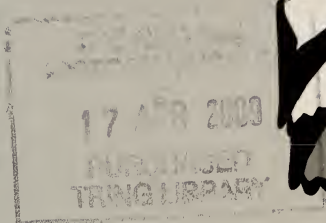


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African Bird Club



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 16 No 1 March 2009

Moroccan bird report

Birds in south-east
Sudan

Additions to the Congo-
Brazzaville list

Searching for the
wintering grounds of
Aquatic Warbler

Seabirds of the
Conrad Rise

Black-naped Tern in
Seychelles

White-tailed Swallows
near Negele, Ethiopia

Birding Sierra Leone

Torotoroka Scops Owl
nesting on the ground





African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

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

Registered Charity No 1053920

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The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

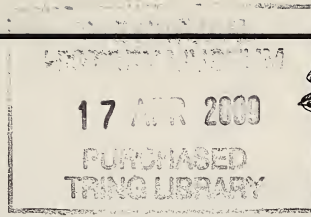
The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final 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).

Contents

Bull ABC Vol 16 No 1



News & Comment

- 2 **Club News**
Compiled by Alan Williams
- 5 **Obituaries**
- 6 **Advertising information**
- 7 **Conservation Fund News**
- 14 **Africa Round-up**
*Compiled by Ron Demey,
Guy Kirwan and Peter Lack*
- 99 **Recent Reports**
Compiled by Ron Demey
- 112 **Reviews**
- 128 **Notes for Contributors**

Illustrations

Pete Leonard and Wayne Jones

Photographs

Mark Anderson, Ken Behrens, Patrick Bergier, Zul Bhatia, Marc de Bont, Maans Booyens, Nik Borrow, John Caddick, Christelle Chamberlan, Hugh Chittenden, Callan Cohen, Ron Eggert, Fanny Ellis, Martin Flade, O. Fontaine, Dick Forsman, Trevor Hardaker, Jock Henwood, David Hoddinott, Fred Hodgson, Richard Hurt, Abdi Jama, Adam Scott Kennedy, Tony King, C. G. Knox, T. Kolaas, Georges Oliosio, David Peterson, J. Piette, Geoff Randall, Jaco Reynecke, Lily-Arison Rene de Roland, Adam Riley, Ricardo Rocha, Peter Ryan, Jørgen Sagvik, Volker Salweski, David Shackelford, Guy Shorrock, Adrian Skerrett, Claire Spottiswoode, Keith Valentine, S. Werner, Alan Williams, Robert Van Zalinge and David Zeller

Front cover

Great White Pelicans / Pélicans blancs
Pelecanus onocrotalus by Brian Hart

Features

- 23 **Rare birds in Morocco: report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (2004–2006)**
Patrick Bergier, Jacques Franchimont, Michel Thévenot and the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee
- 37 **Bird observations from south-east Sudan**
Marc de Bont
- 53 **Additions to the avifauna of Congo-Brazzaville**
Hugo J. Rainey, Jérôme Mokoko Ikonga, Randy Vernon and Tony King
- 61 **Quest for a phantom—the search for the winter quarters of the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola***
Volker Salweski, Bruno Bargain, Ibrahima Diop and Martin Flade
- 67 **The seabirds of the Conrad Rise, Southern Ocean**
Peter G. Ryan
- 78 **First confirmed breeding record of Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* from St François Atoll and a new population estimate for Seychelles and the Afrotropical region**
Pierre-André Adam, Adrian Skerrett and Gérard Rocamora
- 83 **Occurrence of White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* near Negele, Ethiopia**
Merid Nega Gabremichael, Claire N. Spottiswoode, Lincoln Fishpool, Erik Forsyth, Alan Lewis, Debbie Pain, Richard Thomas and Negussie Toyé
- 87 **First record of Torotoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis* nesting on the ground**
Lily-Arison Rene de Roland and Russell Thorstrom
- 89 **A record of Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* in southern Africa**
Jørgen Sagvik
- 90 **First record of Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* for The Gambia**
Kevin Roy
- 92 **Birding in Sierra Leone: an emerging West African destination**
Frank Lambert

Club News



PAOC 2008 in Cape Town

Approximately 250 delegates, including many ABC members, attended the 12th Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, on 7–12 September 2008. Tasso Leventis (ABC President), Keith Betton (ABC Chairman) and Phil Atkinson (ABC Vice-Chairman) were all present. The Club was pleased to sponsor the participation of Keddy Mooketsa of Birdlife Botswana and Wanyoike Wamiti of the National Museums of Kenya, as well as sponsoring the Congress Programme and Abstracts booklet. ABC also presented a prize to Talatu Tende from Nigeria whose presentation on vulture populations within Yankari Game Reserve was judged to be the most impressive given by a student of ornithology.

Many African countries were represented including Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaŵi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Réunion, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland,

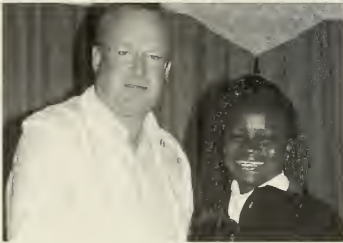


Figure 1. Talatu Tende receiving her prize from Club Chairman Keith Betton at the PAOC for her presentation on vulture populations within Yankari Game Reserve (Zul Bhatia)

Talatu Tende recevant son prix de Keith Betton, Président du African Bird Club, pour son exposé sur les populations de vautours dans la Réserve de Yankari, Nigeria, au Congrès ornithologique pan-africain (Zul Bhatia)

Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. ABC country representatives present were Tiwonge Mzumara (Malaŵi), Phil Hall (Nigeria), Moussa Séga Diop (Senegal), Ara Monadjem (Swaziland) and Derek Pomeroy (Uganda).

The sessions operated under a general theme on the interaction between humans and birds. Plenary sessions were held on birds and people, climate change, seabird conservation, threats to raptors, the Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, habitat fragmentation, and the relationship between stable isotopes and bird migration. Using five halls, a total of 35 symposia was run with c.160 presentations being made over four days. Attendance at these sessions was very good—not least because the weather was unexpectedly cold and extremely wet!

Several recipients of ABC Conservation Fund awards attended, and three presentations were made on ABC-supported projects. These were by Donella Young on the South African Coordinated Avifaunal Road Counts, Lizanne Roxburgh on her assessment of the distribution of Chaplin's Barbet *Lybius chaplini* and Keddy Mooketsa on her Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* studies.

The 2012 PAOC will be held in Nigeria. Full details will be published in the Bulletin in due course.

Contributed by Keith Betton

ABC at the 2008 British Birdwatching Fair

The Club had a stand at the Fair for the 15th successive year. Once again the weather was not ideal for an outdoor event but the public made the best of it. There were early signs of the global financial downturn, but it did not deter those who attended and for many participants business was brisk. As usual, members of Council

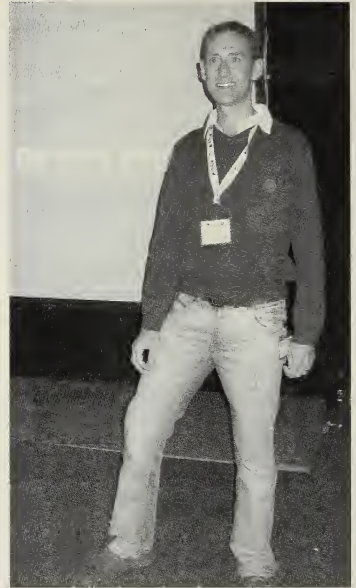


Figure 2. Pete Leonard giving his talk on birding Zambia at the British Birdwatching Fair (Alan Williams)

Pete Leonard donnant sa causerie sur les oiseaux de la Zambie à la *British Birdwatching Fair* (Alan Williams)

and volunteers manned the stand. In addition, John Caddick and Pete Leonard were speakers on the talks programme. John spoke about the tremendous lowland forests of Gabon, one of the best countries for birdwatching in Africa but still rarely visited. Pete used his experience of working in Zambia to describe the main zones and important species of a country whose profile is increasing due to the publication of the new atlas. Pete was also the Club's representative for the Bird Brain of Britain quiz, hosted by Bill Oddie and generously sponsored by the Catalan Tourist Board. His specialist subject was Birds of Zambia. Pete took second place and received a UK£500 prize, which will bolster the Club's Conservation Fund.



Figure 3. The ABC stand at the British Birdwatching Fair, at Rutland Water, August 2008 (Geoff Randall)

Le stand du ABC à la *British Birdwatching Fair* à Rutland Water, août 2008 (Geoff Randall)

ABC website

Bird images

Many of you use AFBID, the African Bird Image Database (www.birdquest.net/afbid) to look at photographs of African birds, to help in identification, or to add your own images. The system has been in place for just over three years and over 500 photographers have posted 10,000 photos of 1,800 species in this time. During 2008 we tried to improve the quality of the images, with the result that some of the older and less good images were deleted. We are, of course, still seeking good images of species already included and of the several hundred species on the African checklist not yet represented.

For much of the three years, the functions of the system have remained as originally implemented, but recently we have begun to make some modifications. The first of these was the addition of French language species names in the master database and their inclusion below each image. Since this, we have noticed an increase in the number of users in France and we hope that it will assist those in other French-speaking countries. A further change was to improve the way in which comments are added. We had reached a point where the level of 'spam' comments was intolerable, necessitating a tightening of our security arrangements.

We have many more ideas and plan to implement these in time, although the availability of funds will determine the speed of change. Meanwhile, we would appreciate your feedback about the system.

Bird sounds

In *Bull. ABC* 15: 147, we announced a major new website for bird sounds of the African region in cooperation with xeno-canto.org. Although good recordings of some unusual species have been added to the database, we would like to hear more recordings from the African region and we hope to enlist the help of members to rectify this situation. *Xeno-canto* is currently the largest community database of bird songs on the web with over 22,000 recordings. It is just about the only website that actively endeavours to provide an insight into geographic variation in bird song. It also allows users to try to identify unknown recordings themselves.

If you follow the regional links, you will see that the African site has fewer recordings than the American and Asian sites, even though the latter has been operational for less time than the African site. A larger number of recordings from the African region would help many people with identification issues and provide the opportunity to hear bird sounds that they would rarely hear otherwise.

Many of you are seasoned researchers of African bird song and

have made many recordings on your travels. We encourage you to upload some of these onto the database. Recordings are shared under a Creative Commons license, permitting free distribution but no commercial use without the consent of the recordist, and all rights remain with the latter. If you are willing to contribute recordings, but find the procedure of uploading them via the website too time-consuming, then please request the assistance of Willem-Pier Vellinga or Bob Planqué at contact@xeno-canto.org. Substantial sets of recordings may be contributed in many ways, such as via e-mail or on CDs, provided that the recordings are in digital format.

Country pages

Version 7 of the country checklist database is now operational. This contains new data published in recent editions of *Malimbus*, *Bull. ABC* and other sources, resulting in the addition of several hundred new records. The largest change is to the Botswana checklist.

Many of you buy your books and sound-recordings from WildSounds via the ABC website. Each purchase via this link generates a donation for the ABC Conservation Fund. We have recently loaded a new profile for each country, which contains several exciting new publications available or planned for early 2009. Please continue to make your purchases via this link and generate more money for conservation.

Finally, considerable ongoing effort is invested into the maintenance of the country pages. Major improvements have been made recently to the Cape Verde Islands, Madeira and Mali pages.

Credit card payments

Many members pay their subscriptions, donations and for sales items by credit card, using either the website facility or by mail order. Since 2006, we have used an electronic payment facility for processing transactions, which has proved reliable and efficient, as well as cheaper because the bank charges are less than for paper transactions. To use elec-

tronic processing, we require your Customer Verification Code (CVC) as well as your other credit card details. Your CVC code is the final three digits in the signature strip on the reverse of your card. The website and our literature have been modified to reflect the change, which will improve transaction security and reduce costs.

Conservation Fund

ABC is very pleased to report that it has been able to make awards from the Conservation Fund of more than UK£14,000 to 19 individuals and organisations in 2008. This represents both a record number and total value of awards in a year.

Since its inception some ten years ago, around UK£76,000 has been awarded to over 100 projects in 29 African countries. In recent years, awards have been made for projects in Angola, Djibouti, Eritrea, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Socotra. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there have been a larger numbers of awards to

countries in East and southern Africa. The awards would have been impossible without the generous donations from our members and Corporate Sponsors. A summary of the awards made and some of the project reports appear at http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund_projects.html

Contributed by John Caddick

Contacting ABC by email

The list of contact e-mail addresses appears on the inside front cover of the Bulletin, and should guide you to the person most appropriate to deal with your query. To contact ABC regarding the mailing of the Bulletin, e-mail the Membership Secretary at membership@africanbirdclub.org.

When we receive an e-mail address from a member it is recorded on the database. As with all information held about members, it is only used for Club business and is not released for any other purpose except with the express approval of the member concerned. If, for

example, someone has lost touch with a member, we may get a request to forward their e-mail address; but, instead, we ask the member to contact the enquirer if they wish. We also send e-mails individually, rather than by mass mailings, so that other members' e-mail addresses are not revealed.

We do not hold all members' e-mail addresses on the database. For instance, those people who bank in the UK and renew their subscription by direct debit do not need to contact the Club each year. Using e-mail is quicker and cheaper for us to communicate with members than by post. If you have not supplied your e-mail address and want us to have it, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org with your name, locality and postcode. Your e-mail address can then be copied to the database.

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Obituaries

Major John F. R. Colebrook-Robjent

1935–2008

407 677-1001

Africa's foremost oologist, John Robjent, died on 17 November 2008 in Lusaka, Zambia, having been ill for some time. John's contribution to our knowledge of Zambian birds' eggs and breeding habits was unparalleled.

John was born in April 1935 and during the war lived in London where he began collecting eggs in Hyde Park. At Tabley House School in Cheshire, John's passion for birds was cemented by his headmaster, John Leicester-Warren, who encouraged boys to take advantage of the school's 1,600-ha estate and pursue all avenues of natural history. Each year there was a nature notebook competition, which John often won. This habit of writing meticulous notes remained with him for life.

He became Head Boy at Tabley and, after leaving school, worked first as a ghillie in Scotland and then taught for a short period before joining the army. He was commissioned in 1959 into the First Battalion of the Royal Ulster Rifles and soon embarked on a tour of duty in Cyprus. It is said that once, whilst driving his car in Cyprus, he saw a rare bird and was so mesmerised that an accident resulted.

Subsequently, John spent time in Borneo and Uganda, where he was seconded to the King's African Rifles at a time when Idi Amin was the regimental sergeant-major. John is reputed to have incited a mutiny which resulted in him and his fellow officers being locked in the regimental officers' mess whilst their wives were sent back to the UK. On release, John was given the task of collecting specimens for the Kampala Museum.

John arrived in Zambia in September 1966, seconded to the Zambian army, based in Kabwe. After a couple of years he resigned his commission and moved into tobacco farming in Choma where he remained for the rest of his life. He studied the birds of this area intensively and recorded his findings in great detail.

When discussing John with those who hadn't met him, it has always been frustrating yet inevitable that one would quickly find oneself defending his character. In an age when collecting eggs is such a taboo, people often find it difficult to accept the enormous scientific value of oology. Condemnation of egg collecting is perhaps a luxury of those who come from countries already possessing large museum collections and extensive knowledge. What John has done for Zambia is help establish baseline data on which so much future work will depend. Furthermore, his approach was always meticulous, rigorous and scientific.

Stepping into his house was like entering a museum. John had a fine library and an extensive skin collection, but eggs were his main focus. Listening to him talk about his latest findings, one became entranced by his boundless enthusiasm, particularly if it related to brood parasitism. His investigations into the breeding habits of cuckoos (Cuculidae), honeyguides (Indicatoridae) and parasitic finches (Viduidae) were staggering, and this work is being continued by Claire Spottiswoode at Cambridge University. John also had a particular love of raptors and did some pioneering work on nightjars.



John made regular field trips to other parts of Zambia with a small team of assistants whom he had trained. Lazaro Hamusikili in particular began working with John from the age of ten and is now a highly skilled skinner, climber and nest-finder. Such expeditions invariably resulted in exciting discoveries and John was the first to describe the nests and eggs of many species, amongst them Chaplin's Barbet *Lybius chaplini* and Grimwood's Longclaw *Macronyx grimwoodi*. He collaborated with a number of other ornithologists, most notably the late Charles Sibley, to whom he regularly sent specimens and samples, and for whom he had tremendous respect. It was Sibley who arranged for John to go on a seven-week collecting trip to Madagascar with Jali Makawa (Con Benson's collector).

John was full of surprising contradictions. His passion for scientific collection and his ledgers filled with handwritten notes seemed to be from a bygone age. He had a vivid sense of duty, history and tradition, and was fascinated by genealogy. At the same time, he was quick to embrace new ideas such as genetic taxonomy and always had an eye on current trends. He devoured Harry Potter books with childlike glee. Rather fittingly, the late Dylan Aspinwall once described him as being like 'some sort of wizard.'

John could appear bombastic, arrogant and slightly wild-eyed, but those who knew him well will remember Colebrook-Robjent as a charming, self-deprecating, passionate and hugely entertaining gentleman. His collection of eggs and skins will be going to The Natural History Museum at Tring.

Pete Leonard

David Snow

1924–2009

407 678-1001

With the death of David Snow, on 4 February 2009, ornithology has lost one of its most distinguished field and museum workers of the second half of the 20th century. David's name is perhaps not household amongst modern African ornithologists and birders, although he did author *The Atlas of Speciation in African Non-passerine Birds* (1978) during his 16 years as Senior Principal Scientific Officer at the British Museum of Natural History. But, amongst Neotropical field workers, his output and fame are nigh-on legendary. The list of offices he held and his published works are both considerable. David was a former President of the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) (1983–87), Editor of *Ibis* (1968–73), Editor of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* (1991–97), and one of the editors of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* handbook series. He was awarded the BOU's Godman-Salvin medal in 1982 and edited the British Ornithologists' Club centenary anthology *Birds: Discovery and Conservation* (1992). Early books included *A Study of Blackbirds* (1958) and *The Web of Adaptation* (1976). David, and his wife Barbara, who was also a prodigious field worker, published extensively on two Neotropical bird families, cotingas (Cotingidae) and manakins (Pipridae). This work culminated in David's monograph *The Cotingas* (published in 1982) and his authorship, in 2004, of both families for the universal-acclaimed *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW)

series. His contributions to our knowledge of these two groups were honoured by Rick Prum's (2001) erection of the genus *Snowornis* for two species of Andean green pihás. David also described a new cotinga himself, from south-east Brazil in 1980, and the rare north-east Brazilian endemic Alagoas Antwren *Myrmotherula snowi* is also named for him. Barbara, who predeceased him in July 2007, and David wrote a classic in the Poyser series, *Birds and Berries* (1988), whilst he also authored the motmots (Motmotidae) for *HBW. Birds in our lives*, David's autobiography, published just last year revealed hidden talents even to people who had known him for many years. In his preface to John Ash and John Miskell's *Birds of Somalia* (1998), David commenced 'In 1948, when I was contemplating an undergraduate expedition with the perhaps naïve aim of contributing to the knowledge of the birds of some little known part of the world, R. E. Moreau suggested as a first choice what was then British Somaliland.' In some, this might have been taken for false modesty, but those who knew David would never have so construed it. Like all truly great people, in whatever field they excel, David had no need of such devices. A great many people will remember him fondly and with much gratitude. Full obituaries will be appearing in *Ibis* and *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* in due course.

Guy M. Kirwan

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Copy deadlines

March Bulletin 15 January

August Bulletin 15 June



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are available on the ABC web site at:

www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html



In *Bull. ABC* 15: 154–155 I reported on four recent Conservation Awards: to Claudien Nsabagasani for surveys of the Akanyuru wetlands in Rwanda, funded by Hyde-Lascelles, to Dawit Semere for a survey of Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* in the Eritrean Red Sea, to Geoff Welch *et al.* for a Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* survey, and to a team of researchers for a Tanzanian forest project examining the impact on birds of Mpingo harvesting. At present the Djibouti Francolin survey is 'on hold', but if/when it goes ahead ABC will help fund the work. Already we have received interim reports for the Socotra Cormorant survey and the Mpingo project (see below). Neil Taylor completed two months of surveys in the Kalahari in Botswana, monitoring raptors, bustards and mammals, but then contracted a tick-borne disease. He has sent an interim report of the 2008 surveys and is working on a report based on four years of data.

I am pleased to announce that eight new awards had been made by December 2008, and two others have been approved for funding in 2009, as follows.

North Nandi Forest survey

An award of UK£1,000 was made to Moses Mitau, Simon Musila (Ornithology Department of the National Museums of Kenya) and Nicholas Shikuyenze (Kakamega Forest guide) for their survey of Nandi Forest Important Bird Area (IBA). The forest lies on the edge of the Nandi escarpment in the Kenyan Rift Valley, and

represents a transition between the lowland forest of west and central Africa and montane forests of the central Kenyan highlands. It also belongs to the Kakamega and Nandi Forests Secondary Area of endemism, defined by the presence of the globally threatened and range-restricted Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa lendu*. The avifauna is similar to that of Kakamega Forest, mostly comprising Guinea-Congo forests and Afrotropical Highland biome species. Species of regional concern include Olive Ibis *Bostrychia olivacea*, African Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum*, Thick-billed Honeyguide *Indicator conirostris*, Least Honeyguide *I. exilis*, Grey-chested Illadopsis *Kakamega poliothorax*, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye

Dyaphorophyia concreta (all Vulnerable) and Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis*. The main threats include illegal timber extraction, charcoal burning, grazing and the unsustainable removal of forest products, which are likely to significantly reduce or locally extirpate populations of some birds. During the project, research assistants drawn from the local community will be

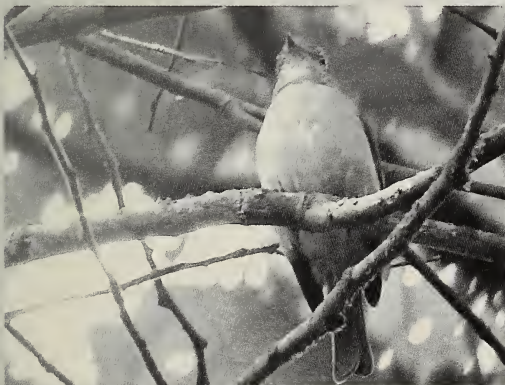


African Crowned Eagle /
Aigle couronné
Stephanoaetus coronatus
(Adam Scott Kennedy)

trained in conducting bird and vegetation surveys. The main objectives are to determine the current status of Chapin's Flycatcher and to investigate the bird species richness and abundance as well as current threats to forest habitats. Recommendations for an appropriate conservation strategy will be made. Other expected outcomes include a checklist of bird species in the IBA.

Surveys of Lake Victoria IBAs and potential IBAs

Leonard Akwany Omondi of the Lake Victoria Sunset Birders and Ecofinders Youth Group was awarded UK£850 thanks to a very generous donation by Avifauna. The project's aims are to



Chapin's Flycatcher / Gobemouche de Chapin *Muscicapa lendu* (Nik Borrow)



identify key hotspots for birds around Lake Victoria and any threats to these areas, as well as to document flagship species at each hotspot and to enhance the network of village environmental committees and Site Support Groups in the region. Leonard will work closely with NatureKenya and other relevant bodies.

Zambian ringing course

An award of UK£500 was made to AFRING, the bird ringing office based at the Avian Demography Unit, in Cape Town, towards a ringing course in Zambia. Doug Harebottle, the organiser, wrote in late November that the course went extremely well. Fourteen delegates and five trainers from seven countries attended, and they ringed at some good sites in Zambia. Doug Harebottle thanked ABC for the grant, which was used to purchase the rings and other much-needed ringing equipment for the course.

Sharpe's Longclaw in Kenya

ABC gave UK£800 to Luca Borghesio towards this work, in particular to support Dominic Kamau, one of the field assistants, who elaborated a small project in the primary schools of the Kinangop plateau. Teaching children about the conservation importance of Kenya's grassland is a key conservation action. Luca reported in July 2009 that the team had spent three days in Aberdare National Park, one of the few protected areas where Sharpe's Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei* was reported in the past, but had found no sign of the species there and that all of the alpine moorland habitats had been severely encroached by shrubs and dense grasses, making them unsuitable for the longclaw. Management action might be urgently needed to restore the habitat, and Luca speculated that a similar situation might exist in other protected areas known to harbour the species, whilst elsewhere the situation is also of grave concern due to the current world food crisis. Luca and his team are collaborating with 10000birds, a UK-based blog, to advertise and raise funds for Dominic's project. Charlie Moores, owner of the blog, has already produced an introduction to the work (<http://10000birds.com/it-all-adds-up.htm>).

