable Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* and its close relative, Barbary Falcon *F. pelegrinoides*. The team would be very grateful for any biological material (feathers, blood or, for dead birds, muscle) of any subspecies from anywhere in their breeding ranges. Furthermore, material from hybrid falcons and other species in the genus, such as Lanner *F. biarmicus*, Merlin *F. columbarius* and Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonorae*, is also required. Contact: Anne-Marie Drieux-Dumont, Director of Genetics Laboratory, International Foundation for Conservation and Development of Wildlife, PO Box 116, Inezgane, Morocco. Fax: +212 48 240766; e-mail: am2d.fcg@wanadoo.fr.

Nightjar photographs wanted

Photographs of nightjars and related families are urgently required for a new, high-quality, comprehensive photographic guide currently in preparation. This title is to be published by WILDGuides Ltd, with profits benefiting BirdLife International. If you are able to help, please contact Nigel Cleere, 2 Hawthorn House, Round fields, Upper Bucklebury, Berks RG7 6RQ, UK; e-mail: cleere@churr.freeserve.co.uk.

Corrigenda

In *Bull. ABC* 10 (1), on p 9, middle column, the item on Red-tailed Tropicbird should be corrected as follows. The bird was found by Marie-Claude Portier in her garden at Saint Gilles Les Hauts, Réunion, Mascarenes. Cf: Le Corre, M., Salamolard, M. and Portier, M.-C. 2003. Transoceanic dispersion of the Red-tailed Tropicbird in the Indian Ocean. *Emu* 103: 1–2.

In *Bull. ABC* 10 (2), on p 95, right-hand column, the reference to Fig 6 on line 33 should be to Fig 5, and that to Fig 7, on line 36, should be Fig 6. On p 96, left-hand column, line 16, the reference to Fig 7 should read Fig 6. ?

African Bird Club *Conservation Fund*

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 2005. 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

ABC Conservation Fund News

Since the last *Bull. ABC* was published, the Conservation Fund has awarded UK£800 to Potiphar Kaliba for a study to determine the current population size, distribution and population trends of Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* in the Nyika National Park, Malawi, and the threats facing the species. This project contributes to the implementation of the International Blue Swallow Action Plan and is being carried out in collaboration with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Malawi. In June, through a generous donation from a member we were able to award Diana Nalwanga from Makerere University at Kampala, Uganda, UK£500 towards her proposed research on landuse and biodiversity. The Fund has also awarded UK£500 to Dr Richard Dean in South Africa for studies and cataloguing of museum skins in Zimbabwe.

There has been a plethora of new applications for funding. The first of these is for survey work and research on the rare and endangered Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*, by Djiboutian Houssein A Rayaleh, with technical assistance from the World Pheasant Association (WPA) and the Partridge, Quail and Francolin Specialist Group of WPA/IUCN/BirdLife. Other applications being considered include an education project in Cameroon, preparation of an inventory of the birds of Brazzaville, Congo (and encouraging conservation awareness in the local community), a waterbird survey at Lake Turkana in Kenya, and work on Mackinder's Eagle Owl *Bubo capensis mackinderi* and African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* in an agricultural area in Nyeri District in Kenya's central province, working in close cooperation with a farmer who has a keen interest in owls and has developed a small-scale tourism operation whereby he shows visitors owls. We have also been asked to give further support to students for small projects in Uganda (see below). Unfortunately the Conservation Fund is so low at present that we have had to defer decisions on all these projects, and on the radio telemetry work on vultures in Namibia. However, the Conservation Committee (Paul Buckley, Lincoln Fishpool, Hazell Thompson and myself) is in agreement that the Djibouti Francolin proposal should receive an award as soon as sufficient funds become available.

A report has been received from Simon Musila on his study of the little-known Chapin's Fly-

catcher *Muscicapa lendu* in Kakamega Forest in Kenya, which was funded by Avifauna. So too has another report, by Marjorie Muienr and Pauline Nantongo of *Nature*Uganda on the diverse small projects carried out by students at Makerere University in Kampala, to which ABC gave funding last year. If the financial situation of the Conservation Fund improves we hope to be able to encourage more small projects of this nature.

Stephanie Tyler

Research projects in Uganda

*Nature*Uganda and the Institute of Environment and Natural Resources at Makerere University have jointly selected a number of projects by young students, for most of whom this was their first experience of research. As a result, interest to pursue further study or full-time research may be stimulated. Dr Julius Arinaitwe, who as a result of receiving such a grant in the 1990s gained an interest in birds, collected data that supported Lake George's qualification as a Ramsar site, and thereafter gained both MSc and PhD degrees, and is now working as the GEF Programme Officer with Birdlife International, based in Kenya. The ABC grant to *Nature*Uganda has resulted in some interesting studies, summaries of which are presented below.

The ecology of Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* at the Meat Packers, Kampala, by Nkangali Martin. This project was conducted with the aim of investigating the ecology of Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* at the Kampala city abattoir, and to build a databank that can be used to establish a conservation programme for the birds. The objectives were to estimate the population size of the vultures at the abattoir, discover where the vultures came and went after feeding, establish their diurnal activities at the abattoir, and the attitude of workers at the abattoir to the birds. The results showed the population to be 120–150 birds which visited from various directions, including the east (industrial area), west (city centre) and north (Kololo), and arrived at different times of the day, with few early in the morning and the majority arriving later in the day. Diurnal activities included feeding, soaring and resting at the end of the day. The birds left at different times in different directions, with some taking the same direction as they had come. The survey of human attitudes indicated that most (87%) of the people in the abattoir were indifferent to the presence of vultures.

The characteristics of trees used for nesting and/or roosting by birds at Makerere University, by Kifuko Richard. Makerere University has a number of nesting and/or roosting trees, among which are *Ficus natalensis*, *F. ovata*, *Mangifera indica* and many others. Currently birds around the university are threatened with habitat destruction, mainly through tree cutting to make room for construction. The study aimed to identify different types of trees used for nesting and/or roosting; their suitability for those purposes; and design recommendations to promote avian conservation. The transect method was used in this study, dividing the study area into four transects, each of c1,000 m x 40 m along roads. Trees were categorised as illustrated by Katende *et al* (1995). The results indicated that more trees are used for roosting than nesting, with deciduous trees being better used than evergreens. Trees for nesting were of greater mean height with smaller bole heights, and smaller diameter at breast height, compared to those for roosting.

Ecology of Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitoriodes* in and around Mbarara University, by A B Karekona. The study was conducted to determine the activity patterns of Grey-backed Fiscals during daytime, from 06.00 hrs–19.00 hrs in four study sites in and around Mbarara University of Science and Technology. The different sites showed significant differences in the numbers of shrikes using random samples within them. A significant correlation was detected between grass height, perch site and distribution. Feeding was found to be the main activity throughout the study period and prey items were mainly insects such as grasshoppers, moths and butterflies. The species also fed on grain like millet and maize.

24th International Ornithological Congress 2006

13–19 August 2006 • Hamburg, Germany

Call for symposium proposals and pre-registration

The Scientific Programme Committee (SPC) for the 24th International Ornithological Congress 2006 invites you to submit symposium proposals. Symposia are aimed at the general ornithologist and to provide up-to-date coverage of current ornithological research. Each symposium will include 5 speakers: 2 of these will be invited by the conveners to provide keynote addresses that summarize the global progress of ornithological science in the field over the last four years and to address priorities for future research. The other 3 speakers will be chosen by conveners, with guidance from the SPC, from abstracts of accepted contributed papers. This is intended to increase global participation and/or allow new researchers to contribute to symposia. The call for contributed papers (which will come in autumn 2004) will include a box that a contributor can check if they wish to be considered for a specific symposium. In cases where 3 additional speakers cannot be found for a symposium topic, conveners will be allowed to invite additional speakers.

Each symposium should have 2 co-conveners. Since this is an international congress, the SPC will give preference in choosing symposium topics to symposia with co-conveners from different continents, and, failing this, from different countries. If it is not possible to meet these criteria, a brief explanation should be given under 'Justification of symposium' on the application form. Conveners may choose themselves as keynote speakers. Conveners can organize only one symposium. Also note that symposium speakers cannot give another oral presentation during the congress, but can apply to organize a round table discussion or present a poster. **Proposals for symposia must be received on or before 1 April 2004**. We urge you to use the electronic submission form available on the IOC meeting web site http://www.i-o-c.org. If you are unable to use the electronic form, please contact the chair of the SPC, Susan Hannon, at IOC2006@biology.ualberta.ca

If you cannot submit your proposal by e-mail, please mail it directly to the programme chair: Susan Hannon, Dept of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6G 2E9.

Please provide a title of symposium, Names, institution or affiliation, addresses, phone, fax, email of Principal organizer, Co-organizer, first and second keynote speakers, and describe (400 words maximum) goals, objectives, importance of the symposium and outline briefly what each keynote speaker will cover, giving a preliminary title if possible. Justify (250 words maximum) why this symposium is important and timely and why it will be of interest to IOC congress participants. If you cannot find a co-convener from another continent or country, explain why. The justification will not appear in the program or on the web site.

All proposals will be reviewed by the SPC in August 2004 and symposium organizers will be notified as to whether their proposal has been accepted shortly thereafter.

The IOC is not able to provide any financial assistance to symposium organizers or participants. Organizers must make this clear to participants.

We ask that symposium organizers have a firm commitment from keynote speakers to attend the meeting before listing them in their proposal. Once a proposal has been accepted and the speakers finalized, we will request abstracts for each of the keynote talks. Summaries of accepted symposia will be posted on the IOC website. We also ask that symposium conveners inform speakers that the conference proceedings will be published, so that speakers must be willing to submit a paper on their presentation.

We also call for **pre-registration** if you like to receive all further information about the congress. Please use the electronic submission form available on the IOC meeting web site http://www.i-o-c.org. If you are unable to use the electronic form, please contact us by e-mail at info@i-o-c.org or mail it to: IOC 2006, Institute of Avian Research, An der Vogelwarte 21, 26386 Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

• Second Announcement •

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Abstracts must be in English or French and must not exceed 300 words. The name and address of the author(s) and the title of the paper must be clearly shown. In the case of multiple authors, the name of the person presenting the paper should be indicated by an asterisk.

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First-ever photographs of Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri* and first detailed observations since 1962

Iain Robertson

Premières photos du Râle d'Olivier *Amaurornis olivieri* et premières observations détaillées depuis 1962. L'auteur rapporte l'observation du Râle d'Olivier *Amaurornis olivieri*, espèce endémique à Madagascar et gravement menacée d'extinction, au Lac Ampandra (16°39'S 44°49'E), près du village de Bejofo-Antanadava, district de Besalampy, dans le nord-ouest de Madagascar, le 29 novembre 2002. Deux adultes et un couple avec deux jeunes âgés d'environ deux semaines ont été vus. Le lendemain, l'auteur a pu photographier l'espèce et obtenir un enregistrement des vocalisations pour la toute première fois.

Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri* is one of the least-known birds in Africa. It is endemic to Madagascar where it is known from three widely separated localities in the Sakalava country of the western lowlands. It is considered globally threatened, in the category Critically Endangered. It was first described in 1929 from an undated specimen obtained at Antsalova, near Maintirano at c18°40'S 44°37'E[3]. The species was then found c300 km to the north-east, at Ambararatabe, near Lac Kinkony, (c16°19'S 46°04'E), where seven specimens were obtained in March 1931, six of them along the Tsiribahina River[5]. A female was taken from a nest at Nosy Ambositra on the Mangoky River (21°55'S 44°00'E), approximately 360 km south of the type locality in March 1962[1]. In May 1995 a single was seen at Lac Bemamba (18°46'S 44°22'E)[4] but subsequent searches in this area have proved unsuccessful. In December 2001, two were observed at a marsh known as Amborompotsy, near the village of Andimaka (19°50'S 44°43'E), c30 km south of the Manambolo River; this is c75 km south-southeast of Lac Bemamba[7].

The birds along the Tsiribahina River were found 'on floating vegetation on a narrow deep stream bordered with coarse grass locally called 'bararata', apparently *Phragmites mauritianus*'[5]. The nest at Nosy Ambositra was 50 cm above ground in bulrushes *Typha angustifolia* near water in a marshy area with bulrushes, water-lilies *Nymphaea stellata* and *Phragmites mauritianus*, and stretches of open water. The two eggs, presumed to be a complete clutch, were creamy white marked with chestnut.

The species may suffer from loss of habitat owing to increasing rice cultivation and the impact of introduced fish. It may also suffer from systematic exploitation for food, and the eggs from the only known nest were eaten by local people[2]. At Lac Bemamba, Ramanampamonjy was told that its flesh was good, and that it had become scarce in the area because it was trapped and its nests were robbed in September–October. His informant indicated that the species had not been seen or caught in the area for six years[6].

In late October 2002 I set out from Mahajunga in north-west Madagascar, accompanied by Sama Zefania from BirdLife International (Madagascar), to survey wetland habitats in the hope of finding the species. Our eight-day search of Lac Kinkony and the Tsiribahina River proved unsuccessful. The habitat on the Tsiribahina River where Rand collected in 1931 had changed beyond recognition; there was very little *Phragmites* or floating vegetation remaining and smaller waterways were choked with the exotic floating water-hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes*. We showed local people a laminated card with an illustration of the species, but they did not recognise the bird. Eventually we did find one villager who had seen the species at Lac Kinkony. He was able to tell us that the bird had a local (Sakalava) name, 'Vorfaly'. 'Faly' (or 'fady') means taboo, so the species is effectively protected in this area.

Now armed with a Sakalava name as well as the illustrations I continued alone, travelling on foot and by ox-cart. In the Ambohipaky region, c80 km west of Kinkony, there were many apparently suitable lakes with *Phragmites* beds and floating vegetation but unfortunately water levels were unusually low due to a localised drought. The bird was not widely known to local people, but with the

help of Vincente Ramana, a villager who acted as my guide, I was able to find three persons who recognised the bird from the illustration and also knew the local name. One said that 'Vorfaly' was 'the King of Birds', presumably in deference to its local taboo status. I was told that 1–2 pairs occurred in at least three sites in the Ambohipaky area. The birds were apparently very shy and difficult to see, except during the wet season when they could be seen on floating vegetation away from the *Phragmites* beds. Thus, after spending nearly two weeks surveying 12 sites in this area, all I had to show was an inconclusive silhouette view of two small rails in dense *Phragmites* at one of the sites.

After five weeks in the field I reached the small village of Bejofo-Antanandava, Besalampy district, on 29 November. Vincente and I eventually found a villager who not only recognised the illustration but also said that he could show us the bird! The site was Lac Ampandra (16°39'S 44°49'E), a short distance from the village. As I watched our new guide thatching his roof with palm fronds, I waited impatiently with a mixture of mounting excitement and a feeling that this would be another false alarm (at other sites some locals had confused the bird with Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrula alleni*). On reaching the lake we hired a dugout canoe from a fisherman and paddled across the lake towards the *Phragmites* beds. After c1 hour, by which time I was becoming increasingly less optimistic, the boatman suddenly began to hone in on a call, which he had recognised. As we approached the reeds, in a shaded inlet covered with floating vegetation, there was an adult Sakalava Rail! We eventually found two single adults and a pair with two chicks, approximately two weeks old. The birds were not shy and permitted a careful approach to within 2 m. The following morning we returned to the site and I was fortunate to obtain the first photographs and sound-recordings of the species (the latter have been deposited at the National Sound Archive, London, UK).

The birds inhabited dense 'bararata', here reaching a height of 3–4 m, with floating vegetation, mainly *Nymphaea* and *Eichhornia* between the clumps of reeds. The birds walked in a *Jacana*-like manner on the floating vegetation where they picked food items from the surface. The tail was held cocked and flicked constantly. When disturbed the adults climbed to about 1.5 m in the dense *Phragmites*, the chicks vanishing into the base of the clumps. The mantle, upperwing-coverts, scapulars, tertials and rump were bright chestnut-brown (Figs 1–3). The edges of the closed primaries were duller brown. The crown, nape, face-sides, throat, breast, rest of underparts and tail were dark slate-grey. The bill was bright yellow with a hint of greenish, quite long, slightly decurved and deep at the base. The eyes were bright red, surrounded by a vivid vermilion orbital ring. In deep shade the pupils dilated to an extent that the eye appeared black surrounded by the bright orbital ring. The legs and feet were bright pinkish red. The downy chicks were overall sooty grey with a hint of brown on the mantle, and the legs and feet were blackish with a hint of dark red on the anterior of the tarsus. The bill was black with a bright pale pink base to the upper mandible. The eyes were dark. The contact call, a constantly repeated *kick* was uttered by both adults with chicks and also by the other two individuals.

The species was well known to the boatman (G Malem) who estimated that there might be 20 pairs at the site. He said that it was double-brooded and that in the wet season when the area was inundated, it could be seen feeding along the lakeshore away from the *Phragmites* beds. Besides the contact note, he knew of another call that he described as *tirrreee*, probably uttered during display. In this region the bird has no local name and is not protected by 'Fady'; however it is not hunted as it is considered to be too small, the locals preferring the much larger Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*. My guide had never seen a nest and said that local people did not take the eggs for food. There are several other lakes in the area, including Lac Amparihy, a large site with extensive reedbeds where the species is apparently common (L Ramamonjy pers comm). Unfortunately, I was unable to visit these sites due to the onset of the rains, which resulted in swollen rivers making access impossible (see Fig 4 for sites surveyed).

It would appear that Sakalava Rail still inhabits small lakes with 'bararata' and floating vegetation in the northern part of its known range where it may be locally common at some sites. During the dry season the species is apparently confined to the impenetrable 'bararata' beds which are virtually impossible to enter on foot (the water was 1.5 m deep at Lac Ampandra). One would be very fortunate to observe the species from the shore. During the wet season, when the bird is evidently easier to see, most of the sites are inaccessible. The

species is protected by taboo in the Lac Kinkony and Ambohipaky areas and is not hunted. In the Ambohipaky, Befania and Bejofo areas the habitat would appear to be comparatively safe, as there is a locally important fishing industry. Dried fish is the main source of income for the villagers and it is unlikely that lakes would be drained for rice cultivation. 'Bararata' is cut in large quantities for a variety of uses, but this practice appears to be sustainable, as there is no obvious sign of destroyed reedbeds at any of the sites. Although hunters from Mahajunga regularly shoot waterfowl at lakes in the Ambohipaky and Befania region, it is unlikely that they would target Sakalava Rail because of its small size and the dense cover provided by its preferred habitat. There is a multitude of potentially suitable lakes between the Sambao and Manambaho Rivers, and also near Maintirano, which have yet to be surveyed.

Acknowledgements

Dr Frank Hawkins of Conservation International, who initially suggested this survey, assisted me greatly in Antananarivo. Marc Rabenandrasana and Sama Zefania of BirdLife International, Antananarivo, provided much useful advice and encouragement. M. Vincente Ramana in Ambohipaky proffered his hospitality and stalwart efforts as guide, driver and interpreter. M. Leonard Ramamonjy, and in particular, M. George Malem, in Bejofo, also assisted me and without their local knowledge and help I might never have found the bird.

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Figure 1. Adult Sakalava Rail / Râle d'Olivier adulte *Amaurornis olivieri*, Lac Ampandra, Madagascar, November 2002 (Iain Robertson)

Figure 2. Adult Sakalava Rail / Râle d'Olivier adulte *Amaurornis olivieri*, Lac Ampandra, Madagascar, November 2002 (Iain Robertson)

Figure 3. Adult Sakalava Rail / Râle d'Olivier adulte *Amaurornis olivieri*, Lac Ampandra, Madagascar, November 2002 (Iain Robertson)

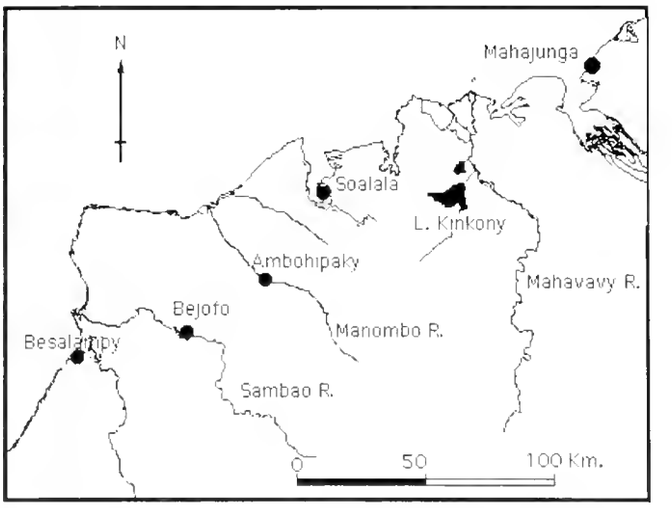

Figure 4. Map of sites surveyed in north-west Madagascar.
Carte des sites inventoriés dans le nord-ouest de Madagascar

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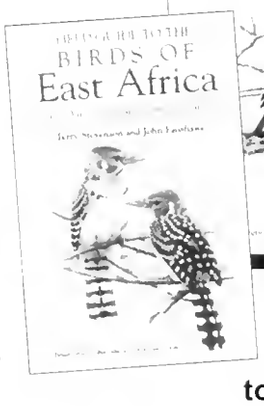

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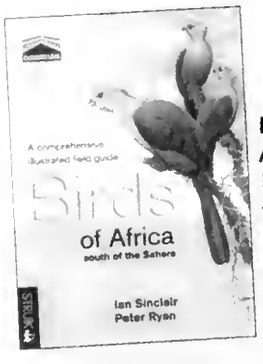

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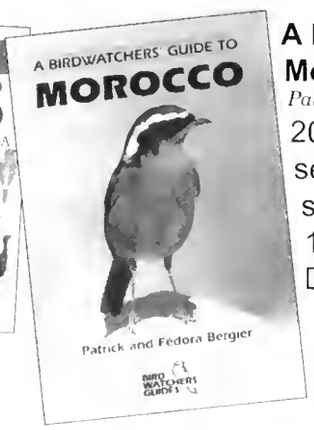

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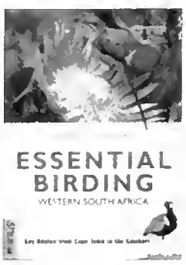

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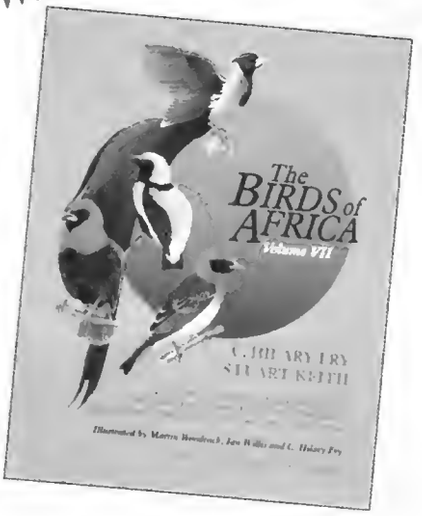

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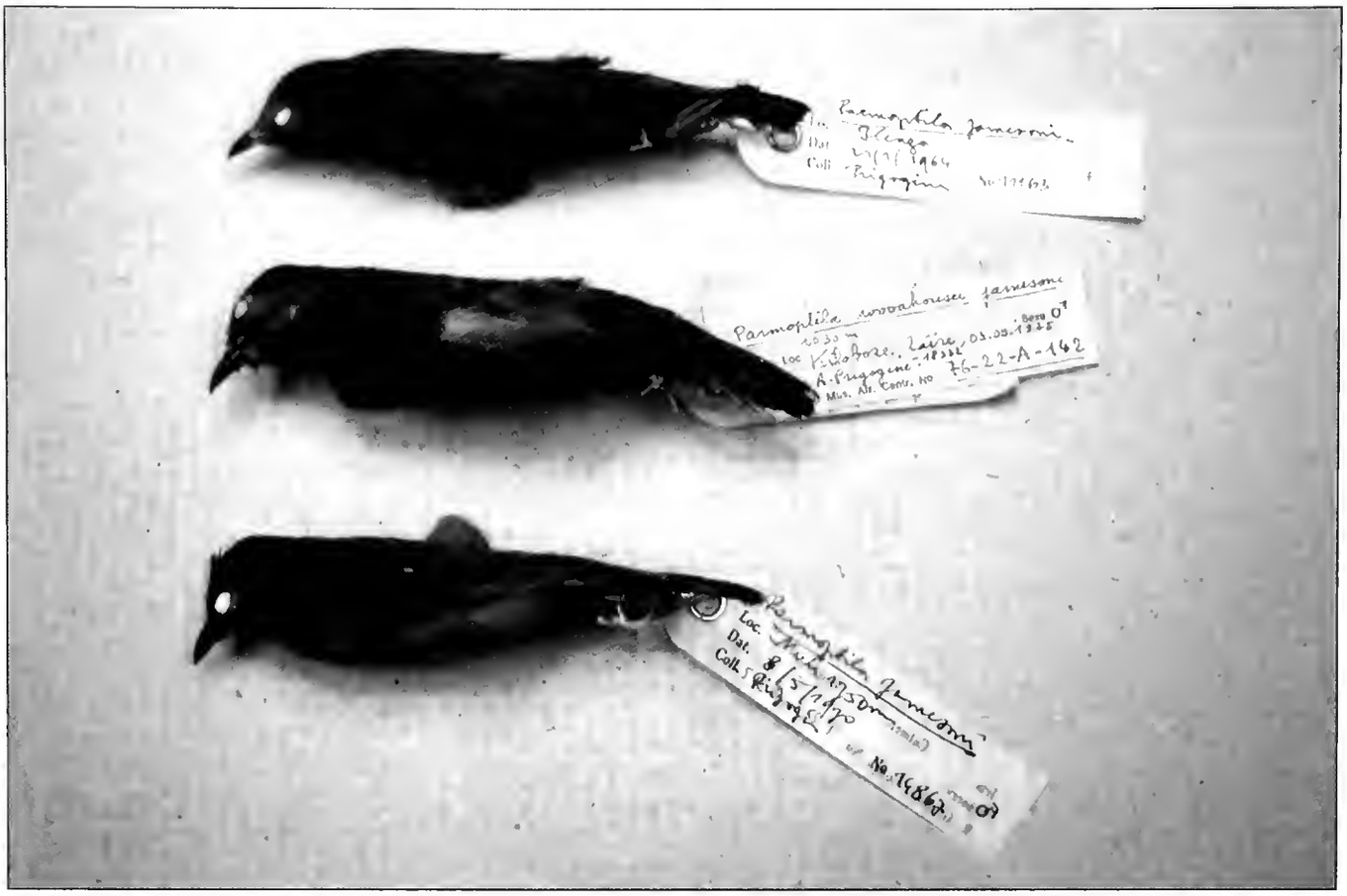

Figure 1. Adult males / mâles adultes *Parmoptila jamesoni* © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (Alain Reygel)

Figure 2. Adult females / femelles adultes *Parmoptila jamesoni* © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (Alain Reygel)

Confusing antpeckers

Dr John A. Eyre

Des parmoptiles problématiques. L'auteur rapporte l'observation d'un couple de parmoptiles dans la forêt de Bwindi, Ouganda. Après avoir constaté que les illustrations des parmoptiles dans plusieurs des ouvrages consultés ne correspondaient pas aux oiseaux vus, l'auteur a appris que des études récentes ont conclu que le genre *Parmoptila* comprend trois, et non deux, espèces: *Parmoptila rubrifrons*, *P. woodhousei* et *P. jamesoni*. En Afrique de l'Est, il s'agit de la dernière espèce (précédemment traitée comme une sous-espèce de *P. woodhousei*), dont le mâle ressemble au mâle *rubrifrons*, mais avec les joues de la même couleur brun-roux que les parties inférieures, et non sombres pointillées de blanc, tandis que la femelle ressemble à la femelle *woodhousei*, mais avec les parties inférieures marquées de barres ou de croissants, plutôt que de petites taches.