Malkamari expedition

An award was made to Lucy Muithui and Geoffery Mwangi of the Ornithology Department of the National Museums of Kenya to survey birds in this remote national park in north-east Kenya. Unfortunately, for various reasons, it was only possible to conduct surveys along the Mandera and Daua River valleys, in August 2008. The area comprised three major habitats: semi-arid bushland, scrubby grassland and riparian woodland along the Daua River. During the survey a total of 74 bird species was recorded, including three species listed as rare in the region and three new for the area. Two species characteristic of the Jubba and Shabeelle Valleys Endemic Bird Area were recorded, namely White-winged Collared Dove *Streptopelia reichenowi* and Juba Weaver *Ploceus dicrocephalus*. The latter is not entirely confined to along the Daua River, being recorded several times in Mandera town in *Acacia*. The dove, on the other hand, is largely restricted to the river on both the Kenyan and Ethiopian sides. Riverine vegetation has been severely modified by irrigation and invasive species, mainly *Prosopis juliflora*. Although the team did not reach Malkamari National Park, recent reports indicate that the vegetation along the river is still undisturbed within the park.

Support for students at Makerere University, Kampala

ABC has given UK£300 towards supporting an intern at the university, supervised by Prof. Derek Pomeroy.

Breeding success of Stripe-breasted Tit: an Albertine Rift endemic

In 1995 Chris Perrins and Derek Pomeroy established a study of the breeding ecology of Stripe-breasted Tit *Parus fasciiventer* at Ruhija, Uganda. A small number of pairs now breed annually in the nest boxes provided, enabling Institute for Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC) field staff to record laying dates, breeding success, nestling growth rates, adult provisioning rates and subsequent survival. This is the only long-term study of an Albertine Rift endemic bird in progress, and one of only three studies of African Paridae, the others having focused on



Stripe-breasted Tit / Mésange à ventre strié *Parus fasciiventer* (Ken Behrens)

southern African species. An award of UK£642 was made to help train two field assistants, Narsensius Owoyesigire and Savio Ngabirano, who will record breeding activity during 2009, as well as colour ringing additional adults and nestlings. They will also provide support to four short-term studies of other Albertine Rift endemics, including the threatened African Green Broadbill *Pseudocalyptomena graueri*.

The plight of vultures in Somalia

ABC has supported this project to the tune of US\$1,500, which aims to examine the disappearance of five out of six vultures species from Somaliland west of 46°E, where only Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* is still extant in large numbers. Between Buroa town and the border with Djibouti at Loyada all five species are now absent from around abattoirs and discarded offal dumps where they used to feed in huge numbers. It is believed that the chemicals used to clean slaughterhouses affects vulture populations and that goat and sheep herders near offal dumps lace the discarded leftovers with poison. There is a need to canvas abattoirs in all five



Hooded Vulture / Vautour charognard *Necrosyrtes monachus* (Ron Eggert)

major cities in the region (Hargeisa, Buroa, Borame, Erigavo and Bebera) to discover which chemicals they are using, and to establish the reason for the vultures disappearance, before commencing a recovery and awareness-raising programme.

Conservation and capacity-building in the Yala Swamp

This project intends to establish sustainable utilisation of natural resources and to promote the conservation of papyrus endemic bird species in the Yala Swamp, as well as seeking to build capacity through training, to promote school outreach programmes by establishing Nature Clubs, and to increase awareness in schools. The project also aims to promulgate a community monitoring and surveillance scheme, to collect data about the wetland, enabling the creation of a database and the production of reports on status and trends, which will be sent to NatureKenya. One of ABC's Corporate Sponsors, Avifauna, has very kindly also agreed to fund this project.

A ranger-based oxpecker-monitoring programme for protected areas in Kenya

Alfred Owino aims to establish baseline status information for both species of oxpecker *Buphagus* in two pilot protected areas (Nairobi and Amboseli National Parks) and on the Laikipia Plateau; to train rangers and equip them to assess oxpecker populations; and to set up a functional monitoring programme in these areas. He will work in collaboration with Ronald Mulwa of the National Museums of Kenya and



Yellow-billed Oxpeckers / Piquebœuf à bec jaune *Buphagus africanus* (Adam Scott Kennedy)

Hassan Guyo of Earthwatch. Alfred works closely with NatureKenya. The budget is in excess of UK£1,500, but ABC has been asked to provide two pairs of binoculars and two GPS (estimated at UK£600). ABC has requested that Alfred also gather information on the use of poisons in the areas concerned.



PAOC support

In addition to the awards above, ABC helped fund the travel costs of two African delegates to the PAOC in South Africa in September 2008, namely Wamiti Wanyoike from Kenya and Keddy Mooketsa from Botswana. Both had received previous awards from ABC, for surveys in the Namanga Hills and a study of the Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* population in Botswana, respectively, and gave talks on their research at the meeting. Wamiti managed to obtain a very cheap flight, so ABC has agreed that the balance of the award should be used for forest bird surveys and training of community bird guides in the little-known Marmanet Forest Reserve. ABC is also funding the publication of the PAOC abstracts booklet.

Finally, ABC has funds earmarked for projects in The Gambia and in Zambia or Zimbabwe, so if you live in any of these countries do consider making an application. We favour applications that aim to survey important areas for birds, undertake research on globally threatened species or those that involve local communities in conservation programmes.

Reports

Mpingo conservation project, Tanzania

The aims of this project were: (a) to gain an insight into the effects of forest degradation on birds and primates; (b) conduct baseline surveys to establish the distribution and abundance of species in forest around Kilwa in southern Tanzania; (c) develop new techniques for rapidly mapping the distribution and abundance of birds in developing countries; and (d) develop avian indicators of forest health that can be used to monitor sustainable forest use. Ilya Maclean's interim report focused on the species present in the various forest blocks surveyed and the selection of suitable species for monitoring sustainable forest management.

Of the 13 biome-restricted species known from the Kilwa District Coastal Forests Important Bird Area (IBA) the team located all but one and also confirmed the presence of Kretschmer's Longbill *Macrosphenus kretschmeri*



Brown-breasted Barbet / Barbican à poitrine brune *Lybius melanopterus* (David Peterson)

and Brown-breasted Barbet *Lybius melanopterus*, which were not previously known to be certainly present. Additionally, Mangrove Kingfisher *Halcyon senegaloides* was recorded in mangrove around Kilwa town. Two additional taxa of uncertain taxonomy are worthy of mention: the local forms of Green Barbet *Stactolaema olivacea* ('Rondo Green Barbet') and Cape Batis *Batis capensis* ('Reichenow's Batis'; sometimes also treated as a race of Forest Batis *B. mixta*). Should they prove to be separate species, the area would qualify as an Endemic Bird Area.

The survey also highlighted the importance of several forest blocks not currently included within the Kilwa IBA. Foremost is Uchungwe, between the Mitaurure and Rungo forest reserves, which was the only area found to host Rondo Green Barbet and one of only two areas in which Reichenow's Batis was located. It also hosts the Near Threatened Southern Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus* and Plain-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes reichenowi*. Nainokwe Coastal Forest, adjoining Uchungwe, is also important, hosting Reichenow's Batis and other biome-restricted species (e.g. Brown-headed Parrot *Poicephalus cryptoxanthus*, Green Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus simplex* and Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike *Prionops scopifrons*). Migeregere and Kisangi host seven and five biome-restricted species, respectively; both hold Southern Banded Snake Eagle and the former also has Plain-backed Sunbird. Ruhatwe and Kikole also held the former species and Ruhatwe the latter too.



One of the core aims of the project is to capitalise on a recent change in Tanzanian law, which permits rural householders to claim ownership of forest, provided it is sustainably managed (including ensuring that this is compatible with biodiversity conservation). The Mpingo project is working alongside the District Forestry Office in Kilwa, helping to develop Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in the district. Under PFM communities are encouraged to set aside some forest as a Village Land Forest Reserve (VLFR) under the control of the village council, by designing and following a forest management plan approved by the District Council. Once approved the village council owns the rights to all timber trees, including Mpingo, within the VLFR.

As resource extraction elements to sustainable forest management are monitored by the villagers themselves this necessitates the use of simple techniques to monitor timber stocks. The Mpingo project aimed to adopt the same ethos for biodiversity monitoring: find a taxon or suite of taxa easily monitored by the villagers themselves and representative of the general 'health' of the forest. To do this, two elements must be considered: taxa should be indicative of forest state and be easy to monitor. Bird species make more effective indicators than other animal taxa, except butterflies, because of their detectability and encounter rates. Some butterfly species might make effective indicators of forest 'health', but as they prefer sunny areas and are often more abundant in open areas created by illegal felling their abundance is unlikely to be congruent with other elements of sustainable forest management.

Within the study area, only six bird species (Crested Guineafowl *Guttera pucherani*, African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*, Yellow-streaked Greenbul *Phyllastrephus flavostriatus*, Eastern Bearded Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas quadringata*, Livingstone's Flycatcher *Erythrocerus livingstoni*, Eastern Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* and Dark-backed Weaver *Ploceus bicolor*) make appropriate indicators of good forest. All occur in the majority of forested areas classified as 'good' and were generally absent from degraded forest. Of these, only two, Crested Guineafowl and African Broadbill, are relatively easy to detect and identify. Crested Guineafowl is easy to recognise

and is likely to be well known to local villagers as it is often hunted for food. It can be rather shy and retiring in some areas, and is generally encountered in flocks. Thus, overall abundance is likely to be dictated by flock size and will be highly sensitive to whether or not flocks are encountered. African Broadbill is also readily recognised and highly detectable as a result of its loud display flights. In Kilwa it appears to be sufficiently abundant for meaningful abundance indices to be constructed. Overall the project found that the abundance of African Broadbills would be the best measure of forest 'health' and indicative of whether or not it is sustainably managed. Factors that might need to be considered are whether or not the species is more vocal at certain times of day and whether display-flights are more frequent at certain times of year. Such questions would be easily answered by implementing a pilot monitoring survey in which calls are monitored at intervals throughout the day and year.

Socotra Cormorant in the Eritrean Red Sea

This survey was undertaken on 27 August–4 September 2008 on the islands around Idi and Tio, to ascertain if Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* breeds there, to describe the habitat used, to estimate the Eritrean Red Sea population, to evaluate the site's importance, and to investigate possible threats to the species. Dawit Semere reports that off Idi on 28 August the team observed 8,000–10,000 cormorants flying north and that, next day, on Kurum Ali, they found 2,000 Socotra Cormorants. The team recorded 700 cormorants on four other islands and at one coastal site in the Hawakil Bay islands. Older fishermen claimed to have seen the species in large numbers on the islands since they were children. Thousands appear in October–January, when anchovies and sardines are present. Some men claimed to have seen chicks in summer and there appears to be no threat to the cormorants as local fishermen do not persecute them and the government has stopped sea cucumber collecting. Large numbers of Socotra Cormorants have never been formally recorded from this area before. The team intended to visit the area in December 2008, to



ascertain the species' exact status in the area, when they also hoped to check Kurum Ali Island again.

Conservation status of Amani Sunbird in Arabuko-Sokoke, Kenya

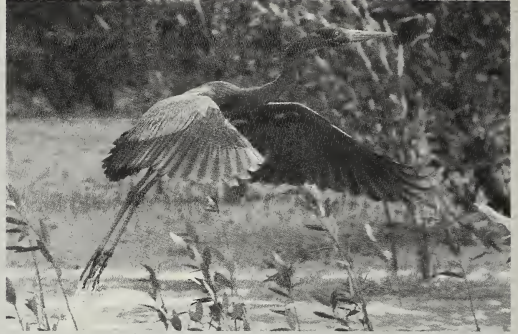
This survey, conducted in April 2008, aimed to investigate the status of Amani Sunbird *Hedydipna pallidigastera* and its habitat. Current threats to the habitat were assessed and the species' population and spatial distribution determined. The survey was based on point counts and opportunistic observations, whilst vegetation was sampled and analysed against bird presence to determine the species' distribution. A total of 109 individuals was counted in an area of 30 ha, with a density of 4 birds/ha. Besides Amani Sunbird, the survey produced a number of interesting bird records, further underlining the importance of this Important Bird Area.

Anthropogenic threats to Jackson's Widowbird

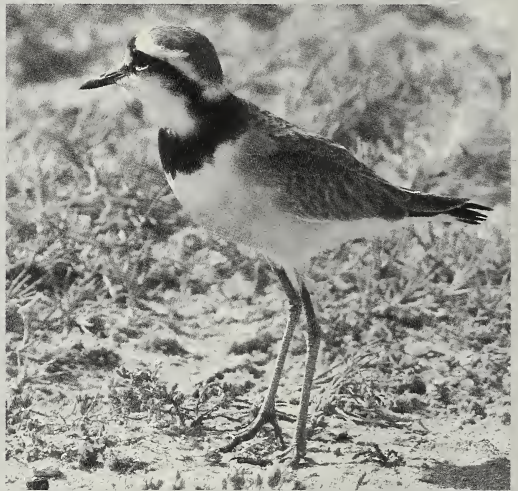
This study, undertaken in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, at Oloirobi, on 14 July–13 August 2008, aimed to identify anthropogenic activities in Oloirobi, land use patterns in Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority and the habitat requirements of Jackson's Widowbird *Euplectes jacksoni*. Grazing was the major anthropogenic activity in the study area, followed by cultivation, settlements and burning. Jackson's Widowbird was found to prefer mostly open grass cover and the study concluded that if anthropogenic factors are controlled its population is likely to increase. Further studies should be performed in other parts of Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, to assess the species' distribution elsewhere in relation to land use.

Nahan's Francolin in Kibale and Semliki National Parks, Uganda

This study aimed to confirm or deny the reported presence of Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani* in Kibale and Semliki National Parks. No indication of Nahan's Francolin was recorded in the two parks during the field work. The species prefers *Cynometra* forest because the trees provide better buttresses, which the birds require for breeding. Although the entire forest area was not surveyed, the failure to acquire a positive response during the playback trials, especially in



Madagascar Heron / Héron de Humblot *Ardea humbloti*
(Ken Behrens)



Madagascar Plover / Pluvier à bandeau noir *Charadrius thoracicus* (Callan Cohen)

the preferred habitat, implies that Nahan's Francolin does not occur in these national parks.

Madagascar Spiny Forest Expedition 2007/2008

This Anglo-Malagasy collaborative project conducted research on mammals, plants and other taxa as well as birds. The bird surveys, by Matthew Smith and Tsibara Mbohoahy, involved 35 hours of transects, whilst records by other observers were also compiled. In three habitats—dry forest, mangrove and mudflats—60 species, including 26 endemics, were recorded, including Madagascar Heron *Ardea humbloti* (Endangered), Madagascar Plover *Charadrius thoracicus* and Madagascar Rail *Rallus madagascariensis* (both Vulnerable), and Verreaux's Coua *Coua verreauxi* (Near



Threatened). There was no sign of Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis*, reported in 1998 by Frank Hawkins. All the areas surveyed had been subject to anthropogenic disturbance and many of the birds seen were indicators of cleared areas. As a result of the team's work funding has recently been secured to manage Andatabo-St Augustin Forest as a protected area.

Birds in wetlands along the Baro and Gilo rivers, south-west Ethiopia

This study assessed resident and wintering water-birds in the marshes and small lakes along the Baro and Gilo rivers, with special emphasis on Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* and other globally threatened species. It aimed to contribute to the regional conservation of waterbirds by: (1) estimating waterbird congregations during the main counting season, (2) assessing the status of threatened birds and their habitat along the Baro and Gilo rivers, and (3) estimating the breeding population of Black-crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina*. Field work was undertaken on 26 March–6 April 2001, and all possible habitats were carefully investigated. Some 130 species were recorded, most of them wetland birds. Black-crowned Crane and Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* were amongst the most frequently recorded species on transects, and hence in the floodplain, but no Shoebills were seen. During the study, the wetland was already drying out, leaving only small lakes and the river channels. A large cattle population was present and the area was overgrazed. Remaining grassland was being burnt and prepared for maize cultivation. People were also catching fish in the muddy wetlands. The area is flooded in June–December, when local people usually move into the nearby hills. Although Shoebill was not recorded, local people recognised the species in the field guide and claimed that it occurs there around November each year, prior to the onset of the dry season. It is recommended that further surveys be carried out in December–January.

Status of Oberländer's Ground Thrush in Uganda

Oberländer's Ground Thrush *Zoothera oberlaenderi* is restricted to Congo-Kinshasa and western Uganda, where it is known from only two sites.



Shoebill / Bec-en-sabot du Nil *Balaeniceps rex*
(Robert Van Zalinge)

It is little studied and Thomas Gottschalk argued that a rapid population estimate could be made from a short-term bird census combined with predictive species modelling. He further aimed to analyse habitat preferences and clarify the species' status in Uganda. Intensive surveys were conducted using point counts and mist-netting in Semliki and Bwindi Impenetrable national parks, between 9 February and 14 March 2008. The species was not recorded in Semliki, but seven singing males were found in Bwindi. It prefers dense forest close to rivers where *Newtonia* is dominant, at altitudes of 1,506–1,935 m. Gottschalk predicted there to be 28 km² of suitable habitat, with a minimum 27 males, of 331 km² of forest in Bwindi. Uganda holds only very small numbers of Oberländer's Ground Thrush, which in this country is now restricted to Bwindi. Ongoing degradation and deforestation within its potential range suggest that the species' conservation status merits reassessment.

*Steph Tyler, on behalf of the
Conservation Committee*

Africa Round-up

General

One less globally threatened bird, but several 'new' boubous

Recently published genetic data have indicated that the Bulo Burti Bushshrike *Laniarius liberatus*, whose description generated considerable furore within the scientific community because no type specimen was collected, is an unusual colour morph of a subspecies of Tropical Boubou *L. aethiopicus erlangeri*, and not a species at all. Both birds are restricted to Somalia, and *L. liberatus* was regarded as Critically Endangered (cf. *Bull. ABC* 14: 144). This finding is but one of several made by the authors of a recent phylogeny of the genus, which suggest that variation in plumage characters does not echo phylogenetic lineages within *Laniarius*. Billy Nguembock and his colleagues uncovered evidence of five clades within *Laniarius*, which did not coincide with previous presumptions concerning superspecies, with black-and-white boubous belonging to two different clades, and Tropical Boubou apparently polyphyletic. The authors recommend that the following taxa, previously considered as subspecies of *L. aethiopicus* are better treated specifically: *L. major* from Sierra Leone to western Kenya and south to Zambia, *L. erlangeri* (including *L. liberatus*) in central and



Tropical Boubou / Gonolek d'Abyssinie
Laniarius aethiopicus erlangeri (Hugh Chittenden)

southern Somalia, and *L. sublacteus* in coastal southern Somalia to Zanzibar.

Source: *Mol. Phyl. & Evol.* 44, pp 396–407



Eleonora's Falcon / Faucon d'Éléonore
Falco eleonorae (Dick Forsman)

New insights into the migration routes of Eleonora's Falcon

Satellite telemetry has been used to elucidate our knowledge of the Eleonora's Falcon's *Falco eleonorae* non-breeding range and migration routes across Africa. The German team that designed the study found that adults and juveniles migrated separately, with juveniles moving to winter in Madagascar via West Africa, whereas adults passed through central and east Africa to reach the same destination, despite the two age-groups commencing their migrations effectively simultaneously. On their return, two adult female falcons initially moved north from Madagascar, then virtually due west across central Africa, before returning north to the Mediterranean across the Algerian and Moroccan Sahara, i.e. much further west than the track of their autumn migration.

Furthermore, the non-breeding grounds of non-sexually mature individuals, which were previously unknown, are, on the basis of the subsequent movements of two juveniles quite widespread and possibly fluid, with one summering in various parts of West Africa and the other in the Horn of Africa. One side-result of the study was that Eleonora's Falcon can now be certainly added to an incredible 20 countries species lists, namely (from west to east and south): Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan, Ethiopia, Gabon, Congo, Zaïre, Burundi, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi.

Source: *Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. B*, doi:10.1098/rspb.2008.0575

A new form of forest robin from Gabon

Some years ago, a new form of forest robin was found in Dzanga-Sangha Forest, Central African Republic, and described as a separate species, Sangha Forest Robin *Stiphornis sanghensis* (see *Bull. ABC* 7: 9). To be consistent with their phylogenetic species concept, the authors declared that the three races of the widespread Forest Robin *S. erythrothorax*—nominata, *gabonensis* and *xanthogaster*—also deserved specific status (cf. Beresford, P. & Cracraft, J. 1999. Speciation in African forest robins (*Stiphornis*): species limits, phylogenetic relationships, and molecular biogeography. *Amer. Mus. Novit.* 3270: 1–22). This initially led to some inconsistent treatment of the four taxa by others, with e.g. BirdLife recognising *sanghensis* as a Data Deficient species, but retaining the other three taxa as races of *S. erythrothorax*, a treatment also followed in the third edition of the Howard & Moore checklist (Dickinson 2003). However, as there is no behavioural

or ecological evidence in support of this, BirdLife no longer considers *sanghensis* as a species but as a fourth race of *S. erythrothorax*, as do most researchers (cf. Collar, N. J. 2005. Turdidae (thrushes). In del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Christie, D. A. (eds.) *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Vol. 10. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions). The taxon *sanghensis* is considered to be no more than the end of a colour cline within *S. erythrothorax*.

History now seems to be repeating itself with the description, in August 2008, of yet another form of forest robin, found in south-east Gabon and considered by its discoverers to be a new species, Olive-backed Forest Robin *S. pyrrholaemus*. The males exhibit a fiery orange throat and breast, yellow belly and olive back; females are duller. Although it was widely publicised as a new species, it seems *pyrrholaemus* will undergo the same fate as *sanghensis*. Lack of knowledge of a bird in life may indeed result in a misinterpretation of molecular data and care is needed to assess the importance of varying percentages of molecular distances produced by different DNA studies.

Source: *Zootaxa* 1850, pp 27–42

Apalis warblers are polyphyletic

Apalises are a group of small cisticolid warblers that have traditionally been considered monophyletic. However, recent work by Billy Nguembock *et al.* using three genes (both mitochondrial and nuclear) strongly rejects this theory. Their results suggest that the apalises should be placed in a clade with Green Longtail *Urolais epichlorus* as well as the two *Schistolais* (White-



Ruwenzori Apalis / Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzorii* (Adam Riley)

chinned *S. leucopogon* and Sierra Leone Prinias *S. leontica*) and African Tailorbird *Artisornis metopias*; the last has been more commonly placed in the Sylviidae. Within the current genus *Apalis*, the authors found that Black-collared *A. pulchra* and Ruwenzori Apalises *A. ruwenzorii* are sufficiently distinctive compared to the remaining members, leading them to erect a new genus, *Oreolais*, for these two.

Source: *Ibis* 150, pp 756–765

‘Species Guardians’ found for one-third of Africa’s most threatened birds

In *Bull. ABC* 15: 157 we mentioned the recent BirdLife International initiative to find ‘Species Guardians’ for each one of the world’s Critically Endangered bird species, of which 30 occur in Africa (though see above for the removal of one species from that list). During 2008, ‘Species Guardians’ were found for Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*, Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei*, Raso Lark *Alauda razae*, Long-billed Tailorbird *Artisornis moreaui*, Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina*, São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni* and São Tomé Grosbeak *Neospiza concolor*, with confirmation awaited at the time for three others, Taita Thrush *Turdus helleri*, Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscularis* and Uluguru Bushshrike *Malaconotus alius*.

Source: *BirdLife Africa* / *Afrique* 11, p 26

Eurasian Hobby migration across Africa tracked

Transmitter weights still preclude satellite telemetry studies of many bird species, even including some raptors. On 9 August 2008 an adult female Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* was fitted in Germany with a new type of solar transmitter weighing just 5 g. The bird set off south in the second half of August, with a short rest on 6–13 September on Elba off western Italy, before continuing south to North Africa. From Libya (20 September) the bird flew south-west to the most westerly point of its



Raso Lark / Alouette de Razo *Alauda razae* (Adam Riley)



Long-billed Tailorbird / Couturière de Moreau *Artisornis moreaui* (Nik Borrow)

route, in western Nigeria close to the border with Benin, on 30 September. After initially swinging 90° south-east, the female Hobby moved south from Cameroon on 8 October. It maintained this course until reaching its main wintering area in southern Angola on 17 October. After more than two months it then continued south-east to western Zimbabwe, where it arrived on 29 December. From there it flew further east, reaching its southernmost point, between Bulawayo and Harare in central Zimbabwe, on 1 January 2009. The length of the outward migration route from the nest site, excluding regional movement in Angola, was 10,065 km.