On 9 August 2002, while birding with three colleagues and our guide (Hassan Mutebi) in roadside forest at The Neck, between Buhoma and Ruhija, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, in south-west Uganda, I observed a small passerine feeding in a dense tangle of vines c2 m above ground. My initial impression was that it superficially resembled a Red-faced Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus laetus* but, with better views, it clearly was not this species. The bird was grey-brown above with a rufous supercilium and face, the latter colour extending onto the throat and upper breast, and contrasting with the rest of the underparts, which were whitish, barred grey.

I drew the attention of the other observers (John Clark, Brian Foster, Mike Shaw and HM) to the bird and continued to watch it as it climbed the tangle. I was more than a little surprised to hear my companions describe a bird quite unlike the one I was watching. It soon became obvious that there were two birds in the same tangle, but none of us could locate both. Following some frantic searching, both birds disappeared high into the tangle and we resorted to leafing through the recently published *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa*[3]. We concluded that we had been watching the bird described, on Plate 269, as Woodhouse's Antpecker *Parmoptila woodhousei*. My companions had seen a male and myself a female. The illustration of the male was apparently quite accurate, but the female was strikingly different to the bird I had been watching. In particular, the breast is illustrated as being densely spotted, whereas the bird I saw appeared to have a narrowly scaled or barred breast.

Upon our return to the UK, we checked other modern literature, including Clement *et al*[1]. On Plate 38 of that guide two species are illustrated: Flowerpecker Weaver-finch *Parmoptila woodhousei*, and Red-fronted Flowerpecker Weaver-finch *P. rubrifrons*. The female *P. woodhousei* resembles the bird I saw but, again, the breast is shown as being irregularly spotted, as in Stevenson & Fanshawe[3], rather than barred. Furthermore, the species is illustrated as being sexually monomorphic, with the male and female virtually identical, and mapped only for West Africa, not extending as far east as Uganda. In contrast, the range of *P. rubrifrons* is considered to reach Uganda, and the male superficially resembles the male *P. woodhousei* of Stevenson & Fanshawe[3]. However, it is depicted as having dark cheeks, rather than the rusty cheeks observed by my companions. Moreover, the female *P. rubrifrons* lacks the rusty cheeks of female *P. woodhousei*.

By now thoroughly confused, I continued to check other literature and found, with relief, that the illustrations of both male and female *Parmoptila* in van Perlo[2] appeared correct. However, van Perlo[2] names the species *P. rubrifrons*, although the plumages of both sexes differ from the species of the same name in Clement *et al*[1]. Further adding to the confusion, the illustrations in Stevenson & Fanshawe[3] appear to be a male *P. rubrifrons* (after van Perlo[2]) and a female *P. woodhousei*. I contacted Norman Arlott, who illustrated Stevenson & Fanshawe[3] and who informed me that he had based his illustrations on skins in the Natural History Museum (Tring),

but I subsequently learned that this institution has no female *Parmoptila* specimens from Uganda. I began to consider that the *Parmoptila* I had observed in Uganda is either a distinctive subspecies of *P. rubrifrons* or that the genus contains three species, rather than the two illustrated in the current literature. The Ugandan *Parmoptila* is dimorphic, as illustrated by van Perlo[2], but Clement *et al*[1] illustrate only *P. rubrifrons*; although they do mention *P. r. jamesoni* for western Uganda, only the male plumage is described. To confirm this, I contacted Dr Michel Louette, at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, in Tervuren (Belgium), who kindly supplied a verbal description (and subsequently photographs) of *Parmoptila* specimens from the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, close to the Ugandan border. The descriptions closely matched those of the birds observed by myself and my colleagues in Uganda, particularly the barred breast of the female.

In an attempt to avoid further confusion being promulgated in the literature, I contacted Martin Woodcock, who I was aware was illustrating the final volume of the *Birds of Africa*. He has subsequently reviewed the history and systematics of the *Parmoptila* genus and concluded that it does, indeed, comprise three species:

- Red-fronted Antpecker *Parmoptila rubrifrons* (in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, with a claim from southern Mali presumably based on a misidentification; R. Demey pers comm);
- Woodhouse's Antpecker *P. woodhousei* (from south-east Nigeria through southern Cameroon and Gabon to the western Democratic Republic of Congo);
- Jameson's Antpecker *P. jamesoni* (in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, western Uganda and north-west Tanzania)[4].

This taxonomy was widely accepted during the early-20th century, but then apparently forgotten during a bout of lumping since the 1940s.

Acknowledgements

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Status of Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* and Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *C. beaudouini* in The Gambia

William S. Clark[a] *and Clive Barlow*[b]

Le statut du Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus* et du Circaète de Beaudouin *C. beaudouini* en Gambie. Du fait que le Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus* et le Circaète de Beaudouin *C. beaudouni* sont souvent considérés comme conspécifiques, leur statut respectif en Gambie reste à préciser. De l'analyse de plus de 50 observations de circaètes effectuées pendant les trois dernières années dans le pays, ainsi que de quelques autres mentions, il apparaît que le Circaète de Beaudouin peut être observé durant toute l'année (mais aucun nid n'a encore été trouvé), tandis que le Circaète Jean-le-Blanc semble rare. Les auteurs invitent les observateurs à leur faire parvenir toute observation relative à ces deux espèces.

Standard works[3,8] on bird status and distribution in West Africa, including The Gambia[1], have not distinguished between Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* and Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *C. beaudouini*. Others[2,12] treat them as species, indicate the difficulties in separating them, and list the status of Short-toed Eagle in The Gambia as rare. Del Hoyo *et al*[7] also recognised them as different species, but depicted them as both occurring in The Gambia, whereas Ferguson-Lees & Christie[9] show the range of Beaudouin's Snake Eagle as including The Gambia, but that of Short-toed Eagle to be north and east of, but not within, The Gambia.

Clark[5] presented arguments for species status for the two (as well as for Black-chested Snake Eagle *C. pectoralis*), and he recently enumerated field marks that permit field workers to separate adult Beaudouin's Snake Eagles from all Short-toed Snake Eagles, and the all-brown juvenile plumage of Beaudouin's Snake Eagle from Brown Snake Eagle *C. cinereus*[4].

For the past three years we, especially CB, have been noting the identification features of all of the more than 50 snake eagles of these two species seen in The Gambia, including studying more than 15 photos taken by WSC and others. We have identified more than 40 adult and two juvenile Beaudouin's Snake Eagles, but not a single Short-toed Eagle.

Adult Beaudouin's Snake Eagles have been seen throughout the year in The Gambia (although no nests have been found). One juvenile was seen and a distant photograph taken by WSC in early January, in the Lower River Division. The other juvenile was observed by CB and photographed by John Ovenden, on 23 April 2002, in extensive rice fields at Jakally-Pacharr, Central River Division (13°13'N 14°58'W). A possible reason why so few juveniles are recorded is that they are being misidentified as Brown Snake Eagles (see Figs 1–4 for field marks to distinguish them).

Nik Borrow (pers comm) has recorded only two Short-toed Snake Eagles in The Gambia during short visits over the past eight years, one in January at Basse and the other in November at Kotu, and at least six adult Beaudouin's Snake Eagles.

Meyburg *et al*[10,11] have reported on two Short-toed Snake Eagles, one juvenile and one adult, that were tracked with satellite transmitters from western France into Africa on their autumn migration. Both individuals spent the northern winter in northern Niger, far to the east of The Gambia. It is possible that most Short-toed Snake Eagles from Europe follow a direct, due south route to their savanna winter grounds, which are mainly north and east of The Gambia, in Mauritania and northern Senegal.

We believe that Short-toed Snake Eagle is rare in The Gambia, compared to the frequently encountered Beaudouin's Snake Eagle. We welcome future reports of either of these species in The Gambia; please include field marks used for identification or, better still, photographs.

Clark[5–6] and other recent authorities[7,9] prefer 'Short-toed Snake Eagle' as the English name for *C. gallicus*, for consistency, as the other five members of this genus are all known as 'snake eagles'.

Acknowledgements

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Captions to plate on page 29

Figure 1. Juvenile Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*, The Gambia, April (John Ovenden). Body and underwing-coverts brown, except the greater coverts, which are pale. Wings show extensive dark tips; secondaries are faintly barred and pale undertail shows faint narrow dark bands.

Circaète de Beaudouin *Circaetus beaudouini*, juvénile, Gambie, avril (John Ovenden). Corps et couvertures sous-alaires bruns, sauf les grandes couvertures, qui sont pâles. Le bout des ailes est largement bordé de sombre; les rémiges secondaires sont faiblement barrées et le dessous de la queue est pâle, vaguement et finement barré de sombre.

Figure 2. Juvenile Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*, The Gambia, April (John Ovenden). From above, pale wing-coverts contrast with darker flight feathers and uppertail has faint darker narrow bands.

Circaète de Beaudouin *Circaetus beaudouini*, juvénile, Gambie, avril (John Ovenden). Dessus: couvertures alaires pâles contrastant avec les rémiges plus sombres; queue vaguement et finement barrée de sombre.

Figure 3. Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*, Kenya, June (W. S. Clark). Similar to juvenile Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *C. beaudouini*, but dark on wingtips is narrow, secondaries are unbarred and dark tail has narrow whitish bands.

Circaète brun *Circaetus cinereus*, Kenya, juin (W.S. Clark). Ressemble au Circaète de Beaudouin *C. beaudouini* juvénile, mais le bout des ailes n'est qu'étroitement bordé de sombre, les rémiges secondaires ne sont pas barrées et la queue est foncée avec d'étroites barres blanchâtres.

Figure 4. Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*, The Gambia, March (W. S. Clark). Uppersides of wings uniformly dark and dark uppertail has narrow whitish bands.

Circaète brun *Circaetus cinereus*, Gambie, mars (W.S. Clark). Le dessus des ailes est uniformément foncé et le dessus de la queue est foncé avec d'étroites barres blanchâtres.

Figure 5. Juvenile Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*, Kenya, January (W. S. Clark).

Circaète de Beaudouin *Circaetus beaudouini*, juvénile, Kenya, janvier (W. S. Clarke).

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New records of Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* in Nigeria

Ross McGregor

Nouvelles observations du Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* au Nigéria. L'auteur rapporte l'observation d'au moins quatre Bruants ortolans *Emberiza hortulana* dans la Forêt classée d'Amurum, sur le Plateau de Jos, au centre du Nigéria, en novembre–décembre 2002. Les mentions précédentes datent de 1963–1966, quand au moins douze individus furent observés, à Vom, également sur le Plateau de Jos, et à Zaria, environ 240 km au nord-ouest.

On 12 November 2002, during the course of regular bird surveys, a single male Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* was observed at Amurum Forest Reserve, on the Jos Plateau, in central Nigeria (09°52'N 08°58'E). Over the following month, at least one male, one female and two immatures were seen. One individual trapped and ringed on 1 December 2002 was considered to be an immature male, using criteria outlined in Svensson[5].

These observations are the first of this species in Nigeria since the three northern winters of 1963/64, 1964/65 and 1965/66, when at least 12 individuals were recorded, between late December and mid-April, at Vom, also on the Jos Plateau, and at Zaria, c240 km north-west of the Jos Plateau[4–8]. There are no other records from the country.

As with the previous records, the November–December 2002 individuals were mostly observed on or near rocky outcrops. They appeared to feed at the edges of small grassy patches amongst bare rock, but were occasionally seen in the nearby Guinea savanna scrub and drinking from adjacent streams.

The European population of Ortolan Bunting has suffered a massive decline and is consequently listed on Annex I of the European Birds Directive[6]. It occurs from Western Europe across Eurasia to Lake Baikal[2] and migrates south to winter in Africa and southern Asia. It is regular, albeit uncommon, in Mauritania south to Liberia and in north-east Chad[1].

The species appears to be genuinely rare in Nigeria and the records reported above were probably only made due to long periods of intensive

Figure 1. Male Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, Amurum Forest Reserve, Nigeria, 14 November 2003 (Ross McGregor)

Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana*, mâle, Forêt classée d'Amurum, Nigéria, 14 novembre 2003 (Ross McGregor)

Figure 2. Immature male Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, Amurum Forest Reserve, Nigeria, 1 December 2003 (Ross McGregor)

Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana*, mâle immature, Forêt classée d'Amurum, Nigéria, 1 décembre 2003 (Ross McGregor)

field work in the area. Numbers in Nigeria may be very small and the species consequently difficult to detect. Now that members of the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute are conducting regular surveys of the Jos Plateau it may be possible to determine if the area is a regular wintering site or, as Elgood[3] suggested, that the area is really 'south of the normal wintering range' and that these birds were merely vagrants.

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Further records from the remnant forests of Benin: White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* and Bioko Batis *Batis poensis*

Maarten van den Akker[a] *and Patrick Claffey*[b]

Nouvelles données sur l'avifaune forestière du Bénin: le Néocossyphe à queue blanche *Neocossyphus poensis* et le Pririt de Lawson *Batis poensis*. Les auteurs rapportent la première observation du Néocossyphe (Grive fourmilière) à queue blanche *Neocossyphus poensis* au Bénin, dans la Forêt classée de Pobé, le 10 avril 2003, et confirment la présence du Pririt de Lawson (Batis de Fernando Po) *Batis poensis*, déjà signalé par Brunel en 1958.

The remnant forests of southern Benin have been the subject of a number of investigations in recent years[1,10]. Little or no field work had been performed in these areas since Bouet's[2] early notes and Brunel's observations, published in 1958[3]. Both Mackworth-Praed & Grant[8] and *Birds of Africa*[7,9] had extrapolated the presence of several species on the basis of evidence in contiguous areas, but without specific records. One of the significant contributions of the recent work has been to confirm over 30 of these species. It has also provided interesting evidence of the number of species that survive in relatively small areas of suitable forest habitat. Here we report the occurrence of White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* and confirm the presence of Bioko Batis *Batis poensis*.

White-tailed Ant Thrush was observed in Pobé Forest Reserve (06°58'N 02°41'E) on 10 April 2003. The bird was perched in the upperstorey of the undergrowth at the forest edge, wagging its tail like a wagtail *Motacilla* sp. Head, throat, breast, upperparts and tail seemed almost black in the early-morning sun. Belly and undertail-coverts dark red. The broad white tips to the outer tail feathers were visible as the bird moved in the undergrowth spreading its tail. Bill and eye dark and the legs pale. New to Benin. Rare in Togo, with only a single 1989 record from the Koué River in the Fazao Mountains (08°16'N 00°43'E)[4], whilst in Nigeria it is considered a 'not uncommon and local resident...right across the forest zone from Lagos to Calabar'[6].

On the previous day, in almost the same place, MvdA observed a Bioko Batis in the midstorey at the forest edge. Crown, lores, ear-coverts, upperparts and uppertail appeared black in the early-morning sun. There was no real supercilium, only a small white spot in front of the eye, and on the nape a tiny stripe extending as a white patch. There were also white spots on the wings. Underparts white, with a dark breast-band. The eye was pale. Although this is not a first Benin record, it is in some ways more interesting. Brunel claimed to have observed it in 1958 at 'Bégon'[3]. This is probably a misspelling of Bohicon (07°10'N 02°04'E), as it occurs in some old literature, and most of Brunel's observations come from this area. Dowsett[5] considered that Brunel's record required further proof, whilst *Birds of Africa* considered it to be extralimital[9]. However, the species occurs in a contiguous area of western Nigeria[6]. It has not been recorded in Togo. It is stated by *Birds of Africa* to be rare throughout[9]. This, then, is a particularly interesting record, confirming Brunel's earlier record and the species' place on the Benin list.

Acknowledgements

We thank R.J. Dowsett for his comments on a draft of this note.

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First record of Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* for Cameroon and western Africa

Ronald Messemaker

Première mention du Vanneau sociable *Vanellus gregarius* pour le Cameroun et l'Afrique de l'Ouest. Un Vanneau sociable *Vanellus gregarius* a été observé et photographié dans la plaine inondable du Logone, Cameroun du Nord, le 31 janvier 2001. Ceci constitue la première mention pour le pays et l'Afrique de l'Ouest de ce migrateur paléarctique menacé, qui niche en Russie et au Kazakhstan et hiverne, en Afrique, principalement en Eritrée et, au moins précédemment, au Soudan.

On 31 January 2001, during a waterbird survey of the Logone floodplains in northern Cameroon and Chad by the Foundation Working Group International Waterbird and Wetland Research, The Netherlands (WIWO), in collaboration with the Waza Logone Project, Cameroon, I observed a lapwing with a conspicuous head pattern, near Ivye (11□25'N 15□03'E). I immediately identified it as a Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* in non-breeding plumage, having observed the species on several previous occasions in The Netherlands and Israel. The bird was feeding at a distance of 30 m in a partially dry arm of the Logone River. I watched it for c30 minutes with 10 x 40 binoculars and took photographs. Reference to Hayman *et al*[6] revealed nothing concerning the species' occurrence in Cameroon. Subsequently, when Borrow & Demey[4] was published, I found that Sociable Lapwing was not mentioned, confirming my suspicion that the species was new to Western Africa.

Description

Slightly larger and more slender necked than Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*, which was common in the area. Conspicuous white supercilium from bill to well behind eye, bordered by long black eyestripe. Crown greyish brown. Throat dirty white; head-sides washed yellowish. Upperparts greyish brown with contrasting black primaries. Pale line of secondaries visible at rest. Breast pale greyish brown. Belly whitish. Bill slender, black. Legs blackish. Upright stance. Foraging behaviour typical of plovers, with short, swift runs interrupted by abrupt stops followed by pecking. Plain upperparts and breast, and contrasting head pattern, are indicative of a non-breeding-plumaged adult (see Fig 1).

This is the first record for Cameroon and Western Africa of this threatened Palearctic migrant, which is classified as Vulnerable[3]. It breeds in Russia and Kazakhstan and is rapidly declining, with a population estimated at 2,500–10,000 individuals[3,7]. In Africa, it winters mainly in Eritrea and, at least formerly, in Sudan[7,16]. In Eritrea, the species has been reported to winter in variable numbers, usually in flocks of 10–20, once c150 (earliest date 28 November, latest 10 March; absent in some years)[13], but there is only one recent record, by D Zinner[1]. There are also four old records from within the borders of present-day Ethiopia, all in the period 1925–1941, but none since[1]. In Sudan it was formerly scarce in the north of the country and is now considered rare, with no reports since 1950[10,11]. Sociable Lapwing is a rare passage visitor through Egypt, from early September to mid-November and from late February to mid-April, occasionally in winter, but again there are relatively few recent records[5]. There is a single old record from north-east Somalia (Shiikh) of an immature male on 2 November 1919[2]. Vagrants have been recorded in Morocco (Tangier Peninsula, 3 December 1972)[14], the Canaries (El Hierro, 10–12 February 1992)[8] and Seychelles (Alphonse, 12 November 2001–15 March 2002)[12].

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Figure 1. Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius*, Logone floodplains, near Ivye, Cameroon, 31 January 2001 (Ronald Messemaker)

Vanneau sociable *Vanellus gregarius*, plaines inondables de la Logone, près d'Ivye, Cameroun, 31 janvier 2001 (Ronald Messemaker)

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Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* in Zanzibar: a survey re-assessing its conservation status

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Le Touraco de Fischer *Tauraco fischeri* à Zanzibar: un inventaire évaluant son statut de conservation. Nous avons recensé les Touracos de Fischer (race endémique *Tauraco fischeri zanzibaricus*) à l'île de Zanzibar (Tanzanie) pendant un mois. Nous avons essayé de déterminer les préférences écologiques, la distribution et la taille de la population. Contrairement à ce qui a été trouvé précédemment, le touraco, dont la population compte 900–1.500 individus, est bien répandu, occupant environ 56 km″ de forêt. Il évite les zones agricoles et les plantations, préférant les zones forestières avec une couverture dense et une haute canopée. La plus grande partie de cette forêt n'est pas protégée et est très menacée par une exploitation abusive, principalement pour la coupe de bois de chauffe. Ce même milieu est habité par deux mammifères menacés, le Colobe de Zanzibar *Procolobus kirkii* et le Rat à trompe de Zanj *Rhynchocyon petersi*. La distribution du touraco est déjà sévèrement fragmentée et sa population est sans doute en diminution. Nous proposons que *Tauraco fischeri* soit considéré comme 'Vulnérable' selon les critères de l'UICN.

Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* is currently considered Near Threatened[2], being restricted to the coast of southern Somalia, Kenya and north-east Tanzania. The subspecies *T. f. zanzibaricus* is endemic to Zanzibar Island. Following its description in the 1930s[11], *T. f. zanzibaricus* has been observed on comparatively few subsequent occasions, and was even suspected of being extinct[3]. Few observations from Zanzibar have been published[12,15], all from the tiny area around Jozani Forest, a small reserve in the south of the island. Based on existing data, this subspecies has been considered to number just 25–50 birds[2] or fewer than 50 pairs[15].

Detailed information on the biology of Fischer's Turaco in Zanzibar, and elsewhere, is lacking, making it difficult to evaluate its conservation status. Between 22 June and 21 July 2001, we surveyed the species in Zanzibar. We assessed habitat selection and evaluated the present and likely future conservation status of the species. We also assessed the status of natural habitats in Zanzibar, using Fischer's Turaco as an indicator of the general condition of local ecosystems.

Study site

Zanzibar Island (also known as Unguja) is located in the southern Indian Ocean, at c05°40'S 39°50'E, 40 km off the coast of Tanzania. The island covers c1,666 km^2 and can be divided into two zones, characterised by different soil types[6]. The deep soil zone in the west of the island mainly supports permanent cultivation, while the coral rag zone, with a very shallow soil, can only support shifting cultivation and has a lower human population density. Since it was apparent that conditions in the densely inhabited deep soil zone were unfavourable for turacos, our survey was entirely restricted to the coral rag zone, which occupies c60% of the total island area.

The conservation importance of Zanzibar is undoubtedly high, as the main natural habitat in the island, East African coastal forest, is biologically very rich and is considered highly threatened[5,14]. Indeed, the island has several endemic or sub-endemic mammals[10], butterflies and reptiles[4]. However, overall the biota of Zanzibar have received very little scientific attention in the past.

Methods

We censused Fischer's Turaco using unlimited-distance point counts, performing playbacks of the species' call at evenly spaced points throughout the coral rag zone of the island. At each census point we also recorded the presence of four other species: Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*, an introduced avian pest; two endangered mammals[8], Zanzibar Red Colobus *Procolobus kirkii* and Black-and-rufous

Elephant-shrew *Rhynchocyon petersi*, and the common and widespread Sykes's Monkey *Cercopithecus mitis*.

We assessed habitat characteristics by recording 13 different variables in a sample of 181 bird census points. A comparison of habitat with turaco presence/absence data from these points provided data on habitat selection. To map current and past forest cover in the Zanzibar coral rag zone we compared three datasets: (1) habitat features indicated on maps drawn from aerial photos of 1977–78[7], (2) data on vegetation composition and structure collected by Beentje in 1989[1], and (3) present vegetation data collected from census points during our visit. This information resulted in an updated map of vegetation cover. The current range of Fischer's Turaco was estimated by plotting all detection points from the survey on the new map.

Mean number of cut stems in the census plots was used as an indication of the intensity of human activity in different parts of the study area, enabling classification of different areas into one of three human-impact categories: low (0–5 stems per 10 m radius plot), medium (5.01–20) and strong (>20) impact.

Results and discussion

Vegetation

We recognised three main habitat categories within the study area:

1. Four man-modified habitats, viz. cultivated fields, open grassland, tree plantations and settled areas.
2. *Albizia*-dominated vegetation, which usually occurs on the coast and is characterised by *A. glaberrima*, *A. adianthifolia* and *A. gummifera* trees. Also lumped with this habitat was the c200 ha of groundwater forest within Jozani Forest Reserve that is dominated by *Pandanus rabaiensis* and *Elaeis guineensis* (Fig 1).
3. *Diospyros*-dominated vegetation, the most common vegetation type in the study area and characterised by the common presence of *D. consolatae*. Other common tree species are *Rapanea melanophloeos*, *Mystroxylon aethiopicum*, *Olea woodiana*, *Euclea schimperi* and *E. racemosa*. This vegetation mostly occurs in drier areas than the *Albizia*-dominated vegetation.

Habitat of Fischer's Turaco in Zanzibar

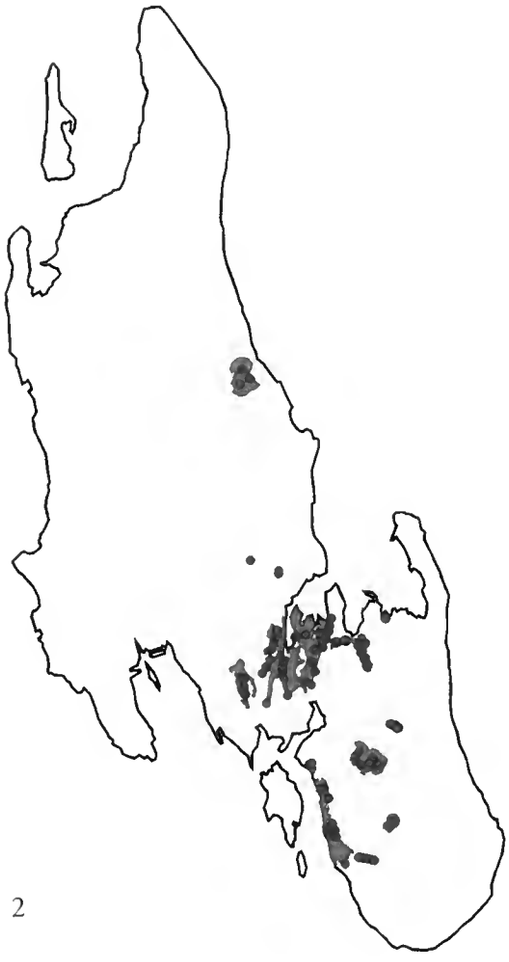
Fischer's Turaco was detected at 76 of the 325 census points sampled. It selected only two habitat types (*Albizia*- and *Diospyros*-dominated). Places where it was found had greater tree cover, a higher density of tree stems, and higher and more closed canopies than those where it was not seen. The species was quite sensitive to habitat degradation and strongly avoided man-modified habitats. Fruit availability did not differ between occupied and unoccupied sites, suggesting that the species' distribution in Zanzibar is defined by habitat, but is not food-limited.

Evidence from our survey suggests that *Albizia* is the primary habitat of Fischer's Turaco, as the species was found at higher density in such areas, and tolerated higher levels of disturbance than in *Diospyros*. It was more or less continuously distributed within all of the relatively small patches of *Albizia* vegetation. In ten visits to different *Albizia*-dominated patches, turacos were always contacted within a short period, unlike the situation observed in *Diospyros* habitat, where turacos were less frequently contacted and were usually restricted to patches separated by expanses of apparently similar *Diospyros* vegetation. Indeed, in Kiwengwa and Muyuni, the species occupied only a fraction of the much larger vegetation patches.

Changing forest cover and turaco range

According to the 1977–78 data, the area covered by tall trees was 115 km^2 (41 *Albizia*, 74 *Diospyros*). Fischer's Turaco's range in 2001 (Fig 2) was confined to those areas that were forested in 1977–78, with the exception of three tiny *Diospyros*-dominated patches (total area 8.7 km^2). These patches were probably missed by the 1977–78 aerial map or have recently re-grown. Seemingly, between 1977–78 and 2001 at least 25 km^2 were deforested in Zanzibar.

We estimated the total range of Fischer's Turaco in 2001 to be 56 km^2, of which 34 km^2 were *Diospyros*- and 22 km^2 *Albizia*-dominated. Of the total estimated range, a maximum of 25 km^2 presently enjoys some form of protection as a government-held reserve or as a sacred grove. Only a small part (16%) of Fischer's Turaco range fell under low human impact, while 42% fell under high impact and 42% under medium impact. All the patches with low, and 60% of those with



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medium, human impact were inside Jozani Forest Reserve (Fig 3). All woodland areas where Fischer's Turaco was not found were in the highest human-impact class.

The current distribution of the turaco is suggestive of a shrinking range, being a remnant of a formerly larger and continuous area that is currently fragmented. The apparent nucleus of the species' distribution is in the protected area of Jozani Forest.

Captions to figures on opposite page

Figure 1. A view of the groundwater forest at Jozani Forest Reserve (Andrea Borghesio)

La Forêt classée de Jozani (Andrea Borghesio)

Figure 2. Distribution of Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* in Zanzibar (in green) based on our data.

Répartition du Touraco de Fischer *Tauraco fischeri* à Zanzibar (en vert) basée sur nos données.

Figure 3. Forest quality in Zanzibar. Green, yellow and red areas represent relatively low, medium, and high human-impact areas respectively. Most of the high-quality forests are inside Jozani Reserve (boundary indicated by a dashed line).

La qualité de la forêt à Zanzibar. Les zones vertes, jaunes et rouges représentent, respectivement, les zones à impact humain relativement bas, modéré, et élevé. La plupart des forêts de haute qualité se trouvent à l'intérieur de la Forêt classée de Jozani (dont les limites sont indiquées par une ligne interrompue)

Figure 4. Old secondary vegetation at Muungoni under heavy human exploitation; Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* was present here (Luca Borghesio)

Vieille végétation secondaire à Muungoni sous forte exploitation humaine; le Touraco de Fischer *Tauraco fischeri* était présent ici (Andrea Borghesio)

Figure 5. An opening created following forest destruction at Cheju; food crops have been planted in the clearing (Luca Borghesio)

Une clairière créée suite à la destruction de la forêt à Cheju et plantée de cultures vivrières (Andrea Borghesio)

Population estimates of Fischer's Turaco

We estimated the population of Fischer's Turaco in Zanzibar to be 900–1,500 individuals, with a density slightly higher than one individual in 5 ha of suitable habitat. This is much higher than the previous estimate of fewer than 50 pairs[15], in part due to the wider range where we found the species. However, it is also probable that the species' secretive and shy behaviour led to a serious initial underestimate of its presence and abundance.

Population density was higher in *Albizia* than in *Diospyros*. However, *Diospyros*, owing to its larger area, was estimated to host a higher proportion (57%) of the total population. Only c44% (530 individuals) of the total population presently occurs in governmental or privately managed protected areas.

Co-occurrence of Fischer's Turaco with other vertebrates

Fischer's Turaco presence was positively correlated with that of Zanzibar Red Colobus, Black-and-rufous Elephant-shrew and Sykes's Monkey. However, it strongly avoided sites where Indian House Crow was present. Fischer's Turaco appeared less adaptable to habitat modifications than the two threatened vertebrates (Zanzibar Red Colobus and Black-and-rufous Elephant-shrew). As previously observed by Siex & Struhsaker[13], Zanzibar Red Colobus also tolerates cultivated landscapes.

Current conservation status of Fischer's Turaco

Compared to Beentje's[1] survey of 1989, our 2001 survey demonstrated that the status of forests in Zanzibar is rapidly deteriorating. This situation is attributable to the growing human population of the coral rag zone, which has immigrated from the deep soil zone. Indeed, during the last 30 years human population in Zanzibar has been growing at over 3% per annum, with a present total in excess of 500,000 individuals[6]. Although clearance for agriculture has been extensive, it appears that habitat degradation due to firewood and timber extraction has been considerably more widespread, and presently almost all wooded areas outside Jozani are intensely exploited (Figs 4–5). This pressure appears to increase as wooded areas progressively shrink.

At present exploitation levels, it appears probable that within c10 years no natural forest will remain outside the protected areas. Our survey shows that most (56%) of the estimated population of Fischer's Turaco in Zanzibar occurs outside protected areas. We therefore predict a population decline of over 50% for the turaco in the next decade, a pattern also highly probable for the other threatened species on the island. Such dramatic declines and the confinement of the residual populations in one or few areas could trigger an imminent extinction crisis in the island.

Fischer's Turaco is presently considered Near Threatened[2]. Although this study only focused on a small part of its range, our data suggest that a reassessment of its conservation status is necessary. Although human density in Zanzibar is higher than on the mainland, we feel that the high rates of habitat destruction noted in Zanzibar are probably not dramatically different from the situation elsewhere. Indeed, existing evidence points to rapid habitat degradation in most East African coastal forests[14,16]. We suggest that Fischer's Turaco be considered Vulnerable under IUCN criteria[9], as it appears to qualify under criterion A2c (population decline of at least 20% suspected to be met within the next ten years based on decline in area of occupancy, extent of occurrence and quality of habitat).

Conservation recommendations

As a considerable proportion of the populations of other endemic and threatened taxa occur outside Jozani reserve, it is imperative that the scope of future actions be widened to include larger areas beyond the reserve. The patches of forest in the southern part of the island are a priority.

Due to inefficient planning, fees that woodcutters are supposed to pay the government for felling trees are rarely collected. Benefits derived from clearing natural forests are therefore almost free of cost. Enforcement of existing legislation to ensure payment of such fees could make exploitation of natural forests economically less profitable.

At present, the main reason for woodland degradation appears to be firewood extraction. Large expanses of land in the coral rag zone (perhaps 50% of total area) are occupied by young secondary habitats that arise when cultivated fields are abandoned. As secondary vegetation is dominated by soft-wooded plants unsuitable for firewood, they have little economic value. It would be wise to develop an incentive system that encourages creation of tree plantations in such areas. Such plantations would provide alternative wood sources and reduce pressure on the remaining natural woodlands, improving the survival prospects of the threatened species that depend on them.

Zanzibar attracts large numbers of tourists. The main attraction for almost all tourists visiting the forests is the endemic red colobus, found in Jozani. We consider that Fischer's Turaco, being a species of considerable beauty and rarity, also has the potential for attracting interest from birdwatchers and generating revenue. Our finding that the species can easily be attracted with cheap audio devices suggests that the difficulty of observation could easily be overcome.

Fischer's Turaco has the characteristics of a flagship and an umbrella species: it is a charismatic species that could focus conservation awareness or action, and has sufficiently broad habitat requirements that, if adequately protected, most other threatened species on the island would also be protected.

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Observations on nest building and courtship behaviour of the Madagascar Flufftail *Sarothrura insularis*

Lily-Arison René de Roland

Notes sur la construction du nid et la parade du Râle insulaire *Sarothrura insularis*. La parade et la construction du nid d'un couple de Râles insulaires *Sarothrura insularis* sont décrites. Les observations ont été faites dans la forêt de Makira, située au nord-nord-est de Maroantsetra, dans le nord-est de Madagascar. Cette forêt, dont l'altitude varie entre 400 et 1.140 m, comprend 160.000 ha de forêt intacte et 460.000 ha de forêt secondaire. Le couple de *Sarothrura insularis* a été observé du 26 au 28 février 2003, à 840 m d'altitude, pendant la construction du nid. Durant cette période, le type de cris, la durée des accouplements et le comportement des deux sexes ont été notés. Seul le mâle construisait le nid et toutes les activités se déroulaient entre 06.00 h et 09.15 h. Pendant la période d'observation, 136 feuilles mortes de lianes de bambou *Cephalostachyum viguieri* furent apportées comme matériaux de construction. La durée d'accouplement était de 2,7 ± 0,8 sec (N=10, variant de 2–4 secondes). Le nid de forme ovale, aux dimensions de 219 x 145 mm, était situé à 1,6 m au-dessus du sol. L'ouverture, orientée vers l'est, était de 75 x 65 mm et la profondeur interne était de 65 mm.

The breeding biology of many species of Malagasy birds is becoming better known due to the recent increase in avian studies in the region, but there remain several species for which nests and breeding behaviour have never or poorly been described. Recent work has described only nests and nesting behaviour for several endangered and poorly known species on the Masoala Peninsula of north-east Madagascar, eg Bernier's Vanga *Oriolia bernieri*[6], Madagascar Red Owl *Tyto soumagnei*[4] and Madagascar Serpent-eagle *Eutriorchis astur*[5]. To add to our collective knowledge of breeding biology of Malagasy birds, I describe here courtship and nest construction by of a pair of Madagascar Flufftails *Sarothrura insularis* in Makira Forest, north-east Madagascar. Makira Forest is north to north-west of the town of Maroantsetra. It covers 460,000 ha of intermixed secondary growth and tavies (slash-and-burn agriculture), and 160,000 ha of intact primary forest. The wet season lasts from December to August. Elevation ranges from 400 to 1,140 m.

Observations of courtship behaviour and nest building

A courting pair of Madagascar Flufftails was located by following their distinct vocalisation, *bee-bee-bee*, on 26 February 2003, at 840 m above sea level. The nest was discovered on the crest of a ridge in a hurricane-downfall regeneration area. Observations were conducted over three consecutive days: 26 February, at 06.25–09.00 hrs; 27 February, at 05.00–11.00 and 15.12–18.00 hrs; and 28 February, at 05.10–11.00 and 15.07–18.00. Nest observation time totalled 20 hours and six minutes. Courtship behaviour consisted of vocalisations, nest building, copulations and nest visits by the female. Only the male constructed the nest while the female walked around the nest vicinity, and on five occasions entered the nest. During nest observations, I observed a total of 136 deliveries of dead leaves taken from bamboo vines *Cephalostachyum viguieri* and small branches of an unidentified vine less than 1 m from the nest. Construction only occurred at 06.00–09.15 hrs, and no nest building or courtship was observed thereafter. The male carried nesting material in the bill and positioned it within the nest. Copulations occurred several times after the nesting material was positioned. All copulations occurred on a small dead branch and averaged 2.7 ± 0.8 seconds (N=10, range 2–4 seconds). The pair uttered a short *ii-ii-ii* during each mating. Several times after a period of nest-building activity, the male uttered a *tee-chh, tee-chh* (N=5) and the female responded with a *chh-*

chh (N=2) and entered the nest. The nest was near completion on the third day of observation.

Nest characteristics

The spherical nest was positioned on a bamboo vine 1.6 m above ground, and measured 210 by 145 mm. Nest depth was 65 mm, and the nest entrance was 75 x 65 mm and oriented east. The placement of this nest, 1.6 m above ground, differed from other reports for the species; Rand[3] and Benson *et al*[1] mentioned ground nests, and Benson *et al*[1] also observed a nest 20 cm above ground. The period of nest construction by this pair of Madagascar Flufftails was in February, the wet season, similar to *Sarothrura* spp in tropical Africa, which also breed in the wet season, between November and April inclusive[2]. It appears that Madagascar Flufftails time their breeding season to the start of the wet season. Those nests described by Rand[3] and Benson *et al*[1] were observed in October, at the start of the wet season in Mandeny, in southern Madagascar.

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African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* breeding in Bahi Swamp, Tanzania

Lars Dinesen

Des Spatules d'Afrique *Platalea alba* nichant dans le marais de Bahi, Tanzanie. L'auteur rapporte la découverte de deux colonies de Spatules d'Afrique *Platalea alba* dans le marais de Bahi, au centre de la Tanzanie, au cours d'une reconnaissance aérienne, le 6 juin 2001. Les colonies comprenaient environ 360 et 120 nids respectivement, ce qui constitue un nombre important, vu que les quelques grandes colonies connues, par exemple au Lac Fitri (Tchad) et dans le delta du Niger (Mali), ont été estimées à 300–400 couples. La population totale sur le continent de cette espèce a été estimée par différents auteurs à moins de 10.000 ou à 10.000–25.000 individus; les observations rapportées ici font supposer que le nombre est supérieur à 10.000 individus.

Two colonies of African Spoonbills *Platalea alba* were discovered in the Bahi swamp (06°03'S 35°10'E), 45 km west of Dodoma, central Tanzania, during aerial reconnaissance of four major wetlands, on 6 June 2001, as part of preparatory work for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention. The colonies were spaced only a few kilometres apart and comprised ground-breeding birds in extensive marsh vegetation in the northern part of the swamp.

The colonies comprised c360 and 120 nests respectively, counted from photographs, thus representing a total of c480 pairs. Previously, I estimated from the air that there were approximately 400 and 150 nests in each, illustrating the discrepancies that can be involved in such overflights. Furthermore, c440 spoonbills were estimated in Lake Kitangiri, c240 km to the northwest during the same flight, and nesting may also have occurred at this locality. In the Wembere swamp—part of the same wetland ecosystem—250 pairs bred in 1962[1]. The Bahi colonies comprise a significant breeding record, because the few other large known colonies have comprised 300–400

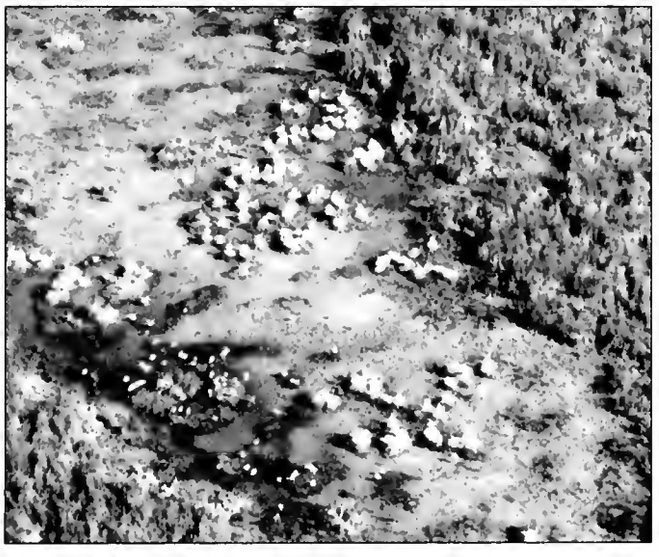

Figure 1. Part of African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* colony, Bahi swamp, central Tanzania, June 2001 (Lars Dinesen)

Partie de colonie de Spatules d'Afrique *Platalea alba*, marais de Bahi, Tanzanie centrale, juin 2001 (Lars Dinesen)

Figure 2. African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* colony, Bahi swamp, central Tanzania, June 2001 (Lars Dinesen)

Colonie de Spatules d'Afrique *Platalea alba*, marais de Bahi, Tanzanie centrale, juin 2001 (Lars Dinesen)

pairs, eg in Lake Fitri, Chad and the River Niger, Mali[1,6,8].

Most of the Bahi swamp was a lake at the time of the survey. The Bahi depression is a seasonally inundated, semi-permanent internal drainage basin, situated in the Eastern Rift Valley and delimited by the 800 m contour[9]. It is 54 km long by 30 km wide and supports salt-tolerant grasses and some sedges and reeds. The wet season normally ends in late May and at the time of the survey the water table was virtually at its annual maximum.

African Spoonbill is considered generally uncommon and patchily distributed, but it can be locally common, especially in the Rift Valley lakes of Kenya[5], Tanzania[2] and western Uganda[8], and parts of West Africa[1]. Approximately 4,200 were counted in the nationwide waterbird count in Tanzania in 1995[3] including 2,850 at Lake Eyasi alone[4].

The internal drainage basins of the Eastern Rift Valley in central and northern Tanzania and Kenya, comprising saline and soda lakes, represent a dynamic network of isolated localities for this semi-nomadic species. It moves in response to seasonal rainfall[1] and probably human interference, eg annual burnings. The total African population was estimated to be fewer than 10,000 or 10,000–25,000 individuals[1,10], but the new record contributes to the expectation that the population exceeds 10,000 birds (N E Baker *in litt*) in accordance with the latest review by Dodman[7], who estimated the population at 10,000–100,000 individuals.

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Notes on the reproduction of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* in the Atlantic plains of semi-arid Morocco

Abdeslam Rihane[a], Patrick Bergier[b] and Saadia Mahari[c]

Note sur la reproduction de l'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba* dans les plaines atlantiques du Maroc semi-aride. L'Effraie des clochers est largement répandue au Maroc, y compris en région désertique. Son régime alimentaire a été bien étudié mais seuls quelques cas de reproduction étaient connus jusqu'à présent. Cette note détaille 22 cas observés dans les plaines atlantiques de Doukkala et Chaouia. Les nids y sont établis préférentiellement en milieu anthropisé (minarets de mosquées, châteaux d'eau,...). La taille moyenne des pontes s'élève à 5,91 œufs, le taux d'éclosion à 73,1%, et le succès global de reproduction à 53,8%. Les causes d'échec incluent l'utilisation des jeunes dans la pharmacopée populaire, la disparition d'œufs (plusieurs ingurgités par les Effraies elles-mêmes), le cannibalisme et la désertion des nids. Les pontes sont très étalées, déposées de début janvier à début avril, occasionnellement jusqu'à mi-mai. 101 proies ont été inventoriées dans les nids; leur liste est donnée en annexe.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* is widespread throughout Morocco, including low montane and desert regions[5,6]. Its diet has been extensively studied but only a few breeding records are known (synthesis in Thévenot *et al*[6]). This note puts together the elements that have been collected in the Doukkala and Chaouia region, around the towns of El Aounate and Ouled Said, and is largely based on a study of 22 breeding attempts by the species in this area. Doukkala and Chaouia are part of the 'Middle Atlantic Plains', and are situated within a semi-arid environment (Figs 1–2).

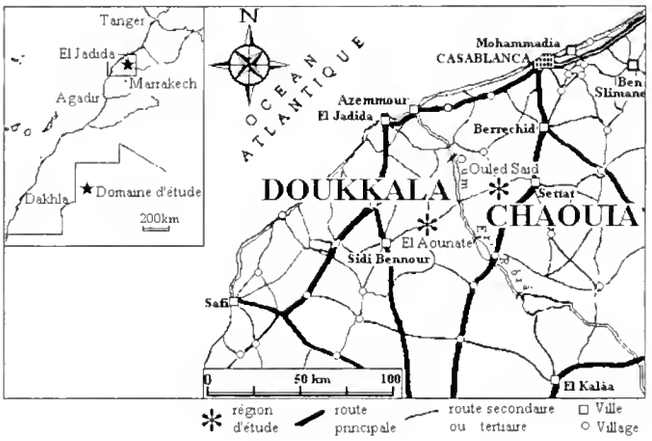

Figure 1. Location of Doukkala and Chaouia in Morocco.

Localisation de Doukkala et Chaouia au Maroc.

Results and discussion

Nest location

In Morocco, the Barn Owl basically breeds on cliffs, although nests have been recorded in old wells[1], a hay stack[3], a mine gallery[4], or in various types of mattoral (scrub communities of sclerophyllous shrubs or low trees, below 7 m), olive orchards, palm trees and *Eucalyptus* woodland. It also occupies numerous towns and villages,

Table 1. Number of breeding attempts recorded annually.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
No. of breeding pairs recorded	1	6	5	7	3

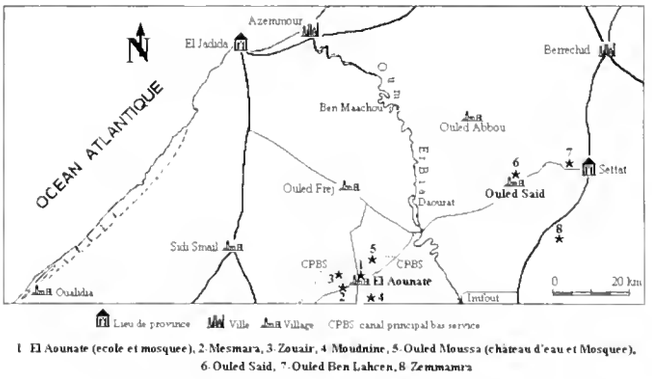

Figure 2. Detailed map of Doukkala and Chaouia.

Carte détaillée de Doukkala et Chaouia.

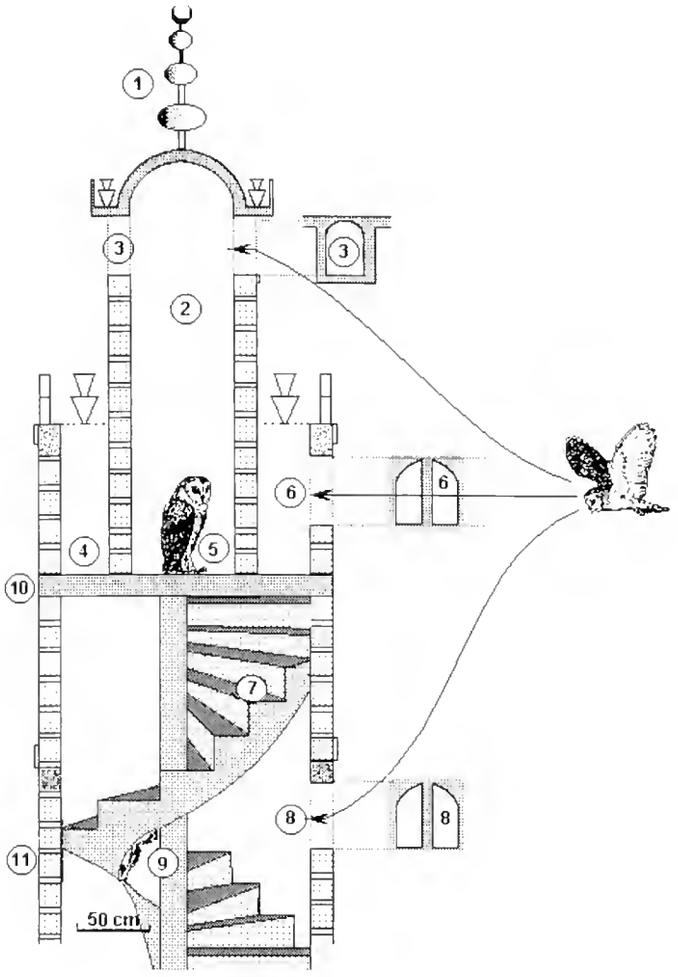

Figure 3. An example of a minaret, that of Mesmara mosque: 1. 'Jamour'; 2. Calling room ('Adane'); 3. Cuts of the calling room; 4. Terrace; 5. Possible Barn Owl nest; 6. Cuts of the terrace (east and south); 7. Reinforced concrete helicoid staircase; 8. Ventilation cuts; 9. Other possible Barn Owl nest; 10. Reinforced concrete.

Exemple d'un minaret: celui de la mosquée de Mesmara. 5 et 9 indiquent l'emplacement possible de deux nids d'Effraie des clochers.

including old kasbahs (castles), and man-made structures such as water towers, bell towers and barns[6].

Twenty-five nest sites were found in the study area, most in man-made constructions, including nine (36%) in the calling room of the minaret of mosques (Fig 3). Five others (20%) were in water towers, three (12%) in chimneys or the false ceiling of schools, and two (8%) each in palm trees (*Phoenix* and *Washingtonia*), wells, ruins and cliffs.

Breeding parameters

Detailed results are presented in Appendix 1.

Clutch size

Mean clutch size was 5.91 eggs (N = 22 clutches, total of 130 eggs) and is close to that recorded in Europe, eg in Burgundy, France (mean = 5.7 eggs, N = 325 first clutches, or mean = 6.3, N = 475 first and second clutches[2]). Clutch size is highly variable, the smallest being of three eggs and the largest of 11 eggs; the latter was in a year of large numbers of Black Rats *Rattus rattus* at Ouled Ben Lahcen (standard deviation = 2.18 eggs, N = 22).

Elsewhere in Morocco, we are aware of only three nests of five eggs, one of six and another of seven[6], but Valverde[7] found clutches of 10–14 eggs and a nest with 13 young, at Smara in Saharan Morocco, during summer/autumn 1952, which were seasons of rodent plague.

Hatching rate

Hatching rate (ie, the ratio between the number of hatched eggs / number of eggs observed) was 73.1% (N = 95 hatched eggs).

Brood size at fledging

Seventy young fledged, giving an overall breeding success rate of 53.8% and a brood success rate of 73.7%. If we exclude the removal of young from the nest linked with popular medical belief (six young removed, see below), success rates respectively reach 58.5% (76/130) and 80% (76/95).

Causes of clutch and brood failure

The following causes of failure have been recorded.