Source: *Br. Birds* 102, p 103; see www.Raptor-Research.de

Site fidelity in wintering Great Reed Warblers

By analysing stable isotope profiles in feathers of migratory Great Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* recaptured in two or more of six successive years, Elizabeth Yohannes and co-workers confirmed that individual warblers not only breed but also winter in the same locality year after year. A number of ring recoveries had already established this in several

African countries, from Ghana to Malawi.

Source: J. Ornithol. 149, pp 261–265

Proceedings 12th Pan-African Ornithological Congress

The 12th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC), held on 7–12 September 2008 at the Goudini Spa Resort, in Western Cape province, South Africa, was attended by over 200 delegates from 40 countries, including 21 in Africa. Over 10 plenary sessions, 150 oral presentations and about 50 posters were presented in 35 symposia. Ten round-table discussions addressing various current and emerging ornithological issues were convened. The next PAOC is planned for 2012 and will be hosted by the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (BirdLife in Nigeria) and the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI). Congress proceedings will be made available online at <http://paoc12.adu.org.za>

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin* 17, p 3

African Journal of Ecology special issue

To coincide with the 12th Pan-African Ornithological Congress, held in South Africa (see above and p. 2), the *African Journal of Ecology* published a special issue devoted to the continent's avifauna. The 12 papers covered issues addressed by the congress, which was entitled *Birds and People: interaction, utilization and conservation*. Further details can be found at the following web address: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/121388434/issue>

North Africa

Simple conservation measure helps Northern Bald Ibis

Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* is one of the most threatened bird species in Africa, with the main breeding site at Agadir, in Morocco, the subject of some intensive conservation work in the last few years. Now Ken Smith *et al.* (from the

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, BirdLife partner in the UK) have found that simply providing a little supplementary fresh water near the breeding sites can improve breeding success quite substantially. The increase occurred in all years of the experimental study, but was especially marked in years when winter rainfall was low.

Source: *Ibis* 150, pp 728–734

First Eyebrowed Thrush in Africa

Not yet accepted by the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee, a first-year Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* was photographed at Merzouga, in south-east Morocco, on 17 December 2008, which represents the first record of this east Asian species in continental Africa.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 31, pp 29–31

Those problematic grey shrikes

For the past 15 years most commentators have separated the grey shrikes in the *Lanius excubitor* complex of taxa into two species, Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor* and Southern Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis*. Now, continued research into the molecular profiles of Canary Islands birds has revealed that the endemic insular taxon, *L. meridionalis koenigi*, is genetically identical to North African *L. m. algeriensis*, but that these two differ significantly from nominate *meridionalis*, which occurs in southern France and Iberia. This finding suggests the possibility that at least three species are involved within Southern Grey Shrike, these two and Desert Grey Shrike *L. (m.) elegans*, which, for now, comprises all of the other named taxa currently clumped within *meridionalis*.

Source: J. Ornithol. 149, pp 495–506, *Dutch Birding* 31, pp 35–37

Migrating Lesser Spotted Eagles tracked

In July 2008, a satellite-tagged juvenile Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* from Germany took a surprise route from Crete straight across the Mediterranean to the border region of Egypt and Lybia and continued quickly south. For the first time, another satellite-tagged juvenile

crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to Morocco. A third satellite-tracked individual appeared to have died at a water treatment plant north of Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, in late October (see below).

Source: www.Raptor.Research.de

Mysterious deaths of soaring migratory birds in Egypt

In late 2008, 27 migrating Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* and over 30 White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* were found dead near a water treatment plant at Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. The exact causes of their deaths are not known. Egypt is at a critical geographic bottleneck for soaring migratory birds, and at the time of these deaths thousands of birds were passing through the country.

Source: www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/12

West & Central Africa

Eastern Olivaceous Warblers winter in Senegal

The recent taxonomic revision that split Eastern *Hippolais pallida* and Western Olivaceous Warblers *H. opaca* into separate species, the former with several more or less distinct races, meant that the precise wintering grounds of these taxa was thrown into some obscurity (because observers had



Eastern Olivaceous Warbler / *Hippolais* pâle *Hippolais pallida* (Nik Borrow)

generally failed to differentiate the different taxa at this season prior to the split). In January 2008, Volker Salewski trapped and photographed two *H. p. reiseri*, a subspecies that breeds in eastern Morocco to Tunisia, at Lake Bire Maoudou, in Senegal, and based on the evidence of other records from the wider region has suggested that the East Senegal Valley may represent a potential winter stronghold for this taxon.

Source: *Malimbus* 30, pp 172–175

Breech in Senegal Delta area causes changes in hydrology and waterbird numbers

In October 2003 a breech occurred in the delta of the Senegal River, which caused some quite large changes to the behaviour of the water. Patrick Triplet and Vincent Schricke found that this in turn caused a large fall in numbers of some waders during the following January. Although three species increased in numbers (including Red Knot *Calidris canutus*) those of seven others fell substantially, especially those of Little Stint *C. minuta*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*.

Source: *Alauda* 76, pp 157–159

Niumi-Saloum: the first trans-boundary Ramsar site in Africa

The governments of Gambia and Senegal have formally agreed to collaborate in the management of two Ramsar sites along their borders, making it the first African Transboundary Ramsar Site: Delta du Saloum, Senegal's third Ramsar Wetland of International Importance designated since 1984, and Gambia's Niumi National Park, also the third Ramsar site in that country, since 2008. Both sites are Important Bird Areas with particular importance for gulls and terns.

Source: http://www.ramsar.org/wlw/n.n.trs_niumi.htm

Sardinian Warbler winters in the Sahara

A recent paper by Paul Isenmann and Aïssa Moali of CEFÉ Montpellier has



Sardinian Warbler / Fauvette mélanocéphale *Sylvia melanocephala* (Georges Olios)

shown that Sardinian Warblers *Sylvia melanocephala* winter throughout the Sahara. There is a resident population most of the way across North Africa, but in winter the species seems to occur on a regular basis all across the Sahara and into the northern Sahel zone, at least from Senegal to Niger and the Lake Chad area.

Source: *Alauda* 76, pp 299–304

Birds of Mole National Park, Ghana

We recently announced the commencement of an atlas project for Ghana (*Bull. ABC* 15: 164), spear-headed by Bob Dowsett and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire. A side-product of their recent work in country was a survey of Mole National Park, the results of which were reported recently in *Malimbus*. Some 350 species are known from the park, of which the Dowsetts personally recorded 270 species, among them the Data Deficient Dorst's Cisticola *Cisticola guinea* and 36 of the 37 Sudanian biome species known from the country.

Source: *Malimbus* 30, pp 93–133

White-necked Picathartes doing better than supposed in Ghana

Recent field work in Ghana has identified 15 nesting areas, and a total of c.200 nests, of the globally threatened White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus*, the great majority of them in forest reserves, and only one a previously known site. On the debit side, the same team revisited several previously known nesting sites of the species in Ghana, with generally limited success. Limited ecotourism is being encouraged at one site, with

visits only being permitted in the company of local guides.

Source: *Malimbus* 30, pp 175–177

New sightings of Ibadan Malimbe

Surveys of the Ifon Forest Reserve, Ondo State, Nigeria, in November 2007 and March 2008 produced confirmed sightings of Ibadan Malimbe *Malimbus ibadanensis*, Nigeria's Endangered endemic. In December 2006, the species was first discovered in the reserve, with six sight records during a ten-day survey. During the 2007 and 2008 surveys, foraging pairs were seen on two occasions and lone males were recorded twice. These sightings, which constitute an extension of the species' known range, have led Ifon Forest Reserve to be proposed as Nigeria's newest Important Bird Area. Ibadan Malimbe was previously known only from a small area circumscribed by Ibadan, Ife, Iperu and Ilaro in south-west Nigeria. Widespread forest clearance for subsistence agriculture is cited as a possible cause of the Ibadan Malimbe's decline since the 1970s, and human pressure on forests within its range is ongoing.

Source: www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/10/nigeria_iba.html

New Ramsar Site in Chad

The government of Chad has designated the 'Plaine de Massenya' (2,526,000 ha; 11°15'N 16°15'E) as its sixth Wetland of International Importance. This brings the total area under Ramsar listing in Chad to 12,405,068 ha. For more information, visit: www.ramsar.org/index_bulletin.htm

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin* 17, p 8

Kingfishers on the Gulf of Guinea Islands

São Tomé and Príncipe each possess a small *Alcedo* kingfisher, which have variously been considered as separate species, or as subspecies of Malachite *A. cristata* (both *A. thomensis* of São Tomé and *A. nais* on Príncipe) or White-bellied Kingfishers *A. leucogaster* (solely *A. nais*). Both Malachite and White-bellied Kingfishers occur

on nearby mainland Africa, with *leucogaster* found on Bioko as well. Martim Melo and Jerome Fuchs have examined mitochondrial and nuclear DNA to try to resolve their taxonomy. These authors have concluded that both taxa are most closely related to *A. cristata* and should be classed as subspecies of the latter. Madagascar Kingfisher *A. vintsioides* is a sister form, but less closely related to any of the above three forms than they are to each other, and *A. leucogaster* is even more distantly related. The reason for this might lie in the fact that *leucogaster* is a forest interior species, which generally disperse less readily than more open-country species such as *cristata*.

Source: *Ibis* 150, pp 633–639

Atlantic Islands

Monteiro's Storm Petrel: a 'cryptic' new seabird from the Azores

The existence of two seasonally distinct breeding populations of *Oceanodroma* storm petrels in the Azores was first documented in 1996. The subsequent discovery of morphological and vocal differences between them led to the suggestion that they might be cryptic sibling species (cf. *Bull. ABC* 14: 132–133). Now, analysis of mtDNA and micro-satellites from these and other populations elsewhere in the Atlantic and Pacific has led Mark Bolton and his co-workers to conclude that the hot-season Azores population should be considered a new species, Monteiro's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monteiroi*, which is genetically distinct from the sympatric cool-season population and all other populations of Madeiran Storm Petrel *O. castro* in the Atlantic and Pacific examined to date. Clear differences in their vocalisations are considered to probably function as a pre-mating isolating mechanism, whilst the extent of primary feather wear and moult stage aids their separation (by humans) in the Azores, which is especially important in August when both are present at the colonies in large numbers. To date, Monteiro's Storm Petrel is known only from the Azores where it

nests on just two small neighbouring islets, with a total estimated population of 250–300 pairs in 1999.

Source: *Ibis* 150, pp 717–727

A third *Pterodroma* species breeding in the northern Atlantic?

Genetic studies carried out as part of the 'SOS Freira do Bugio' Life Project, suggest that Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma deserta* should be split from Cape Verdean Fea's Petrel *P. feae* and recognised as a distinct species. This confirms the conclusion in *Petrels Night and Day* (Robb *et al.* 2008) that there are not two but three *Pterodroma* species breeding in the northern Atlantic (the other being Zino's Petrel *P. madeira*). All are very hard to identify at sea.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 30, p 260

Two lots of good news from the Cape Verdes

The discovery of Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* on the island of Fogo was initially announced in these pages (*Bull. ABC* 12: 147–149), making it only the third island in the archipelago known to harbour a population of this globally threatened species. Since then, Jens Hering and Elmar Fuchs have conducted additional surveys for *A. brevipennis* on Fogo, in the process discovering that the species is widespread in the north of the island with a total population of perhaps 500 pairs, with coffee plantations and other introduced crops offering important habitat for the bird. Providing that radical changes are not made to coffee crop



Cape Verde Purple Heron / Héron de Bourne *Ardea (purpurea) bournei*
(Adam Riley)

management, then the species' future appears secure, at least on Fogo. Meanwhile, the even more threatened Cape Verde Purple Heron *Ardea (purpurea) bournei*, for which just one, rather famous breeding site was known, has been found nesting at a second site, also on the island of Santiago. Despite this good news, its conservation predicament remains perilous.

Sources: *Br. Birds* 102, pp 17–24;
Malimbus 30, pp 145–155

'Southern skua' in the Canaries

Full details of a South Polar *Catharacta maccormicki* or Brown Skua *C. antarctica*, which was photographed off La Palma, in the Canary Islands, on 6 October 2005 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 13: 96 & 100), have now been published. The bird has been accepted as one or the other species by the Spanish Rareities Committee, although the author of the paper, Edwin Winkel, suggests that it was perhaps more likely to have been a South Polar Skua.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 31, pp 20–23

Evolution and conservation status of Tristan da Cunha buntings

Traditionally treated as two species each comprising separate subspecies on Nightingale and Inaccessible islands, and both of them categorised as Vulnerable, the conservation and taxonomy of the *Nesospiza* buntings have been recently reevaluated by Peter Ryan. His research suggests the need to recognise five taxa, two of them species endemic to Nightingale (Grosbeak Bunting *N. wilkinsi* and Nightingale Bunting *N. questi*) and the other three (a single species, but perhaps three incipient species) on Inaccessible, Inaccessible Bunting *N. a. acunhae*, *N. a. dunnei* (Dunn's Bunting) and *N. a. fraseri* (Upland Bunting), which three hybridise extensively. Inaccessible and Nightingale Buntings both qualify as Vulnerable, whilst Grosbeak Bunting, with a population of <200 individuals, is regarded as Endangered.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 18,
pp 20–29

Trouble on Gough

The globally threatened Gough Bunting *Rowettia goughensis* (currently ranked as Vulnerable by BirdLife International / IUCN) may be in decidedly more straitened circumstances than recently thought. That is one of the conclusions emanating from a recent study of the species, by Peter Ryan and Richard Cuthbert. The monotypic genus *Rowettia* is confined to Gough, where the species is suffering due to the increasing population of House Mouse *Mus musculus*, which predated bunting eggs and chicks, and may to a lesser extent compete for invertebrate food. As a result, the bunting population has become steadily more restricted to higher altitudes and coastal cliffs, as well as offshore islands. The decline is apparently ongoing, with a current population estimate of just 400–500 pairs, and the species is to be upgraded to Critically Endangered by BirdLife. The authors of the study also provide new data on morphology, moult, foraging and breeding biology.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 128, pp 242–253

East Africa

Degodi Lark: another species that never was

When first described by Christian Énard, from two specimens taken at Bogol Manyo in south-east Ethiopia in 1971, Degodi Lark *Mirafra degodiensis* was considered a sibling species of the Horn of Africa's Gillett's Lark *M. gilletti*. Degodi Lark is currently treated by BirdLife International / IUCN as Vulnerable. However, as demonstrated in a paper in the most recent issue of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, subsequent field reports have failed to clarify how it can be separated from *gilletti*. To evaluate differences between them, Nigel Collar and his co-workers measured the two specimens and a live bird caught at the type locality, as well as 43 Gillett's Lark specimens. Furthermore, they reviewed the available literature to assemble all of the published diagnos-

tic characters, and visited Bogol Manyo and adjacent areas to photograph, observe and sound-record both taxa. They have found no morphometric disjunction between the taxa, no evidence of vocal separation, no consistent plumage difference, and no molecular distinction, and have recommended that *M. degodiensis* be retained as a doubtful subspecies of *gilletti*, chiefly on account of its smaller mean size, but suggest that in all probability *degodiensis* is a mere synonym of *gilletti*.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 129, pp 49–62

Socotra recognised as World Heritage Site

Because of its rich and distinct flora and fauna and high level of endemism, the Socotra Archipelago was added to the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) list of World Heritage Natural Sites in 2008. No less than 37% of Socotra's 825 plant species, 90% of its reptile species and 95% of its land snail species are endemic. The site also supports globally significant populations of land and seabirds. Globally threatened species include Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*. Bird species restricted to Socotra include the Near Threatened Island Cisticola *Cisticola haesitata*, Socotra Warbler *Incana incana*, Socotra Starling *Onychognathus frater*, Socotra Sunbird *Nectarinia balfouri* and the Vulnerable Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*. Also only found on the island is the Socotra Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, part of the complex of species which Yemen recently appointed as its national bird, the Golden-winged Grosbeak. A further 11 subspecies are endemic to the island. Surveys have shown that all have healthy populations.

Source: www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/07

Indian Ocean Islands

Seychelles Warbler: 40 years of success

In December 2008 BirdLife International and Nature Seychelles (BirdLife in Seychelles) celebrated the anniversary of one of the world's greatest conservation success stories. In 1968, Cousin Island was purchased by the International Council of Bird Preservation (now BirdLife International) to save Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis* from extinction. Fewer than 30 individuals of the warbler remained in the world and they were largely confined to a mangrove swamp on Cousin. Forty years on, warbler numbers have risen by 300%, and the island has been transformed from a coconut plantation to a profitable nature reserve.

Cousin Island—a small island in Seychelles—is today home to a wealth of globally important wildlife. It is the most significant nesting site for Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* in the western Indian Ocean, and supports over 300,000 nesting seabirds of seven species. Cousin also hosts five of the Seychelles' 11 endemic landbirds including Seychelles Magpie Robin *Copsychus sechellarum* (Endangered), Seychelles Sunbird *Nectarinia dussumieri*, Seychelles Fody *Foudia sechellarum* and Seychelles Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas pulcherrima*.

Source: <http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/12>

Madagascar Stonechat is possibly a species

Friederike Woog *et al.*, from the Stuttgart museum, have examined the DNA of various forms of Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* and concluded that the Madagascar form, *sibilla*, is very distinct (in its mtDNA), albeit closest to East African *axillaris* and the Réunion form (currently considered a separate species *S. tectes*). A detailed description is given but more data are needed to determine if *sibilla* warrants species rank.

Source: J. Ornithol. 149, pp 423–430

Sooty Falcon tracked from the United Arab Emirates to Madagascar

A Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* has been tracked from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to its wintering grounds in Madagascar. This is the first satellite tracking of Sooty Falcon anywhere in the world. The bird, fitted with a satellite transmitter at its nest on islands in the Sila Peninsula, Abu Dhabi, departed the UAE in October and was recorded flying over Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique before crossing to Madagascar. Altogether it passed through seven countries and covered 6,700 km.

Sooty Falcons breed in scattered, highly localised colonies in the Middle East and time their breeding to coincide with the autumn migration of small birds. Most of the population winters in Madagascar. The species has recently been uplisted to Near Threatened owing to concerns that its population may be much smaller than previously thought, and is in decline. A recent breeding survey revealed a fall of 64% since 1994 in the UAE. The species had disappeared from several former nesting locations, and only six known breeding pairs remain. The loss may be a result of disturbance from development and human presence during the nesting season.

Source: <http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/01>

New population of Greater Bamboo Lemur discovered

Scientists in Madagascar have discovered a population of Greater Bamboo Lemurs *Prolemur simus*, a Critically Endangered species, in an area more than 400 km from its only known refuge, reports Conservation International. The discovery occurred in 2007 in the Torotorofotsy wetlands, a Ramsar site in east-central Madagascar. The researchers believe that the population numbers 30–40 individuals.

Source: *Conservation International press release, 22 July 2008*

Southern Africa

South Africa's seabirds faring badly . . .

Adding to the woes expressed in *Bull. ABC* 14: 136, a study of trawl fishing in South Africa suggests that as many as 18,000 seabirds may be killed annually by this fishery, highlighting trawl fisheries as a major threat to seabirds, especially several species of albatross at risk of extinction. Published in the journal *Animal Conservation*, the study was based on catches from 14 different vessels in the Benguela Current, off South Africa, which is one of the main hotspots for seabirds in the Southern Hemisphere. The vessels were trawling for hake, and the majority of bird deaths resulted from collisions with warps leading from the stern of the vessels. "We believe the seabird deaths . . . might be just the tip of the iceberg", said John Croxall, Chair of BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme.

Source: http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/08/trawler_bycatch_paper.html

. . . but its Lesser Flamingos are doing well, for now

An aerial survey of the Kamfers Dam Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* colony (on the outskirts of Kimberley, South Africa) in January 2009 revealed a total of 6,748 chicks

and a further c.6,000 incubating adults, which means that more than 12,000 chicks may be produced this year; an estimated 9,000 chicks hatched in 2007/08. This is good news for the declining population of this Near-Threatened species and a major achievement for all those involved in trying to protect the colony, especially Ekapa Mining who funded and constructed the breeding island. Kamfers Dam is the only locality where Lesser Flamingos have ever been recorded to breed in South Africa, is one of only four breeding sites in Africa, and one of just six breeding sites globally. Importantly, Lesser Flamingos do not breed successfully very frequently at the other nesting sites. If the flamingos continue to breed annually at Kamfers Dam, they could reverse the negative population trend of this species in southern Africa. To see live images of



Young Lesser Flamingos / Flamants nains *Phoeniconaias minor* (Mark Anderson)



Lesser Flamingos / Flamants nains *Phoeniconaias minor* (Mark Anderson)

the flamingos, visit www.africam.com, and to sign the petition in support of the conservation work at the dam, www.savetheflamingo.co.za

Source: Mark Anderson in litt. to *AfricanBirding*, February 2009

South African IBA under grave threat

BirdLife South Africa reported in September 2008 that time is running out to save Langebaan Lagoon, one of the country's most precious Ramsar sites, and part of the West Coast National Park and Saldanha Bay Islands Important Bird Area (IBA). Langebaan is the most important wetland for waders in South Africa, regularly accounting for around 10% of South Africa's coastal wader numbers. The lagoon can support more than 37,500 non-passerine waterbirds in summer, of which 34,500 are waders, and 93% of which are Palearctic migrants. It is threatened by port expansion, sewage pollution, urban development and tourism infrastructure development.

Source: http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/09/langebaan_lagoon.html

Yet more bad news for South Africa's wildlife

A British-owned company is seeking to mine coal in one of South Africa's most important natural areas. Conservationists believe the prospecting rights obtained by Delta Mining, which is majority owned by London Mining, were obtained without the necessary prior consultation with the

affected landowners and interested parties, and poses the most serious threat to the country's wildlife for decades. The extraction of coal from the area of wetlands and grasslands spanning Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces would destroy habitats used by 300 bird species, including South Africa's national bird, the Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradiseus*. Also at risk would be Bush Blackcap *Lioptilus nigricapillus*, Yellow-breasted Pipit *Anthus chloris* and >85% of the world population of Rudd's Lark *Heteromirafra ruddi* which occurs close to the region's two main towns, Wakkerstroom and Luneburg. The area is also the source of four major rivers, which could be polluted if the development went ahead. Carolyn Ah Shene, of BirdLife South Africa, which is spearheading the campaign to stop the mining, said: "The Wakkerstroom region is classed as irreplaceable by the Mpumalanga Department of Conservation, Agriculture & Environment and a large part of it will be destroyed if mining goes ahead. The area is one of South Africa's most prized natural possessions, attracting huge numbers of tourists who visit to see its unique landscapes, its animals and plants. The government must show it values our wildlife and the livelihoods dependent on wildlife tourism by giving the area legal protection from mining and all other development threats." Delta Mining was awarded prospecting licences late last year. The company had ignored legal

requirements to consult landowners and environment groups prior to their application to the Department of Minerals & Energy for prospecting rights. BirdLife South Africa and a consortium of conservation agencies and affected landowners have now applied to the South African High Court for a judicial review of Delta's prospecting rights. The South African Department of Minerals & Energy and Delta Mining are both opposing the applications. Among sites threatened by the mining is Pongola Forest Reserve, which is legally protected. Delta Mining claims there are no threatened species in the area, despite that the reserve hosts 13 birds found only in South Africa. Pongola and its environs were designated an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International in 2001. Carolyn Ah Shene added: "We have absolutely no confidence in the company's promises of environmental safeguards. It has blatantly ignored legal requirements for environmental impact studies, suggesting it has no regard for the effect of its plans on the region's natural environment. Thousands of people who depend on farming and tourism will lose their jobs if mining goes ahead."

Source: Royal Society for Protection of Birds press release, 12 December 2008

Oxpeckers making a comeback in KwaZulu-Natal

The reintroduction of Red-billed Oxpeckers *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* in the Otto's Bluff / Karkloof Valley area in July 2008 appears to have been a resounding success as the birds are breeding and spreading to other areas. This has raised the hopes of conservationists that the birds will re-establish themselves in KwaZulu-Natal and reduce the need for farmers to dip their cattle. The species died out in this area due to poisoning. In July 2008, 36 of the tick-eating oxpeckers were released on a commercial game ranch.

Source: [http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global\[_id\]=1955](http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global[_id]=1955)



Blue Cranes / Grues de paradis *Anthropoides paradiseus* (Mark Anderson)

Huge new national park in Namibia

Namibia has a new protected area: Sperrgebiet National Park. At 2.6 million ha, this is the largest single protected region proclaimed in Africa in two decades. It comprises a coastal region in the south-west of the country that has been controlled by diamond mining concerns and has been off-limits to the public for the past 100 years. The new park, which is part of the Succulent Karoo Hotspot, includes large tracts of unspoiled dunes, plains and mountains, and is home to several species of antelope, Brown *Hyaena brunnea* and Spotted Hyenas *Crocuta crocuta*, Cape Fur Seals *Arctocephalus pusillus*, and a variety of birds, reptiles and invertebrates. More than 1,000 plant species occur in the area, including 130 endemics. Several reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates also are restricted to this area or its immediate surroundings. The Namibian government is examining the possibility of creating a network of protected areas, including Sperrgebiet, along its entire coastal region. If created, the resulting conservation area will cover 10.7 million ha, making it the largest protected area in Africa and the sixth largest terrestrial protected area in the world.