Removal of young from nest. In Moroccan popular belief, the Barn Owl—and often the Little Owl *Athene noctua* as well—is said to cure skin diseases; the birds are slaughtered, the feathers removed and the remainder cooked and eaten. During the study six young were removed from nests: in 2000, a pair at Zouair laid four eggs, of which three hatched; one of the young was removed and the two others fledged normally, whilst in the same year, at Moudnine, five young in a nest acquired their full-grown plumage but were subsequently removed. We have recorded only one other instance of deliberate removal—not linked to popular belief—by the new warden at Zouair mosque, in 2002. The young at Mesmara mosque were killed in 2003, probably by children.

Egg loss. Nineteen eggs disappeared during the breeding cycle, most of them after the third egg had hatched (eg one egg in 1999 and three eggs in 2000 at Mesmara mosque, and one egg at Zouair mosque on 7 May 2000). Most eggs were probably removed by the adult Barn Owls, as such behaviour was video-taped at Ouled Said mosque, on 18 May 2002, when the female destroyed then consumed three eggs that had failed to hatch. The remains of one egg (membrane and shell) were also found in a pellet at Zemmamra.

Cannibalism / Caïnism. The corpses of four young, partially eaten, were found at nests in Mesmara and El Aounate mosques. Such incidences probably result from a lack of food during poor weather; two other recently hatched young disappeared during the continuous rains of April 2002 at Ouled Moussa.

Desertion of nests. Two nests of the 22 (9.1%) were deserted for unknown reasons. On 6 March 2001, a Barn Owl was incubating four eggs at Mesmara; one month later, one egg hatched, then the nest was deserted. Also in 2001, the pair at Zouair mosque deserted its five eggs.

Laying date

In the Atlantic plains of semi-arid Morocco, eggs are laid early, from early January to early April, occasionally until mid-May (Fig 4). There is no record of a second clutch.

As an example, the data relating to two nests in Chaouia (Ouled Saïd and Ouled Ben Lahcen) in 2002 are presented below.

Ouled Said mosque

17 February: nuptial displays
31 March: seven eggs
15 April: nine eggs
22 April: two young and six eggs
29 April: four young and three eggs
11 May: six young and one egg
18 May: five young
Five young fledged early July

Ouled Ben Lahcen mosque

14 March: 11 eggs
16 April: seven young and three eggs
4 May: nine young
5 June: nine young in adult plumage
Nine young fledged

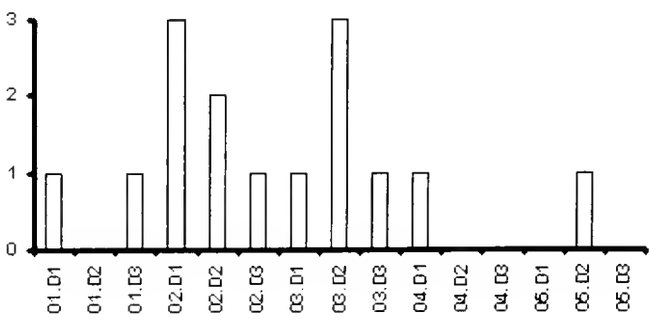

Figure 4. Number of clutches laid per 10-day period in the Atlantic plains of semi-arid Morocco (dates are shown as month, then 10-day period, eg 05.D3 = the third 10-day period of May, ie 20–31 May).

Nombre de pontes par décade dans les plaines atlantiques du Maroc semi-aride (le premier chiffre indique le mois, le deuxième la décade, par exemple 05.D3 = troisième décade de mai, du 20 au 31 mai).

Surplus prey recorded at nest

One hundred and one surplus prey items were recorded during our visits to nests. They included 58 mammals (56 were rodents), 42 birds (mainly House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*) and one amphibian. Appendix 2 details the list of prey, but we provide some examples below.

Zouair mosque, in 2000:

- 28 April: three eggs and one young, with four prey items: 1 *Lemniscomys barbarus*, 2 *Mus spretus*, 1 *Passer domesticus*.
- 7 May: three young and seven prey items: 2 *Gerbillus campestris*, 1 *Gerbillus nanus*, 1 *Mus spretus*, 3 *Passer domesticus*.
- 13 May: three young and eight prey items: 4 *Gerbillus campestris*, 1 *Gerbillus nanus*, 2 *Mus spretus*, 1 *Passer domesticus*.
- No prey at nest when the young are 20 days old.

Mesmara mosque, in 2000:

- 9 March: six eggs and two prey items: 1 *Gerbillus campestris*, 1 *Passer domesticus*.
- 30 March: three eggs, two young and seven prey items: 6 *Passer domesticus*, 1 *Mus musculus*.
- 6 April: three young and eight prey items: 7 *Passer domesticus*, 1 *Anthus campestris*.

Ouled Saïd mosque, in 2002:

- 31 March: seven eggs and eight prey items: 2 *Gerbillus maghrebi*, 5 *Mus spretus*, 1 *Mus musculus*.

Figure 5. Clutch of nine Barn Owl *Tyto alba* eggs at Ouled Said mosque, 15 April 2002. Prey include mice *Mus* spp (Abdeslam Rihane)

Ponte d'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba* de neuf œufs dans la mosquée d'Ouled Said, 15 avril 2002. Les proies comprennent des souris *Mus* spp (Abdeslam Rihane)

Figure 6. Brood of nine young Barn Owls *Tyto alba* at Ouled Ben Lahcen, 4 May 2002; this is the largest ever recorded in the Atlantic plains of semi-arid Morocco (Abdeslam Rihane)

Nichée de neuf jeunes Effraies des clochers *Tyto alba* à Ouled Ben Lahcen, 4 mai 2002; ceci constitue la plus grande nichée observée dans les plaines atlantiques du Maroc semi-aride (Abdeslam Rihane)

- 15 April: nine eggs, five prey items: 1 *Gerbillus maghrebi*, 2 *Mus spretus*, 2 *Mus musculus*.
- 22 April: six eggs, two young and seven prey items: 3 *Mus spretus*, 3 *Mus musculus*, 1 *Crocidura russula*.
- 29 April: three eggs, four young and nine prey items: 2 *Gerbillus maghrebi*, 2 *Mus spretus*, 1 *Mus musculus*, 1 *Crocidura russula*, 2 *Passer domesticus*, 1 *Galerida cristata*.
- 11 May: one egg, six young and seven prey items: 7 *Gerbillus maghrebi*.
- 18 May: five young and no prey.

Acknowledgements

We thank all those who contributed to this work, and especially the inhabitants of the villages of Zouair and Ouled Said.

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Appendix 1. Details of Barn Owl *Tyto alba* breeding attempts monitored in Doukkala and Chaouia, Morocco. (CC = size of complete clutch; BH = brood size at hatching; BF = brood size at fledging; DFE = laying date of first egg, with dates being shown as month, then 10-day period (decade), eg, 05.D3 = third decade of May, ie 20–31 May).

Annexe 1. Données concernant la reproduction de l'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba* à Doukkala et Chaouia, Maroc (CC = taille de la ponte complète; BH = taille de la nichée à l'éclosion; BF = taille de la nichée à la sortie du nid; DFE = date de la ponte du premier œuf, le premier chiffre indiquant le mois, le deuxième la décade, par exemple 05.D3 = troisième décade de mai, du 20 au 31 mai).

	Doukkala							Chaouia		
	Mesmara mosque	Zouair mosque	Ouled Moussawater tower	Ouled Moussa school	El Aounate school	Moudnine school	El Aounate mosque	Ouled Saïd mosque	Ouled Ben Lahcen mosque	Zemmamra
1999										
CC	4									
BH	3									
BF	3									
DFE	03.D3									
2000										
CC	6	4	5	3	5	6				
BH	3	3	5	1	4	5				
TNE	3	2	4	1	4	0				
DFE	02.D1	03.D2			03.D2					
2001										
CC	4	5	6		5		5			
BH	1	0	6		5		5			
BF	0	0	6		5		2			
DFE	02.D3		02.D2				05.D2			
2002										
CC	5	3	8		4		6	9	11	
BH	2	0	7		4		4	6	9	
BF	0	0	4		4		4	5	9	
DFE	02.D1		03.D1		04.D1			03.D2	02.D2	
2003										
CC	8								9	9
BH	6								8	8
BF	0								7	7
DFE	01.D3								01.D1	02.D1

Appendix 2. Prey items found at nests of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* in Doukkala and Chaouia, Morocco.

Annexe 2. Proies trouvées dans des nids de l'Effraie des clochers *Tyto alba* à Doukkala et Chaouia, Maroc.

Mammals			58	Birds	42
Insectivora				Galliformes	
Soricidae	*Crocidura russula*	2		Phasianidae	*Coturnix coturnix* 2
Rodentia				Passeriformes	
Gerbillidae	*Gerbillus campestris*	8		Alaudidae	*Galerida cristata* 1
	Gerbillus nanus	2		Motacillidae	*Anthus campestris*
	Gerbillus maghrebi	12		Fringillidae	*Carduelis carduelis* 1
Muridae	*Lemniscomys barbarus*	1		Passeridae	*Passer domesticus* 37
	Rattus rattus	8	Amphibians		1
	Mus spretus	17	Anoures		
	Mus musculus	8	Ranatidae	*Rana* sp.	1
			Total		**101**

Birding Cameroon, part 2
Southern Cameroon: forests, low to lofty

Michael Mills and Callan Cohen
Photographs by Ron Hoff and Callan Cohen

Observer les oiseaux au Cameroun, 2ème partie: les forêts du sud camerounais. Les auteurs présentent les sites de la zone forestière camerounaise les plus intéressants du point de vue ornithologique. La zone comprend deux Zones d'Endémisme d'Oiseaux ayant chacune une avifaune bien distincte: les montagnes camerounaises et la zone de basse altitude du Cameroun et du Gabon. La première, qui comprend également le Plateau d'Obudu au Nigéria et l'île de Bioko, compte 26 espèces d'oiseaux endémiques, dont 24 peuvent être observées le plus facilement au Cameroun à trois sites clés: (1) le Mont Cameroun, (2) le Mont Koupé et les Monts Bakossi, et (3) les Monts Bamenda (voir Tableau 1). Le site à visiter dans la zone de basse altitude est le Parc national de Korup, où on a une bonne chance de voir le Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas*.

Biogeographically, southern Cameroon encompasses two highly distinct and unique avifaunas. The forests and grasslands of the Cameroon Mountains Endemic Bird Area (EBA), which extend marginally beyond the borders of Cameroon to Equatorial Guinea (the island of Bioko) and Nigeria (Obudu Plateau), is the most significant of these. A substantial 26 bird species are confined to the lofty heights of this region (hereafter 'endemics'; nomenclature follows *Birds of Western Africa*[1]), 24 of which are best seen in Cameroon. The distribution of each endemic among the discontinuous chain of mountains differs, with some being widespread and others localised to one or two peaks (Table 1). Birders need visit only three key areas to see all of the endemics: (1) Mount Cameroon, (2) Mount Kupe and the Bakossi Mountains, and (3) the Bamenda Highlands.

Besides the unique and diverse highlands, the juxtaposed lowlands provide a complementary set of forest birds. Six of these, including the renowned **Red-headed Picathartes** *Picathartes oreas*, are largely restricted to the Cameroon and Gabon Lowlands EBA[11]. These two distinct eco-regions combine to make southern Cameroon one of the most exciting forest regions on the continent.

With these biogeographical criteria in mind, we overview birding in southern Cameroon, focusing specifically on the uniqueness of the region. We first move inland along the cool mountain chain and then digress into the lowlands. All key sites are recognised for their global importance in conserving Cameroon's rare and range-restricted birds[5]. Importantly, BirdLife International has not only recognised the conservation importance of this region, but has embarked on various conservation initiatives in collaboration with its local partner, the Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS), and other conservation organisations.

Birders can play an important role in the conservation of this area and are encouraged to submit their sightings to the CBCS (c/o BP 3055, Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon; e-mail: cbcs@iccnet.cm) to help ongoing monitoring of these threatened sites. Most threatened of all these areas is the Bamenda Highlands, where community-linked conservation projects, using **Bannerman's Turaco** *Tauraco bannermani* as their focal bird, have been implemented. Communities are also involved in the conservation of Mount Kupe and Mount Cameroon. At all these sites, visitors are encouraged to support these projects by making use of local forest guides. For further details and tips on practical access 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 for download is our detailed guide to birding in Cameroon for independent travellers (write to cameroon@birdingafrica.com).

Mount Cameroon

For much of the year western Africa's loftiest mountain (4,095 m) is concealed under a dense blanket of cloud. Rising steeply from the Atlantic Ocean, warm, moist air is trapped along the seaward slopes, each year pouring more than 10 m of rain onto its well-leached soils. The northern slopes are the driest and most accessible, harbouring a number of endemics restricted to the mountain: **Mount Cameroon Francolin** *Francolinus camerunensis*, **Mount Cameroon Speirops** *Speirops melanocephalus* and **Mountain Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne fuliginosa* (the latter also on Bioko), and a total of 18 EBA endemics.

The biodiversity of Mount Cameroon has recently come under severe pressure from agriculture, excessive burning and hunting. Once the lower slopes of the mountain were covered in a swathe of dense forest, which continued into the lowlands. Now agriculture is pushing higher up the mountain, forcing the forest into a narrower and more degraded belt. Still, productive forests holding most of the endemics can be found away from Buea, particularly on the north-west slope, in some places spanning an altitudinal range of 900–1,600 m. Here, **Mount Cameroon Francolin** still skulks in the primary forest understorey, only occasionally coming to the forest edge. Ten years ago a lucky few could see them on the very rough track to the radio mast above Buea, but now they are only to be reliably found on the less-intensely hunted north-western slopes, where they are still difficult to observe. It is not easy to visit this remote area—one needs to hire a guide, hike a long way and camp in the forest—but the sight of one of these rare birds stalking through the forest undergrowth is an unforgettable experience.

Still, there is much to keep one below the treeline on the north-east slope. Nectar-bearing plants, particularly common at the forest edge, attract a vivid array of sunbirds, including **Cameroon** *Cyanomitra oritis* and **Ursula's Sunbirds** *Cinnyris ursulae*. Ghost-like whistles of **Green-breasted Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus gladiator* drift through the misty air, together with the fluty melody of **Crossley's Ground Thrush** *Zoothera crossleyi*. Watch for **Little Oliveback** *Nesocharis shelleyi* and **Oriole Finch** *Linurgus olivaceus* feeding in dense tangles and vines, together with **Yellow-breasted Boubou** *Laniarius atroflavus*. With some patience **Cameroon Olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus poensis* and **White-tailed Warbler** *Poliolais lopezi* can be seen in the dark, moist forest undergrowth. Ever-active groups of **Black-capped Woodland Warblers** *Phylloscopus herberti* join mixed-species feeding flocks, and with some luck **Cameroon Olive Pigeon** *Columba sjostedti* can be spotted gorging itself on ripe-red fruit.

Above the treeline the habitat opens, being dominated by grassland with scattered trees and forest patches in the gullies. Suddenly **Mountain Saw-wing** is numerous, flitting along the forest border in small flocks. This is also the domain of the mountain's most sought-after endemic, the unusual white-eye **Mount Cameroon Speirops**. Parties move restlessly through small forest patches in gullies. Also listen for the explosive call of **Evergreen Forest Warbler** *Bradypterus lopezi*, the local race *camerunensis* sometimes treated as an endemic species **Cameroon Evergreen Forest Warbler**. Higher still, the grass becomes shorter and sparser, ideal habitat for the endemic race of **African Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus*, often treated as a full species, **Cameroon Pipit** *A. camaroonensis*.

The heart of the highlands: Mount Kupe and the Bakossi Mountains

Of all Cameroon's birding spots, Mount Kupe is the most celebrated, not least because it hosts one of the world's rarest birds (**Mount Kupe Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus kupeensis*) and a genus of charismatic babbler (mountain babblers, *Kupeornis*) bearing its name. A mixture of farmbush and forest on the lower slopes creates a mosaic of bird-rich habitats—around 350 species have been recorded in the area—which could engage birders for days, whilst the higher slopes hold 15 Cameroon endemics. Mount Kupe and its birds have received prominent exposure by Bowden & Andrews[3] and Bowden[2], although it should be noted that this is no longer a reliable site for **Red-headed Picathartes**. Still, it holds healthy populations of many of the endemics.

However, because most of the endemics are more readily found in the Bakossi Mountains (see below), the mid-altitude farmbush vegetation on the lower slopes is of greatest interest here. **Forest Swallow** *Hirundo fuliginosa*, a Cameroon and Gabon Lowlands endemic, is common on the lower slopes of the mountain, particularly along

1. Red-headed Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* (Tasso Leventis, courtesy of BirdLife International)
2. Mountain Robin Chat / Cossyphe d'Isabelle *Cossypha isabellae* (Callan Cohen)
3. Green-breasted Bush-shrike / Gladiateur à poitrine verte *Malaconotus gladiator* (Callan Cohen)
4. Crossley's Ground Thrush / Grive de Crossley *Zoothera crossleyi* (Callan Cohen)
5. Yellow-billed Barbet / Barbican pourpré *Trachylaemus purpuratus* (Callan Cohen)
6. Many-coloured Bush-shrike / Gladiateur multicolore *Malaconotus multicolor* (Ron Hoff)
7. Western Bluebill / Sénégali sanguin *Spermophaga haematina* (Ron Hoff)
8. Grey-headed Broadbill / Eurylaime à tête grise *Smithornis sharpei* (Ron Hoff)
9. Brown-capped Weaver / Tisserin à cape brune *Ploceus insignis* (Ron Hoff)
10. Bannerman's Turaco / Touraco de Bannerman *Tauraco bannermani* (Ron Hoff)
11. African Pipit / Pipit africain *Anthus cinnamomeus lynesi* (Ron Hoff)
12. Lesser Bristlebill / Bulbul jaunelore *Bleda notata* (Ron Hoff)
13. Rufous-sided Broadbill / Eurylaime à flancs roux *Smithornis rufolateralis* (Ron Hoff)

the Nature Trail. Also watch for **Bates's Swift** *Apus batesi* overhead. Due to the open nature of the habitat, a plethora of fruit-eaters can be seen here: numerous barbet species can be heard simultaneously, including the decidedly ugly **Naked-faced Barbet** *Gymnobucco calvus*, and its scarcer but equally grotesque cousin **Bristle-nosed Barbet** *G. peli*.

Mixed foraging flocks of insectivores can hold scores of species. Sifting through the commoner birds should turn up **Black-shouldered Puffback** *Dryoscopus senegalensis* and **Rufous-crowned Eremomela** *Eremomela badiceps*, and if you are lucky **Bioko Batis** *Batis poensis* (of which the mainland race *occulta* is sometimes considered a separate species, **West African Batis**) and **Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver** *Ploceus preussi*. Three of the mountains' most sought-after birds include **Many-coloured Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus multicolor*, **Grey-headed Broadbill** *Smithornis sharpei* and **African Piculet** *Sasia africana*, all of which can be incredibly difficult to find unless their calls are known. For those who are more optimistic, **White-naped Pigeon** *Columba albinucha* has been seen here and in the Bakossis. **Bates's Weaver** *Ploceus batesi*, the latter perhaps Cameroon's least-known lowland endemic, has also been recorded in the past, although not for

Table 1. Birds confined to the Cameroon Mountains EBA [11], and their occurrence within the three key birding sites, Mount Cameroon, Mount Kupe and the Bakossi Mountains, and the Bamenda Highlands. E = Species endemic within the political boundaries of Cameroon.

Tableau 1. Oiseaux confinés à la Zone d'Endémisme d'Oiseaux des montagnes camerounaises[11], et leur présence à trois sites clés: le Mont Cameroun, le Mont Koupé et les Monts Bakossi, et les Monts Bamenda. E = espèce endémique à l'intérieur des frontières politiques du Cameroun.

	Mount Cameroon	Mount Kupe & Bakossi Mts	Bamenda Highlands
Mount Cameroon Francolin / Francolin du Mont Cameroun *Francolinus camerunensis*	E		
Cameroon Olive Pigeon / Pigeon du Cameroun *Columba sjostedti*	•	•	•
Bannerman's Turaco / Touraco de Bannerman *Tauraco bannermani*			E
Mountain Saw-wing / Hirondelle brune *Psalidoprocne fuliginosa*	•		
Cameroon Montane Greenbul / Bulbul concolore *Andropadus montanus*	•	•	•
Western Mountain Greenbul / Bulbul à gorge grise *Andropadus tephrolaemus*	•	•	•
Cameroon Olive Greenbul / Bulbul olivâtre *Phyllastrephus poensis*	•	•	•
Grey-headed Greenbul / Bulbul à ventre jaune *Phyllastrephus poliocephalus*	•	•	
Mountain Robin Chat / Cossyphe d'Isabelle *Cossypha isabellae*	•	•	•
Bangwa Forest Warbler / Bouscarle du Bangwa *Bradypterus bangwaensis*			•
Green Longtail / Prinia verte *Urolais epichlora*	•	•	•
Bamenda Apalis / Apalis du Bamenda *Apalis bamendae*			E
White-tailed Warbler / Poliolais à queue blanche *Poliolais lopezi*	•	•	
Black-capped Woodland Warbler / Pouillot à tête noire *Phylloscopus herberti*	•	•	
Banded Wattle-eye / Pririt du Bamenda *Platysteira laticincta*			E
White-throated Mountain Babbler / Phyllanthe à gorge blanche *Kupeornis gilberti*		•	
Cameroon Sunbird / Souimanga à tête bleue *Cyanomitra oritis*	•	•	•
Ursula's Sunbird / Souimanga d'Ursula *Cinnyris ursulae*	•	•	
Mount Cameroon Speirops / Speirops du Cameroun *Speirops melanocephalus*	E		
Green-breasted Bush-shrike / Gladiateur à poitrine verte *Malaconotus gladiator*	•	•	•
Mount Kupe Bush-shrike / Gladiateur du Kupé *Malaconotus kupeensis*		E	
Yellow-breasted Boubou / Gonolek à ventre jaune *Laniarius atroflavus*	•		•
Bannerman's Weaver / Tisserin de Bannerman *Ploceus bannermani*		(•)*	•
Little Oliveback / Dos-vert à tête noire *Nesocharis shelleyi*	•	•	•
TOTAL	17	16	15

*Not present on Mount Kupe and only very marginally in the Bakossi Mountains.

some time. All recent records appear to come from the far south of the country, near Gabon.

Of equal stature to Mount Kupe, but ornithologically almost unknown, the remote Bakossi Mountains harbour a similar avifauna and are proving a reliable site for **Mount Kupe Bush-shrike**, which was first seen here in the early 1990s and photographed in 2002[4]. Access is trickier, but many of the birds are easier to find once you have reached the village of Kodmin (see also Mills & Cohen[9]). Birders should, however, not visit without first making enquiries at the WWF office in Nyasoso. The forest at Kodmin is part of a different community project and one needs to pay a forest fee and hire guides from the village itself. Birders need to exercise respect and should not attempt to enter the forest without the blessing of the local chief.

Chubb's Cisticola *Cisticola chubbi*, of which the Cameroon population is sometimes treated as a separate species, **Brown-backed Cisticola** *C. discolor*, occurs in the rank vegetation on the edge of the village. Climbing out of the village, the narrow track winds through a mixture of secondary growth and farmbush where **Cameroon Montane Greenbul** *Andropadus montanus* and **Tullberg's Woodpecker** *Campethera tullbergi* are regular and **Cameroon** and **Ursula's Sunbirds** flit among the abundance of flowering plants. The secretive **Red-faced Crimsonwing** *Cryptospiza reichenovii* may be seen feeding quietly on the track. At the forest edge watch for **Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis* sallying from its treetop perch, and **Green Longtail** *Urolais epichlora* and **Brown-capped Weaver** *Ploceus insignis* in the mixed flocks. Due to the steep nature of the terrain the forest canopy is sometimes at eye level, making this also one of the best sites to see the fierce-looking **Green-breasted Bush-shrike**. Dense undergrowth within the forest supports chattering groups of **Cameroon Olive Greenbuls**, the restless **White-tailed Warbler** and shy **Bocage's Akalat** *Sheppardia bocagei*. Once in the forest proper, try to locate a mixed feeding flock, which are often dominated by noisy bands of **White-throated Mountain Babblers** *Kupeornis gilberti* and **Grey-headed Greenbuls** *Phyllastrephus poliocephalus*. Other species to watch for include **Western Mountain Greenbul** *Andropadus tephrolaemus*, **Black-necked Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophyia chalybea*, **Black-capped Woodland Warbler**, **Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis*, **Pink-footed Puffback** *Dryoscopus angolensis* and **Mountain Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius poensis*.

However, **Mount Kupe Bush-shrike** will certainly be the highlight for anyone lucky enough to find it. This site is undoubtedly the best place to observe this elusive species, a number of pairs of which occur in ridge-top forests along the network of trails. Until ten years ago it was known only from Mount Kupe, making the discovery of a larger population in the Bakossi Mountains vital for its survival.

Bamenda

Most degraded of Cameroon's uplands, the localised endemics of the Bamenda Highlands cling to the last remnant forest patches. Sixteen endemics occur here, of which **Bannerman's Turaco** and **Banded Wattle-eye** *Platysteira laticincta* are confined to these highlands. The most accessible site where these species still occur is the Bafut-Ngemba Forest Reserve, really a plantation forest with natural forest in narrow riparian strips. In the early morning the rasping call of **Bannerman's Turaco** can be heard from isolated valleys. **Banded Wattle-eye** is scarce here and requires more time and good fortune to track down. Among the other endemics, this is the best site for species that prefer rank secondary growth. **Mountain Robin Chat** *Cossypha isabellae*, **Bangwa Forest Warbler** *Bradypterus bangwaensis*, **Chubb's Cisticola** and **Bannerman's Weaver** *Ploceus bannermani* are usually easy to see, and **Yellow-breasted Boubou** skulks among dense tangles.

Mount Oku, the largest remaining patch of forest, holds much more significant populations of endemics, but is more difficult to reach. This is certainly the best site for **Banded Wattle-eye** and **Bannerman's Turaco**, and is regarded to hold the only viable population of these two threatened species[6]. Also, **Cameroon Olive Pigeon** and **Little Oliveback** are more readily seen here than at Bafut-Ngemba. Other forest species to watch for include the colourful **Oriole Finch**, **Cameroon Montane Greenbul** and **Western Mountain Greenbul**.

The last of the Cameroon Mountains endemics, **Bamenda Apalis** *Apalis bamendae*, has a unique distribution. It ranges from wooded gullies and ravines around Bamenda north to the Adamawa Plateau, where it can also be seen at Ngaoundaba


7


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Ranch[8]. The best area to look for it is in the remaining patches of gallery forest near the town of Bali, west of Bamenda.

Korup National Park: Picathartes

No doubt, anyone setting foot into one of Africa's most ancient forests will be in nervous anticipation of one of the world's most bizarre and elusive birds, the famed **Red-headed Picathartes**. Birders should enter Korup from Mundemba and aim to search the vicinity of Picathartes Knoll, about a 10-km walk from the Mana River. Rengo Rock Camp, conveniently situated less than 2 km from the knoll, is an excellent base from which to explore the surrounding forest. Coming from Mundemba, an early start over the Mana River suspension bridge provides opportunity for scanning for hornbills: the smaller **Piping** *Bycanistes fistulator* and **White-thighed** *B. albotibialis* are more tolerant of habitat degradation and can even be seen on the road between Mundemba and Ekondo Titi, whereas the colossal **Yellow-casqued** *Ceratogymna elata* and **Black-casqued** *C. atrata* are largely restricted to primary forest. Overhead, too, watch for flocks of swifts which may contain **Sabine's Spinetail** *Rhaphidura sabini* or the rarer **Cassin's Spinetail** *Neafrapus cassini*, or **Bates's Swift**. **Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus* is common here and can usually be seen in some numbers. As daytime temperatures increase, watch for soaring raptors, of which **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Spizaetus africanus* is most regular. Below, scan the rocky riverbed for resident **Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis*. The deep hoot of **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster* will draw you into the forest, but you will need to be lucky to see this extreme skulker.

Once in the forest birding becomes much more challenging, but the rewards are impressive. Ant columns attract an array of understorey species such as **Fire-crested Alethe** *Alethe diademata*, **Forest Robin** *Stiphrornis erythrothorax*, **Lesser** *Bleda notata* and **Red-tailed Bristlebills** *B. syndactyla*, and **Pale-breasted** *Illadopsis rufipennis* and **Blackcap Illadopsises** *I. cleaveri*. Watch the tangled midstorey for colourful forest weavers and wattle-eyes: **Blue-billed** *Malimbus nitens*, **Crested** *M. malimbicus*, **Red-vented** *M. scutatus* and **Rachel's Malimbes** *M. racheliae*, and **Chestnut** *Dyaphorophyia castanea*, **White-spotted** *D. tonsa* and **Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes** *D. concreta* can all be seen. Greenbuls are also a feature here, and will pose some identification challenges, particularly the **Icterine** *Phyllastrephus icterinus*/**Xavier's** *P. xavieri* and **Red-tailed** *Criniger calurus*/**White-bearded** *C. ndussumensis*/**Eastern Bearded** *C. chloronotus* complexes. The warbler-like **Fraser's Sunbird** *Deleornis fraseri* is common and can be seen in most feeding flocks. Canopy species may include **Yellow-billed Turaco** *Tauraco macrorhynchus*, **Lemon-bellied Crombec** *Sylvietta denti* and **Blue Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina azurea*.

Species that don't join mixed flocks are often more challenging to track down and usually require knowledge of their calls. The deep, mournful hoots of **Blue-headed Wood Dove** *Turtur brehmeri* can be heard around Rengo Camp, but often the only views obtained are of a small dove flushing off the track. **Latham's Forest Francolin** *Francolinus lathami* and **Black Guineafowl** *Agelastes niger* are also present; scratch marks in the leaf litter indicate their favourite haunts. Midstorey species are often the easiest to see. **Rufous-sided Broadbill** *Smithornis rufolateralis* performs its clockwork display flight at dusk and dawn, and **Red-billed Dwarf** *Tockus camurus* and **White-crested Hornbills** *Tropicranus albocristatus* are quite noisy, the latter often in the vicinity of monkey troops. You are also sure to hear **Chestnut-backed Owlet** *Glaucidium sjostedti*, **Bare-cheeked Trogon** *Apaloderma aequatoriale* and **Chocolate-backed Kingfisher** *Halcyon badia*, but these species often stay high in the canopy, making them exceptionally difficult to spot.

The list of species to be seen in Korup is long[7,10,12]. Other mouth-watering possibilities include **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolophus*, **Spot-breasted Ibis** *Bostrychia rara*, **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*, **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis marourus*, **Black Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus hartlaubi*, **Lyre-tailed Honeyguide** *Melichneutes robustus*, **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis haematopus* and **Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri*, the latter two present around Rengo Camp earlier this year.

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All *The Birds of Africa*

C. Hilary Fry[a], *Emil K. Urban*[b] *and Martin Woodcock*[c]

***The Birds of Africa* terminé.** L'objectif de cette courte évaluation est de marquer la parution du septième et dernier tome de *The Birds of Africa* et de célébrer la fin de ce projet, qui a duré 25 ans. En touchant à certaines difficultés d'ordre taxonomique et autres, en présentant des cartes et en examinant les sources bibliographiques, nous tentons de placer cette œuvre dans la perspective de l'ornithologie africaine contemporaine.

Our purpose in this brief appraisal is to mark the publication of the seventh volume of *The Birds of Africa* and to celebrate the completion of the 25-year project. In touching upon some taxonomic and other difficulties, in presenting maps and discussing literature sources, we try to place the work in perspective with African ornithology today.

The history of this multi-volume handbook has been outlined in the introduction to the seventh and final volume[15] and by Fry & Woodcock[16]. In the 1970s Leslie Brown developed ideas for a definitive handbook on Africa's avifauna in discussion with Emil Urban in Ethiopia and Kenneth Newman in South Africa. It was conceived as a two-volume work to occupy him in his retirement and would be the modern successor to Reichenow[30], Sclater[32] and Mackworth-Praed & Grant[23–25]. Finding a publisher willing to take the considerable commercial risk took many years. Eventually, Academic Press agreed to it in 1976, but negotiations continued and late in 1978 a work of four volumes was agreed upon. Writing commenced immediately. Unhappily, Leslie Brown died in 1980, long before the first volume[3] appeared. It necessitated some reorganisation of the book, published in 1982, and restructuring of the remainder as an edited, multi-author, series. Martin Woodcock became sole colour artist and Ian Willis the principal line artist. Hilary Fry and Stuart Keith, members of the first volume's Advisory Editorial Board, were appointed editors jointly with Emil Urban. The new team straightaway persuaded Academic Press to expand the series to six volumes, three non-passerine and three passerine. Later, the need for a fourth passerine volume became apparent, bringing the final total to seven.

Natural history book publishing was a new field for Academic Press in the 1970s. Nowadays a publisher would doubtless require an extremely detailed and convincing business plan before agreeing to embark upon such a major venture, and it is greatly to the credit of Academic Press that they agreed to proceed with *The Birds of Africa* (hereafter simply *BoA)* and that they persevered when the first three or four volumes were commercially barely viable at all. If it were not for Leslie Brown's powers of persuasion and for Academic's constant support during the trials and tribulations of so many years, *BoA* would simply never have come into existence.

After Vol 1, it became increasingly evident that production of *BoA* was as slow as the slowest contributor, and successive interims between volumes 2[41], 3[13], 4[20] and 5[43] were of two, four and five years. To speed matters up, Hilary Fry was appointed Executive Editor of the last two volumes[14,15], and sectional or 'horizontal' as well as systematic or 'vertical' research and authorship were initiated, with David Pearson responsible for most Descriptions and Stuart Keith for most of the Voice and Field Characters sections. Vol 6 was able to appear only three years after Vol 5. Despite some delays consequent upon Vol 7 being put up for sale (along with most other natural history titles) by Academic Press's new owners in 2002, the final volume was delivered to its new publishers, Christopher Helm / A & C Black, a mere 21 months after the appearance of Vol 6. Unfortunately Stuart Keith did not live to see the completion of the series; he died in February 2003[46], having finished his contribution but denied the pleasure of seeing any of it in proof.

Looking back, we are inclined to think that the circumstances that made *BoA* so protracted meant that nothing short of a miracle could ever have shortened the production schedule by more than a year or two. With editors, authors, field workers and correspondents scattered worldwide and often on the move, communication was always a problem, but regular week-long meetings of editors and

artists with the publishers in London served to keep the team functioning smoothly.

Objectives

During its long life *BoA*'s objectives have remained unchanged: to integrate salient facts from field, literature and museum, and to produce a compendium characterising the lives and biology of every species. In pursuing them, the project has had to keep abreast of the accelerating pace of events. These include geopolitical changes across the face of Africa and the consequent imperative for nature conservation; increasing tourism and great improvement in knowledge about bird identification and distribution; a spectacular increase in university-led research in South Africa; an exponential growth in ornithological publications; and global developments in information and communication technology and molecular biology.

Design and format

In trying to keep up with all of these developments, progressive material and presentational changes have been introduced with each volume, in such features as species account length, text figures, plate keys, colour maps, mapping precision, voice transcriptions, reference systems and indexing. Despite these changes, inevitable in the passage of so many years, despite the deaths of two editors and several other contributors, and despite far-reaching changes in publisher and production, we believe that the integrity of the series has remained intact. Design and format have kept sufficiently unchanged for the seven volumes to be quite recognisable as a series essentially uniform in presentation and artistry. In the absence of photographs, Ian Willis's meticulous line drawings have enlivened the text throughout. Both he and Martin Woodcock have drawn and painted African birds in the field, as well, of course, as using a variety of other source material. Martin has made frequent visits to Africa expressly for *BoA*, with artistic results that his colleagues think and *BoA*'s reviewers declare have added greatly to the work's attractiveness.

Relationships and classification

Molecular biology has brought about a revolution in systematics and taxonomy, to the point where the very nature of the 'species' is being constantly re-evaluated[6,19,28,31,38]. Most of the *BoA* team has been acutely interested in taxonomy, species relationships and generic boundaries. Whilst organising the birds around conventional systematic arrangements, we have made a point of reassessing their taxonomy throughout, making wide use of the superspecies concept which earlier African studies did so much to promote on the world stage[17,36]. By no means have editors always agreed with an author's preferred arrangement, nor have they always agreed with each other. It can probably be said that over its quarter century *BoA* has not been consistent in its taxonomic/systematic approach: hardly surprising, since the 100 contributors had as many different opinions. At least we have attempted to justify decisions with mini-essays in the Introductions to several volumes and evolutionary/biogeographical case studies in Vols 6 (p xiv) and 7 (p xvi), by cross-references in numerous species texts, and with explanations in the taxonomic diagnoses.

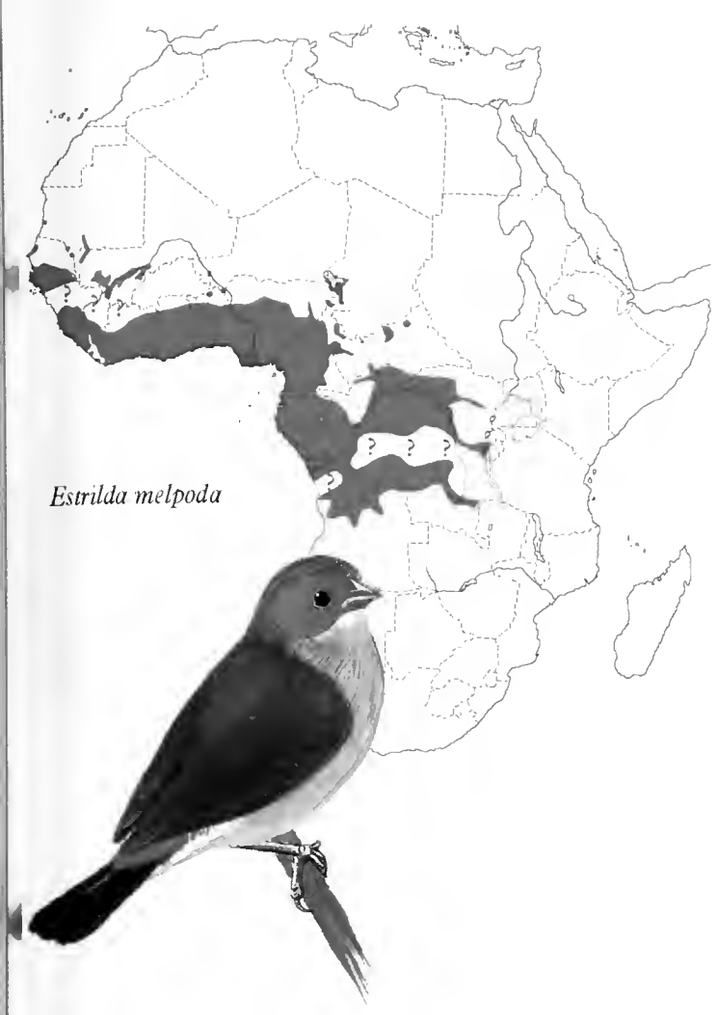
Taxonomy

In every volume many innovations have been made, raising some birds from subspecies to allospecies (members of a superspecies), sinking others, splitting and combining genera, and recognising, eg, picathartes Picathartidae, sugarbirds Promeropidae and oxpeckers Buphagidae as constituting full families (these three being endemic to Africa). In Vol 7 reasons are given for treating Compact Weaver *Pachyphantes superciliosus* as a weaver curiosity and Bob-tailed Weaver *Brachycope*

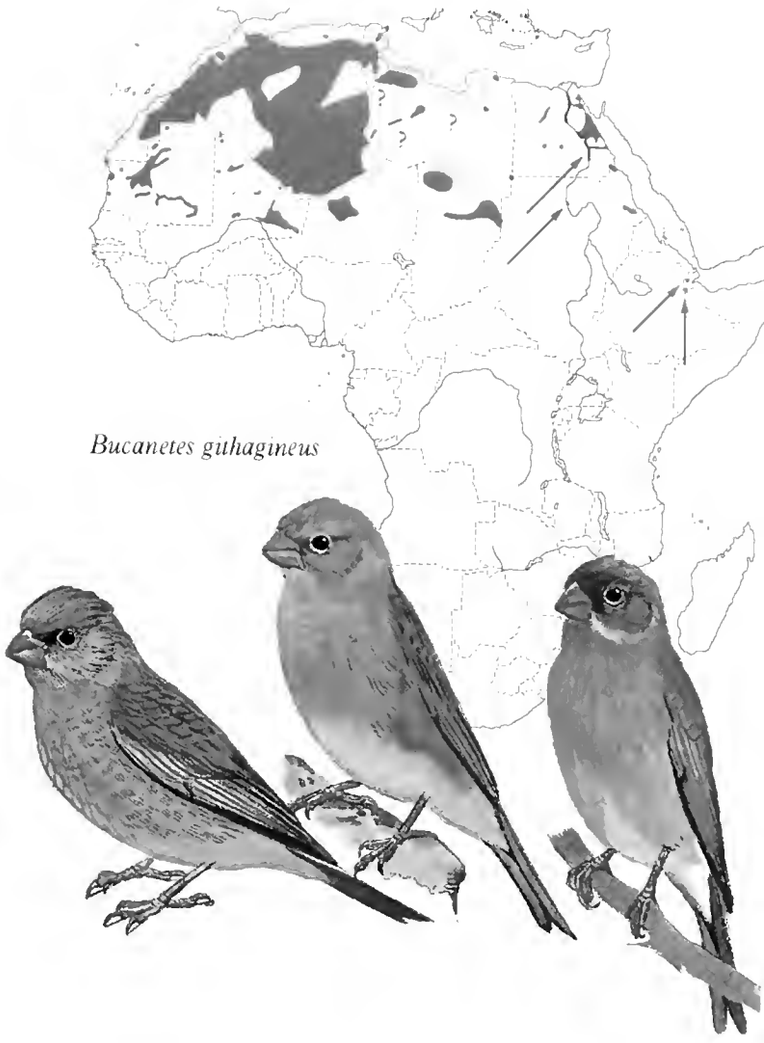
Caption to plate on opposite page

Plate 1. Representative maps from *The Birds of Africa* Vol 7: in West and Central Africa (Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*), Saharan Africa (Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*), Sahel zone, East and south-east Africa (Cut-throat Finch *A. fasciata*), and southern Africa (Red-headed Finch *Amadina erythrocephala*). Multiple images per species are of different subspecies, genders or ages.

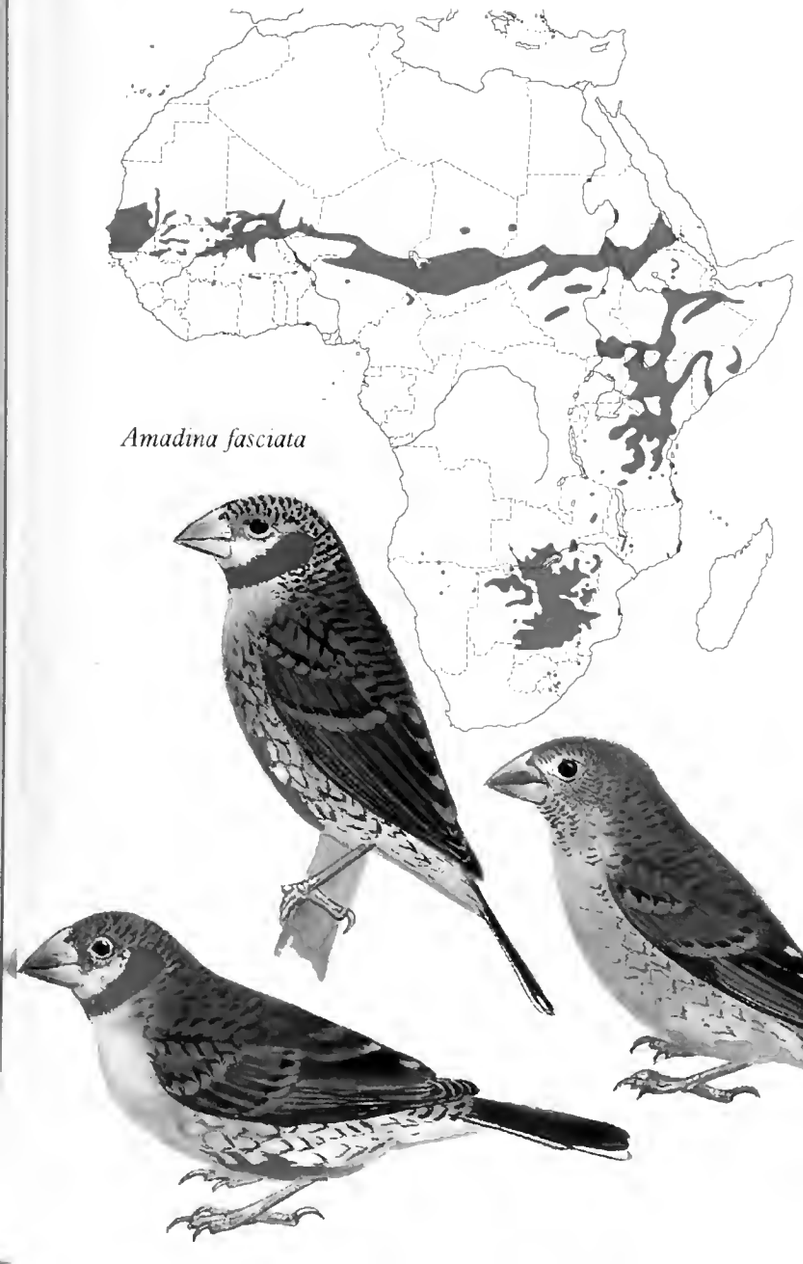
Cartes de distribution représentatives de *The Birds of Africa* Vol 7: Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale (Astrild à joues oranges *Estrilda melpoda*), Afrique saharienne (Roselin githagine *Bucanetes githagineus*), Sahel, Afrique de l'Est et du sud-est (Amadine cou-coupé *Amadina fasciata*), et Afrique australe (Amadine à tête rouge *A. erythrocephala*). Plusieurs images par espèce indiquent soit des sous-espèces différentes, soit des sexes différents ou différentes classes d'âges.



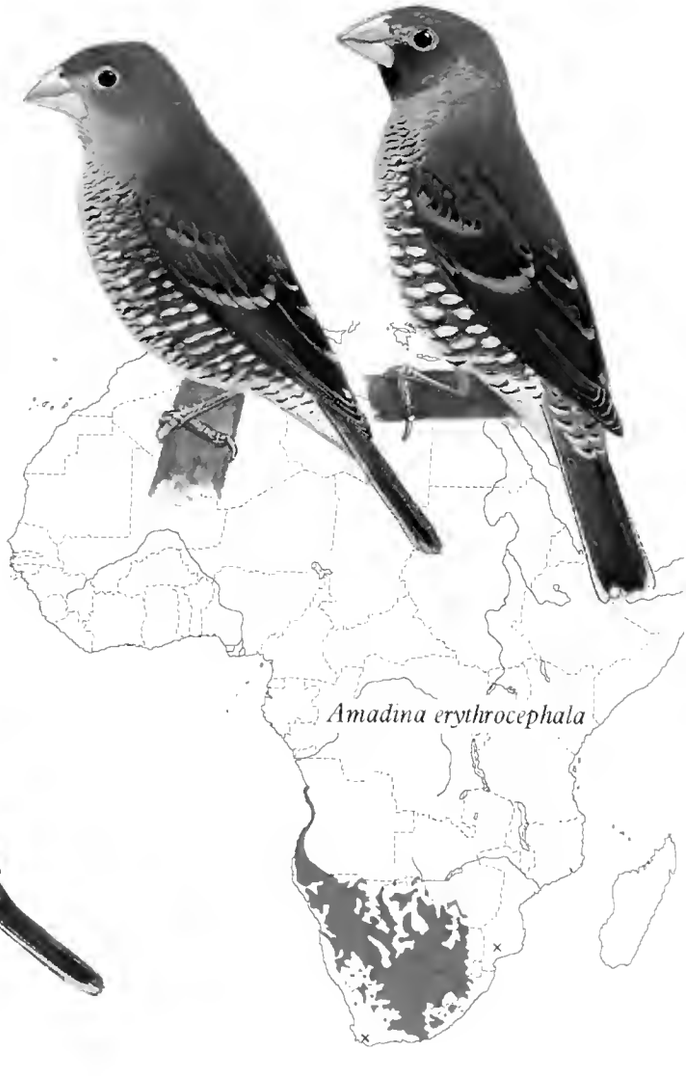
Estrilda melpoda



Bucanetes githagineus



Amadina fasciata



Amadina erythrocephala

anomala as distinct from bishops *Euplectes*, for considering Cuckoo-finch *Anomalospiza imberbis* to be an aberrant viduid *Vidua*[21], and for treating *Carpospiza brachydactyla* as a finch (Pale Rockfinch: Fringillidae) and not a sparrow (Pale Rock Sparrow: Passeridae). Also in Vol 7, taxonomically additional species of antpeckers *Parmoptila*[47], waxbills *Estrilda*, pytilias *Pytilia*, quailfinches *Ortygospiza*, paradise-whydahs *Vidua*, grosbeaks *Rhynchostruthus* and buntings *Emberiza* are recognised, and Robert Payne gives authoritative account of a firefinch *Lagonosticta* and three species of parasitic indigobirds *Vidua* that he has discovered. Many *BoA* taxonomic judgements in later volumes are supported by molecular evidence. Others may prove to be ill-founded. With the benefit of hindsight, we might like to revise some of the opinions in earlier volumes, in relation to superspecies composition for instance. For that matter, we would like to revise some statements in later volumes too, in relation to such exciting revelations as those regarding sunbird-like 'warblers'[33], for instance. Controversy will continue to surround the taxonomic status of some of our species, such as Red Sea Cliff Swallow *Hirundo perdita*, Usambara Hyliota *Hyliota usambarae* and Bulo Burti Bush-shrike *Laniarius liberatus*, at least until the birds become much better known.

The various *BoA* volumes appeared too late for newly discovered species like Udzungwa Forest Partridge *Xenoperdix udzungwensis* and Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala*. Some taxonomically cryptic birds now recognised as species[35] have been treated by *BoA* as subspecies. They include Northern Black Korhaan *Eupodotis afraoides*, Southern White-faced Scops Owl *Ptilopsis* (*Otus*) *granti*, the four red-billed hornbills, Damara *Tockus damarensis*, Southern *T. rufirostris*, Tanzanian *T. ruahae* and Western *T. kempi* (recently split from Northern *T. erythrorhynchus)*, 12 larks, three pipits, 11 bulbuls, Príncipe Thrush *Turdus xanthorhynchus* (from São Tomé Thrush *T. olivaceofuscus*), Eastern Forest Robin *Stiphrornis xanthogaster/sanghensis* (from Western *S. erythrogaster*), Bangwa Warbler *Bradypterus bangwaensis* (from Evergreen-forest Warbler *B. lopezi*), African Desert Warbler *Sylvia deserti* (from Asian Desert Warbler *S. nana*, a non-breeding visitor to Africa), cisticolas, apalises and others.

Perhaps some of the judgements in earlier volumes were overly influenced by the editors' own researches, on the systematics of some ibises and doves[12], jacanas[16], nightjars[9] and others. At least the species accounts concerned give a flavour of how such studies, in relation to voices, nest structure, plumage and behaviour, are well within the ambit of observers hoping to give their African visit some really rewarding purpose. We found African tailorbirds to be thinly disguised Asian ones[10,43] and joined others in thinking that tit-babblers *Parisoma* are really *Sylvia* warblers[43] (but were only mildly suspicious that *Sylvia* are not warblers at all but babblers, which they now prove to be[5]). Such ideas are legion in *BoA*, sometimes causing a change of mind between volumes: Cape Grassbird *Sphenoeacus afer* may also be a babbler, not a warbler[42]; in the bulbul volume, 4, we thought that *Neolestes* and *Nicator* would prove to be shrikes not bulbuls, but by the shrike volume, 6, they had become bulbuls again and the lucky birds were illustrated but not described in both books.

Mapping

The much-improved accuracy with which it is now possible to map most African birds' ranges is extremely important in assessing relationships at low taxonomic level.

The Range and Status section and distribution map are complementary. R & S data, with notes on population density, migrations and conservation, were abstracted from the ever-growing number of fine regional and country avifaunal guides and atlases (of which the most notable ones[2,8,39] appeared too recently to be of much help for *BoA*). Each successive *BoA* volume has benefited from additional atlases, culminating in the great *The Atlas of Southern African Birds*[18]. *BoA* Vols 6 and 7 have particularly detailed maps, drawn from published country ranges including hitherto-overlooked data for Mauritania and Mali[22], and from not-yet-published maps for Tanzania, Cameroon and Central Africa, compiled respectively by Neil Baker, Robert Dowsett and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, and Marc Languy. Some species and their ranges, all from Vol 7, are shown here in Plates 1 and 2, the maps being selected to demonstrate the precision made possible in most countries by currently available atlases.