Source: *Conservation International press release, 17 December 2008*

Internet resources

Full text of *Malimbus* and *Bull. NOS* now freely available

The West African Ornithological Society has placed the full text of the *Bulletin of the Nigerian Ornithologists' Society* (*Bull. NOS*) Vols. 1–4 (1964–67), consisting of PDFs of 391 pages, 45 papers and 15 issues, on its website (<http://malimbus.free.fr>). This completes the initial project, begun in 2004, to make the full text of *Malimbus* (except recent volumes), and *Bull. NOS* freely available. Full text of new volumes of *Malimbus* will continue to be added five years after publication. NOS was the direct predecessor of WAOS, and *Bull. NOS* of *Malimbus*. Though mostly dealing

with birds of Nigeria, *Bull. NOS* contained articles on birds of several other West African countries. Tables of contents, lists of references by country, and species indexes facilitate access to all of the material.

Source: *Peter Browne* in litt. 15 January 2009

Website on African raptors

At the 12th PAOC raptor biologists and enthusiasts resolved to form an African Raptor Network (ARN) with the principal aim of exchanging information about raptor biology and conservation issues across the continent and the western Indian Ocean islands. Towards this goal, the ARN has launched a website www.africanraptors.org

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin 18, p 8*

Discussion group on bird migration in Africa

Anyone interested in bird migration in Africa is invited to join the recently established discussion group devoted to this subject (see *Bull. ABC* 15: 159). To register go to: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/african_migrants

Source: *Volker Salewski* in litt. 20 November 2008

European Honey Buzzard migration

To follow the migration of European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* fitted with satellite transmitters from the UK to their wintering areas in Africa, visit the following websites:

<http://www.roydennis.org/>

honeybuzzard.htm

<http://www.ecologymatters.co.uk/>

honey_buzzard.shtml

Source: *AfricanBirding* 7 October 2008

Wings Over Wetlands

The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) Project is the largest international wetland and waterbird conservation initiative ever to occur in the African–Eurasian region. WOW is fostering international collaboration along the African–Eurasian flyways, building capacity and demonstrating

best practice in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Its website provides information on the Critical Site Network Tool and the Flyway Conservation Training Framework. It also contains pages for demonstration projects being undertaken in 12 African–Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) countries. Please visit www.wingsoverwetlands.org

Source: <http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008>

Tana River Delta website

The Tana River Delta is amongst the top three of Kenya's largest and most important freshwater wetland systems, with a significant local community dependent on it. The Tana Delta is under threat from a sugarcane and biofuel project. A new website, hosted by A Rocha, outlines the threats to the site. Please visit <http://tanariverdelta.org/tana/welcome.html>

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin 18, p 3*

Botswana Tickbird

Botswana Tickbird, a system aiming to collect data from both local observers and visiting tourists, and enabling users to store and manage their own observations, extract reports and view, print or download maps, is now available online. Please log on to <http://www.worldbirds.org/v3/botswana.php>

Botswana Tickbird is part of the Worldbirds global programme—a joint initiative of BirdLife, RSPB (BirdLife UK) and Audubon (BirdLife USA), linking existing and new internet systems to collect and report on bird populations and movements in different countries.

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin 18, p 3*

Corrigendum *Bull ABC* 14 (2)

The caption to Fig. 1 on pp. 154–155 erroneously mentions that the photograph of Alaotra Grebe *Podiceps rufolavatus* was taken in Zahamena; this should be Andreba, as correctly stated in the text.

Rare birds in Morocco: report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (2004–2006)

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Les oiseaux rares au Maroc : rapport de la Commission d'Homologation Marocaine (2004–2006). Après les trois premières synthèses triennales parues dans le Bulletin de l'African Bird Club (Bergier *et al.* 2000, 2002, 2005a), ce nouveau rapport détaille les 129 données analysées entre 2004 et 2006, dont 118 ont été acceptées (voir Tableau 1) soit un taux d'acceptation de 91,4%. Les rapports annuels correspondants ont été publiés dans *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2005b, 2006, 2007).

Neuf espèces / sous-espèces ont été signalées pour la première fois au Maroc. Il s'agit de sept espèces apparemment d'origine sauvage (catégorie A): Puffin du Cap Vert *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsii*, Fuligule à tête noire *Aythya affinis*, Faucon concolore *Falco concolor*, Chevalier criard *Tringa melanoleuca*, Locustelle de Pallas *Locustella certhiola*, Pie-grièche isabelle *Lanius isabellinus* et Pie-grièche masquée *Lanius nubicus*; et de deux espèces échappées de captivité (catégories D ou E): Cygne noir *Cygnus atratus* et Veuve dominicaine *Vidua macroura*. La mention du Fuligule à tête noire et celle de la Locustelle de Pallas sont probablement les premières documentées pour l'Afrique continentale.

Parmi les autres faits exceptionnels, il faut souligner le nombre un usuel d'espèces néarctiques qui ont atteint le Maroc à la suite de l'ouragan Wilma en novembre 2005, parmi lesquelles deux Mouettes de Franklin *Larus pipixcan* (2^{ème} et 3^{ème} pour le Maroc), deux Goélands à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis* et une Mouette atricille *Larus atricilla* (5^{ème} pour le Maroc). Trois Fuligules à bec cerclé *Aythya collaris*, un Chevalier criard *Tringa melanoleuca* (1^{er} pour le Maroc, cf. *supra*), un Bécasseau roussset *Tryngites subruficollis* (2^{ème} pour le Maroc), un Bécassin à long bec *Limnodromus scolopaceus* et un Phalarope de Wilson *Phalaropus tricolor* (5^{ème} pour le Maroc) ont probablement aussi été amenés par cet ouragan. Autre fait remarquable, l'arrivée de trois Pouillots à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus*, qui porte à cinq le nombre total de mentions pour le Maroc. Nous enregistrons également, au cours de cette période, la deuxième Bergeronnette citrine *Motacilla citreola*, la quatrième Sarcelle à ailes vertes *Anas carolinensis*, les quatrième et cinquième Mouettes à tête grise *Larus cirrocephalus* et les cinquième et sixième Goélands à ailes blanches *Larus glaucoides*.

The first three triennial reports of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (MRBC) appeared in *Bull. ABC* in 2000, 2002 and 2005. This fourth report includes 129 records for 2004–06 (see Table 1), of which 118 have been accepted (acceptance rate of 91.4%), including nine species/subspecies new for Morocco. Seven of these nine species were recorded in an apparently natural state (category A): Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsii*, Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* and Masked Shrike *L. nubicus*. Two others are considered escapes (Categories D or E): Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* and Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*. The Lesser Scaup and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

records are probably the first documented for continental Africa. There was also a memorable arrival of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus*, bringing the Moroccan total from two to five records. In addition, following Hurricane Wilma in early November 2005, unusual numbers of Nearctic vagrants reached Morocco; these included two Franklin's Gulls *Larus pipixcan* (second and third for Morocco), two Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* and a Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* (fifth for Morocco). This hurricane brought huge numbers of seabirds towards the east Atlantic seaboard, with most reported from European Atlantic coasts, e.g. in the UK, France, Spain and Portugal, but also further east and inland, e.g. in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland (see Ahmad 2005, Fraser & Rogers 2007, Maumary & Posse 2006, or news in *Dutch Birding* or *Birding World*). Three

Table 1. Number of records analysed by the MRBC in 2004–06.
Tableau 1. Nombre de données examinées par la CHM en 2004–06.

	1942–52	1976	1986	1988	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total	Accepted	Rejected
Tenth report (2004)			1		1	1	11	29			43	32	11
Eleventh report (2005)	1	1						10	20		32	28	4
Twelfth report (2006)				1			2	5	30	27	65	58	7

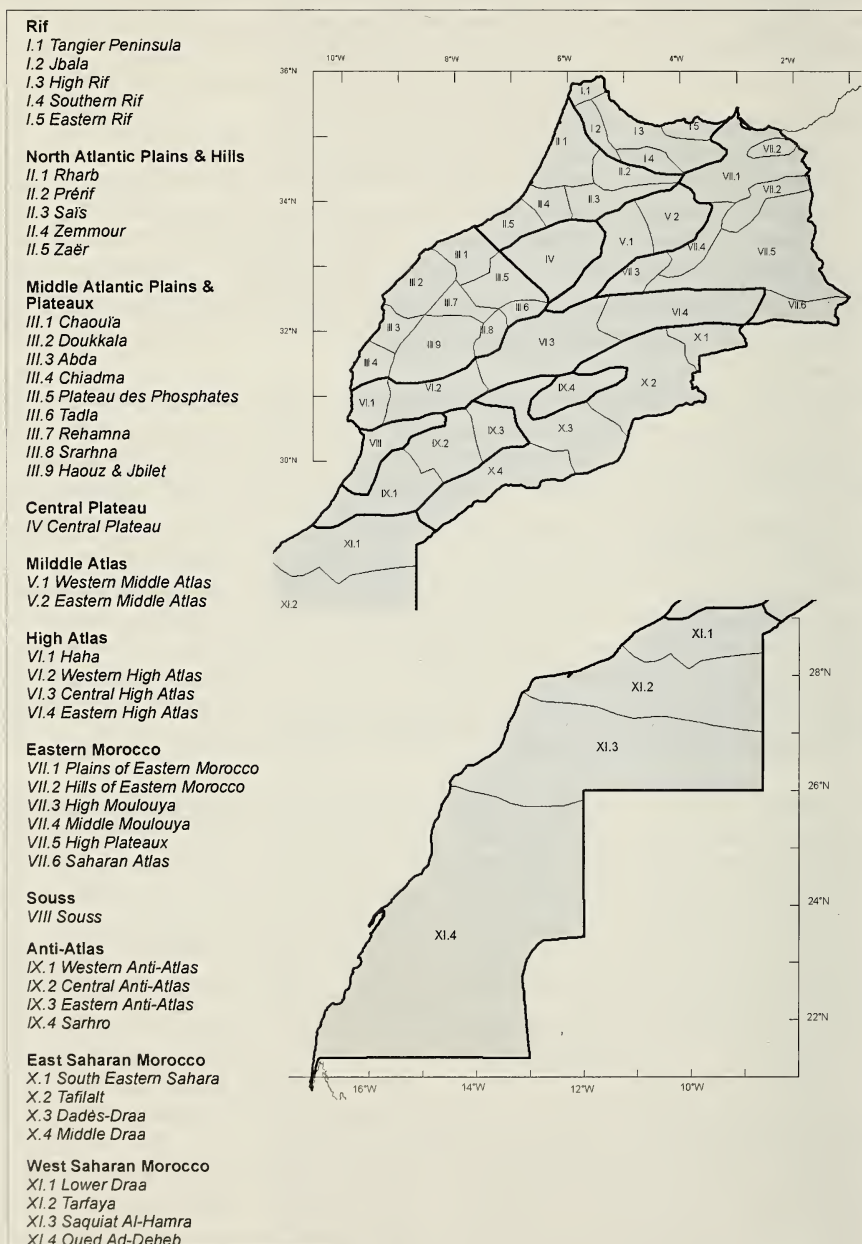


Figure 1. Map showing the regions of Morocco used in this report.
 Carte délimitant les régions du Maroc utilisées dans ce rapport.

Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris*, a Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (first record; see above), a Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (second for Morocco), a Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and a Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (fifth for Morocco) were perhaps also associated with this weather system. Also noteworthy are the following records: the second Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, the fourth Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*, the fourth and fifth Grey-headed Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus* and the fifth and sixth Iceland Gulls *Larus glaucoides*. Annual reports for the period were published in the *Go-South Bulletin* (Bergier *et al.* 2005b, 2006, 2007).

The updated list of species considered by MRBC is available at <http://www.go-south.org> and includes true vagrants (i.e. species with fewer than 30 records) and rare or little-known species whose current status is inadequately known. We strongly urge visiting birdwatchers to submit descriptions of relevant species to the MRBC Secretary: Prof. Jacques Franchimont, Quartier Abbas Lemsadi, rue n°6, n°22, 50.000 Meknès V.N., Morocco.

Presentation of data

The presentation of data follows the pattern of MRBC reports for 1995–97, 1998–2000 and 2001–03 (Bergier *et al.* 2000, 2002, 2005a). For all species, the following sequence has been used:

- English and scientific names
- Status according to the following codes:

RB	Resident
MB	Migrant breeder
OB	Occasional breeder
FB	Former breeder
PM	Passage migrant
WV	Winter visitor
OW	Occasional winter visitor, otherwise migrant (MB, PM)
AV	Accidental visitor (fewer than 30 records)
F(AV)	Former accidental visitor (not recorded since 1899)
?	Indicates doubt concerning relevant status
- Details of: year, MRBC file number, region (see Fig. 1), site, number of birds (one unless otherwise stated), age, sex, other data if applicable, date(s) of observation, and recorder(s) name(s)
- Comments

For accidentals, six numbers in brackets follow the status code. The first two indicate the number of records in the files of the Centrale Ornithologique Marocaine prior to the formation of MRBC, and the number of birds involved (except for those records subsequently examined by the MRBC). The second pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC and published in the previous triennial reports, and the number of birds involved. The last pair indicates the number of records accepted by MRBC in 2004–06, and the number of birds involved. For rare or little-known species, only the two last pairs are presented. The systematic list follows the sequence of species for which details are required by MRBC (www.go-south.org/lists/liste_oiseaux_maroc_annexe4.pdf). Systematic order and nomenclature follow those adopted as standard by the MRBC, rather than the African Bird Club list.

List of accepted records

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)
 2006 (06/05) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, adult, 12 March (I. Cherkaoui & H. Nouiri)

This bird had escaped from a private collection near Rabat.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* AV (3/7, 2/2, 3/3)

2005 (05/02) **Souss**, Massa estuary, female, 26 January (S. Werner *et al.*)

2005 (05/44) **Souss**, Massa estuary, adult male, 12 December (F. Wicker), and 18 January 2006 (W. Price, W. van der Schot)

2006 (06/02) **Haouz**, Marrakech golf course, adult male, 21 January (B. Maire)

All Moroccan records have been in winter, in December (4), January (3) and February (1), unlike in Western Europe, where most appear in autumn, between mid September and mid November (Dubois *et al.* 2000, Votier *et al.* 2003). In Morocco, as in Britain and Ireland, the great majority of American Wigeons have been males (ten out of 12 birds), mostly adults (Votier *et al.* 2003). Five of the eight records are from the Massa estuary.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis* AV (2/2, 1/1, 1/1)

(05/08) **Doukkala**, Oualidia, adult male, 5 February (S. Werner *et al.*)

Fourth record for Morocco, but the first at Oualidia lagoons. All previous records also involved males and were between late February and April (Bergier *et al.* 2002, Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* AV (14/22+, 5/5, 2/2)

2005 (05/03) **Doukkala**, Oualidia, male, 5 February (S. Werner *et al.*; Fig. 2)

2006 (06/13) **Doukkala**, Khemis Zemamra, adult male, 24 March (M. Gerber *et al.*)

Blue-winged Teal is the most frequently recorded Nearctic duck in Morocco (Bergier & Thévenot 2004). Most records are from the Atlantic coast (with two from the Mediterranean coast and one inland). Dates of the present sightings are consistent with the species' pattern of occurrence in Morocco: 15 records are in December–March, three in September–October and two in April–May.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* AV (9/13, 5/5, 5/8)

2003 (03/36) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, female, 2 February (C. Dumortier & J. P. Jordan)

2003 (03/37) **Souss**, Massa estuary, female, 6 February (C. Dumortier, F. Le Gouis & J. P. Jordan), also on 10 April (Demey 2003)

2004 (04/16) **Western Middle Atlas**, Dayet Affenourir, adult male, 5 April (V. Schollaert *et al.*)

2005 (05/34) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, adult male in breeding plumage, 3 April (R. Bonser, L. G. R. Evans), present since 4 March (A. Binns)

2005 (05/35) **Saquiati Al Hamra**, Barrage of Layoune, adults, one male and three females, 10 December, perhaps an additional bird, 11 December (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

The record at Dayet Affenourir is only the fourth inland. Other Moroccan records are all from the Atlantic coast. The record at Layoune is the second for Atlantic Sahara and the southernmost to date; these birds had probably reached the area following the violent hurricane that swept the Canary Islands in late November. The 19 Moroccan records are dated 19 October to 11 April and involve 14 males and ten females.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/17) **Western Middle Atlas**, Dayet Affenourir, adult female, 5 April (V. Schollaert *et al.*)

First Moroccan record and also probably the first for mainland Africa, but seven are known from the Canary Islands (Martín & Lorenzo 2001) and one from the Cape Verdes (Hazevoet 1999).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* WV (-/-, 1/2, 4/8)

2003 (03/32) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult female, 21 December (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2004 (04/03) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, adult male, 25 January (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2004 (04/04) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, adult female, 8 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2004 (04/06) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Sebkhia bou Areg, adults, one male and four females, 30 January (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

Red-breasted Merganser is a rare but regular winter visitor to Sebkhia bou Areg, in the eastern part of the Moroccan Mediterranean coast, between November and early March (Charco *et al.* 1995), but there were no previous records from the Moulouya estuary, further east along the Mediterranean coast.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* WV, OB, PM? (-/-, 8/17, 2/2)

2004 (04/38) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Arabet, Sebkhia bou Areg, adult female, 28 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2004 (04/41) **Rharb**, Sidi Bou Rhaba, female, 16 April (C. Monnerat *et al.*)

White-headed Duck is very rare in Morocco, except at the Royal Lake of Douyiet, near Fès, from where observations are not required by MRBC. At this protected area, the species bred successfully in 2003 and subsequently record numbers were counted in 2004, including 187 birds on 24 February, 30 on 13 April and 124 on 29 November (J. Franchimont *et al.*).

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* AV (2/2, 0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/19) **Souss**, Massa estuary, one in winter plumage, 26 January (S. Werner)

Third Moroccan record, the lowest in latitude and the bird was heading south, but there is at least one record even further south, in the Canary Islands (Martín & Lorenzo 2001).

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* AV (3/3, 2/2, 2/2)

2004 (04/09) Haha, Cape Rhir, first-winter, 11 January (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

2004 (04/25) Haha, Aghroud, 2 April (A. B. van den Berg *et al.*)

Third and fourth records in the Agadir area, possibly involving the same bird, as the two sites are just c.11 km apart. In the same region, two first-winters were at the Souss estuary, in November–December 1986 (Bergier *et al.* 2002), and in Agadir harbour, in December 1989 (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris (diomedea) edwardsii* AV or PM/OW? (0/0, 0/0, 1/2)

2001 (01/24) Souss, Souss estuary, two, 19 March (N. Haass *et al.*)

This record, rejected in 2001 (Bergier *et al.* 2005a), has been re-analysed due to the availability of fresh documentation (see www.magikbirds.com). This is the first record in Moroccan waters of this taxon endemic as a breeder to the Cape Verde Islands. Cape Verde Shearwater is regular at sea near these islands and in the upwelling area off Senegal, mostly in October (Hazevoet 1997). The three Canarian records are also from October (Martín & Lorenzo 2001). It is probable that Cape Verde Shearwater also frequents, at least occasionally, the upwelling area off Western Sahara and southern Morocco, where the subspecies *diomedea* and *borealis* of Cory's Shearwater are regular and particular attention should be paid when seawatching.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* PM, OW (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

2003 (03/27) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, adult, 1 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

Sooty Shearwater is a scarce passage migrant and an occasional winter visitor to the Atlantic coast of Morocco, but it is rare in the Strait of Gibraltar and this is the first record from the Moroccan Mediterranean coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). In future, MRBC will only consider records of this species from the Mediterranean coast. Further east, there are no recent records in Algeria (Isenmann & Moali 2000), singles in Tunisia and Malta, and two in Sicily (Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* PM, WV, RB/BM? (-/-, 1/1, 3/3)

2003 (03/30) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Moulouya estuary, adult, 21 December (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2005 (05/10) Doukkala, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia, adult, 4 April (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

2006 (06/03) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Moulouya estuary, 28 February (I. Cherkaoui)

Great Bittern is apparently recovering in Morocco. Breeding was earlier suspected in the Lower Loukkos marshes (Thévenot *et al.* 2003) and has been proved there during the present decade, whilst even more recently, breeding has also been noted at the Moulouya estuary (M. A. El Agbani & A. Qninba).

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* AV (18/19, 1/1, 1/1)

2005 (05/04) Souss, Massa estuary, 7 February (S. Werner *et al.*)

The second record accepted by MRBC.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba* WV, PM (-/-, 16/19, 15/36)

2003 (03/28) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Barrage Mohamed V, adult, 2 November (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2003 (03/29) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Barrage Mohamed V, immature, 19 December (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2003 (03/35) Dadès-Draa, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, Ouarzazate, two adults, 8 February (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

2004 (04/07) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Barrage Mohamed V, two adults, 1 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2004 (04/08) Dadès-Draa, Barrage Mansour Eddahbi, Ouarzazate, two adults, 6 January (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

2004 (04/34) Rharb, Larache, Loukos salt pans, two adults, 7 November (O. Fontaine & N. Orhant)

2004 (04/37) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Moulouya estuary, 31 October (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2005 (05/01) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Barrage Mohamed V, seven adults, 6 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2005 (05/12) Souss, Souss estuary, 14 April (A. B. van den Berg, P. Kennerley *et al.*)

2005 (05/26a) Rharb, Larache, Loukos salt pans, 12 November (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

- 2005 (05/26b) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, two, 13 November (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)
- 2005 (05/46) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult 17–30 December 2005 and 12 January 2006 (I. Cherkaoui)
- 2006 (06/06) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, 4–6, 18 March (J. Franchimont *et al.*)
- 2006 (06/20a) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, two, 26 May (K. Bensusan *et al.*)
- 2006 (06/20b) **Rharb**, Lower Loukos Marshes, five including an adult in breeding plumage, 28 May (K. Bensusan *et al.*)

All records refer to Palearctic *A. a. alba*, and the increasing number of records submitted to MRBC reflects the expansion of the species' range in Europe. Breeding populations in Central Europe have increased dramatically since the late 1970s, and as a consequence Great White Egret has colonised Western Europe since the early 1990s. This species is also now regular in winter in north-east Algeria (Samraoui & Houhamdi 2002), as well as being increasingly recorded in Morocco.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* RB (-/-, 1/1, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/32) **Eastern High Atlas**, Tachet, Jbel Ayachi, second-calendar year, 25 December (I. Cherkaoui)

Now apparently restricted to the High Atlas, this record is the only recent one outside the Toubkal and Mgoun massifs. It was described in detail by Cherkaoui *et al.* (2006).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* AV (24/30+, 2/2, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/07) **Saïs**, Meknès, adult male, 13 March (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

Third spring record since the MRBC was created. Moroccan records are from the period late September to mid May, with a peak in spring, in March–April, mirroring the pattern of this species further east in the Mediterranean, e.g. in Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005). In Morocco, and elsewhere in the western Mediterranean, autumn records are scarce as the species moves much further to the east at this season.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* RB (-/-, 7/8, 3/3)

- 2004 (04/26) **Lower Draa**, Ouaraoun, 10 km south of Goulimine, second-year, 13 January (P. Laaksonen)
- 2005 (05/05) **Souss**, 15 km west of Aoulouz, immature, 29 January (S. Werner)

- 2006 (06/16) **Haha**, north-east of Cap Tafelney, adult, 29 March (P. Yésou)

The 2005 sighting is from the species' main breeding area in Morocco, i.e. the Souss plain and adjacent foothills of the High and Anti-Atlas covered by Argan parkland. Further south in Lower Draa, records are fewer and probably most concern immatures on post-breeding dispersal; the 2004 sighting is the first from this area to be submitted to MRBC, but there are seven previous records from this region dated August–November and February–April (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Further north, the hills and mountains with Argan trees in the Haha region represent an apparently suitable area for the species, though it has rarely been seen there, probably due to a lack of observer activity; the 2006 record is the only recent record in this area.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* AV (18/c.29, 3/4, 1/1)

- 2003 (03/34) **Hills of Eastern Morocco**, Debdou, adult, 2 May (G. Hilgerloh & G. Nikolaus)

The date is typical of a spring migrant. Eighteen records are from spring and only four in autumn (Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Bergier *et al.* 2005a).