Voice

This became Stuart Keith's department. He was exceptionally talented in rendering transliterations of voices in a realistic, evocative and often humorous

manner. He made best use of increasingly informative sound-record publications and corresponded at length with their authors to ensure accuracy of identification. It culminated in his close co-operation with Claude Chappuis, whose recent, comprehensive collection of high-quality recordings place his work[4] amongst the most valuable publications of *BoA*'s time.

Behaviour, biology, literature

At some 4,720 pages overall, it goes without saying that *BoA* has leant very heavily on the observations of contemporary ornithologists in field, museum and studio, and upon the thousands of people whose work is already entrenched in papers, books, sound recordings, maps and photographs. *BoA* has been fortunate in numbering amongst its contributors many university and museum scientists who are respected and acknowledged authorities on particular families or species. Keeping abreast of the literature, however, and writing with equal authority about birds on one's own patch as well as elsewhere in Africa, has proved difficult for some authors lacking ready access to libraries and skin collections. That is where editorial input becomes imperative.

Here we would like to pay tribute again to the fieldwork of dedicated earlier naturalist-ornithologists, such as C W Benson[1], R E Moreau[27], W Serle[34], J Vincent[45], A W Vincent[44] and V G L van Someren[37] (the references are only examples of their publications). The wealth of their unsophisticated but hard-won life-history observations of hundreds of species remains unsurpassed, and remains an inspiration to this day. There are dedicated and skilled observers today, like Robert Dowsett, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, Robert Payne[29], Peter Steyn[40] and Warwick Tarboton[41], but a market for fact-packed natural histories in the style of van Someren's[37] no longer exists and it is only a few journals (like this one) that promote the publication of natural history observations, the unpopular middle ground between rigorously scientific ornithology and popular birding.

Such has been the growth of knowledge in African ornithology in recent decades that species accounts have sometimes fallen short of encompassing everything known. Moreover, in earlier volumes an account length limitation had to be imposed by the publishers. When it was lifted, passerine accounts were able to become more detailed than those for the non-passerines. All the same, some species accounts are remarkably short, a reflection of just how little is known. If discovery is your desire, you have only to scan the pages for section brevity to identify good reasons for your next field trip.

All in all, however, we feel that a stronger systematic edifice has been built which can give a better understanding of the evolution of Africa's wonderfully diverse bird fauna. What is needed now is first (a mere trifle) revision, updating and expansion of *BoA*'s earlier volumes, and second, new avifaunal and biogeographical analyses like Moreau's[26] some 40 years ago. These are future enterprises for the rising generation of African ornithologists.

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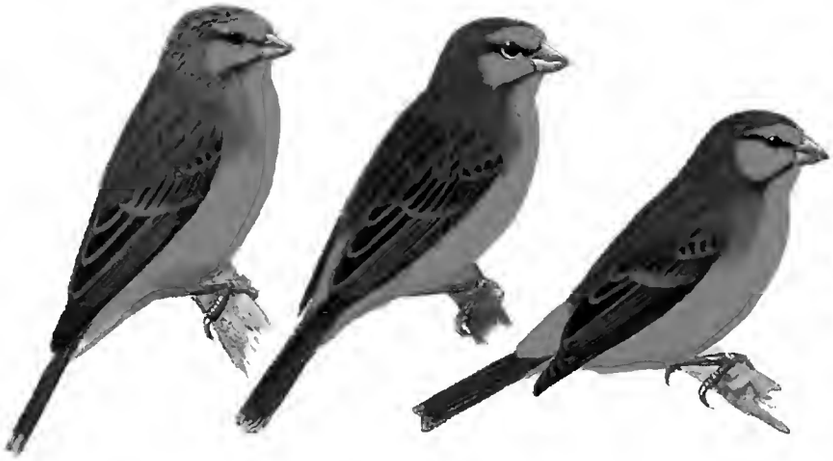
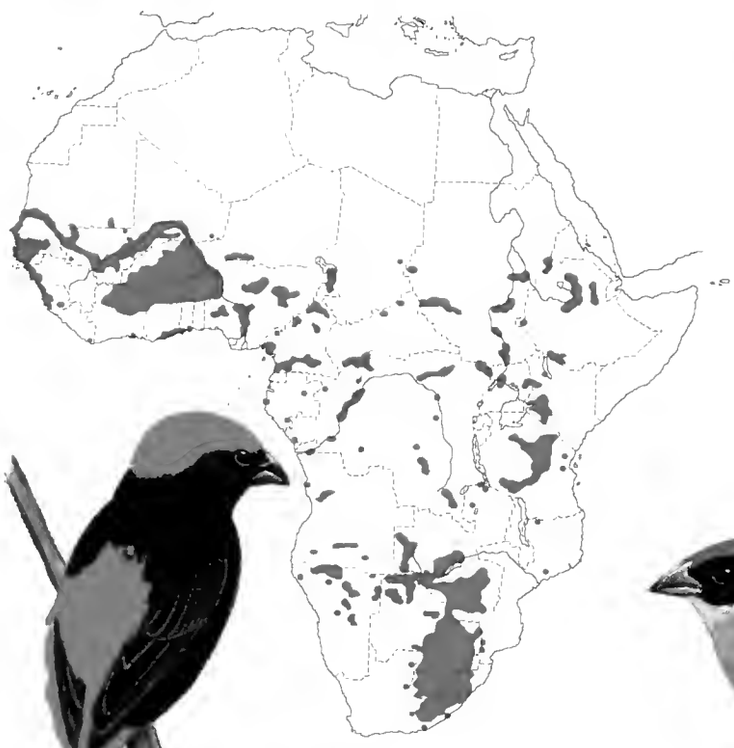
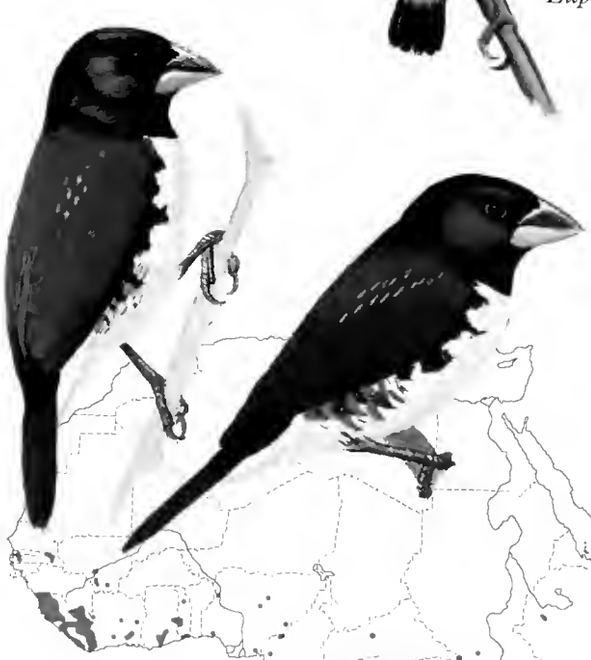


Serinus mozambicus

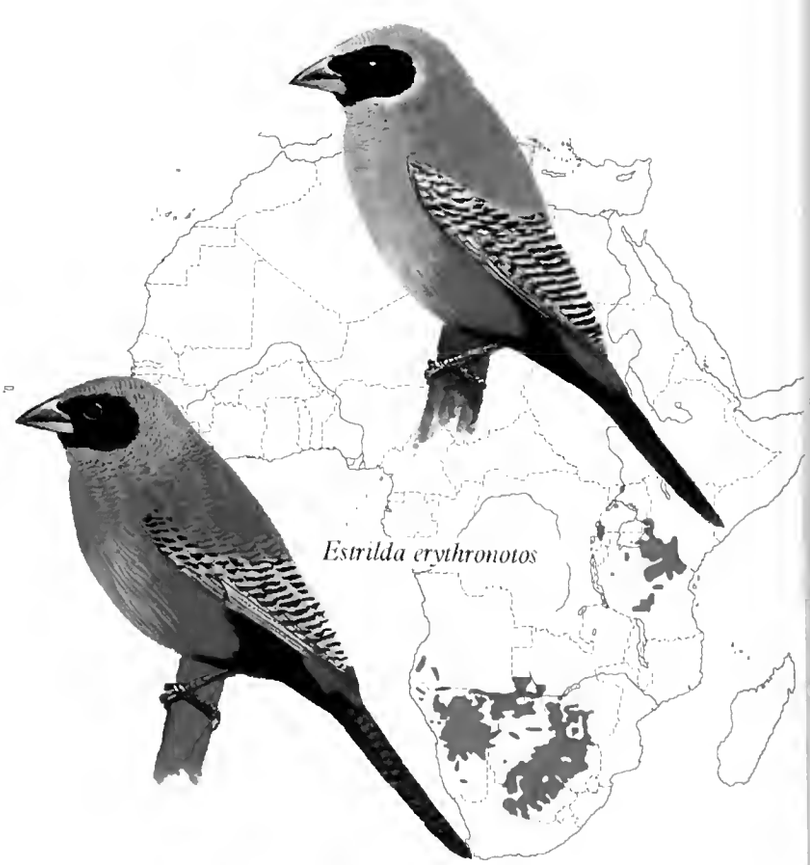


Euplectes afer

Estrilda charmosyna



Spermestes fringilloides



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Caption to plate on opposite page

Plate 2. Representative maps from *The Birds of Africa* Vol 7: a common and widespread wooded-savanna species (Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*), a fragmented distribution (Yellow-crowned Bishop *Euplectes afer*), a range fragmented because of specialised habitat requirements (Magpie Mannikin *Spermestes fringilloides*, a specialist upon *Oxytenanthera abyssinica* bamboo), and parapatric/allopatric populations of taxonomically controversial status (Black-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda charmosyna* and Black-faced Waxbill *E. erythronotus erythronotus* and *E. e. delamerei*, a superspecies). Multiple images per species are of different subspecies, genders or ages.

Cartes de distribution représentatives de *The Birds of Africa* Vol 7: une espèce de savanne arborée commune et à large distribution (Serin du Mozambique *Serinus mozambicus*), une distribution fragmentée (Euplecte vorabé *Euplectes afer*), une distribution fragmentée due à des exigences d'habitat spécifiques (Capucin pie *Spermestes fringilloides*, un spécialiste du bambou *Oxytenanthera abyssinica*), et des populations parapatriques/allopatriques au statut taxonomique controversé (Astrild des fées *Estrilda charmosyna* et Astrild à moustaches *E. erythronotos*). Plusieurs images par espèce indiquent soit des sous-espèces différentes, soit des sexes différents ou différentes classes d'âges.

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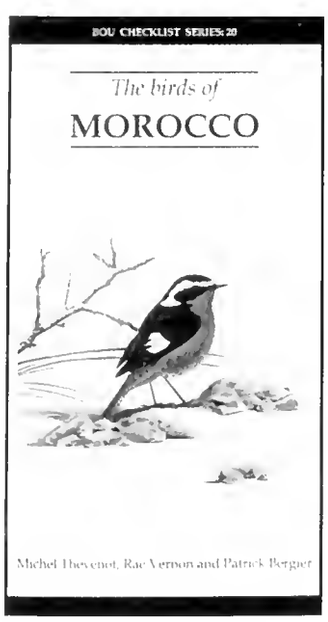
Reviews

The Birds of Morocco: An Annotated Checklist

Michel Thévenot, Rae Vernon and Patrick Bergier. 2003. BOU Checklist No. 20. Tring: British Ornithologists' Union and British Ornithologists' Club. 594 pp, 74 colour photographs, 7 maps. ISBN 0907446-25-6. Hardback. UK£45.

Considering how many birdwatchers visit Morocco these days, it is surprising that such a book has not been published before, but this actually represents a huge advance for Moroccan ornithology, building on and vastly improving the previous reference available from 40 years earlier, Heim de Balsac & Mayaud (1962) *Les oiseaux du nord-ouest de l'Afrique*. I echo James Monk's foreword in congratulating the authors on their accomplishment.

Very nicely produced, if somewhat old-fashioned and conventional in style, the meat of the book is of course the mass of information for each species, all duly referenced, which although inevitably rather dry, provides a clear source of baseline information by region, for future authors to detect trends and changes. The summaries for each species account are succinct,



but the accounts themselves could arguably have been made more interesting had they included more comments on population trends to date, or by highlighting what we don't know as well as what we do. I feel duty bound to comment on the Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* information, which is a good example of this, providing a very thorough summary from numerous sources, important documentation of the decline of the species, but there's little by way of comment or interpretation of more recent trends, nor on their conservation status. Sixty-five pages of references provide an important and up-to-date bibliography. An extensive, 20-page long gazetteer lists all localities and geographical features within Morocco mentioned in the text. There are useful overviews of climate, geology, vegetation (illustrated by some beautiful photos, together with some of the speciality bird species) and geographical divisions. There are signs of poor organisation in places, for example the text and map of the geographical divisions are separated by several pages, and this map is then reproduced (without a title) on both the inside back and front covers—a missed opportunity for other useful information to appear there.

The conservation section includes a map of 'important bird localities' which is also referred to as 'important bird areas' in the legend. This seems like an adaptation from BirdLife's list of IBAs, but it would have been a good opportunity to reinforce such a list if so. This may simply be a case of the timing of publication being too close to do so. Another status that would have been useful to cite with a map might have been SIBEs (Sites d'Interest Biologique et Ecologique), although I realise that not all of these are directly relevant to birds.

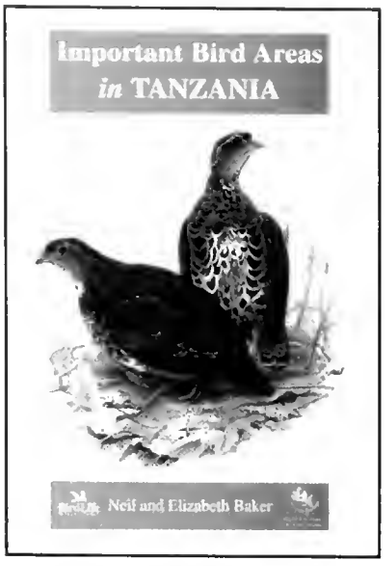
I do think it is a pity that no attempt was made to include Arabic species names as well as French, Spanish and English. It is also a shame to note that there are no Moroccans amongst the authors—something that I feel sure will not be the case for future updates on this type of work, and I suspect marks the end of an era. It is a reference that will be key for many years to come, and anyone seriously interested in Moroccan ornithology will simply have to have it. Let's hope it will provide the basis and information for the production of more popular texts or maybe even a Moroccan field guide, and get more Moroccans interested and involved in the fascinating bird fauna of their country.

Chris Bowden

Important Bird Areas in Tanzania: A First Inventory

Neil and Elisabeth Baker. 2002. Dar es Salaam: Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania. 303 pp, 80 maps, line drawings. Paperback. ISBN 9987-558-04-6. Distributed by NHBS. UK£30.

This is yet another valuable product from the Important Bird Area (IBA) programme, presenting the sites of a single country, following similar publications on Ethiopia, Egypt, Madagascar, Kenya, Uganda, Southern Africa and Nigeria. A succinct 28-page introductory section includes a presentation of the background and aims of the book, a country profile, chapters on conservation in Tanzania and the IBA process, and a summary of the country's IBAs. There follow the 80 site accounts. These are usually 3–4 pages long and all, except one (Tanga North-Kobo salt pans), have an attractively produced one-page map. The accounts follow the same



format as those in Fishpool & Evans[1], with sections entitled Site description, Birds, Other threatened/endemic wildlife, Conservation issues, and full references. A new and very useful section is 'Ideas for future action'. Appendices include clear lists of restricted-range and biome-restricted species within Tanzania's IBAs, and notes on eight of Tanzania's globally threatened species. Among the latter are two sought-after species whose status is considered Critical, which means they have a 50% chance of extinction in the next five years: Uluguru Bush-shrike *Malaconotus alius* and Long-billed (Moreau's) Tailorbird *Orthotomus moreaui*. The bush-shrike is endemic to part of the Uluguru Mountains IBA, where it is seemingly confined to mid-altitude forest and has an estimated population of only 1,200 pairs.

With its 80 identified IBAs, Tanzania is the country with the third-highest number of IBAs of the region covered by Fishpool & Evans[1]: only Madagascar (with 84) and South Africa (with 101) have more. It is also the country with the second-largest total area covered by IBAs, after Sudan. Three unprotected areas have been added to the 77 IBAs listed in the regional IBA book[1], Lake Balangida Lelu (important for waterbirds), Yaida Chini (with recent records of White-tailed Bush Larks *Mirafra albicauda* and large numbers of waterbirds) and 196,000 ha of the Masai Steppe (where a pair of Taita Falcons *Falco fasciinucha* was discovered in the late 1990s). When considering the number of globally threatened species, Tanzania, which has 32 of these, ranks as the most important country in Africa (for comparison: Madagascar has 28, Congo-Kinshasa 26, Kenya 22 and Ethiopia 17).

Although this well-designed book is primarily a tool for conservationists and decision-makers, the wealth of information it contains can also be put to good use by visiting birders, who could add to the knowledge of poorly known sites. Strongly recommended to anyone seriously interested in Tanzania's avifauna.

Ron Demey

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Birding in The Gambia

Malcolm Rymer. Privately produced. Set of three VHS videos. UK£16.95 each.

This set of three videos present a hybrid between a video trip report and an identification guide. They don't set out to be purely an identification guide, as there is no species list accompanying any of the videos, and the birds are not shown in any particular sequence other than the sites at which they can be seen. There is an identification video available, but I haven't seen it.

Video 1 is entitled 'Sorties around the Smiling Coast' and lasts 85 minutes. It has a brief introduction to birdwatching and general information about The Gambia. It then concentrates on sites, and birds that can be found at them, around the hotels near the Kotu Stream, where most people usually stay when visiting The Gambia. Despite the relaxed style of the video, over 100 species of bird are covered—I counted 104.

Video 2 is called 'Forays further afield', occupies 90 minutes and mainly covers sites not mentioned in the first video that are still near the coast but not necessarily in the immediate vicinity. Sites featured include Bakau, Kamaloo Corner, Abuko, Lamin Fields, Mandina Ba and Kuloro, Brufut woods and Tanji, to name but a few. During the course of this video 127 species were noted.

Video 3, 'Upriver Odyssey', is 90 minutes long. It details sites away from the coastal area, such as Tendaba Camp, Pirang, Brumen Bridge, Jahali ricefields, Georgetown and Basse. Also included were sites that I certainly was not aware of when I visited the country, such as the Kau-Ur wetlands, near Jahawur Mandinka, and Bansang quarry. There was also an account of an extensive trip along the north side of the River Gambia. In all I noted 127 species on this video.

Common to all three videos is a map indicating the location of the sites mentioned. A description of the habitats found at each of these is included in the commentary with supporting images. Ignoring the introduction on the first video, which includes birds from other parts of the world, all three videos together cover over 300 different species, obviously with some overlap between them. The footage is generally excellent, although there are one or two brief sections that consist of out-of-focus action shots. The narration is clear and informative. However, sometimes species are not named on their first appearance, although they invariably are subsequently. Identification features are mentioned for many, and some also have status and distribution information as well.

For anyone planning their own trip to this wonderful country, these videos are a very useful source of information and provide a clear picture of what to expect, as well as showing a significant number of the birds you might expect to see.

Roy Hargreaves

Type specimens of birds in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren

Michel Louette, Danny Meirte, Annelies Louage and Alain Reygel. 2002. 105 pp, two colour and two black-and-white photographs. Doc. Zool. (Mus. Roy. Afr. Centr.) Vol. 26. ISBN 90-75894-47-3.

The Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), Tervuren, Belgium, founded in 1898, houses one of the most important specimen collections of African birds in the world. Among the c150,000 specimens are 987 type specimens pertaining to 226 nominal bird taxa, of which at least 125 are still in use as valid names of species or subspecies. A detailed list of all type specimens has now been published including holotypes, paratypes, syntypes, former and current names, registration numbers, dates, localities, and remarks. Although most material comes from the former Belgian colonies, the collection also comprises part of the numerous types from the V G L van Someren collection and some from the H Granvik collection. The publication includes generic and specific indexes, and a short biography of the describers of bird taxa in the RMCA.

Ron Demey

Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume 8

Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David Christie (eds) 2003. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. 845 pp, 81 colour plates, 477 photographs. Hardback. UK£115.

Vol 8 of this series represents a significant milestone, being the first of the volumes dealing with the passerines, the largest of the avian orders, containing roughly 60% of the world's bird species. As we have come to expect, *HBW* 8 is superbly produced and packed cover to cover with stunning photographs, superb plates and authoritative family and species accounts. Indeed, this volume contains the most colour plates and photographs so far in the series. Appropriately, the first volume of the Passeriformes is prefaced by Murray Bruce's comprehensive and readable account of the history of bird taxonomy, from Aristotle's first attempts in 384–322 BC through to Charles Sibley's pioneering DNA hybridisation work from the 1970s.

The present volume covers broadbills to tapaculos, including the pittas, a family which has entranced birders for decades, and has a distinct Neotropical bias with three-quarters of the volume dedicated to the ovenbirds, woodcreepers, antbirds, gnateaters and tapaculos. However, of particular interest to ABC members will be the accounts of the asities, one of Madagascar's endemic families, and the broadbills and pittas, both of which have African representatives.

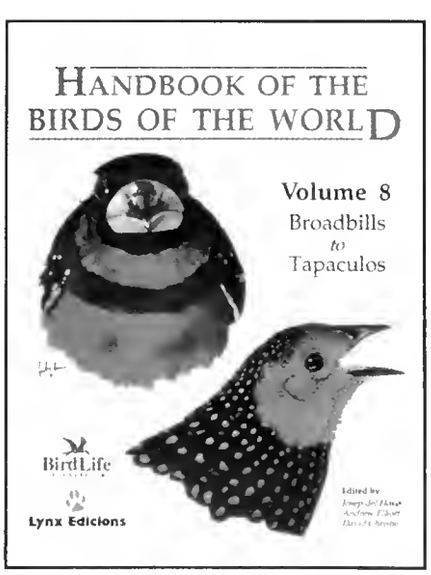
Each family account begins with a detailed introduction covering systematics, morphology, habits, voice, feeding and breeding ecology, and status and conservation, and is lavishly illustrated by top-quality photographs, many of which were taken especially for the series. In response to requests from reviewers of previous volumes, photograph captions now have English names highlighted in bold and all photographs are referenced in the index.

Following the family introduction are the species accounts, accompanied by superbly illustrated plates by renowned artists including Ian Lewington, Chris Rose, Hilary Burn and Tim Worfolk. All too often, different artistic sryles in one volume detract from otherwise excellent books and field guides. No such problems here I'm pleased to say!

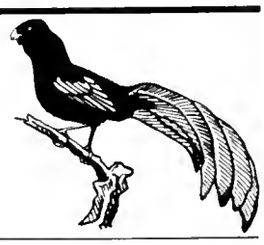
The species accounts are remarkably detailed given the limitations of space, although the font size is considerably reduced to permit the inclusion of maximum text. Each account summarises identification features, habitat preferences, feeding and breeding behaviour, migratory habits if relevant, and a summary of the species' conservation status using the most up-to-date information available from BirdLife International. Distribution maps show the breeding, wintering and resident ranges of each species. An improvement on previous volumes is that distribution maps now indicate major rivers, intended to assist the interpretation of ranges of species within large landmasses where there are no coastlines to act as reference. A minor grumble is that there is no key to the distribution maps—one must refer back to Vol 1 for these. So, for anyone who doesn't own Vol 1 but may be tempted by Vol 8, yellow maps breeding range, blue wintering and green those areas in which a species is resident.

This aside, *HBW* 8 is a superb book and taking delivery of a new volume is one of the highlights of my birding year. The publishers and editors should be congratulated for maintaining such high standards throughout the series to date.

Rob Lucking



Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 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 Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de 2003; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment R.J. Dowsett (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 Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Azores

In 2003, a photo was published of the first **Sandhill Crane** *Grus canadensis* for the Azores (*Anuário Ornitológico* 1: 16), which stayed at Ponta Delgasa, Flores, from 26 June to 3 July 2000 (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 336–339).

Records from April–October 2003 include the following. A **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* was still in Horta Harbour, Faial, on 12 April. Up to six **Grey Herons** *Ardea cinerea* were on Praia islet, Graciosa, on 11–28 June. A **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* was at Faja Grande, Pico, on 11–12 October. Two **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* were at Lagoa das Furna, São Miguel, on 3–4 October, and a **Garganey** *A. querquedula* near Lagoa Seca, Flores, on 11 October. The apparently wild male **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa*, first reported from Furnas on 12 October 2002, remained there until October at least. A **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* was on Praia islet, Graciosa, on 20–27 June. An adult **Royal Tern** *Sterna maxima* in breeding plumage was observed on Terceira on 1 June, with almost certainly the same individual on Praia islet on 24–27th. A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* was found in the Roseate *S. dougallii* and Common Tern *S. hirundo* colony on Praia islet on 5–28 June. Two **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were seen on Flores and one on Terceira in October. Ten **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* were at Faial Caldera during the first half of April.

Nearctic waders in August–October, all at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, unless otherwise indicated, included **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* (up to three, 3–9 September; one, 15–18 September; two, 14–16 October), **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla* (one, 5–9 September; two, 15–18 September; also one at Magdalena harbour, Pico, 7–9 October), **Least Sandpipers** *C. minutilla* (one, 5–9 September; one, 15–18 September), **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* (one, 15–18 September; two, 14–16 October; also one at Lagoa Furnas, 18–19 September, and another at Lajes das Flores, Flores, 12 October), **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* (up to 13, 3–9 September; five, 15–18 September; three, 14–16 October), a **Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* (3–9 September; also probably on 14–16 October), a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *L. scolopaceus* (15–18 September), a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* with up to 12 Whimbrel (6 September), a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* (15–18 September), **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* (one, 5–9 September; two, 15–18 September), **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* (one, 4 September; one, 15–18 September; also one at Mosteiros, São Miguel, 4 September, and another at Lagoa Furnas, 18–21 September), and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* (Lajes do Pico, Pico, 11–16 August) (per *Birding World* 16: 237, 280 & 376; *SL & MH*).