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2004 (04/31) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Barrage Mechra Homadi, adult, 19 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

First record of this species, which breeds from Arabia to Libya. Sooty Falcon is an accidental visitor to the western Mediterranean, where it has been recorded in Malta (Snow & Perrins 1998), Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005) and the Algerian Sahara (Isenmann & Moali 2000).

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* RB poorly known (-/-, 44/51, 16/19+)

- 2004 (04/15) **Souss**, Souss estuary, adult, 12 April (V. Schollaert *et al.*)
- 2004 (04/23) **Saharan Atlas**, Tamlelt Plain, Bouarfa, adult, 18 May (O. Fontaine, V. Liéron *et al.*)
- 2004 (04/24) **Eastern Anti-Atlas**, between Agdz and Tazenakht, juvenile, 25 April (D. Philippe, J. M. Guilpain *et al.*)
- 2004 (04/27) **Souss**, Souss Valley, two adults and one young, 14 January (H. Huhtinen & P. Laaksonen)
- 2004 (04/42) **Oued Ad-Deheb**, Dakhla, immature, 25 November (U. Unger)

- 2004 (04/43) **Dadès-Draa**, between Rissani and Ouarzazate, adult, 23 December (B. van den Broek)
- 2004 (04/44) **Saharan Atlas**, Tamlelt plain, adult and pair with two young at nest, 9–10 June (O. Fontaine & N. Orhant)
- 2005 (05/14) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Melilla, adult male, 24 March (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)
- 2005 (05/17) **Eastern Middle Atlas**, Boulemane, adult, 10 May (J. Franchimont)
- 2005 (05/36a) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, adult, 29 March (D. Suddaby *et al.*)
- 2005 (05/36b) **Sarhro**, Alnif, adult, 30 March (D. Suddaby *et al.*)
- 2005 (05/43) **Souss**, Souss Valley, 14 February (M. Jonker)
- 2005 (05/47) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, adult 17, 18, 21 and 30 December 2005, and 12 January 2006 (I. Cherkaoui & M. Boumaza)
- 2006 (06/14) **Haha**, north of Tamri, 26 March (P. Yésou & N. Demuth)
- 2006 (06/15) **Haha**, north of Cape Tafelney, 30 March (P. Yésou)
- 2006 (06/23) **Souss**, Massa estuary, adult, 12 February (B. Portier)

Most records are from regions where the species is regularly observed, but those from Plains of Eastern Morocco are the first for the Mediterranean coast, where breeding has yet to be confirmed. Barbary Falcon is not rare in Morocco but its separation from the various forms of Peregrines *F. peregrinus* recorded in Morocco is still poorly known: birds along the Atlantic coast south of Essaouira are sometimes very different from 'classic' Peregrines / Barbary Falcons, making their identification a real challenge. Some birds are probably hybrids as they exhibit features intermediate between the two species. A dedicated webpage has been created on www.go-south.org, to share detailed information that may solve this issue.

Andalusian Hemipode (Kurrichane Buttonquail) *Turnix sylvaticus* RB (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2004 (04/02) **Doukkala**, near Oualidia, 10 January (H. Huhtinen & P. Laaksonen)

Nowadays, Andalusian Hemipode is a very rare breeder in Morocco, though it is probably under-recorded due to the species' secretive habits. This is the 13th record in the Doukkala region but the

first submitted to the MRBC. The most recently published observations date from 1988 (Thévenot *et al.* 2003), but we are aware of several unpublished records from Doukkala, which is probably the only part of the country where the species still breeds. Unfortunately, none has been submitted to the MRBC.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* PM, OW (-/-, 5/11+, 3/5)

- 2004 (04/01) **Tafilalt**, Merzouga, 1 January (J. Franchimont)
- 2005 (05/15) **Souss**, Aoulouz, three, 13 April (A. B. van den Berg, P. Kennerley *et al.*)
- 2005 (05/37) **Souss**, Oued Massa, adult, 2 April (D. Suddaby *et al.*)

Spotted Crake is a locally common spring migrant, but rare during autumn passage and only occasional in winter. There have been only nine previous winter records, dated late November to mid February (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). The 2004 record is the tenth and the second for the Tafilalt area; the first was at Errachidia on 4 February 1981 (Thévenot *et al.* 1982).

Little Crake *Porzana parva* PM (-/-, 2/15+, 1/1)

- 2005 (05/18) **Souss**, Oued Massa estuary, female, 7 February (S. Werner)

The first record received by the MRBC since 1998! Little Crake is definitely rare in Morocco where it is known only as a spring migrant. The 2005 record was rather early, as the main passage is from early March to late April (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Corncrake *Crex crex* PM, OW (-/-, 0/0, 1/1)

- 2006 (06/08) **Plains of Eastern Morocco**, Moulouya estuary, 1 January (I. Cherkaoui)

First record received by the MRBC. Corncrake is a rare migrant and an accidental winter visitor to Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). This is only the third winter record since the early 20th century.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* AV (8/12, 2/3, 1/1)

- 2006 (06/07) **Rharb**, Mehdia, adult, 18 March (J. Franchimont *et al.*)

Eleventh record, and the second at Mehdia, of this accidental winter visitor to Morocco.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

AV (0/0, 1/1, 1/1)

2006 (06/09) Dadès-Draa, Ouarzazate, 24 April (J. Piette & H. Dufourny; Fig. 3)

Second Moroccan record, following the first in September 1998 (Bergier *et al.* 2002). This sandpiper was found in the desert near Ouarzazate, where it had probably paused due to the poor weather conditions—cold and snow in the Atlas—responsible for delaying the migration of many common waders.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

AV (4/5, 3/3, 1/1)

2005 (05/29) Souss, Oued Souss estuary, 28 November–2 December (T. Kolaas; Fig. 4)

Eighth Moroccan record and the fifth at the Souss estuary, which is proving a good spot for this Nearctic species.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/25) Souss, Massa estuary, first-year, 16 November (J. Adamson)

First record in Morocco. Its arrival was presumably linked to the hurricane that swept the Canary Islands in late November.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* AV (4/4, 0/0, 1/1)

1988 (88/01) Souss, Massa estuary, first-summer, 25 March (A. H. Qvale)

This record was already mentioned by Thévenot *et al.* (2003). There are only five records for Morocco, two in autumn (September–October) and three in spring (March–May), all but one (at Merzouga Lake, Tafilat) in coastal Atlantic wetlands or estuaries.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* AV

(13+/17+, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/05) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Sebkhah bou Areg, first-winter, 25 January–8 February (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

The first record to be considered by the MRBC, but the second from the Mediterranean coast. The first involved a bird off the Mediterranean coast, near the Chaffarines Islands, on 17 August (Tåning 1933). Most records are from the Atlantic coast between Oualidia and Massa, with just one from the Strait of Gibraltar.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* AV (1/1, 3/3, 1/1)

2006 (06/24) Tarfaya, Tarfaya harbour / Cape Juby, first-winter, 10 March (A. Lees & R. Moores)

This Nearctic species was the most frequently recorded in Europe following Hurricane Wilma (e.g. more than 50 sightings in the UK: Fraser & Rogers 2007). In Morocco, this record is the first for ten years. Furthermore, a sighting listed in Thévenot *et al.* (2003), a first-winter / first-summer at the Yquem estuary on 10 April 1985 (P. J. Dubois *et al.*), is in error and should be deleted (Bergier & Thévenot 2004).

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* AV (0/0, 1/1, 2/2)

2005 (05/33) Souss, Massa estuary, first-winter, 3 November (A. B. van den Berg)

2006 (06/04) Souss, Souss estuary, first-winter, 17 February (D. Walker & G. Hollamby), to 6 April (A. B. van den Berg)

Only the second and third Moroccan records of this Nearctic gull. Another adult was recorded at the Souss estuary, on 4 November 2005 (J. Lidster *in* www.go-south.org; M. Ullman *vide* A. B. van den Berg *in litt.* December 2005), but this record has not (yet) been submitted to the MRBC.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* AV (22/22, 12/16, 2/2)

2005 (05/27a) Rharrb, Larache coastline, adult, 13 November (J. Franchimont & GOMAC)

2005 (05/27b) Rharrb, Larache, Loukkos salt pans, immature/subadult, 13 November (J. Franchimont & GOMAC)

Ring-billed Gull is the most frequently recorded Nearctic larid in Morocco, with 36 sightings, all along the Atlantic coast. The salt pans and marshes of the Lower Loukkos near Larache are the best site (nine records), following Agadir and the Souss estuary (eight records).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* AV (3/3, 0/0, 2/2)

2004 (04/11) Souss, Massa estuary, adult, 20 February (V. & S. Vitthum)

2005 (05/09) Doukkala, Sidi Moussa–Oualidia lagoons, adult in breeding plumage, 4 April (J. Franchimont & F. Touati Malih)

Three of the five Moroccan records are from the Agadir region; the 2005 record at Sidi Moussa–Oualidia lagoons is the northernmost to date.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* AV, WV ? (-/-, 0/0, 2/3)

2006 (06/19a) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Moulouya estuary, adult, 7 January (I. Cherkaoui)

2006 (06/19b) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Moulouya estuary, two adults, 5 February (I. Cherkaoui)

Herring Gull is a rare winter visitor to the Atlantic coast and accidental on the Mediterranean coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). These two records, the first to be examined by MRBC, are thus very welcome.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* AV (3/3, 1/1, 2/1)

2003 (03/26) Souss, Souss estuary, (sub?)adult, 30 May (C. Koller)

2004 (04/10) Haha, Aghroud, north of Agadir, third-winter, 11 January (H. Dufourny *et al.*)

The bird at the Souss estuary stayed two months at least and had been previously seen in early April to early May 2003 (Bergier *et al.* 2005a, record 03/14). It is also possible that the bird seen at Aghroud on 11 January 2004 was the same, as the two sites are only c.33 km apart.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* WV (-/-, 4/5, 1/1)

2004 (04/33) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Kert estuary, adult, 17 October (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

Great Black-backed Gull is a rare winter visitor to the Atlantic coast and Strait of Gibraltar and had not been reported previously from the Mediterranean coast (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* AV/RB? (3+/5+, 1/1, 2/5)

2004 (04/29) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, pair, 14 May (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

2004 (04/32) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, two males and a female, 12 August (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

These birds were in a public garden, in suitable breeding habitat but there is no proof that they bred. Their origin is unknown: they might have been escapes, though local cagebird dealers could not confirm this, or they might originate from the feral populations in Spain or Algeria. In the latter country, Ring-necked Parakeet (which originally escaped from captivity in the late 1980s) has established a feral population that is increasing in Algiers as well as spreading to other areas on the Mediterranean coast (Bendjoudi *et al.* 2005, Fellous *et al.* 2005).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* WV, PM (-/-, 5/7, 1/3)

2005 (05/20) South Eastern Sahara, Tamlelt plain east of Bou Arfa, three adults, 1 February (O. Fontaine; Fig. 5)

Short-eared Owl is a rare passage migrant and winter visitor, with most previous records from coastal Atlantic regions between the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mauritanian border. There are still few records along the Mediterranean coast and even fewer inland, especially in desert areas. This record is thus remarkable.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* BM, PM (-/-, 3/10+, 2/3)

2005 (05/23) Haouz, Marrakech, Hotel Ayoub, 3 June (A. Miller)

2005 (05/41) Haouz, Marrakech, Ménara Gardens, two, 7 June (S. D. Heath)

White-rumped Swift breeds in the Western High Atlas valleys above the village of Asni, but had never been observed previously in Marrakech city.

African Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* RB/BM (-/-, 5/73+, 4/10+)

2004 (04/36a) Saharan Atlas, Bou Arfa, 5 May (A. Qninba, M. Thévenot, P. Bergier & P. Geniez)

2004 (04/36b) Saharan Atlas, between Bou Arfa and Figuig, pair with three fledged young and nest, 9 May (P. Bergier, P. Geniez, A. Qninba & M. Thévenot)

2005 (05/21) Saharan Atlas, Bou Arfa, 18 August (O. Fontaine)

2006 (06/01) Lower Draa, Aouinet Tozkoz, at least three, 10 January (F. Verdonckt)

The above breeding record is the first in the region of Figuig since its discovery in 1928 by Heim de Balsac! The records of 5 May 2004 and 18 August 2005 were at the 'Hotel Climat du Maroc' in downtown Bou Arfa, whilst the record at Aouinet Torkoz is one of the northernmost in West Saharan Morocco. The species' status in Morocco was synthesised by Bergier (2007).

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* WV (-/-, 6/21, 1/3)

2005 (05/38) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Moulouya estuary, up to three, 8 December 2005–17 February 2006 (I. Cherkaoui)

Fourth record in the lower Moulouya Valley, and in exactly the same place where this rare winter

visitor was first recorded in Morocco (Brosset 1960).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* AV (1?/1?, 1/1, 1/1)

2006 (06/25) Souss, Massa estuary, 17 April (C. Knox *et al.*)

Second confirmed sighting, after that in the Lower Loukos marshes on 3–5 January 1995 (Bergier *et al.* 2000). A third, probable record, at Merja Zerga in January 1989, was listed by Thévenot *et al.* (2003).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* PM (-/-, 36/41+, 3/3)

2004 (04/12a) Tafilat, Oued Ziz, Tamellaht salt pans, 27 March (P. Yésou)

2004 (04/12b) Tafilat, Oued Ziz, Tamellaht salt pans, 28 March (P. Yésou)

2005 (05/39) South Eastern Sahara, Mengoub, adult, 9 March (O. Fontaine)

Previously considered only accidental in Morocco, the number of records has increased since the 1990s and it is now regarded as an uncommon but regular spring visitor, especially in the south-east, between late January and late April.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* AV/WV? (15/20+, 4/5, 1/1)

2004 (04/30) Western High Atlas, Tizi-n-Tichka, 28 February (J. de la Cruz *et al.*)

Second record in the High Atlas of this occasional winter visitor. The vast majority of records have been in northern Morocco with only three south of the Atlas.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

1976 (76/01) High Moulouya, Midelt, 5 April (B. Bland *et al.*)

The first documented record of this Asian species in Morocco. Another, near El-Jadida on 22 September 1984, was not accepted due to the lack of details (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Saharan (Eastern) Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* MB (-/-, 0/0, 4/7+)

2004 (04/18) Tafilat, Kasbah Derkaoua, 22 April (J. P. Delapré *et al.*)

2004 (04/35a) South Eastern Sahara, Mengoub, 6 May (P. Bergier, P. Geniez, A. Qninba & M. Thévenot)

2004 (04/35b) South Eastern Sahara, Figuig, 3+, 8 May (P. Bergier, P. Geniez, A. Qninba & M. Thévenot)

2006 (06/12) Tafilat, gardens of Auberge 'Camping L'Oasis', Hassi Labied, Merzouga, 2–3 singing, 13 April (C. G. Knox *et al.*; Fig. 6)

MRBC has decided to consider records of Saharan (Eastern) Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida reiseri* as it has been split from Western Olivaceous Warbler *H. opaca*. In Morocco, *H. p. reiseri* appears to be a regular breeder in the south-east of the country, where it occurs in oases and *Tamarix*. The western limit of its breeding range is unknown, as well as any possible overlap with Western Olivaceous Warbler (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). Breeding at Kasbah Derkaoua, near Merzouga, has already been reported (3–4 pairs late April 2000: Dally 2003), and other sightings have been reported there (one on 26 March 2004: A. Binns). Useful characters for identification (voice, behaviour, plumage and structure) were listed by Svensson (2001) and Ottosson *et al.* (2005).

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* AV/PM? (13/33+, 0/0, 2/2)

2005 (05/16) Saharan Atlas, Bou Arfa, 4 May (O. Fontaine; Fig. 7)

2006 (06/22) Rharrb, Larache, Lower Loukos marshes, 27 May (K. Bensusan *et al.*)

First accepted records since the MRBC was created. The first one was on a date and at a site typical for this rare, but possibly regular, eastern migrant (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). The second was far west of its normal migration route and had probably been driven off-course by strong easterly winds (Amezian *et al.* 2006); it is also interesting to note that five Icterine Warblers were seen at Gibraltar, Spain, on 14 May 2006..

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* AV (1/1, 1/1, 3/3)

2005 (05/28) Haha, Tamrakht, Vallée du Paradis, 5 November (A. V. Harding *et al.*)

2005 (05/30) Souss, Souss estuary, 19 November (T. Kolaas; Fig. 8)

2005 (05/31) Tafilat, Kasbah Derkaoua, 23 November (T. Kolaas)

An incredible series of three records in the same month, given that there were only two previous records (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). The 5 November record comes from the same area as hosted one of

the previous records (Vallée du Paradis near Immouzer Ida Ou Tanane)! This influx is consistent with a large arrival observed in Europe during the same period, during which unprecedented numbers occurred (see, e.g., van den Berg & Haas 2005).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* AV (7/7, 0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/22) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, second-summer male, 23 August (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

Eighth record for Morocco, and the earliest. Previous sightings of this accidental autumn migrant were dated 10 October to 12 December (Thévenot *et al.* 2003).

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/14) Tafilalt, Merzouga, female or first-winter, 30 March (P. Yésou)

First record of this shrike which breeds from south-east Europe to south-west Iran, and winters to south-west Arabia and sub-Saharan East Africa, west as far as Mali. There are very few records in North Africa: 2–3 in Libya, none in Tunisia and two Algeria, in the 19th century and April 1958 (Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962, Isenmann *et al.* 2005, Isenmann & Moali 2000).

Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2004 (04/39) Souss, Massa estuary, 2 November (B. Bland *et al.*)

Another first record for Morocco. Isabelline Shrike breeds in Central Asia and winters mainly from north-west India to East Africa. In West Africa, it has been recorded in Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon, with a few sightings in Niger, Mali, Mauritania, northern Senegal, The Gambia and Gabon (Fry *et al.* 2000, Borrow & Demey 2001, Christensen *et al.* 2005). There is one record from the Canary Islands, on the unusual date of 12 July (Martín & Lorenzo 2001). It is accidental in Western Europe and even rarer in the Mediterranean region, with only three records in south-east France and Corsica (1981–2005), five in Spain (1994–2006) and nine in Italy (1988–2006) (Lefranc 2007). There are no previous records from any of the other Maghreb countries.

Balearic Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator badius* PM (-/-, 1/3, 2/2)

2006 (06/10) Tafilalt, Kasbah Derkaoua, adult, 3 April (A. B. van den Berg & B. Small)

2006 (06/11) Souss, Aoulouz, adult, 5 April (A. B. van den Berg)

The passage of this subspecies, which breeds in the Balearic Islands, Corsica and Sardinia, is probably regular but under-recorded. It is not uncommon during spring migration in Algeria and Tunisia (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* AV (0/0, 0/0, 1/1)

2005 (05/24) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Melilla, male, 19 September (D. Jerez Abad & R. Ramirez Espinar)

This bird was almost certainly an escapee from captivity.

Records not accepted

Scaup *Aythya marila* 2003 (03/31) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Oued Moulouya estuary, female, 21 December. **Goldeneye** 2004 *Bucephala clangula* (04/40) Tafaya, Oued Chebeika, female, 11 April. **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* 2002 (02/39) Haouz, canal de rocade, 15 km south of Marrakech, two adults, 23 February. **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* 1942–52 (42–52/01) Saïs, Meknès area, several on various dates. **Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* 1989 (89/02) Souss, Inchaden, Oued Massa, adult, 27 April. **Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* 2005 (05/06) Souss, 5 km north of Freija, immature, 29 January. **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* 2003 (03/33) Lower Draa, between Goulimine and Tantan, 26–31 October. **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* 2004 (04/13) Tafilalt, Merzouga, adult, 29 March; 2004 (04/19) Western High Atlas, Tizi-n-Tichka, adult, 9 March; 2004 (04/20) Dadès-Draa, Oulad Driss, adult, 10 March; 2004 (04/21) Dadès-Draa, Barrage Tidri, adult, 14 March; 2004 (04/22) Haha, Tamri, adult, 27 April; 2005 (05/42) Souss, Oued Souss, two adults and one young, 29 November. **Andalusian Hemipode** *Turnix sylvaticus* 2005 (05/40) Doukkala, Jorf Lasfar, 16 March. **Baltic Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus* 2003 (03/25) Plains of Eastern Morocco, Beni Anzar, Nador, six adults, 11 January. **Arctic Tern** *Sterna*



paradisaea 2004 (04/28) Souss, Oued Souss estuary, adult and juvenile, 28 April. **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* 2006 (06/18) Middle Draa, 20 km west of Akka, adult, 17 May. **Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor* 2006 (06/17) Haha, Atlantic coast between Tabayat and Cape Sim, 15+, 27 March–3 April; 2006 (06/21) Rharb, Larache, 3+, 27 May. **Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* 2005 (05/11) Central Anti-Atlas, Tata, first-year female, 5 February. **Black-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla (flava) feldegg* 2005 (05/13) Tafilalt, Derkaoua, 11 April. **Balearic Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator badius* 2005 (05/45) Central Anti-Atlas, Taliouine, 19 March.

Captions to photos on opposite page

Figure 2. Male Blue-winged Teal / Sarcelle à ailes bleues *Anas discors*, Oualidia, 5 February 2005 (S. Werner)

Figure 3. Buff-breasted Sandpiper / Bécasseau rouset *Tryngites subruficollis*, Ouarzazate, 24 April 2006 (J. Piette)

Figure 4. Long-billed Dowitcher / Bécassin à long bec *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Souss estuary, 2 December 2005 (T. Kolaas)

Figure 5. Short-eared Owl / Hibou des marais *Asio flammeus*, Tamlelt Plain, 1 February 2005 (O. Fontaine)

Figure 6. Saharan (Eastern) Olivaceous Warbler / Hypolaïs pâle *Hippolais pallida*, Merzouga, 13 April 2006 (C. G. Knox)

Figure 7. Icterine Warbler / Hypolaïs icterine *Hippolais icterina*, Bouarfa, 4 May 2005 (O. Fontaine)

Figure 8. Yellow-browed Warbler / Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus*, 23 November 2005, Kasbah Derkaoua (T. Kolaas)

Figure 9. Typical landscape of south-east Morocco where Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* can be seen from mid February through April (P. Bergier)

Paysage typique du sud-est marocain (P. Bergier). Le Traquet isabelle *Oenanthe isabellina* y est observé en fin d'hiver – début de printemps.

Figure 10. Jbel Grouz, Saharan Atlas (P. Bergier). African Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* was found nesting here in 2004.

Jbel Grouz, Atlas saharien (P. Bergier). L'Hirondelle isabelline *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* y a été trouvée nicheuse au printemps 2004.

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Received 18 December 2007.

Bird observations from south-east Sudan

Marc de Bont

Observations ornithologiques dans le sud-est du Soudan. Les résultats d'observations ornithologiques réalisées entre janvier 2004 et janvier 2006 dans l'extrême sud-est du Soudan sont présentés ici. Au total, 310 espèces d'oiseaux ont été notées et des compléments aux données de Nikolaus (1987, 1989) sont présentées. Neuf espèces dont la protection est d'intérêt mondial des 34 connues du Soudan ont été observées, parmi lesquelles une population du Percnoptère d'Égypte *Neophron percnopterus*, Menacé d'extinction, ainsi que 47 espèces confinées à un certain biome, parmi lesquelles 37 des 49 espèces du biome Somali-Masai recensées au Soudan. Le site étudié se qualifie ainsi comme Zone d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux.

Summary. The results of bird observations made between January 2004 and January 2006 in extreme south-east Sudan are presented. In total, 310 species were found and additions to the data found in Nikolaus (1987, 1989) are given. Nine of the 34 species of conservation concern for Sudan were observed, among them a population of the Endangered Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, as well as 47 biome-restricted species. Of the latter 37 of the 49 species of the Somali-Masai biome recorded in Sudan were observed in the study area, which thus qualifies as an Important Bird Area.

Recent information on the birds of Sudan is very scarce or non-existent, most data being at least 15 years old (Robertson 2001). The major reference remains Nikolaus (1987), followed by Nikolaus (1989). Records of birds species observed by B. Piot at Rumbek, southern Sudan (06°50'N 29°42'E) during 21–28 October 2005, were recently published informally (*Bull. ABC* 13: 108).

From 19 January 2004 until 5 January 2006 I worked for a health care project in Nanyangacor, Kauto Payam, Eastern Equatoria, south-east Sudan. In my spare time I made observations on the birds of this remote area, which is rarely visited by foreigners. Here I present an overview of the species I recorded.