Botswana

Records in June–October 2003 include the following. Successful breeding by four pairs of **Pink-backed Pelicans** *Pelecanus rufescens* at Letsibogo Dam, in the east, during the dry winter months was the first breeding record for this species away from the Okavango Delta and the Makgadikgadi Pans; nine fully grown young were present on 28 September (*CBr, ST*). The Chobe River was rich in waterbirds in July–August, when 23,896 individuals were counted. Water had backed up the Chobe River from the Zambezi so that the Chobe was flowing upriver and into Lake Liambezi. On the western Chobe floodplain, over 2,250 **White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (9% of the southern African population), 104 **Intermediate Egrets** *Egretta intermedia*, c700 **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba,* c5,565 **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata*, 1,925 **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *D. bicolor*, 1,756 **Southern Pochards** *Netta erythrophthalma* and 1,000 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* were counted (*CBr*). A new colony of **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* was discovered in the Jao area of the Okavango Delta, with 20–30 pairs breeding in June–July (*GA*). Single **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were on the Okavango River, near Shakawe, in mid-July (*EP, CO*), at Kasane sewage ponds on 24 August, and at Letsibogo Dam on 11 September (*CBr*). There are unconfirmed reports of a **Rüppell's Griffon Vulture** *Gyps rueppellii* and a dead **White-winged Flufftail** *Sarothrura ayresi* in the Okavango (per *ST*). The buff-coloured inland race of **White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* was seen at Letsibogo and Shashe dams, and in the east on the Motloutse River during the winter (*CBr, ST*). Two **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* at Bokaa Dam, near Gaborone, on 11 August, were of note, being a rare species inland, and for the early date (*ST*). Three **Caspian Terns** *Sterna caspia* were seen at Kavimba, on the western Chobe floodplain, on 24 July (*CBr*). A count of 157 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* was made, on 7 August, on a sandbank on the Okavango River near Mohembo (*CO, ST*). **Swamp Nightjars** *Caprimulgus natalensis* were heard at three locations on the western Chobe floodplain near Satau on 20–22 August. A flock of c50 **Horus Swifts** *Apus horus* was seen at Talana Farms, in the east, on 1 June (*CBr*).

A **Shelley's Sunbird** *Cinnyris shelleyi* was claimed from Mowana Safari Lodge, Kasane, in the extreme north-east, on 18 October (*JW*). There was an unprecedented influx of **Stark's Larks** *Eremalauda starki* into eastern Botswana, from Bobonong across the Zimbabwe border in the Tuli Circle, in June–October, the most notable record being that of a flock of c300 on 29 July. Three Stark's Larks were seen at Kazuma Pan, in the north-east, on 24 August; like the records from Bobonong, this is c1,000 km beyond its usual range in the Karoo and Namibia (see also Zimbabwe). Also in the Tuli Circle, an influx of **Lark-like Buntings** *Emberiza impetuani* took place from March (*CBr*).

Burkina Faso

Records in December 2002–October 2003 that represent extensions of the species' known range (cf. maps in Borrow & Demey 2001, *Birds of Western Africa*) include the following. A **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was flushed from its tree roost along a dry riverbed at Boromo, about halfway between Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso, on 22 December. **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus africanus* were noted in Gonse Forest Reserve, just north of Ouagadougou, on 5 January and 1 October, and at Gandefabou, north-west of Dori, on 11 February. **Black-necked Weavers** *Ploceus nigricollis* were seen along a stream in Ouagadougou forest, commonly known as the Bois de Boulogne, in May–July (*PB*).

Cameroon

On 29 July 2003, c20 swifts, tentatively identified as **Scarce Swifts** *Schoutedenapus myoptilus*, were seen in an area of steep crags between Ndawara and Afua, in the Bamenda Highlands. The next day, two pairs were observed copulating in mid-air; later one bird was seen carrying what appeared to be 3–4 pieces of grass into a crevasse in the rock face. Around 10 August up to 50 swifts were present (*RS*).

Canary Islands

Records from Fuerteventura in July–September 2003 include the following. A **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was at Catalina García Reservoir, from 26 July until at least 19 September; this vagrant is usually observed in November–March, mostly on Tenerife, with only a few records from Fuerteventura. Also at Catalina García were a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* on 16 September and a juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* on at least 7–19 September. A **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* was observed in Corralejo, on 15 September; this is a rather uncommon, albeit regular passage migrant, especially on the

White-backed Night Heron (Nik Borrow)

White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

archipelago's eastern isles (per *Birding World* 16: 326 & 376).

Cape Verde Islands

A dark-morph **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* was photographed at Praia, Santiago, on 12 April 2003; although this species was only rarely recorded in the past, it appears to be a scarce but rather regular visitor to the archipelago, with c25 records since 1980. On the same day, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was also photographed at Praia; only one of the seven previous records is from Santiago (*NC* per *Dutch Birding* 25: 259 & 261).

Congo-Kinshasa

Congo Peacocks *Afropavo congensis*, locally known as 'Lopekele', were seen and heard on a few occasions in February–May 2003 in primary rainforest near the Lokoro River in the south-west of Salonga National Park. A dead bird was found near a trail on 26 May (*AGe*).

Egypt

The following records were made in March–September 2003. Two **Pink-backed Pelicans** *Pelecanus rufescens* and 45 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were at Abu Simbel in mid-May. At the same locality, a **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* possibly of the sub-Saharan race *melanorhynchos* (with all-black legs) was noted on 23 September. Single **Lammergeiers** *Gypaetus barbatus* were noted at Sheikh Shazli on 19 March and at Gebel Elba on 15 June. Four **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* were at Sheikh Shazli on 19 March, 50+ at Shalatein in mid-May, with 65 there on 13 June and 35+ on 18 September. **Sooty Falcons** *Falco concolor* were observed at Hamata (five) and at Abu Simbel (three) in mid-May, with six at the latter locality on 24 September. Also at Abu Simbel, three **Greater Painted-snipes** *Rostratula benghalensis* were observed on 21 September. Nine **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were at Hamata on 15 June, with no fewer than 144 there on 17 September, including pairs with begging juveniles; a pair with a juvenile was at Abu Ghusun mangrove, a few kilometres north of Hamata, on 19 September. At Abu Simbel, 15 **Senegal Thick-knees** *Burhinus senegalensis* and 11 **Kittlitz's Plovers** *Charadrius pecuarius* were present in mid-May; at least 13 Kittlitz's Plovers were there in late September. At Hamata, at least 120 **Greater Sand Plovers** *C. leschenaultii* and 4–7 **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were counted on 17 September. Two **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* were on El Gouna golf course on 25 September. Fifteen **Sooty Gulls** *Larus hemprichii* were at Hamata in mid-May. An **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* reported at Abu Simbel in mid-May was assumed to be breeding; one was also there on 23 September. **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii* were relatively common in the deserts of the newly established Wadi el Gemal-Hamata Protected Area in June. **African Collared Doves** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* were recorded at Sheikh Shazli (30+ on 19 March) and at Shalatein (three in mid-May, with seven on 18 September). Also at the latter locality were 14 **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis*, with one at Abu Simbel on 22 September. In mid-May, four **Phaoroh's Desert Eagle Owls** *Bubo* [*bubo*] *ascalaphus* were at Abu Simbel, 12 **Black-crowned Sparrow Larks** *Eremopterix nigriceps* at Shalatein, and 12 **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp*, two **Olive-tree Warblers** *Hippolais olivetorum* and a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* again at Abu Simbel, with 20+ African Pied Wagtails there in late September. Single first-winter **Steppe Grey Shrikes** *Lanius* [*meridionalis*] *pallidirostris* were claimed from El Gouna, on 16 September, and from Abu Simbel, on 22 September (per *Birding World* 16: 198 & 237 and *Dutch Birding* 25: 262–269; *SBD & MBD, HD & KDR*).

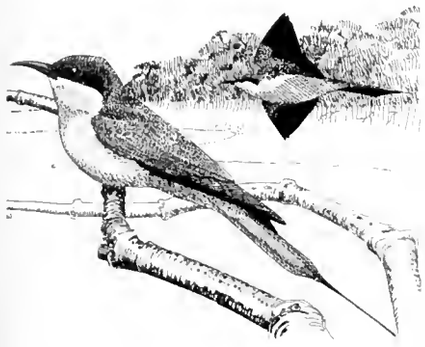
Ethiopia

Noteworthy records from October 2003 include a male **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* on Lake Cheleleke on 25th; this is an uncommon visitor to the country. A **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* flew over Debre Libanos on 10th; this Palearctic migrant is occurring with increasing frequency in sub-Saharan Africa. An **Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius* at Lake Awassa on 18th was a surprise; there are only a few scattered records for the Rift Valley and this appears to be the first for Awassa. A flock of 38 **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* was found on Lake Abiata on 17th. At Lake Hora, an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* was seen on 13th; this appears to be an uncommon species in Ethiopia (*NB*).

Gabon

The following records from September 2003 were received. Five **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were foraging on the mudflats at the Moka River on 5th. The identity of some medium-sized black swifts *Apus* sp, seen well en route to Ndjolé and whose habit of fanning their tail while gliding was notable, remains unknown; they may be **Fernando Po Swifts** *A.* [*barbatus*] *sladeniae*. A group of at least three **Grey Waxbills** *Estrilda perreini* was seen at Lékoni on 1st; this is a new locality for the species in Gabon and apparently only the third record for the country; it was collected in the south-west in 1952 and two were reported from Tchibanga in 1992 (*NB*).

An exploratory visit to the Omboué area and the newly established Iguéla National Park, Ogooué Maritime Province, on 13–18 September, produced hundreds of **Rosy Bee-eaters** *Merops malimbicus* and 300+ **African River Martins** *Pseudochelidon eurystomina*. The waterways held **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolopha*, **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubii*, **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* (common) and both



Rosy Bee-eaters *Merops malimbicus* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

Pel's *Scotopelia peli* and **Vermiculated Fishing Owls** *S. bouvieri*. Two juvenile **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata* were noted along the beach on 15th; there are no documented records for Gabon, although the species has apparently been seen in the country previously. **Black-headed Bee-eaters** *Merops breweri* were seen on the savanna edges. A **Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa ruficauda* in the gardens at Omboué represents an extension of the known range along the coast from the Gamba area. Also in Omboué, **Loango Weaver** *Ploceus subpersonatus* was found breeding (*NB*).

The Gambia

Records in October 2002–September 2003 include the following. An **Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* was seen soaring over Prufu Swamps, Basse, Upper River Division, in October (*SB*), and ten were photographed at Sabi, east of Basse, on 11 June (*KR*); there are only a few records in The Gambia. Seventy **White Storks** *C. ciconia* flew over Bao-Bolon, North Bank Division, in late November and up to 150 over Tendaba, Lower River Division, in early December (*CB*); these are exceptionally high numbers for The Gambia. On 17 January, five **Black Storks** *C. nigra* passed Baboon Island, Central River Division, while seven **White Storks** flew over near Barajali ferry crossing. In February, a flock of c45 **White Storks** was catching the morning thermals near Farafenni, North Bank Division. Also in February, a **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was noted at Pirang, Western Division (*SB*). A male and a female **Gadwall** *Anas strepera* were claimed from the Kaur Wetlands, Central River Division, in November; these would be the first for the country (*ES*). Two **Barbary Falcons** *Falco pelegrinoides* were observed near Keneba, Lower River Division, on 3 February (*CB & MW*). A **Bronze-winged Courser** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* was hunting insects after dark around a low lamp on the Palm Grove Hotel lawn, Banjul, on 21 May (*CB*). A **Great Skua** *Catharacta skua* was on a beach at Bijol Islands on 30 January (*DMC, BHQ & BS*). A **Little Gull** *Larus minutus* was reported from Tanji, Western Division, in November (*ES*). Some 5,500 **Slender-billed Gulls** *L. genei* were counted on 10–12 January at the Tambi Wetland complex, Sanyang and Tanji (*CB*); the main breeding site, with several thousand pairs, is just to the north, on Île aux Oiseaux, Delta du Saloum National Park, Senegal. Five **Kelp Gulls** *L. dominicanus* were also there on 12 February (*CB & MW*). A juvenile **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* was spotted from the Banjul ferry on 28 January (*LJ*). On 23 September, a single **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* was feeding on a track with two Vinaceous Doves *S. vinacea* at Tujering (13°19'N 16°47'W); this species is infrequent at the coast in the dry season and exceptional during the rains anywhere in The Gambia (*CB & TK*). A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* flew over Fajara, Western Division, on 13 January (*AA*). A pair of **Golden-tailed Woodpeckers** *Campethera abingoni* was observed and tape-recorded along Bund Road, Western Division, on 12 July and along Old Cape Road on 17 July; this species is rarely seen in The Gambia (*CB*). Singing **Great Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* were tape-recorded at Sapu, Central River Division, in early December (*CB & PR*), and at Tendaba, Lower River Division, in mid-January (*AA*); this is a rarely seen and probably under-recorded species in the country.

Guinea

A primary feather picked up at the Chutes de la Sâla, near Labé, in the Fouta Djalon, on 15 March 2003, proved to be of **Red-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, a species not previously recorded from Guinea (*RD*).

Belated records from October 1999 representing new localities include a **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* excavating a tree termitarium near Dalaba on 16th and **Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* near Labé on 23rd. The record of a **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Prinia leontica* carrying food to its nest and singing near Petel, Dalaba, would constitute the westernmost locality for this species, if confirmed (*CB*).

Kenya

The following records are from the period March–October 2003. An adult white-morph **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* flying north in Pemba Channel, on 4 October, constitutes the ninth record for Kenya. A subadult **Brown Booby** *S. leucogaster*, found exhausted on the beach at Watamu, on 24 March, was taken into care and released mid-September, after it had moulted all remiges (Fig 1); this is the first substantiated record of the species in Kenya. A subadult **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* was claimed from Watamu, on 3 March; if accepted, this would be only the third record for Kenya. An adult **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was at Mbagathi River, Nairobi National Park (=NP), on 2 August, and a **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* at Sabaki River mouth, on 4 October. Four **Madagascar Squacco Herons** *Ardeola idae* were at Musiara Airstrip Pool, Masai Mara, on 8 July; one at the Carnivore restaurant seasonal pools, Nairobi, on 6 August, and another in the northern suburbs of

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Figure 1. Brown Booby / Fou brun *Sula leucogaster*, A Rocha Kenya Bird Observatory, Watamu, Kenya, 31 August 2003 (Jeff Worden)

Figure 2. Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco vespertinus*, the Pinheira, São Tomé, October 2003 (T. Wojciechowski)

Figure 3. Hoopoe / Huppe fasciée *Upupa epops*, the Pinheira, São Tomé, October 2003 (A. Gascoigne)

Nairobi, on 9 October. On saltpans north of Malindi, 817 **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus ruber* were counted on 5 October—a higher number than normal for this site—with a further 200+ on the seasonal Lake Chemchem just inland. On 22 June, 708 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* were at Sabaki River mouth—the first time there has been any number of this species at Sabaki since 1999. An **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* was observed at Nairobi NP on 26 June; an uncommon record for around Nairobi. Also there, an immature **White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* was seen on 5 July. An immature male **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* was at Amboseli NP on 29–30 June, and another in the Masai Mara on 7 July; these are unusual northern summer records. An **African Marsh Harrier** *C. ranivorus* was at a seasonal swamp south of Shimoni on 4 October; there have only been 3–4 previous records on the Kenya coast. A juvenile **Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* flew over the beach at Watamu, on 26 July; a rather unusual site for this species! Two **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were found at Ndashant wetland, Ngong Hills, on 6 July. Three **Allen's Gallinules** *Porphyrio alleni* were on seasonal wetlands near Malindi, on 4–5 October; the first records here for four years. A one-legged **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was present on Mida Creek from May until 5 October; four flew south in Pemba Channel on 4 October, while a single stayed on Gongoni Saltworks. Three **Madagascar Pratincoles** *Glareola ocularis* at Sabaki River mouth on 5 October and a single 60 km south of Diani are among the latest records of this species in Kenya. Three **Brown-chested Lapwings** *Vanellus superciliosus* were noted in the Sikoma area, Busia; this rare species in Kenya has been reported several times in the past two years raising the possibility that it might be spreading. Four **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* and two **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* were with other Palearctic waders at Nakuru on 5 July. Several **Common Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ridibundus* were at Sabaki River mouth in the last week of July. About 1,500 pairs of **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* bred, for the first time since 2000, on Whale Island, Watamu, in July–September. About 50 pairs of **Sooty Terns** *S. fuscata* also bred there during the same period; the literature mentions only Bridled Terns *S. anaethetus* breeding at this site. A subadult in winter plumage **Arctic Tern** *S. paradisaea* was at Nakuru NP, on 6 July; if accepted, this would be only the second record for East Africa, exactly a year after the first. A pair of **Brown Noddies** *Anous stolidus* was apparently breeding on Whale Island in September. The record of a **Blue-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur afer* at Lion Hill, Nakuru, on 6 July is amongst the first for Nakuru and would appear to represent a very small local population of this mainly western species. A **Dusky Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia lugens* at Lake Baringo on 4 July is an unusual record of this mainly highland species. A pair of **African Orange-bellied Parrots** *Poicephalus rufiventris* near Mrima Hill, on 5 October, was a very uncommon record for the coast (*CJ*). A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* was on the Mbagathi River, at the edge of Nairobi NP, on 29 July (*WK*); about six months previously it was also observed inside the park along the same river (per *IS*). Four **White-headed Mousebirds** *Colius leucocephalus* were found well inside Amboseli NP; this species is rarely reported from within the park. Two **White-eared Barbets** *Stactolaema leucotis* were at Mountain Lodge on 2 July. Three **Yellow-spotted Barbets** *Buccanodon duchaillui* in the Kericho Arboretum, on 6 July, represents a more unusual record of a species known mostly from Kakamega. Six **Somali Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella somalica* were photographed collecting nesting material at Mara Intrepids on 6–8 July; the literature gives no records west of the Rift Valley. During a survey of **Blue Swallows** *Hirundo atrocaerulea*, 40+ were counted in Ruma NP, on 27–30 August, and 15+ at Iseka and Musokoto, in Busia near Mungatsi, on 2–3 September; this is encouraging as there have been few reports in recent years. A pair of **Malindi Pipits** *Anthus melindae* was observed at Lake Chemchem, south of the Sabaki River, on 4 October; this species is not normally found south of the river. A **Sokoke Pipit** *A. sokokensis* was singing at Marereni woodlands on 5 October; this is a new site for this Endangered species, but one which is unfortunately fast being cleared for charcoal and cultivation. Two **Joyful Greenbuls** *Chlorocichla laetissima* were at Sabaringo Valley, Masai Mara, on 8 July; this mainly 'Kakamega species' is unusual elsewhere. **Fischer's Greenbuls** *Phyllastrephus fischeri* were fairly common and associated with mixed flocks in Ngaia forest, Nyambeni Hills, on the western edge of Meru NP; this is the first record of this species away from the coastal strip. A **Spotted Ground Thrush** *Zoothera guttata* ringed A59672 on the Rondo Plateau, southern Tanzania, in February 1996, was found dead in Mombasa on 3 June; this is the first long-distance recovery in East Africa of this little-known species. Two **Taita Fiscals** *Lanius dorsalis* were along the Keekerok Mara road on 9 July; the species is not given as occurring west of Rift Valley in the south in Zimmerman *et al* (1996, *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*). Five **Grey-crested Helmet-shrikes** *Prionops poliolophus* were observed at Nakuru NP on 5 July; this is one of the best sites to find this rare bird. A claim of a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus*, seen within a flock of Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* in the Masai Mara, on 16 July, has yet to be accepted; it would constitute the first Afrotropical record. Two males and a few female **Fire-fronted Bishops** *Euplectes diadematus* were in Amboseli NP on 29 June. A male

Southern Red Bishop *E. orix* was near Siana Springs, Masai Mara, on 9 July; the species is rare in the Mara. Two African Silverbills *Lonchura cantans* in Nairobi NP on 24 August possibly constitutes the first record at this site since 1979. A flock of six Parasitic Weavers *Anomalospiza imberbis* in brushland beside Sabaki River mouth, on 22 June, constitutes the first coastal record since prior to 1974. A flock of c60 was seen on the outskirts of Nairobi on 9 October; there have been relatively few recent reports of the species around the capital. Two Zebra Waxbills *Amandava subflava* were observed in Nairobi NP on 5 July; this species is uncommon in the dry plains around the capital (*CJ*).

Madeira

Records from June–September 2003 include the following. The discovery of a new colony of Zino's Petrels *Pterodroma madeira* raised the known world population from only 20–30 to c45 pairs (*BirdLife International*; for more details, see p 7). A record count of 4,438 Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis* was reported from Porto Moniz on 7 September, along with 700 Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea*, 263 Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* and 19 Bulwer's Petrels *Bulweria bulwerii* (per *Dutch Birding* 25: 336 & *Birding World* 16: 376). The second Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* for Madeira, a female, was observed at Ponta do Pargo on 12 June. Also there that day were three Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* (per *Birding World* 16: 280).

Mali

The following records from the Sokolo area (14□44'N 06□00'W) in July–September 2003, represent slight or fairly large range extensions as compared to the maps in *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001). Savile's Bustards *Eupodotis savilei* were frequently making their advertisement call day and night in July and September. Ten Egyptian Plovers *Pluvianus aegyptius* were observed at Pont Alatoona on 22 September. In July, a Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra cantillans*, at least four Zitting Cisticolas *Cisticola juncidis* and two Desert Cisticolas *C. aridulus* were seen displaying. Tawny-flanked Prinias *Prinia subflava* were also singing and were very common in the area. A pair of Violet-backed Starlings *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* that had shown up every rainy season since 1997 did not appear in 2003 (perhaps because of the severe drought in 2002?). In July, Pin-tailed Whydahs *Vidua macroura* were noted, as in most years. Other noteworthy records include those of a Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*, observed in a moist area on the outskirts of Bamako on 7 September, with a pair in the same area on 18 October, and of Koulikoro (Mali) Firefinch *Lagonosticta virata*, found at Kabalakoro, a rocky site east of Bamako, on the road to Segou, in May (*MC*).

Mauritania

Observations made during a pelagic trip just inside the Western Palearctic boundary from 21 April until 9 May 2003 included several hundred each of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Madeiran Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma castro*, Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*, Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea* and Black Terns *Chlidonias niger*, mostly moving north, and also over 100 each of adult Pomarine *Stercorarius pomarinus* and Long-tailed Skuas *S. longicaudus*. Other seabirds included c120 Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea*, five Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus*, c30 Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* and five Great Skuas *Catharacta skua*. Landbirds noted included a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, ten European Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* and a European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (*RW* per *Birding World* 16: 198).

Morocco

Records from April 2003 include the following. An Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was at the Auberge Kasbah Dakaoua, between Erfoud and Merzouga, on 12th. Single Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* were noted at Skoura on 9th, Jorf on 10th and Merzouga on 12th, with two at the Auberge Kasbah Dakaoua on 12th. Two pairs of Desert Warblers *Sylvia* [*nana*] *deserti* were found nesting at Dayet Srji, Merzouga, on 11th. Twenty Desert Sparrows *Passer simplex* were seen at the well-known Café Yasmina, Merzouga, on 11–12th (per *Birding World* 16: 198). The breeding season of 2003 was quite successful for the Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* population at Oued Massa, where some 85 pairs fledged 100 young (*CBo*).

Mozambique

In the wake of a severe cold front that swept the east coast of southern Africa on 8–10 June 2003, an exhausted Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata* was wrecked on the beach of Praia de Xai-Xai, in southern Mozambique, and subsequently eaten by a local villager; this is the first record for the country. The species, which has a circumpolar distribution, is a very rare vagrant to South African waters, north to Mabibi, KwaZulu-Natal (*BB* per *Africa—Birds & Birding*

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross
Phoebetria palpebrata
by Mark Andrews

8(5): 11). Belated news concerns a **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* mist-netted at Namuli in November 2001; there are very few records of this species from southern Africa and this appears to be the first for Mozambique (*MM*).

Namibia

In 2003, on the Okavango River, on the border of Namibia and Botswana, three large breeding colonies of **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were located in Mahango National Park and c50 chicks were ringed (to mid-October) (*MP* per *ST*). A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was at Walvis Bay on 28 November (*MB*).

Nigeria

The following records from the period August–September 2003 were received. A **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* was at Rockwater Fish Farm, Jos Plateau, on 19 August. Three **Long-toed Lapwings** *Vanellus crassirostris* were at Pandam Wildlife Reserve, Plateau State, on 20 September; this species is locally fairly common in the Lake Chad area, but there are only a few previous sightings from Pandam. Records from the Obudu Plateau include the following. Two **Willcocks's Honeyguides** *Indicator willcocksi* were trapped on 27 September. Several saw-wings, identified as **Mountain Saw-wings** *Psalidoprocne fuliginosa*, were observed on 26–29 September; a perched bird seen through a telescope was in moult, with new feathers being dark chocolate-brown. There have been other claims from the area and although its occurrence is not unlikely, a specimen would be necessary to remove all possible doubt. Several **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* of the race *kumboensis* were noted on 24–29 September; this subspecies is known from adjacent western Cameroon. A male **Pink-footed Puffback** *Dryoscopus angolensis* was present on 27 September; there are few records for this species, all from Obudu. Many **Baglafecht Weavers** *Ploceus baglafecht* were observed around the Protea Hotel on 26–29 September; although the species has been noted here previously and seems to be resident, no published records appear to exist from the site. Two male **Preuss's Golden-backed Weavers** *P. preussi* were observed on 24–25 September at different locations; this species was previously recorded as probably occurring on the plateau (*RMG*).

Rwanda

In June 2003, a short, hassle-free trip to the country produced the following records. In Nyungwe forest, the majority of the Albertine Rift Endemics were found, including **Handsome Francolin** *Francolinus nobilis*, **Rwenzori Turaco** *Tauraco johnstoni*, **Kivu Ground Thrush** *Zoothera* [*piaggiae*] *tanganjicae*, **Grauer's Rush Warbler** *Bradypterus graueri*, **Red-collared Babbler** *Kupeornis rufocinctus*, **Stuhlmann's Rwenzori Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris stuhlmanni* and others. Uniformly dark swifts, uttering *tic* calls similar to those of Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* but much less frequently, possibly were **Schouteden's Swift** *S. schoutedeni*, which has been recorded less than 70 km away. In Akagera National Park, which is now about one-third of its former size but has the new boundaries apparently properly defined (and marked on a new map), sightings included **Shoebill** *Balaeniceps rex* and **Red-faced Barbet** *Lybius rubrifacies* (*NM*).

São Tomé & Príncipe

The following records were made in January–November 2003. The first **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* for São Tomé was observed in January (*SA*); this constitutes the second for the archipelago, the first having been observed on Príncipe, in January 1996. An **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* found at Santo Antonio, Príncipe, on 7 April, was the first for the islands (*MM*). On São Tomé, a first-year **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* remained at the Pinheira from 7 October until at least 10 November (Fig 2); it was joined by a second on 23 October (*AG*). There is only one previous record for the island, from November 1954, when also two birds were seen, one of which, an immature male, was collected. Three **Harlequin Quails** *Coturnix delegorguei* were flushed from the airstrip on Príncipe on 17 September; this appears to be the second record for the island, following that of a single at the same location on 17 August 1997 (*NB*). The first **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* for São Tomé was at the Pinheira, on 15–16 October (Fig 3; *AG*). A **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* was ringed near the airport of São Tomé in January (*SA* per *MM*); this is yet another addition to the São Tomé & Príncipe list.