Study area

Location

I was based and made most observations at the village of Nanyangacor (05°30'N 34°46'E), c.50 km west of the Ethiopian border and 34 km north of the Ilemi Triangle, which is officially part of Sudan, but is governed by Kenya (Fig. 1). For work purposes I regularly travelled up to 50 km from Nanyangacor in various directions. The area is reachable only by dirt road from the border with Kenya at the Lokichokio–Nadapal road. Roads are more or less unpassable during or directly after rains. An airstrip for small aeroplanes was con-

structed near Kuron in 2005. All of the observations presented here were made within a triangular-shaped region bounded by Lotimor (05°31'N 35°08'E; 40 km east of Nanyangacor), Kuron (05°43'N 34°34'E; 35 km north-west from Nanyangacor) and Naparalang (05°06'N 34°28'E; 55 km south-west of Nanyangacor).

Habitat

The area is variable in altitude, with most of the low-lying areas being *Acacia* thornbush with characteristics of the Somali-Masai biome. Small areas on the hill slopes and the plateau have Sudan-Guinea Savanna characteristics. There is little surface water.

Nanyangacor (730 m) lies in a valley surrounded by the Kauto Plateau, which reaches c.1,100 m (Fig. 5). The Nanyangacor River, which dries up entirely at the peak of the dry season, flows from the plateau towards Naparalang. High trees along the river include *Acacia* spp., tamarind spp., *Terminalia* spp., Sycamore Fig *Ficus sycamorus* and Sausage Tree *Kigelia africana* (Fig. 3). Parts of the area are open, with cotton soil, another type of clay or a sandy surface (Fig. 4). Most of the area is very stony. The vegetation consists of low grasses and shrubs like Sodom Apple *Solanum incanum*. In the lower-lying areas there is low thorn scrub, with Hookthorn *Acacia acacia melliflora* one of the commonest small trees (Fig. 9).

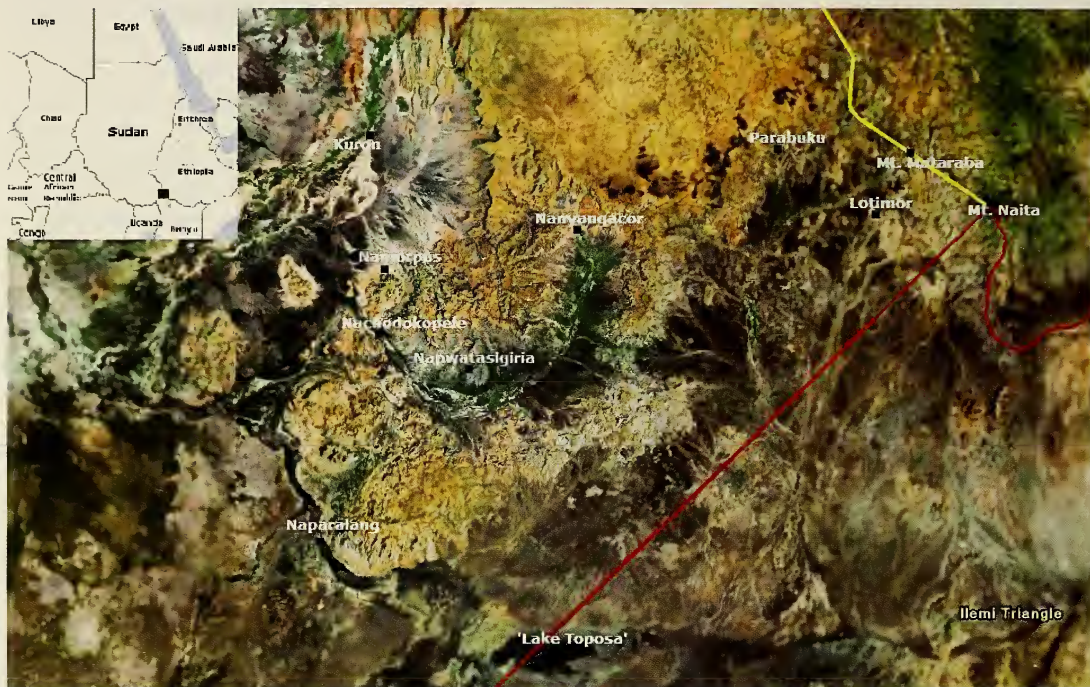


Figure 1. Map of the study area (adapted from Google Earth)
 Carte de la zone étudiée (adaptée de Google Earth)

The tree *Balanites aegyptiaca*, which produces small edible fruits, is relatively common. On the hill slopes the surface is also clay with many stones. The main shrub here is *Grewia Grewia* sp., with *Terminalia spinosa*, Desert Rose *Adenium obesum*, Sickie Bush *Dichrostachys cinerea* and others on more level ground (Fig. 6). In very rocky places Strangler Fig *Ficus thonningii* and *Euphorbia heterochroma* occur. Myrr *Commiphora africana* is also present, but is rare and I have only seen it near Nachodokopele.

On the Kauto Plateau the surface is variable with large areas of cotton soil or another type of clay, stands of Whistling Thorn *Acacia drepanolobium*, some sandy tracts, and areas showing the characteristics of Guinea savanna, with larger broad-leaved trees.

The environs of Lotimor consist mainly of thornbush. Larger trees, mainly *Acacia* spp., occur only along the river. The water in the study area drains into low-lying valleys or partly (like the Kuron River) into the Nile drainage.

North-east of Naparalang the landscape becomes more hilly and rocky. This facilitates water drainage through seasonal streams that flow very

fast just after rainfall. There are places with stagnant water. This hilly country is part of the western slope of the Ethiopian highlands. Near Nanyangacor and Lotimor, close to the border with Ethiopia, the long ridge of Mt Mataraba reaches c.2,000 m and the peak of Mt Naita is at 2,231 m.

In this entire area there is hardly any surface water, except when Naparalang is inundated. However, there is a permanent lake, called Lake Toposa by local people, on the border of the Ilemi Triangle (04°57'N 34°44'E), c.23 km from Naparalang. Despite this short distance I was never able to reach it due to insecurity and the lack of roads.

Climate

Annual rainfall in 2000–05 varied between 423 and 1,197 mm (Fig. 2). Most rain falls in April–May and August–November. In 2004 and 2005 the rains were good, with 841 and 641 mm respectively.

Temperatures vary little. In 2005 mean maxima varied between 32.1°C (May) and 39.9°C (February) and mean minima between 25.1°C (July) and 28.7°C (February).

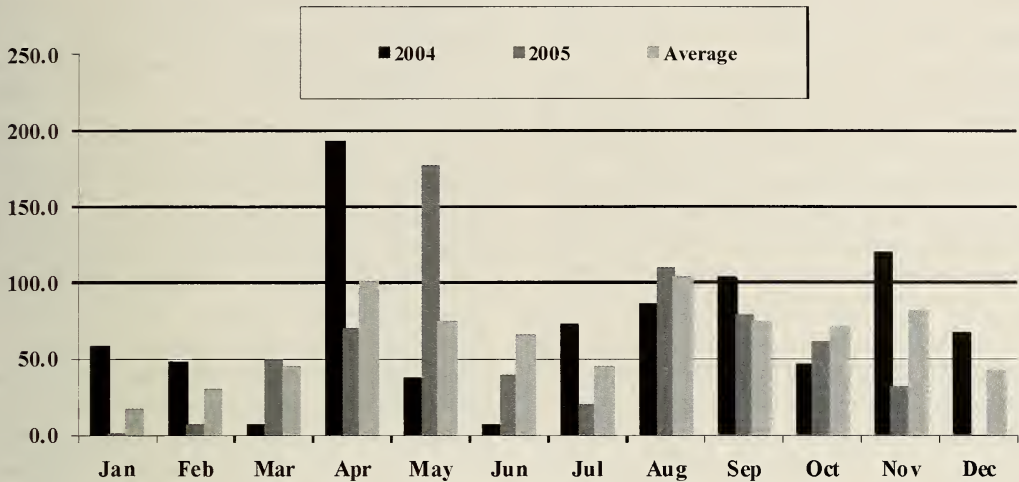


Figure 2. Monthly rainfall in 2004 and 2005 (in mm) compared to average monthly rainfall in 2000–05, at Nanyangacor, Sudan

Précipitations mensuelles en 2004 et 2005 (en mm) comparées aux précipitations mensuelles moyennes en 2000–05, Nanyangacor, Soudan

People and land use

The area is inhabited by pastoralists of the Toposa and Nyangatom tribes. In the last 20 years these tribes have permanently occupied the area, resulting in the land now being grazed year-round, whereas previously it was used during the dry season only. Some agriculture is practised, with the main crop, sorghum, being farmed along small riverbeds (Fig. 7). Some tobacco is produced on the Kauto Plateau.

Hunting pressure is constant. Local people used to hunt with spears, sticks and stones (Günther's Dikdik *Madoqua guentheri* is still regularly killed with stones), but now have firearms. As a result there are now very few large animals (pers. obs.). Elephants *Loxodonta africana* formerly occurred until c.20 years ago, but they now only seem to move between the Ilemi Triangle and the Boma Plateau (the only elephant droppings seen during my stay were on the road to Lotimor).

The recent arrival of expatriates has produced a regular supply of manufactured goods, including metal tools, such as axes and machetes, making it easier to cut firewood from live trees. Larger settlements develop at locations where schools, hospitals and other services are provided, at Nanyangachor and Kuron.

Methods

I attempted to record as many bird species as possible per month by visiting various habitat types. The number of individuals of each species was either counted or estimated. Most observations were made while travelling by car. The surroundings of the following regularly visited sites were also searched for birds: Nanyangacor (427 days), Lotimor (16 visits, totalling 60 days), Napwatasigiria (16 visits, 60 days), Parabuku (five visits, 14 days), Namorpus (four visits, 12 days) and Namasamor (four single-day visits). In total, I spent 572 days in the area.

Evidence of breeding was noted, i.e. observations of birds carrying nesting material, food or faecal sacs, and occupied nests or very recently fledged young being fed by adults. Territorial song or behaviour was also taken as indicative of breeding. Bird calls and songs were recorded with an Olympus VN-240PC digital voice recorder and a Sony ECM-Z60 microphone. The presence of mammals was noted opportunistically (Appendix 4).

Results

I observed 310 species; these are listed in Appendix 1 with their occurrence per month, based on 12,074 bird records. In total, 758 sound recordings of 156 species were made, and were

deposited in the British Library Sound Archive, London, UK, in June 2006.

Comparison with earlier data

Appendix 2 lists 50 species not mentioned by Nikolaus (1987) for the relevant one-degree (120 × 120 km) squares. Of these, 23–25 species were observed during migration, four were both wintering and on passage, and 5–6 are residents. A few species were only present during the northern summer (2–3) or winter (four). Another seven are breeding birds for the area. One (Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis*) was only observed once, on 21 December 2004; its status is therefore unknown.

Fifty-five species mentioned by Nikolaus (1987) were not observed by me (47 from square 5/35 and ten from 5/34). Twenty-two are water-related, which suggests these might have been seen within Sudan or in neighbouring Ethiopia, where the Omo River lies partly in this one-degree square. I am not aware of any larger waterbodies within the Sudanian part of this square. I questioned many local people about the occurrence of the Somali Ostrich *Struthio (camelus) molybdophanes*, mentioned by Nikolaus for both squares, and was told that it no longer occurs in the area, probably because the species has been locally hunted to extinction.

Species of conservation concern

Sudan has 34 species of conservation concern (IUCN 2008). Of these, nine were observed in the study area. One is Endangered (Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*), four are Vulnerable (Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*, Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* and Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*) and another four Near Threatened (White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *G. rueppellii*, Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* and Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami*).

Biome-restricted species

Species restricted to five different biomes (Fishpool & Evans 2001) were found. Best represented were those of the Somali-Masai biome, of which 37 of the 49 species recorded in Sudan (Robertson 2001) were found. This number is significantly higher than in any of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) in southern Sudan (Robertson

2001; highest number: 28 in Kidepo), or in adjacent south-west Ethiopia (EWNHS 2001).

Second come species restricted to the Sudan-Guinea Savanna biome with six out of 36 species: Fox Kestrel *Falco alopex* (not uncommon breeding resident), Red-throated Bee-eater *Merops bullocki* (breeding visitor), Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens* (breeding resident), Gambaga Flycatcher *Muscicapa gambagae* (uncommon in September–January, breeding unknown), Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser superciliosus* (common breeding resident) and Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata* (one record). IBAs in southern Sudan have up to 25 species restricted to this biome (Robertson 2001).

Two species of the Afrotropical Highlands biome were encountered (White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis* and Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii*). Least represented are species restricted to the Sahara-Sindian biome (one of 17: Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*) and the Sahel biome (one of 15: Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*). Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse was common and present in all months over a wide area around Nayangacor, where it presumably breeds. Arabian Bustard was observed (and filmed) once (a single), near the village of Namorpus on 8 December 2005.

Migration

Waterbirds migrated mainly east–west and west–east. Exceptions were Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* and White Stork *C. ciconia*, which in March 2005 were observed flying north. I suspect that storks, ibises and pelicans fly from the Omo River system to the Nile River system, thereby bypassing the mountains of Ethiopia and moving via the Nanyangacor Valley. From the Nile Valley they can reach the Sudd further north. There might be migration through the Omo River system further north, following the Rift Valley through Ethiopia.

There was a well-marked north–south and south–north migration of other migratory birds during autumn and spring. Particularly noteworthy were raptors (Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*), European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* and hirundines.

Mammals

Twenty-eight species were recorded (Appendix 3). Leopard *Panthera pardus* is the only mammal on

the list not seen by me, but it definitely occurs, as twice a man who tried to shoot a Leopard was attacked and admitted to the local hospital.

Notes on selected species

Additions to the relevant one-degree squares in Nikolaus (1987) (see Appendix 2) are marked (+). Species of conservation concern are indicated by EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable and NT = Near Threatened.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (+)

Twenty individuals observed, both during spring (on five occasions) and autumn migration (on eight occasions, among which 14 November 2004, Nanyangacor). Mentioned as uncommon and migration 'more pronounced in spring' by Nikolaus (1987).

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* EN

Observed in small numbers (45 in total; both adults and juveniles) in all months except April and July. Most were seen in March (11). I suspect that many birds were migrants from either nearby (Ethiopian massif) or more distant areas. Breeding might occur within 30–40 km of Nanyangacor.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* NT

Common in the study area: observed in all months (>10 per month). Presumably breeds in the area.

Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* NT

Fairly common; noted in all months and breeding recorded in March.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* VU

Observed in all months with slightly higher numbers in November–January.

White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis* VU

Observed in all months.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* NT

A regular visitor to the area in low numbers (20 individuals in total), especially in September–February. A female was seen near Naparalang on 22 July 2008. The latter seems to be a rather unusual date, although in East Africa this species has been recorded, albeit exceptionally, in July (Britton 1980, Lewis & Pomeroy 1989).

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (+)

Five individuals observed at Nanyangacor on three occasions in March 2005. Rare in the Sudd and further south (Nikolaus 1989) and not mapped for southern Sudan (Nikolaus 1987).

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (+) VU

One observed at Nanyangacor during northbound migration, on 1 May 2005. Mapped only for north-eastern Sudan in Nikolaus (1987) and not mentioned at all by Nikolaus (1989).

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* (+)

Recorded at Napwatasigiria and Nanyangacor. Possible breeder on the hills in the study area. Likely to occur in the bordering area of Ethiopia. Nearest area mentioned by Nikolaus (1989) are the Imatong Mountains (03°55'N 32°55'E).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (+) VU

Nine birds seen migrating south at Nanyangacor on 27 December 2004; one observed hunting at Lotimor on 21 April 2005 and eight along the Nanyangacor–Lotimor road on 22 April 2005.

Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami* NT

Only one observation, of two birds at Naparalang on 9 April 2004, but dense vegetation in many parts of the area hamper views from the road. Probably extirpated from most of the area by hunting and grazing pressure.

White-cheeked Turaco *Turaco leucotis* (+)

Observed in the Nanyangacor area in March (two), May (one), June (two), July (two) and September (one); no indication of breeding found. This Afrotropical Highlands biome species was previously only recorded in the Boma hills (square 6/34: Nikolaus 1987).

Mottled Swift *Tachymarpis aequatorialis* (+)

Observed twice in April 2005 (>6 birds) and once in October 2005 (one). Possibly indicates movement between wintering and breeding areas, as suggested by Nikolaus (1989). Might breed in the nearby Ethiopian highlands.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (+)

Common; observed throughout the year (subspecies *epops* and / or *senegalensis* / *waibeli* not distinguished in the field); singing noted in various months. Likely breeder. One individual of the race *africana* was seen at Nanyangacor on 13

February 2004. Nikolaus (1987) mentions only a single record, from Darfur, of this form.

Hemprich's Hornbill *Tockus hemprichii* (+)

Resident, although not observed in May; presumably breeds along the cliffs in the study area. My records fill the small gap in the national range of this uncommon species, which occurs only in the extreme south-east of Sudan (Nikolaus 1987).

Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus* (+)

The observation of singing birds suggests breeding in April–July, and constitutes a small range extension towards the Ethiopian border.

Gambaga Flycatcher *Muscicapa gambagae* (+)

Found between September 2005 and January 2006. This species is known as an uncommon and local migrant, with breeding records from around 11°N in eastern Sudan (Nikolaus 1987). My records constitute a range extension south of the known breeding areas.

Hunter's Sunbird *Nectarinia hunteri* (+)

A species restricted to the Somali-Masai biome, observed around Nanyangacor and Lotimor in all months except January, May, June and September. A possible observation was made in April. Possibly present year-round. Not previously recorded in the area, although a specimen was obtained from the Ilemi Triangle in May (Nikolaus 1987, 1989).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (+)

Observed in April 2004 near Nanyangacor (one) and April 2005 on the Kauto Plateau (nine birds in total). An uncommon to rare winter visitor to southern Sudan (Nikolaus 1987, 1989).

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (+)

In total, 103 migrants were observed on various dates in April 2005 (11 birds) and in September 2004 and 2005, October 2005, November 2004 and 2005, and December 2004. Previously recorded in southern Sudan only during spring migration and it has been suggested that the species would 'overfly [the country] on autumn migration' (Nikolaus 1987, 1989).

Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii* (+)

Common resident; breeding noted April–July. In southern Sudan, this Afrotropical Highlands biome species was previously only recorded in two neighbouring squares (6/34 and 4/35; Nikolaus 1987).

White-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis albirostris* (+)

Observed on 51 occasions in all months and in good numbers. Mentioned by Nikolaus (1987, 1989) only for the area around Kapoeta. Not recorded east of 34°E, where Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *B. niger* is reportedly common (Nikolaus 1987, 1989). However, I observed the latter species only twice, in September 2005 (Nanyangacor; one individual) and December 2005 (Namorpus; one).

Steel-blue Whydah *Vidua hypocherina* (+)

Three, one with long rectrices, were seen at Lotimor on 20 July 2005. The host species, Black-faced Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotos*, was observed once (one bird) at the same locality on 17 December 2005. This constitutes a slight range extension for both species.

Discussion

The study area qualifies as an Important Bird Area for two reasons (for criteria see Fishpool & Evans 2001): it holds a population of the Endangered Egyptian Vulture and therefore qualifies under criterion A1, as well as under criterion A3 (A08) because the site holds 37 of the 49 species of the Somali-Masai biome recorded in Sudan. Besides these two reasons it holds eight other species of conservation concern.

The area proposed as an IBA could be seen as an extension of Boma National Park, because the northern border should be the Kuron River. As a western border I advise the area around the Lothagum Hills (around 05°19'N 34°19'E) south-east towards Lake Toposa at the border of the Ilemi Triangle, and north-east towards the Ethiopian border near Mt Naita. The eastern border with Ethiopia would also form the eastern boundary of the IBA.

Judging from satellite images, the Ilemi Triangle mostly comprises Somali-Masai biome vegetation. It would be interesting to include it within an IBA, but it is a disputed area between Sudan and Kenya, which has created uncertainty about presence of species within Sudan's borders and has prevented research because of uncertainty as to which country the area belongs, and because the three main tribes (the Turkana in Kenya, Toposa of Sudan and Nyangatom of Sudan and Ethiopia) regularly make cattle raids. There is such a degree of insecurity about the region that even



Figure 3. Habitat near the Nanyangacor River with Sausage Tree *Kigelia africana* (M. de Bont)

Habitat aux environs du fleuve Nanyangacor avec Saucissonier *Kigelia africana* (M. de Bont)

Figure 4. Habitat near Lotimor with Mt Naita in the background (M. de Bont)

Habitat près de Lotimor avec le Mont Naita en arrière-plan (M. de Bont)

Figure 5. Habitat near Nanyangacor with the Kauto Plateau in the background (M. de Bont)

Habitat près de Nanyangacor avec le Plateau de Kauto en arrière-plan (M. de Bont)

Figure 6. Habitat on hill near Nanyangacor (M. de Bont)

Habitat sur une colline près de Nanyangacor (M. de Bont)

Figure 7. Sorghum field near the Nanyangacor River (M. de Bont)

Champ de sorgho aux environs du fleuve Nanyangacor (M. de Bont)

Figure 8. Rock face with the Nanyangacor River in background left (M. de Bont)

Paroi rocheuse avec le fleuve Nanyangacor en arrière-plan à gauche (M. de Bont)

Figure 9. Habitat near Napwatasigiria (M. de Bont)

Habitat aux environs de Napwatasigiria (M. de Bont)

most Toposa would not enter the area, especially for fear of the Turkana.

Birds most at risk within the study area appear to be those restricted to the Sudan-Guinea Savanna and Afrotropical Highlands biome. These biomes indeed occur within a small area. Larger trees are being cut for firewood and construction purposes by the Toposa and Nyangatom peoples, who moved into the area because of the civil war. Hunting is widespread and most larger mammals have already been extirpated.

Acknowledgements

I thank Fr. T. Galvin and S. Cremin for offering me a job in south-east Sudan; Herma Klandermans, without whom I would not have been in southern Sudan for two years; R. L. Vogel, R. Noordhuis and A. de Wit for providing their observations while visiting me in Nanyangacor; Gert Ottens, Vogelbescherming Nederland, for help with literature; C. Tipp, British Library Sound Archive, for providing some recordings of range-restricted species; Ed Hall, Ruurd Noordhuis and Ruud Foppen for reading drafts of this paper and providing much good advice; Henk Sierdsema for helping with some calculations; Dries Oomen for producing the map; Lincoln Fishpool for literature and advice; and Ron Demey for contacts and reading the drafts.

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Received 2 August 2007; revision accepted 16 October 2008.

Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in the Nanyangacor area, Eastern Equatoria, Sudan, 19 January 2004–5 January 2006

Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées dans la zone de Nanyangacor, Eastern Equatoria, Soudan, 19 janvier 2004–5 janvier 2006

Biome (Fishpool & Evans 2001):

SS = Restricted to the Sahara-Sindian biome (1 species)

SA = Restricted to the Sahel biome (1 species)

SG = Restricted to the Sudan-Guinea Savanna biome (6 species)

SM = Restricted to the Somali-Masai biome (37 species)

AH = Restricted to the Afrotropical Highlands biome (2 species)

Bird numbers recorded in the field are given in precise figures or as follows / Le nombre d'oiseaux recensés sur le terrain est indiqué par un chiffre précis ou comme suit:
A = 1, B = 2–10, C = 11–100, D = 101–1,000, E = 1,001–10,000.

An asterisk * marks species for which sound-recordings were made / Un astérisque * indique les espèces dont des vocalisations ont été enregistrées.