Senegal

A **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*, ringed as a nestling on the island of Schiermonnikoog, The Netherlands, on 14 May 1999 (colour ring G[RZ]/aG[RZ]; metal ring NLArnhem 8042728), was observed at Djoudj National Park on 2 April 2003 (*JV* per *CB*).

Seychelles

Records from the period May–October 2003 include the following. A **Little Curlew** *Numenius minutus* at Seybrew mudflats, Mahé, on 21–22 October was the second for Seychelles (the first was on Bird Island, c100 km north of Mahé). A **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* on Alphonse on 25 October was a third record and a **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* on Bird Island a fifth. Other records of interest include a **Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* on Aride Island on 16 October, an **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* on Alphonse on 13 May and a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* at La Passe, Silhouette Island, on 11–12 October (*AS*).

South Africa

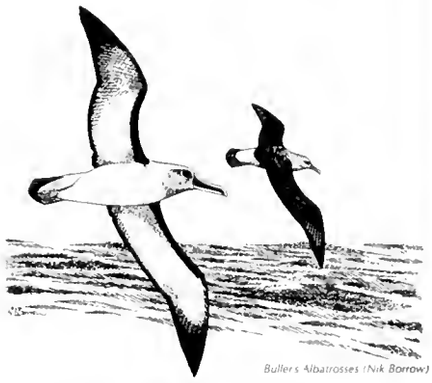
A belated report was received of a **Mascarene Martin** *Phedina borbonica* seen in Kruger National

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

Park on 1 August 2002; the species has previously been recorded in southern Mozambique, but this would apparently constitute the first for South Africa, if accepted (*SJ*).

Species recorded on pelagic trips out of Cape Town in July–November 2003 include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (two, 23 August), **Northern Royal Albatross** *D.* (*epomophora*) *sanfordi* (one, 23 August; two, 6–7 September; one, 8 November), **Southern Royal Albatross** *D.* (*epomophora*) *epomophora* (1–2, late August; one, 8 November), **Grey-headed Albatross** *D. chrysostoma* (one, 23 August), **Buller's Albatross** *D. bulleri* (one, 8 November; apparently the second for South Africa), **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialoides* (2–3 per trip, late August; four, 6–7 September), **Great-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma macroptera* (one, 26 July, which was unseasonal; three, 26 October), **Atlantic** (=Schlegel's) **Petrel** *P. incerta* (one, 26 July), **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* (one, 12 October), **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* (one, 6 September, which was early; 1–12, October) (per *JG & TH*). A pelagic out of Richard's Bay on 9 November produced a **Barau's Petrel** *Pterodroma baraui*, an Endangered species breeding on Réunion and not previously recorded in South Africa (*ASu*).

The following records from the mainland were reported in June–early December 2003. A **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was first seen at Centurion and subsequently at Rust de Winter Dam, Northern Province, on 20–31 October (*PWi*, *RC*, per *EM*), whereas a **Lesser Frigatebird** *F. ariel* was at Richard's Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, in early November (per *TH*). At the former locality there was also a **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* on 28 October (per *EM*). A **Little Blue Heron** *E. caerulea* was still present near Papendorp, Western Cape, on 15 June and 2 July (*BvdW*, *KS*). An adult and a juvenile **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* were found on Keurbooms River, Southern Cape, in early November (*KS*). An **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* was at Grootvadersbos, Western Cape, on 16 November (*DW*, *CC*, *MBu*). An **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* was at St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 20 November (*MMi*). A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was seen at Zandvlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 31 October (per *Capebirdnet*). A **European Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was on Koeberg beach, Western Cape, on 18 June (*MK* per *AGr*). Single **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were reported from the Upper Limpopo Valley, in the Den Staat area (part of the future Vhembe National Park), Northern Province (*RG* per *EM*) and from West Coast National Park, Western Cape, in November (*JC*, *CC*), whereas a **Spotted Redshank** *T. erythropus* was at Marievale, Gauteng, on 22 November (*PA*). Single **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were seen at Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 18 November (per *JN*), Oribi Gorge, KwaZulu-Natal, on 20 November (*DMK*) and the Bitou River, Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 3 December (*PW*). A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 24 November (*AGn*). As in 2002, a **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* was at Driftsands Reclamation Works, Eastern Cape, in November (*AT*). A **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* was noted at Cape Recife



Buller's Albatross *Diomedea* (*Thalassarche*) *bulleri* by Nik Borrow courtesy of Birdquest Ltd.

Point on 5 July (*PW* per *PM*). A **Blue-bellied Roller** *Coracias cyanogaster*, a potential first for southern Africa, was at Pilanesberg National Park, North West Province, on an unstated date (*AB*); it was possibly an escape. In September–October, a pair of **Red-billed Firefinches** *Lagonosticta senegala* was seen near Robertson, Western Cape (*AW*, *MF*, *CC*).

Tunisia

Records made in June–October 2003 include the following. At Sebket Halk el Menzel, Sousse, 18 **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* and 1,500–1,600 **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus ruber* were counted on 8 June. Also there on the same date were 120 breeding pairs of **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 135 **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* and 60 breeding pairs of **Little Terns** *Sterna albifrons*. At Soliman, Nabeul, 142 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were observed on 19 July. **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* with young were recorded at Oued Sed, Sousse, on 8 June (two pairs with four and ten young respectively and one adult with 14 young), at Soliman on 13 June (one adult with ten young; *MS*) and at Lebna Reservoir, Nabeul (seven adults with 15 young). On 25 July, 142 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca*, and 14 adult **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* with seven young were counted at Lebna reservoir. Four **Common Cranes** *Grus grus*, presumably first-years, stayed at Soliman from 19 July until

7 October; this appears to be the first record of oversummering cranes in the country (*HA*).

Uganda

A **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* was claimed from the Buhoma area of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, on 19 August 2003; scope views from a distance of c30m were obtained of the bird, which was perched at c3 m along the river below the entrance to the park (*PB & AT*). There are only two previous records of this species in Uganda, from Bwamba, Semliki, in 1990 and 1994. Also in Bwindi, near Mubwindi Swamp, Ruhija, a pair of **African Green Broadbills** *Pseudocalyptomena graueri* were watched as they fed two nearly fully grown nestlings on 4 August (*HB, RD, RSw & ATw*).

African Green Broadbill
Pseudocalyptomena graueri
by Mark Andrews

Zimbabwe

A pair of **Plain-backed (Blue-throated) Sunbirds** *Anthreptes reichenowi* was seen at Hippo Pools, Umfurudzi Wildlife Area, c160 km north-east of Harare, on 17 September 2003 (*TW*). In June–October 2003, a large influx of **Stark's Larks** *Eremalauda starki* occurred in the Tuli Circle, the most notable record being that of a flock of c300 on 29 July, partly in Zimbabwe and partly in eastern Botswana (which see). There was also an influx of **Lark-like Buntings** *Emberiza impetuani* in the same area, although they moved in earlier, from March (*CBr*).

*Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Peter Alexander (PA), Andrew Allport (AA), Staffan Andersson (SA), Grant Atkinson (GA), Hichem Azafzaf (HA), Clive Barlow (CB), Hemme Batjes (HB), Peter Bijlmakers (PB), Sering Bojang (SB), Mark Boorman (MB), Nik Borrow/Birdquest (NB), Chris Bowden (CBo), Bill Branch (BB), Chris Brewster (CBr), Mike Buckham (MBu), Alex Bussutil (AB), Rod Cassidy (RC), Callan Cohen/Birding Africa (CC), Mary Crickmore (MC), Ron Demey (RD), Kris De Rouck (KDR), Sherif Baha El Din (SBD), Mindy Baha El Din (MBD), Hugues Dufourny (HD), Mike Ford (MF), Angus Gascoigne (AG), Rob Geddes (RG), Nico Geiregat (NG), Alexander Georgiev (AGe), John Graham/Zest for Birds (JG), Anne Gray (AGr), Alan Green (AGn), Megan Hall (MH), Trevor Hardaker/Zest for Birds (TH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Steve James (SJ), Lamin Jobarteh (LJ), Magriet Kastell (MK), Trevor Key (TK), Will Knocker (WK), Steve Lister (SL), Laibo Manneh (LM), Etienne Marais (EM), Paul Martin (PM), Dermot McCabe (DMC), Ross McGregor (RMG), Duncan McKenzie (DMK), Martim Melo (MM), Michael Mills/Birding Africa (MMi), Nigel Moorhouse (NM), Jenny Norman (JN), Christine Orchard (CO), Mark Paxton (MP), Elaine Pryce (EP), Bill & Heather Quinn (BHQ), Peter Roberts/VENT (PR), Kev Roy (KR), Erik Sanders (ES), Itai Shanni/*Nature*Kenya Bird Committee (IS), Kevin Shaw (KS), Roger Skeen (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Mike Smart (MS), Bob Strickland (BS), Andrew Sutherland (ASu), Rita Swinnen (RSw), Alfred Taylor (AT), Alfred Twinomujuni (ATw), Stephanie Tyler (ST), Johannes Vermerhen (JV), Buks van der Walt (BvdW), Adam Welz (AW), Phil Whittington (PW), Peter Wilgenbus (PWi), Johnny Wilson (JW), Martyn Wilson (MW), David Winter/Birding Africa (DW), Tony Wood (TW), Russell Wynn (RW), and from* Birding World, Dutch Birding *and* Africa—Birds & Birding.

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List of Bird Recorders and Checklist Compilers

Compiled by Keith Betton

Liste des personnes ressources et compilateurs de check-listes. La liste présentée ci-après est mise à la disposition des lecteurs afin de les inciter à envoyer leurs observations ou rapports de voyages ornithologiques de la région couverte par l'ABC (voir *Bull. ABC* 1: 12) aux personnes indiqués.

This list was last published in 2002 in *Bull. ABC* 9:58–60, since which details have changed significantly. The purpose of this compilation is to update ABC members on relevant bird recorders and checklist compilers for all of the countries within the ABC region (see *Bull. ABC* 1: 12). We urge all ABC members to submit records or trip reports from any visits, future or past, to the region to the relevant recorders in order that the information can be utilised, and not remain 'buried' in observer's notebooks.

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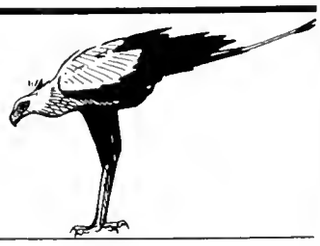
Letter to the Editor



Birding in Northern Cameroon

It was pleasing to see birding in northern Cameroon covered in *Bull. ABC* 10: 111–116, given that it generally receives less coverage than the forests of the south, and Michael Mills and Callan Cohen made a terrific job of describing the ornithological highlights of this region. However, I did feel that mention should have been made of the potential risks associated with birding around Waza and in Bénoué National Park.

Both African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* and Lion *Panthera leo* occur in the Waza area, and during our visit in 1996 we encountered a large herd of the former in the vicinity of the pools south of Waza town, and heard Lion roaring in the same area. In Bénoué we found fresh Lion tracks along the river near Campement du Buffle Noir, and Iain Robertson encountered an aggressive lioness along the main track there in January 1995. Whilst not seeking to overstate the risk, it would pay to ensure that you stay reasonably close to the vehicle when birding in these areas.

On the subject of mammals, it is also worth noting that the road south of Waza can provide some of the best spotlighting in Africa. On one night alone myself and colleagues observed two Serval *Felis serval*, two African Wildcats *Felis sylvestris*, two Sand Foxes *Vulpes pallida*, a Golden Jackal *Canus aureus*, an African Civet *Civettictis civetta* and at least five Common Genets *Genetta genetta* in less than an hour! Others, including Mark Andrews, have had similar experiences, although it should be noted that the following night we only saw three Common Genets and two African Elephants along the same stretch and at the same time of night! Unsurprisingly given the abundance of mammalian predators, nightjars were almost non-existent.

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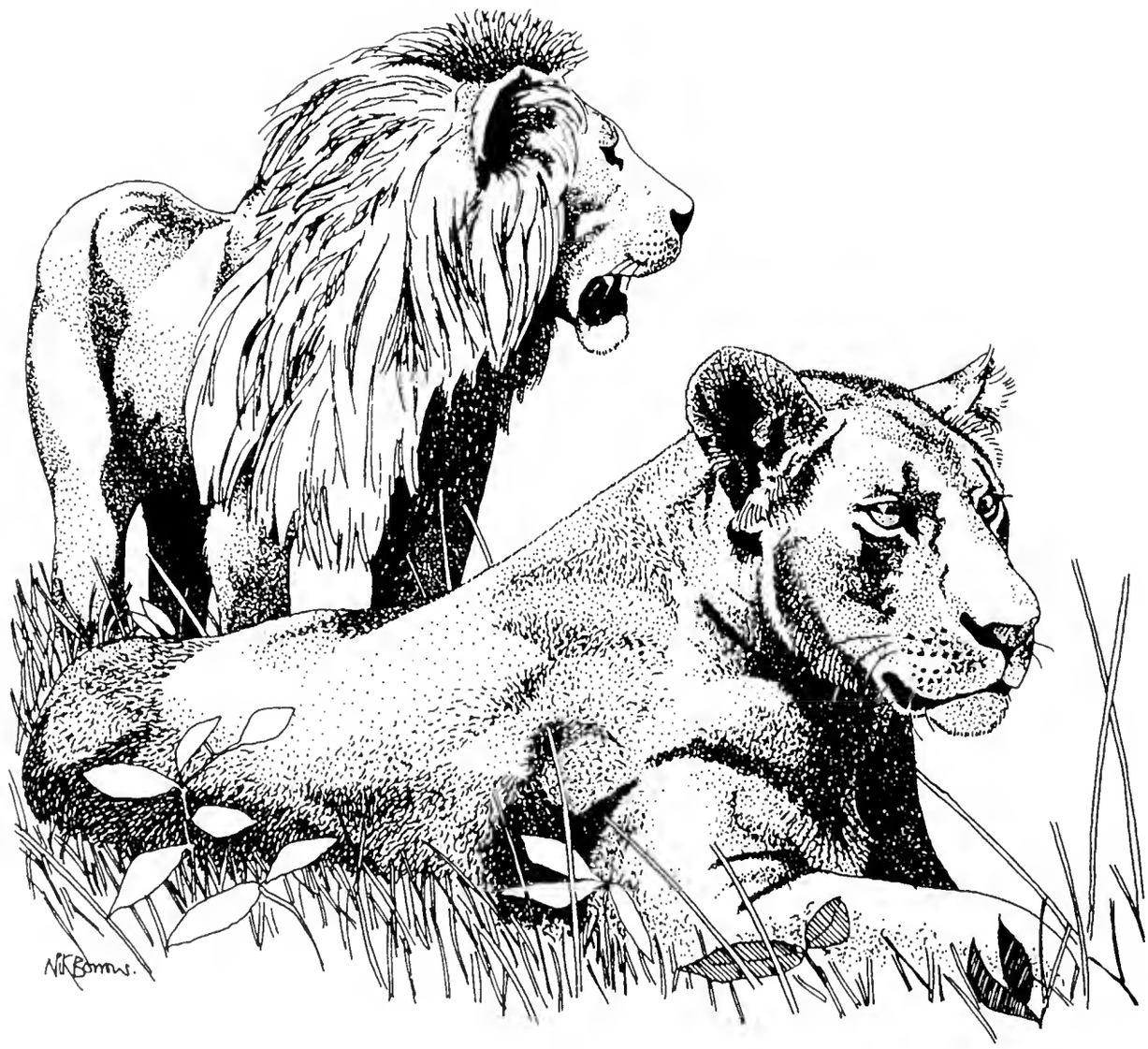


Obituaries

Richard Liversidge 1926–2003

Richard Liversidge died after a brief illness, on 15 September 2003, just two days short of his 77th birthday. A combination of great energy, enthusiasm for all aspects of the natural world, an incisive mind and an inclusive and liberal view of human affairs, led him to make significant contributions both to the development of ornithology in southern Africa, and to the value and preservation of South Africa's important historical heritage. Although his life is remembered here mainly for his contributions to ornithology, he was also regarded as one of the experts on the biology of Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis*, an authority on the natural history of the Kalahari, and as a community leader in his chosen hometown of Kimberley.

Richard was a man of lively conversation who would always find time to share his knowledge and enthusiasms with whoever he engaged. He was also practical, resourceful and tenacious, willing to turn his hand to any task in the field. These qualities, combined with great experience of travel in remote regions, made him an invaluable companion on any field trip, especially into the desert and semi-desert regions of Namibia and the Kalahari that he knew so well. Richard's practical nature reflected his early training as an engineer and then his early employment as a laboratory technician at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where he worked part-time for five years for a degree in biological sciences. He pursued his doctoral studies on the reproductive ecology of Cape Bulbuls *Pycnonotus capensis* at a field site near Port Elizabeth while employed as the ornithologist at that city's museum.

Richard was born of English parents at Blantyre (Malawi) in September 1926. During his early life he moved many times with his family before coming to England for early-years school in Sussex and Surrey, where he became an enthusiastic birdwatcher, spending many hours wandering the Sussex Weald in pursuit of birds and their eggs. His ability and interest in identification through sound stayed with him all of his life, and became a prominent feature of the three editions of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa* that he co-authored with Geoff McLachlan between 1957 and 1978. His interest in bird vocalisations was last evident in his use of sonogram data in the descriptions of the new species of pipits, Long-tailed *Anthus longicaudatus* (*Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 116: 211–215, 1996) and Kimberley *Anthus pseudosimilis* (*Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 122: 93–108, 2002), which he first detected less than 400 m from his doorstep while on his early-morning walks.

As a technician in the UCT Biology Department Richard was mainly involved in research work in marine biology and spent much time in the field, visiting the mouths of all the South African rivers. During this time he became a founder member and first secretary of the Cape Bird Club, a post that he held for nine years. He also joined the Council of the South African Ornithological Society. His ability to keep many balls in the air simultaneously reflected his diverse enthusiasms and great energy, qualities that stayed with him all his life. He took up his first post as an ornithologist at Port Elizabeth Museum in September 1956, and stayed there until 1964, during which time he published his first significant ornithological paper, on the Little Sparrowhawk

Accipiter minullus (*Ibis* 104: 399–406, 1962). He also led a collecting expedition to the Okavango Delta and returned with the first examples of birds collected in that region during the summer. This expedition was to have a considerable impact on his contribution to the second revision of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*. For that edition he drew heavily upon his own observations of behaviour, including vocalisations, as a crucial aspect of field identification characteristics. He assumed the post of Director of the McGregor Museum in Kimberley in 1966, a post that he held for 20 years until his retirement in 1986.The museum had a wide remit and Richard was able to push forward on many fronts simultaneously. He maintained his ornithological interests particularly through his field excursions into the Kalahari, and he became the leading authority on the natural history of the region.

In 1971 he co-published a book on *Ludwig Krebs, Naturalist to the King of Prussia*. This combined his great interests in natural history with a desire to understand the early history of the region and how knowledge of the wealth of its wildlife became known to European scientists and natural historians. His desire to bring bird knowledge to a wider audience is reflected in two books, *The Rapid Bird Guide* (1978) and *The Birds Around Us* (1991). In all he published 80 scientific papers and c40 articles in more popular journals. He attended all of the International Ornithological Congresses of the period and gave papers at most of them. He was also actively involved in such societies as the Wildlife Society of South Africa, the Zoological Society of South Africa, and the Wildlife Management Association, where he served as President.

Under his direction the McGregor Museum grew considerably in size and in influence. He included on his staff many people from the black community and broke an unwritten rule of the apartheid years when he ensured that his more highly qualified black staff were paid more than some of the white staff at the museum. This stance earned him great respect among the black community leaders and at the time of his death he was remembered in the city's newspapers as much as a liberal community leader as a historian and ornithologist.

During his life Richard received many awards and was made an honorary life member of a number of organisations to which he had given service. Perhaps the one that brought him most satisfaction was his election to a Fellowship of the Linnaean Society of London in 1994.

At the time of his death he was trying to make sense of Barlow's Lark *Certhilauda barlowi*, a recently described species from Namibia. He was struggling with the fundamental question of 'what is a bird species?', aware that the old certainties of the Biological Species Concept that he had grown up with were crumbling away. However, his approach was still field based and he spent three weeks in early 2003 camping in Namibia observing and sound recording these birds. Sadly he did not live long enough to answer his question about the status of Barlow's Lark.

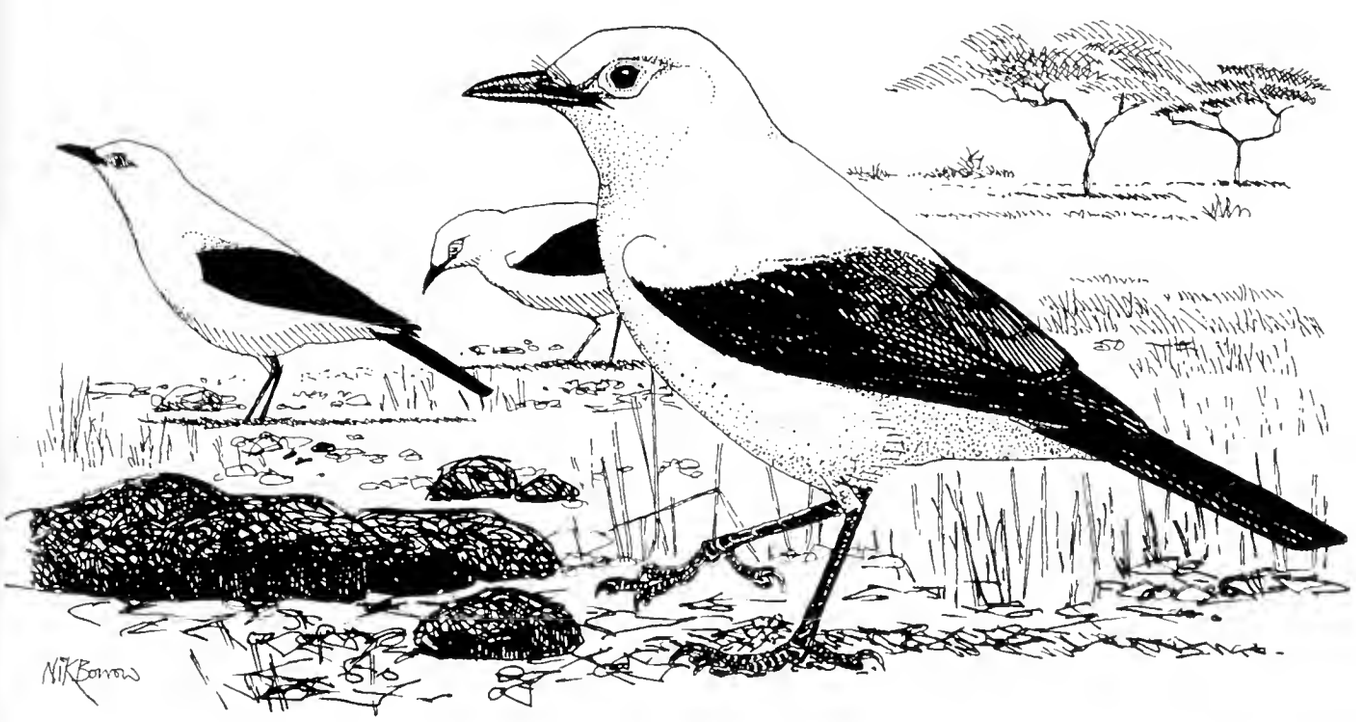
Graham Martin

John Gerhart: 1943–2003

John Gerhart was a first-rate birder who saw almost 5,000 species, and in a relatively short tenure as president solved long-standing problems at The American University in Cairo and launched exciting new initiatives. He had passion in his desire to build a world-class university in Egypt and for beautiful birds. He shared his joy at joint achievement both at work and in the field. In more difficult searches he would buoy others up with his humour. After a two-hour search for one of Ethiopia's endemics, his wife, Gail, asked how it had gone. John laughed and said "We spent two hours to find an insignificant little bird, and tomorrow we are going to look for an even more insignificant one!". His enthusiasm was infectious. At one time the American Birding Association named him as the top amateur birder in Africa.

A few months before John's death I read an article entitled 'Spotting patterns on the fly—a conversation with birders David Sibley and Julia Yoshida'. They were discussing the need for both executives and doctors to make decisions and to anticipate based upon pattern recognition, just as a birder must identify a flying bird without having full information. They said that pattern recognition is 'the art of finding order in often chaotic masses of data.' To the outsiders universities often seem chaotic because of their internal dynamism. Maybe this is why John was so much at home and did so well as president of a university. Honesty about data, self-awareness, self-criticism and a lack of ego were other qualities that David said a good birder needs. His low-key open approach endeared him to the university and he heard what people thought. He responded with care and concern to what he heard, and encouraged others both in his work and his hobby.

A. L. (Sandy) Darling



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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 Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Two hard (printed) copies should be sent unless submitting by e-mail (preferred) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

Contributions are accepted in English or French: French summaries are required for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If you submit your contribution on floppy disk, please state computer (eg IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (eg Word, WordPerfect) used.

When sending your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (ie with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (eg 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article the names of places should follow those on standard or readily available maps.

Preferred names

With the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *Birds of Africa* Vols 1–7. The African Bird Club has recently published (www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/checklist.html) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on *Birds of Africa* but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names as well races and alternatives used by publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-*Birds of Africa* species (eg from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). 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 ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

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 Representatives Coordinator, at the club address or e-mail: reps@africanbirdclub.org.

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ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries within the Club's region: Algeria, Ascension, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde Islands, Central African Republic, Chad, Comores & Mayotte, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Libya, Madeira, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Rwanda, São Tomé & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha, Tunisia and Zambia.

Supported and Affiliated Membership

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.

ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU 9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 721068. Fax: +44 1763 5626. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@egroups.com. You will then receive an email instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members e-mail addresses that are useful for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. We have addresses for approximately 33% of members. Please send additions or corrections to the secretary, at secretary@africanbirdclub.org. All addresses will be kept confidential and not used for commercial advertising etc.

African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*, Cross River National Park, Nigeria, January 1999 (Guus Hak)

Brève de l'Angola *Pitta angolensis*, Cross River National Park, Nigéria, janvier 1999 (Guus Hak)