☐ = Evidence of breeding observed / Preuve de reproduction obtenue

	Biome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pelecanidae													
Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	8	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ardeidae													
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	–	–	10	>48	C	65	>650	43	3	102	100	–
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	–	–	–	A	A?	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	–	A	A	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	A	–	–	–
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	A	–	–	A	–	A
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	–	–	–	A	A	–	12	–	3	6	–	–
Scopidae													
Hamerkop*	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	A	A	A	B	B	B	A	B	B	B	B	B
Ciconiidae													
Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	3	–	24	–	–	–	–	–	A	77	9	12
African Openbill Stork	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	–	A	59	–	–	15	–	–	140	500	–	A
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	–	–	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Abdim's Stork	<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>	6	3	421	2,918	>112	220	–	–	150	–	–	–
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	–	2	A	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	9
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	–	–	48	19	3	–	A	–	A	2	–	290
Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>	2	C	>50	14	A	B	B	–	5	14	B	67
Threskiornithidae													
Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	21	–	21	20	A	–	12	46	–	100	19	210
Anatidae													
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	–	–	–	–	C	B	4	–	–	B	–	–
Knob-billed Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	–	–	–	–	–	15	–	–	–	–	–	–
Accipitridae													
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	–	–	4	–	4	–	–	–	8	3	A	–
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	–	–	–	A	A	–	–	A	–	–	A	7
African Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Chelictinia riocourii</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	A?	2	A	–	2	2
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	–	–	25	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–
Yellow-billed Kite*	<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>	C	D	>80	>65	C	C	C	B	31	C	D	C
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	2	4	11	–	A	3	–	A	3	3	2	5
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	C	C	C	>25	C	C	>100	19	D	C	D	C
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	C	C	C	26	C	C	>25	19	C	C	C	C
Rüppell's Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>	C	C	19	7	4	B	>10	7	C	C	C	C
Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>	C	8	7	4	9	4	8	4	8	B	C	C
White-headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	B	8	8	3	5	4	B	3	5	11	B	B
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	A?	–	–	–	A
Black-chested Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>	A	A	A	A	2	–	–	–	A	–	–	–
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	A	A	–	–	–	2	2	A	–	2	–	3
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	B	3	9	5	C	6	9	B	B	C	B	B
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	A	A	A	A	A	–	2	B	–	–	–	A
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	4	1	–	–	–	–	A	–	A	A	2	9
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	–	4	13	3	A	–	–	–	–	–	4	4
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	A	2	–	5
Gabar Goshawk*	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	A	B	B	4	B	A	3	B	B	B	B	B
Dark Chanting Goshawk*	<i>Melierax metabates</i>	B	B	B	21	2	7	15	3	B	B	C	B
Shikra*	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	B	B	B	6	B	7	C	B	B	3	C	B
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	–	–	A	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Grasshopper Buzzard	<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>	–	A	A	–	A	–	8	A	A	–	–	–
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	–	12	717	15	49	–	–	–	556	2,329	2	2
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	–	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Augur Buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>	–	–	–	–	–	A	–	–	–	–	A	–
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	–	4	202	4	–	–	–	–	A	2	4	5
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	–	–	–	–	A	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Tawny Eagle*	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	B	C	22	5	7	8	7	B	10	8	C	C
Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	A	2	10	A	A	–	–	–	–	2	–	4
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>	–	2	3	–	–	2	A	A	2	2	–	–
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>	–	–	A	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
African Hawk Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i>	B	A	A	B	–	–	–	B	–	B	B	4
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–
Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	–	A	A	A	2	B	–	–	A	2	B	B

	Biome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sagittariidae													
Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Falconidae													
Pygmy Falcon	<i>Polihierax semitorquatus</i>	B	3	2	A	A	-	B	-	2	3	A	2
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Common Kestrel*	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	A	4	5	3	2	3	2	2	B	A	B	6
Fox Kestrel*	<i>Falco alopecurus</i>	B	5	4	5	C	14	>17	B	B	B	C	C
Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>	A	A	-	2	B	B	-	B	A	A	-	A
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	-	-	2	10	3	-	-	-	6	3	2	-
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	-	2	2	2	A	4	-	-	3	A	B	B
Numididae													
Helmeted Guineafowl*	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Phasianidae													
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Harlequin Quail	<i>Coturnix delegorguei</i>	-	-	-	-	-	A	2	-	-	-	-	-
Crested Francolin*	<i>Francolinus sephaena</i>	C	C	C	D	C	D	D	C	C	C	D	D
Yellow-necked Spurfowl	<i>Francolinus leucoscepus</i>	SM	C	C	2	B	C	C	B	C	B	B	C
Otididae													
Denham's Bustard	<i>Neotis denhami</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Arabian Bustard	<i>Ardeotis arabs</i>	SA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A
Kori Bustard	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Buff-crested Bustard	<i>Eupodotis gindiana</i>	SM	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
White-bellied Bustard	<i>Eupodotis senegalensis</i>	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	-	10	B	B	B
Black-bellied Bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>	A	2	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	2	-
Hartlaub's Bustard	<i>Lissotis hartlaubii</i>	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recurvirostridae													
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-
Burhinidae													
Spotted Thick-knee*	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>	B	B	B	B	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	B
Glareolidae													
Temminck's Courser	<i>Cursorius temminckii</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	4	-	8	-
Charadriidae													
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	6
Black-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus tectus</i>	-	5	-	A	B	B	-	6	-	-	4	-
Spur-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	-	-	A	-	-	A	A	-	-	4	-	-
Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>	B	4	-	-	-	-	B	-	3	-	4	3
Scolopacidae													
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	-	-	A	A	-	-	-	A	8	7	A	7
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	-	-	7	5	-	-	2	A	A	4	-	-
Pteroclididae													
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse*	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	>30
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse*	<i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>	SS	C	C	C	C	B	40	>20	A	B	C	C
Four-banded Sandgrouse*	<i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	>25	-	-	-	-
Columbidae													
Bruce's Green Pigeon*	<i>Treron waalia</i>	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	C	C
Tambouine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove*	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Namaqua Dove*	<i>Oena capensis</i>	B	C	C	18	D	D	E	D	D	C	D	C
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	-	3	7	>23	3	2	16	-	10	A	A	B
Red-eyed Dove*	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	C	C	D	D	D	C	D	C	C	C	D	C
African Mourning Dove*	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>	C	D	D	D	D	D	E	D	D	D	D	D
Vinaceous Dove*	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Laughing Dove*	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	D	D	D	D	D	E	E	D	D	D	D	D
Psittacidae													
Meyer's Parrot*	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	B	C	B	>9	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Musophagidae													
White-cheeked Turaco*	<i>Tauraco leucotis</i>	AH	-	-	2	-	A	2	2	-	A	-	-

		Biome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
White-bellied Go-away-bird*	<i>Corythaoides leucogaster</i>	SM	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Eastern Grey Plantain-eater*	<i>Crinifer zonurus</i>		B	B	B	C	B	C	C	B	15	B	C	C
Cuculidae														
Jacobin Cuckoo*	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>		-	-	A	B	B	C	16	B	B	B	-	A
Great Spotted Cuckoo*	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>		-	-	A	4	4	9	6	-	B	A?	-	2
Red-chested Cuckoo*	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>		-	-	-	B	B	B	B	B	B	-	A	-
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
African Cuckoo*	<i>Cuculus gularis</i>		-	-	A	>26	5	8	A	-	B	B	-	-
Klaas's Cuckoo*	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>		A	A	A	A	B	2	2	-	2	A	-	A
Didric Cuckoo*	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>		-	-	-	4	3	5	10	B	>11	2	B	-
White-browed Coucal*	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>		B	C	8	C	C	C	C	C	B	B	C	C
Tytonidae														
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		-	-	-	A	-	B	2	A	-	A	-	A
Strigidae														
African Scops Owl*	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>		A	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Northern White-faced Owl	<i>Ptilopsis leucotis</i>		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Spotted Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>		A	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-
Verreaux's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>		A	A	-	-	B	B	B	B	B	A	-	B
Pearl-spotted Owlet*	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>		B	-	-	2	A	4	2	B	2	-	B	B
Caprimulgidae														
Slender-tailed Nightjar*	<i>Caprimulgus clarus</i>		B	C	>50	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Star-spotted Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus stellatus</i>	SM	-	-	-	-	-	A	2	-	2	2	-	-
Freckled Nightjar*	<i>Caprimulgus tristigma</i>		A	B	B	-	A	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Standard-winged Nightjar	<i>Macropteryx longipennis</i>		-	-	-	A	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Apodidae														
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>		2	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		-	-	460	>555	>300	-	50	E	D	194	B	C
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>		-	-	-	>1	-	-	-	2	3	-	-	-
Little Swift*	<i>Apus affinis</i>		C	C	>100	C	>60	C	>22	E	D	C	D	C
Mottled Swift	<i>Tachymartis aequatorialis</i>		-	-	-	>5	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymartis melba</i>		D	D	240	>70	>38	-	-	>17	C	72	D	D
Coliidae														
Blue-naped Mousebird*	<i>Urocolius macrourus</i>		D	D	D	D	C	D	C	C	D	C	D	D
Speckled Mousebird*	<i>Colius striatus</i>		-	B	C	B	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	C
Alcedinidae														
Grey-headed Kingfisher*	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>		B	B	B	17	C	C	C	B	2	-	A	B
Woodland Kingfisher*	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>		-	-	-	-	-	A	2	A	B	A	A	-
Striped Kingfisher*	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>		-	B	10	B	B	B	B	B	A	B	B	B
African Pygmy Kingfisher*	<i>Ceyx pictus</i>		2	B	4	6	B	11	C	B	B	A	B	C
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>		-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meropidae														
Little Bee-eater*	<i>Merops pusillus</i>		B	C	C	D	C	12	>20	C	C	C	C	C
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>		-	B	B	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Red-throated Bee-eater*	<i>Merops bulcocki</i>	SG	30	C	C	C	-	-	-	17	13	2	D	C
White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>		-	-	12	-	C	3	>85	C	B	-	-	-
Madagascar Bee-eater*	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>		-	-	-	>3	>49	D	>155	C	C	B	-	-
European Bee-eater*	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		-	-	>300	>1,276	>847	-	-	>45	>312	>636	>1	-
Northern Carmine Bee-eater*	<i>Merops nubicus</i>		C	C	E	>28	>10	>104	>175	>46	D	D	D	E
Coraciidae														
Rufous-crowned Roller*	<i>Coracias naevius</i>		8	2	C	C	C	C	C	5	C	C	C	C
Abyssinian Roller*	<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>		C	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	B	C	C
Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>		A	-	-	-	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Phoeniculidae														
Green Woodhoopoe*	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Black Scimitarbill*	<i>Rhinopomastus aterrimus</i>		B	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	2	-	-	-
Abyssinian Scimitarbill*	<i>Rhinopomastus minor</i>	SM	B	B	B	8	3	13	>17	3	B	B	B	C
Upupidae														
Hoopoe*	<i>Upupa epops</i>		A	B	6	6	B	10	4	C	10	5	B	B
African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops africana</i>		-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Bucerotidae

Abyssinian Ground Hornbill*	<i>Bucorvus abyssinicus</i>	B	–	4	11	2	4	8	2	11	6	B	3	
Red-billed Hornbill*	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	C	C	D	D	D	
Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill*	<i>Tockus flavirostris</i>	SM	A	B	14	B	A	B	19	B	B	B	–	B
Jackson's Hornbill*	<i>Tockus jacksoni</i>	SM	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D
Hemprich's Hornbill*	<i>Tockus hemprichii</i>	SM	B	3	4	7	–	4	12	A	3	8	B	B
African Grey Hornbill*	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	D	D	D	D	C

Capitonidae

Red-fronted Tinkerbird*	<i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i>		C	C	C	D	B	D	C	C	C	C	C	C
Black-throated Barbet*	<i>Tricholaema melanocephala</i>	SM	C	C	C	8	B	C	C	C	C	C	D	D
Red-and-yellow Barbet*	<i>Trachyphonus erythrocephalus</i>	SM	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	D
D'Araud's Barbet*	<i>Trachyphonus damaudii</i>	SM	C	C	C	D	C	C	D	D	C	C	C	D

Indicatoridae

Scaly-throated Honeyguide	<i>Indicator variegatus</i>		–	–	–	2	3	B	A	–	–	–	–	–
Greater Honeyguide*	<i>Indicator indicator</i>		A	B	3	9	B	B	2	B	B	A	A	B
Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>		–	–	B	–	B	A	–	–	2	–	A	A

Picidae

Nubian Woodpecker*	<i>Campethera nubica</i>		C	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Cardinal Woodpecker*	<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>		–	B	B	A	–	A	A	A	A	–	B	B
Grey Woodpecker*	<i>Dendropicos goetae</i>		–	B	4	A	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	B

Alaudidae

Rufous-naped Lark*	<i>Mirafra africana</i>		–	–	–	–	–	–	C	–	C	–	B	B
Red-winged Lark	<i>Mirafra hypermetra</i>	SM	–	B	C	5	B	5	–	A	–	A?	A?	B
Flappet Lark*	<i>Mirafra ruocinnamomea</i>		–	B	–	A	–	–	A	A	–	B	B	B
Pink-breasted Lark*	<i>Mirafra poecilosterna</i>	SM	–	–	–	–	–	B	–	B	A	>11	B	B
Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	B
Chestnut-headed Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix signatus</i>	SM	C	–	–	31	–	–	–	–	–	C	B	>250

Hirundinidae

Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		–	–	35?	–	121	–	–	–	>136	16	2	–
Mosque Swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	A
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>		B	B	C	8	>10	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		B	C	38	>148	274	A	13	53	>845	>1,098	29	C
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		20	60	35	51	35	–	–	–	406	102	2	40

Motacillidae

Yellow Wagtail*	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		–	B	3	>54	–	–	–	–	A	>81	58	8
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	A	–	–
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		–	A?	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	6
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>		–	–	–	–	A	A	A	–	–	–	–	–
Long-billed Pipit*	<i>Anthus similis</i>		B	B	B	>15	C	C	C	B	C	B	C	B
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		A	B	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	4

Campephagidae

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike*	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>		–	A	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
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Pycnonotidae

Northern Brownbul*	<i>Phyllastrephus strepitans</i>		C	C	D	D	C	D	D	C	C	C	D	D
Common Bulbul*	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>		D	D	D	D	C	D	D	D	D	C	D	D

Turdidae

White-browed Robin Chat*	<i>Cossypha heuglini</i>		B	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Spotted Palm Thrush*	<i>Cichladasa guttata</i>		D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	D	D	D	D
White-browed Scrub Robin*	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>		D	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	C	C	D	D
Common Redstart*	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		A	9	7	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	B
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Northern Wheatear*	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		C	C	C	A	–	–	–	–	A	C	D	D
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>		C	C	B	–	–	–	–	–	A	2	C	C
Heuglin's Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe heuglini</i>		–	–	–	6	C	C	C	B	C	C	–	–
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>		C	C	C	–	–	–	–	–	2	C	D	D
Familiar Chat*	<i>Cercomela familiaris</i>		B	–	–	–	–	–	2	A	B	–	B	A
Brown-tailed Rock Chat*	<i>Cercomela scotocerca</i>	SM	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D
Mocking Cliff Chat*	<i>Thamnodia cinnamomeiventris</i>		B	B	–	A	A	B	C	A	B	B	C	B
Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>		A	3	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
African Thrush*	<i>Turdus pelios</i>		B	B	B	>11	C	C	C	B	C	B	A	C

	Biome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sylviidae													
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler*	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	C	C	C	D	-	-	-	-	A	-	C	C
Buff-bellied Warbler*	<i>Phylloscopus pulchella</i>	C	B	C	B	C	C	B	C	B	B	B	B
Yellow-bellied Eremomela*	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	B	C	C	C	C
Green-backed Eremomela*	<i>Eremomela canescens</i>	SG	B	-	B	B	-	B	B	-	B	B	B
Northern Crombec*	<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>	B	B	B	7	-	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Red-faced Crombec*	<i>Sylvietta whytii</i>	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Willow Warbler*	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	A	-	10	24	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	3
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	A	2	-
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	3
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cisticolidae													
Rattling Cisticola*	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>		B	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Boran Cisticola*	<i>Cisticola bodessa</i>	SM	C	B	-	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	C
Ashy Cisticola*	<i>Cisticola cinereolus</i>	SM	B	B	B	B	-	C	-	B	-	B	B
Tiny Cisticola*	<i>Cisticola nanus</i>	SM	B	B	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	C	C
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		-	B	B	B	-	-	-	-	B	B	-
Tawny-flanked Prinia*	<i>Prinia subflava</i>		B	B	B	4	B	C	B	C	B	B	C
Pale Prinia*	<i>Prinia somalica</i>	SM	C	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	C	C
Red-fronted Warbler*	<i>Urorhipis rufifrons</i>		C	B	C	>25	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Yellow-breasted Apalis*	<i>Apalis flavida</i>		C	-	B	-	-	C	C	C	C	B	B
Grey-backed Camaroptera*	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Grey Wren Warbler*	<i>Calamanastes simplex</i>	SM	C	C	C	>14	C	C	D	C	C	C	C
Muscicapidae													
African Grey Flycatcher*	<i>Bradornis microhynchus</i>	SM	D	C	C	D	C	D	D	C	D	D	D
Silverbird	<i>Empidonis semipartitus</i>		-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher*	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		-	-	A	11	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
Gambaga Flycatcher*	<i>Muscicapa gambagae</i>	SG	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	A	B	2
Monarchidae													
African Paradise Flycatcher*	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>		B	C	C	D	B	C	C	C	B	C	C
Platysteiridae													
Black-headed Batis*	<i>Batis minor</i>		B	-	-	-	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Pygmy Batis*	<i>Batis perleo</i>	SM	C	B	B	11	C	7	C	C	B	C	C
Timaliidae													
Brown Babbler*	<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>		-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rufous Chatterer*	<i>Turdoides rubiginosa</i>	SM	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	C	D	D	D
Paridae													
White-winged Black Tit*	<i>Parus leucomelas</i>		B	-	B	-	-	2	2	-	B	2	-
Remizidae													
Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus musculus</i>	SM	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	2
Nectariniidae													
Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird*	<i>Anthreptes orientalis</i>	SM	C	C	C	D	C	D	D	C	C	D	D
Hunter's Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra hunteri</i>	SM	-	B	B	A?	-	-	A	6	-	B	A
Pygmy Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna platura</i>		-	B	-	-	-	-	-	A?	B	B	-
Beautiful Sunbird*	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>		C	C	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	C
Shining Sunbird*	<i>Cinnyris habessinicus</i>	SM	C	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D
Variable Sunbird*	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>		C	B	-	-	-	2	>17	C	C	C	-
Zosteropidae													
African Yellow White-eye*	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>		-	B	-	4	5	B	5	B	-	10	B
Laniidae													
Taita Fiscal	<i>Lanius dorsalis</i>	SM	B	C	C	24	>20	23	C	C	C	C	C
Grey-backed Fiscal	<i>Lanius excubitoroides</i>		-	-	6	10	-	2	4	A	-	-	7
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>		-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>		-	A?	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	4
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		A	-	A	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	A
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>		A	4	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	B
Northern White-crowned Shrike*	<i>Eurocephalus rueppelli</i>		D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

	Biome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Malaconotidae													
Grey-headed Bushshrike*		B	B	C	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	C
Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike*		A	B	C	C	B	B	C	B	B	B	B	C
Rosy-patched Bushshrike*	SM	B	-	B	>16	B	C	C	C	B	C	C	C
Black-crowned Tchagra*		B	B	B	2	A	-	>22	B	B	B	C	C
Northern Puffback*		B	B	B	8	2	B	B	B	8	B	C	C
Slate-coloured Bobou*		C	C	D	D	D	D	D	C	C	C	D	D
Black-headed Gonolek		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A
Brubru*		C	B	7	9	4	7	6	2	C	B	C	C
Prionopidae													
White Helmetshrike*		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	C	C	C	C
Oriolidae													
Eastern Black-headed Oriole*		C	C	D	D	C	D	D	C	C	C	D	D
African Golden Oriole		2	B	A	-	-	-	-	B	A	-	-	A
Eurasian Golden Oriole		-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	6	73	5	A
Dicruridae													
Fork-tailed Drongo*		C	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Corvidae													
Cape Crow		-	-	-	-	-	10	15	-	-	-	-	-
Pied Crow		-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Fan-tailed Raven*		B	C	C	>71	>169	C	>35	>32	>65	C	C	C
Sturnidae													
Red-winged Starling*		B	C	C	>20	C	C	>80	C	C	C	D	C
Greater Blue-eared Starling*		-	-	-	-	C	>176	>700	D	D	D	C	B
Lesser Blue-eared Starling		-	-	-	-	>59	C	E	D	C	-	-	-
Rüppell's Glossy Starling*		C	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Superb Starling*		D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Shelley's Starling	SM	C	-	40?	-	2?	>95	>250	>15	C	C	C	C
Violet-backed Starling		-	-	-	6	-	B	>10	C	-	-	-	-
Maggie Starling*	SM	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	>15	C	B	C	C
Wattled Starling*		D	A	C	C	E	D	>700	D	D	C	C	D
Red-billed Oxpecker*		C	C	D	>48	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C
Yellow-billed Oxpecker		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-
Passeridae													
Swainson's Sparrow*	AH	B	C	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	D	C	C
Parrot-billed Sparrow	SM	B?	B	B	-	-	A?	B?	-	B?	-	B	B
Chestnut Sparrow		-	-	-	-	-	C	B	-	-	-	-	-
Yellow-spotted Petronia*		C	C	C	D	D	D	D	C	C	C	D	C
Ploceidae													
White-billed Buffalo Weaver*		C	C	C	D	>150	D	D	C	C	C	C	D
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	A
White-headed Buffalo Weaver*	SM	C	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	D	D	D
White-browed Sparrow Weaver*		D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver*	SG	C	-	4	B	C	B	C	-	C	C	C	C
Red-headed Weaver		B	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Little Weaver*		B	B	B	C	B	C	C	C	C	C	B	C
Black-necked Weaver*		B	2	B	-	-	C	B	B	B	B	C	C
Northern Masked Weaver*		-	B	B	C	-	B	C	C	-	-	C	C
Lesser Masked Weaver*		D	D	D	D	C	B	C	D	C	D	D	D
Vitelline Masked Weaver*		C	C	D	D	B	-	C	C	B	B	-	C
Village Weaver*		-	-	-	-	D	>500	D	D	B	B	D	C
Chestnut Weaver		-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-
Red-headed Quelea		-	-	-	A	-	-	A	-	-	-	-	-
Red-billed Quelea		C	-	B	D	E	E	>7,300	D	B	C	C	B
Estrildidae													
Crimson-rumped Waxbill*		B	-	C	-	B	B	-	-	-	B	-	20
Black-faced Waxbill		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B
Red-cheeked Cordonbleu*		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Purple Grenadier*	SM	B	A	B	B	-	B	C	C	B	B	B	C
Green-winged Pytilia*		B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	C	C
Red-billed Firefinch		C	B	C	C	B	C	C	B	C	C	C	C

		Biome	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Black-faced Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta larvata</i>	SG	-	-	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cut-throat Finch	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-	-	-	-
African Silverbill	<i>Lonchura cantans</i>		2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Viduidae														
Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>		B	-	4	-	-	A	B	-	-	-	-	-
Eastern Paradise Whydah*	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>		-	-	C	-	-	15	C	6	2	5	-	9
Steel-blue Whydah	<i>Vidua hypocherina</i>	SM	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Village Indigobird*	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>		-	-	3	-	-	A	-	3	-	A	-	-
Fringillidae														
Reichenow's Seedeater*	<i>Serinus reichenowi</i>		C	B	C	>35	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
White-bellied Canary	<i>Serinus dorostriatus</i>	SM	B	B	2	A?	C	C	C	B	B	B	B	C
Emberizidae														
Somali Bunting*	<i>Emberiza poliopleura</i>	SM	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting*	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>		B	B	B	4	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	C
Total: 310 species			180	184	209	204	186	189	199	181	209	212	204	222

Appendix 2. Additions to the relevant squares in Nikolaus (1987) / **Annexe 2.** Compléments aux carrés définis par Nikolaus (1987)
 Square numbers = degrees north / east (4/34 = 04°N 34°E). Numéros des carrés = degrés nord / est (4/34 = 04°N 34°E).

		Squares		
		4/34	5/34	5/35
Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	-	X	-
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	-	X	-
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	-	X	-
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	-	X	-
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	-	X	X
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	-	X	-
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	-	X	-
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	-	X	-
Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	X	X	-
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	-	X	X
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	-	X	-
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	-	X	-
Augur Buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>	-	X	-
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	-	X	X
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	-	X	-
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>	-	X	-
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	-	X	-
Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	-	X	X
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	-	X	-
White-cheeked Turaco	<i>Tauraco leucotis</i>	-	X	X
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	-	X	-
African Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus gularis</i>	-	X	X
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymartus melba</i>	-	X	X
Mottled Swift	<i>Tachymartus aequatorialis</i>	-	X	-
Red-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops bullocki</i>	-	X	-
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	-	X	-
Hemprich's Hombill	<i>Tockus hemprichii</i>	-	X	X
Scaly-throated Honeyguide	<i>Indicator variegatus</i>	-	X	-
Mosque Swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>	-	-	X
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	-	X	-
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	-	X	-
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	-	X	X
Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	-	X	-
Buff-bellied Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulchella</i>	-	X	X
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	-	X	-
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	-	X	X
Gambaga Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa gambagae</i>	-	X	-
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	-	X	-

		Squares		
		4/34	5/34	5/35
White-winged Black Tit	<i>Parus leucomelas</i>	-	X	-
Hunter's Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra hunteri</i>	-	X	X
African Yellow White-eye	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	-	X	X
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	-	X	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	-	X	-
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	-	X	-
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	-	X	-
Lesser Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprolornis chloropterus</i>	-	X	X
Violet-backed Starling	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	-	X	X
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>	-	X	-
White-billed Buffalo Weaver	<i>Bubalornis albirostris</i>	-	X	X
Swainson's Sparrow	<i>Passer swainsonii</i>	-	X	X
Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver	<i>Ploceopasser superciliosus</i>	-	X	-
Black-faced Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta larvata</i>	-	X	-
Steel-blue Whydah	<i>Vidua hypocherina</i>	-	-	X

Appendix 3. Mammal species recorded in the Nanyangacor area, Eastern Equatoria, Sudan, 19 January 2004–5 January 2006 (taxonomy and order as in Kingdon 1997).

Annexe 3. Mammifères observés dans la zone de Nanyangacor, Eastern Equatoria, Soudan, 19 janvier 2004–5 janvier 2006 (taxonomie et ordre des espèces selon Kingdon 1997).

Common name	Scientific name	Date	Location	N
Guereza Colobus	<i>Colobus guereza</i>	various months	Parabuku	>15
Olive Baboon	<i>Papio anubis</i>	various months	Nanyangacor, Parabuku	>25
Patas Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus patas</i>	Oct, Nov, Dec	Nanyangacor	10
Grivet Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus (a.) aethiops</i>	all months	Nanyangacor	C
Yellow-winged Bat	<i>Lavia frons</i>	various months	Lotimor	B
Lesser Elephant Shrew	<i>Elephantulus</i> sp.	various months	Nanyangacor, Lotimor	B
Scrub Hare	<i>Lepus saxatilis</i>	all months	Nanyangacor, Lotimor, Parabuku, all roads	C
Unstriped Ground Squirrel	<i>Xerus rutilus</i>	all months	Nanyangacor, Lotimor, Parabuku, all roads	C
Striped Ground Squirrel	<i>Euxerus erythropus</i>	various months	Nanyangacor, Lotimor, Road 7	B
Rat sp.	<i>Arvicanthis</i> sp.	March	Napwatasigiria	B
Common Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	April	Road 2	B
Side-striped Jackal	<i>Canis adustus</i>	Feb, Apr	Road 2, Road 6	B
Black-backed Jackal	<i>Canis mesomelas</i>	February	Road 6	B
Bat-eared Fox	<i>Otocyon megalotis</i>	various months	Nanyangacor, Road 2	B
Egyptian Mongoose	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>	November	Nanyangacor	1
Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguinea</i>	various months	Lotimor	B
Dwarf Mongoose	<i>Helogale parvula</i>	various months	Nanyangacor, Road 6	C
White-tailed Mongoose	<i>Ichneumia albicauda</i>	23 June 2004	Nanyangacor	B
Spotted Hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	various months	Namorupus, Kauto	B
Common Genet	<i>Genetta genetta</i>	various months	Nanyangacor, Road 2	B
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	various months	Nanyangacor	1
Aardvark	<i>Orycteropus afer</i>	various months	Nanyangacor, Road 2	1
Rock Hyrax	<i>Procavia</i> sp.	various months	Nanyangacor, Napwatasigiria	B
African Elephant	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>	various months	Road 6	?
Lesser Kudu	<i>Tragelaphus imberbis</i>	19 December 2005	Road 6	1
Eland	<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>	26 February 2005	Road 6	1
Bush Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>	19 November 2004	Lotimor	1
Guenther's Dikdik	<i>Madoqua guentheri</i>	26 April 2004	Road 2, Road 6	C

Additions to the avifauna of Congo-Brazzaville

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Compléments à l'avifaune du Congo-Brazzaville. Cet article présente 18 espèces nouvelles pour le pays depuis la publication de Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) et de quelques études publiées par la suite. Les données concernent dix espèces afrotropicales, sept visiteurs paléarctiques occasionnels et une espèce introduite, et proviennent de la Réserve communautaire du Lac Télé, dans le département de la Likouala, la Réserve de Lesio-Louna et la côte. Parmi celles-ci, les premières observations du Tisserin de Weyns *Ploceus weynsi*, dont quelques rassemblements particulièrement importants ont été notés, le plus grand groupe comprenant au moins 20.000 individus. Des informations supplémentaires sont également fournies concernant quatre espèces peu connues dont la présence dans le pays avait déjà été documentée.

Summary. This paper documents 18 additions to the list of the birds of Congo-Brazzaville since the publication of Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) and a few studies published subsequently. The records concern ten Afrotropical species, seven rare Palearctic migrants or vagrants, and one introduced species, and come from the Lac Télé Community Reserve, Likouala department, the Lesio-Louna Reserve and the coast. Among these are the first observations in the country of Weyns's Weaver *Ploceus weynsi*, of which a few remarkably large flocks were seen, one comprising at least 20,000 individuals. Details of sightings of four species that were already on the Congo-Brazzaville list but about which little is known in the country are also provided.

The birds of Congo-Brazzaville have been studied by relatively few experienced observers. Amongst the most important studies are those of R. J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire (see e.g. Dowsett 1993, Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* 1993, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998) and J. Mokoko Ikonga (2003). Recent additions to the country's avifaunal list by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) brought the total to 639 species; subsequently, the occurrence of an additional seven species has been documented (Bulens & Dowsett 2001, Mokoko Ikonga & Bokandza-Paco 2001, Mokoko Ikonga & Rainey 2005, Mamonekene & Bokandza-Paco 2006, King & Chamberlan 2007). Here we present details of another 18 species new to the Congo-Brazzaville list. We also provide details of sightings of four species that were already known to occur (Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Red-capped Lark *Calendrella cinerea* and Lesser Bristlebill *Bleda notata*), but about which little is known in Congo-Brazzaville.

Taxonomy, order and nomenclature follow Borrow & Demey (2001) with updates as appropriate from Borrow & Demey (2004). The probable status of each species in the country is indicated as follows: R = resident; M = intra-African migrant; P = Palearctic migrant.

Additions to the avifauna of Congo-Brazzaville

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* M

RV saw an adult flying south over the wetlands near the Loya River mouth, in the M'Pita area of Pointe-Noire, on 27 October 2003. It flew parallel to the Loya River at 300–400 m from the water, at a height of c.50–60 m. The pelican was largely bright white, with contrasting black flight feathers; the bill pouch was yellow. RV, who has seen this species previously in Kenya and Cameroon, noted that the bird was much whiter and had a brighter yellow bill than Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens*, with which he is also familiar. There appear to be no other recent observations of *P. onocrotalus* in Congo-Brazzaville, although the species has been recorded in Gabon (Sargeant 1993, Schepers & Marteiijn 1993, Vande weghe 2005) and Cabinda (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949). Malbrant & Maclatchy (1949) may have observed this species on the Congo River several times ('à plusieurs reprises'). Brown *et al.* (1982) map its presence in inland Congo-Brazzaville, but this is based on approximations of distribution and does not imply specific observations of the species.



Figure 1. Martial Eagle / Aigle martial *Polemaetus bellicosus*, Lefini Faunal Reserve, 21 July 2006 (Tony King)



Figure 2. House Sparrow / Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus*, Pointe-Noire, 12 November 2005 (Tony King)

Figure 3–4. Lesser Bristlebill *Bleda notata ugandae*, Lesio-Louna Reserve, 3 November 2005 (Christelle Chamberlan). Note the dull greenish-yellow loreal spot (bright yellow in the nominate race); the yellow tips to the outer tail feathers are also 5–10 mm wider than in *B. n. notata*.

Bulbul jaunelore *Bleda notata ugandae*, Réserve de Lesio-Louna, 3 novembre 2005 (Christelle Chamberlan). Noter la tache vert-jaune terne en avant de l'œil (jaune vif chez la sous-espèce nominale); le pointes jaunes sur les rectrices externes sont 5–10 mm plus large que chez *B. n. notata*.



Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* R/M

Mokoko Ikonga (2003) made the first observation in Lac Télé Community Reserve (LTCR) in 2001 of one individual. Local people reported that it previously bred at a colony near Dzéké village, in central LTCR, but was extirpated by hunting in the late 1970s. Subsequent observations were made in LTCR by JMI and HJR: two individuals in March 2002, one in November and five in March 2006, and three, including one bird carrying nesting material at the Massolo waterbird colony near Botongo, in December 2006. The birds were identified by their overall grey plumage, little contrast between the remiges and wing-coverts, and pale yellow bill. Recent conservation activities in LTCR may have encouraged this species' return. Previous unconfirmed records include those of Malbrant & Maclatchy (1949) who observed it on the Congo River. It was appar-

ently first noted by Dybowski (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949). Chapin (1932), who worked on the other side of the river, in Congo-Kinshasa, recorded it at Stanley Pool, and thus observations of this species in Congo-Brazzaville are not surprising. An observation of a pelican colony by Verschuren & Mbani Akangala Mankarika (1982) just south of the Congo-Brazzaville border in Cabinda in 1981 is not precise enough for specific identification. However, if indeed the birds were nesting in trees, they were likely to be *P. rufescens*: *P. onocrotalus* nests on the ground.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* R/M

A second- or third-year bird, identified by its very large size, mainly white head and underparts, and finely barred tail, was observed and photographed by TK in the south-west part of Lefini Faunal Reserve on 21 July 2006; it was perched on a tall

termite mound in open savanna next to the Louna River, just north of the northern boundary of the adjacent Lesio-Louna Reserve (Fig. 1). Adults were sighted on two occasions in November 2006, both in or near the same part of the Lefini Faunal Reserve. This species is also known from the Batéké Plateau in Gabon (Christy 2001a; TK pers. obs.)

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* P

One and two females observed in LTCR, flying along the Likouala-aux-Herbes River, on 5 and 15 October 2005, respectively, by HJR. The birds were seen in good light at c.20–30 m. They were medium-sized falcons with an orange-rufous crown and chest, and red legs; these features distinguish the species from African Hobby *Falco cucvierii* and Amur Falcon *F. amurensis*. The dates suggest that these Palearctic migrants were on passage to their wintering grounds in southern Africa.

Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* R

A female was observed by RV in wetlands near the mouth of the Loya River, in the M'Pita neighbourhood of Pointe-Noire, on 25 March 2003. Subsequent sightings in the same area include: two males and a female on 30 October 2003; two males and two females on 29 January 2004; an unspecified number on 30 January 2004; a male and a female on 14 May 2004; and a male and two females on 19 April 2005. Urban *et al.* (1986) map its presence in central Congo-Brazzaville but this is based on approximations of distribution; it is not listed by Dowsett (1993). Probably resident, as the species was observed on a wide range of dates. Previously recorded at Loango in Cabinda, the Congo River in Congo-Kinshasa and Port-Gentil and the Ogooué delta on the Gabon coast (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949, Christy 2001b).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* P

A group of at least six in non-breeding plumage was seen by RV foraging on mudflats of the M'Pita neighbourhood, Pointe-Noire, on 27 October 2003. RV observed a similar number on a subsequent visit on 28 January 2004: possibly the same group. On both occasions several other waders were present, including Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. The birds were noticeably smaller than the latter, with shorter legs, a shorter, less curved bill, and a somewhat more streaked

upper breast. The diagnostic split supercilium was less distinct than anticipated, but this is a variable character that may not be so obvious in non-breeding birds (Borrow & Demey 2001, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002). This species is rarely recorded in western Africa. Previous nearest records, all from the coast, are from Gabon (one at Owendo, near Libreville, 27 March–3 April 1983: Christy 1990; two at the Moka River mouth, 3 September 1999: N. Borrow in *Bull. ABC* 7: 74) and Cameroon (one at La Digue, Douala, 21 November 1993: Sørensen *et al.* 1996).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* P

One was observed on the beach in Conkouati-Douli National Park on 17 June 2007, by JMI and the WCS waterbird survey team. The thin straight bill, thin legs and overall gracile appearance enabled identification. This species is known from two sites in coastal Gabon (Christy 2001b), so its discovery in Conkouati-Douli National Park, at the border with Gabon, is unsurprising.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* P

An adult was found dead in a fishing net in the south of LTCR on 31 January 2001 by JMI (Mokoko Ikonga 2003). The very long tail feathers were evident, separating it from other *Stercorarius* species. This appears to be the first record for mainland central Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* M

A large flock of more than 200, including a small number of adults with distinctive grey heads, was recorded south of Bouanéla, in southern LTCR, during annual waterbird counts in February 2002 (Mokoko Ikonga 2003). An adult was also observed at Stanley Pool, on the Congo River, on 21 January 2003 by JMI. M. Agnagna (pers. comm.) observed a large flock of hundreds of gulls on Lac Télé (date unknown) which may have been this species. There are very few records in this part of Africa, although one was collected by a fisherman on the Sangha River, Central African Republic, in October 1981 (Green & Carroll 1991).

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* R

One was observed on 30 June 2007 by HJR in Pokola forest concession, part of the Nouabalé-

Ndoki National Park (NNNP) periphery. Its distinctive chestnut back, white outer tail tips and black and grey wings were very evident. It was on a broad causeway across a river and surrounding swamp forest, c.1 km from the logging town Ndoki 1, south of NNNP, within the PROGEPP (Programme de Gestion de la Périphérie du Parc). The nearest previous records of this species are from Dja in Cameroon (Christy 1994), as well as southern Central African Republic (Borrow & Demey 2004). It is commonly seen in human-modified habitats elsewhere in its range (Borrow & Demey 2001; HJR pers. obs.), and its occurrence in Congo-Brazzaville is perhaps an unfortunate indicator of the opening of formerly closed forest. There was a possible sighting in 2005, on the road between Épéna in LTCR and Impfondo, but it was too brief to be confirmed (HJR pers. obs.). Other recent sightings of non-forest species in the forests of northern Congo-Brazzaville, including Hoopoe *Upupa epops* in Kabo town and near Épéna (HJR pers. obs.), and Spotted Hyaena *Crocuta crocuta* in Kabo logging concession (P. Elkan pers. comm.), also in PROGEPP, are further indicators of ongoing deforestation. Along with Equatorial Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville was one of the few sub-Saharan countries from which *S. senegalensis* had not previously been recorded.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* P

First seen by HJR in gallery woodland and forest on the Likouala-aux-Herbes and Bailly rivers during waterbird counts in LTCR on 19–25 February 2005, when three and four birds, including at least three of the hepatic form, were found on two days. The hepatic birds distinguish the species from African Cuckoo *C. gularis*, which has not yet been identified in the reserve. Subsequently, the species was recorded at several sites throughout the reserve, on 5, 13 and 15 October, 2 November 2005 and 3 March 2006. Common Cuckoo has been recorded throughout Central African Republic and most of Cameroon, with a few observations in Gabon (Brosset & Énard 1986, Carroll 1988, Borrow & Demey 2004). The nearest observation is from Lobéké in Cameroon (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000). Chapin (1939) believed he saw one at Lukolela, on the Congo River in Congo-Kinshasa.

Familiar Chat *Cercomela familiaris* R

Two birds, presumed to be a pair, were observed by RV on a savanna hillside with rocky outcrops at Ngouédi, midway between Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville, a few kilometres north of the border with Congo-Kinshasa, on 12 September 2004. They were apparently nesting, as they went back and forth from a rock niche to forage in nearby cultivation. They had a plain, dark brown back, a bright rufous rump and tail, the latter with dark central feathers and dark brown tips, in an inverted 'T' pattern, a paler grey-brown breast and a pale eye-ring. The birds were quite active, often flicking their wings, and were silent during the c.30 minutes of observation. The previous known northern limit of the species' southern distribution was Manyanga, Bas-Congo region of Congo-Kinshasa, and Cabinda (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949, Keith *et al.* 1992). In western Africa, it is known from the savanna zone (Borrow & Demey 2001).

European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* P

Three *Acrocephalus* warblers observed by HJR in LTCR, in long grass close to the Likouala-aux-Herbes River, near Épéna, on 13 January 2005, 22 January 2006 and 24 February 2006, were confidently identified as this species. They were not as large as Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*, which is commonly seen in LTCR, had warm brown plumage, and primaries extending beyond the rump; no vocalisations were heard. *A. scirpaceus* is known from several nearby localities (e.g. Lobéké in Cameroon: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000; various localities including Bangui in Central African Republic: Germain & Cornet 1994). Interestingly, Chapin (1953) recorded *A. arundinaceus* from many wetlands and along rivers in Congo-Kinshasa, but mentions only two *A. scirpaceus* specimens, both of these from eastern Congo-Kinshasa.

Capuchin Babbler *Phyllanthus atripennis* R

One was observed flying across the Likouala-aux-Herbes River near Itanga, in LTCR, on 5 October 2005, by HJR. It was seen at a distance of c.30 m. The grey head and chestnut body were distinctive, although the observation of only a single was atypical. No calls were heard. The nearest records are from Bwamanda in Congo-Kinshasa (Schouteden 1962), southern Central African Republic (Carroll

1988, Borrow & Demey 2004), and it has also been collected at Bangui (Chapin 1953).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* P

A first-winter was seen 1 km east of Epéna on 12 November 2007 by HJR. The rufous tail and rump, grey-brown mantle, wings and head, indistinct mask and faint scalloping on the breast-sides were evident. These features distinguish it from first-winter Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (head, mantle and wings warm brown) or first-winter Souza's Shrike *L. souzae* (head, mantle and wings warm brown with more extensive scalloping). This individual was perched on a grass stem in seasonally flooded savanna (floods receding by this date) and flycatching. The nearest record of this Palearctic migrant is from Bwamanda in Congo-Kinshasa (Schouteden 1962). The observation in LTCR falls within two days of those of a Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (previously only known from Odzala NP and LTCR) and of *Calandrella cinerea* (this study), suggesting that conditions may have been suitable for migrating birds. *L. collurio*, also a Palearctic migrant, has already been recorded from LTCR (HJR pers. obs.) and is known from the west of Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon. *L. souzae* is resident on the Batéké Plateau in central Congo-Brazzaville and is not known to be migratory.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* R

A small, mixed-sex group was observed by TK on 12 November 2005, foraging on the wooden floor of a beach-side restaurant in Pointe-Noire. The white cheeks and chestnut upperparts of a male suggest they were of the race *indicus* (Fig. 2). Further observations in December 2006 suggest the species is fairly common in the town, but still out-numbered by Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *P. griseus* (TK pers. obs.). A widespread species in southern Africa but found in only a few scattered locations in western Africa, the nearest records being from Chad and the Lake Chad area (Borrow & Demey 2004, Fry & Keith 2004). Surprisingly, there are no records as yet from Libreville or elsewhere in Gabon (Borrow & Demey 2004, TK pers. obs.).

Weyn's Weaver *Ploceus weynsi* M?

Huge, cloud-like, wheeling, hesitant flocks of at least 5,000 weavers were identified as this species

at Épéna, in LTCR, on 13 January 2005. Large flocks were observed in January–March 2005, September 2005–October 2006 and January 2007. In July 2006, a flock of more than 10,000 birds and another comprising at least 20,000 individuals were seen. Weyn's Weaver has been observed in farmbrush, secondary forest and, occasionally, the edge of swamp forest, throughout most of LTCR, including on the Bailly River in the west and near Mokengui in the north. In flight this species may initially resemble Village Weaver *P. cucullatus* but the upperparts are darker, and the wavering, wheeling flight patterns of large flocks are unmistakable. The previous largest known flocks known were of 200 birds (Fry & Keith 2004). Young or eclipse-plumage birds may resemble *P. cucullatus* as the pale eye is not always distinct, even at close range. Overall, however, *P. weynsi* is much darker and the pale fringes to the greater coverts are very distinct. The higher pitched voice is also useful to distinguish the bird in flight. As the species is known from western Congo-Kinshasa (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949, Chapin 1954), its occurrence here is unsurprising. It is known to wander erratically (Fry & Keith 2004) and its occurrence in Congo-Brazzaville may only be sporadic, as the species was only discovered here in 2005, despite experienced observers having counted waterbirds in LTCR since 1997, and it is very unlikely that the huge flocks would have remained unobserved. This is a very poorly known bird; neither breeding nor the voice have been recorded.

Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis* R

Single males were observed near Epéna in LTCR by HJR on 16 October and 3 December 2006, with a third 5 km away on 9 December 2007. The first was seen in lightly flooded grassland at a distance of c.20 m. It was perched in short grass c.60 cm above ground. The second was perched 7 m high in a dead tree at the edge of a manioc field near grassland and a patch of secondary forest. The third was on 2-m tall grass in a small patch of savanna between the Likouala-aux-Herbes River and secondary forest and cocoa plantations. All individuals had a bright yellow head, breast and belly. The upperparts were heavily and regularly streaked green and dark brown. The bill was black and conical, unlike that of the weavers present in such habitat in LTCR (e.g. Slender-billed Weaver

Ploceus pelzelni, Black-headed Weaver *P. melanocephalus*, and Village Weaver *P. cucullatus*). They were larger than *P. pelzelni* and smaller than *P. melanocephalus*. As the first bird flew off, it uttered a soft *tsip tsip tsip* call, similar to the recording on Chappuis (2000). This species has a patchy distribution throughout its range (Borrow & Demey 2001, Fry & Keith 2004) and has a preference for moist grasslands. The nearest known record is from Boyagati, Congo-Kinshasa (Schouteden 1962).

Additional data on selected species

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* R/M

First observed by JMI and HJR in 2001–05 on the Likouala-aux-Herbes River in LTCR (Mokoko Ikonga & Rainey 2005). On 8 August 2006, one was seen at the exit of Conkouati lagoon into the sea, in Conkouati-Douli National Park, by HJR. The all-feathered, dark face and dark eye were clearly seen. The nearest records are from Gabon, where the species is a vagrant (Christy 1982).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* P

Two were observed by TK on 21 December 2004 in freshly burnt grassland halfway up the escarpment of Epopé, on the north bank of the Lefini River, c.5 km west of the Lefini / Louna confluence in Lefini Faunal Reserve. This is the second record of this species in Congo-Brazzaville, the first being of one bird with a flock of Woolly-necked Storks *Ciconia episcopus*, on 22 February 2000, at the confluence of the Bailly River with the Likouala-aux-Herbes (Mokoko Ikonga & Bokandza-Paco 2001). The nearest observations are from Bamanya and Iyonda, in Congo-Kinshasa (Schouteden 1961).

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea* M

Two larks were observed on a muddy track just outside Epéna in LTCR, on 11 November 2007, by HJR. Both had a red cap, a white supercilium, white underparts, and rufous-streaked breast-sides. One was more sandy coloured than the other, which was of a more greyish hue. They were feeding and could be approached to c.10 m. This species had previously been observed near Brazzaville (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1989) and is known from Ipeko and Ikengo (Schouteden

1961) and near Kinshasa in Congo-Kinshasa (Chapin 1953).

Lesser Bristlebill *Bleda notata* R

The distinctive subspecies *B. n. ugandae* was recorded by Rand *et al.* (1959) from Impfondo on the Oubangui River in Congo-Brazzaville (85 km east of LTCR). Aside from this observation, *B. n. ugandae* had not previously been recorded from Congo-Brazzaville. We observed, trapped and photographed this subspecies in closed forest on the edge of Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park at Bomassa (JMI), in gallery forest in the Lesio-Louna Reserve (TK) and in swamp and secondary forest in LTCR, where it is fairly common (HJR) (Figs. 3–4). *B. n. notata* has been recorded west of the Sangha River, in the Kouilou, at Dimonika and in Odzala National Park (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1989, Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1991, Dowsett-Lemaire 1997). The two taxa may be separated in Congo-Brazzaville by the Sangha River in the north and savannas of the Batéké Plateau in the south. The nearest records in Congo-Kinshasa are from Equateur region on the east bank of the Oubangui River (R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2008), as well as being widely found elsewhere in the dryland and swamp forests of western Congo-Kinshasa (e.g. Schouteden 1923, Chapin 1953; R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2008), in similar habitat to that in LTCR. Given the observation in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, its occurrence in southern Central African Republic, east of the Sangha River, is a possibility.

Discussion

We added 18 species to the list of birds known from Congo-Brazzaville. Since the last review of the birds of Congo-Brazzaville, which listed 639 species (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998), Nyanza Swift *Apus nyansae* has been deleted from the country list (Herroelen 2003). The maps in Borrow & Demey (2001, 2004) indicate *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Black-necked Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophya chalybea* and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* as occurring in Congo-Brazzaville. These mapped distributions are approximations and in fact only the former has been claimed from the country (this study). A number of new species have been observed recently (*Egretta ardesiaca*, *Ciconia ciconia*, Sladen's Barbet *Gymnobucco*

sladeni, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*, Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*, Red-headed Picathartes *Picathartes oreas*: Mokoko Ikonga & Bockandza-Paco 2001, Mokoko Ikonga 2003, Mokoko Ikonga & Rainey 2005, Mamonekene & Bockandza-Paco 2006, King & Chamberlan 2007). If Green-breasted Pitta *Pitta reichenowi* and Bates's Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone batesi* are recognised as separate species (as in Keith *et al.* 1992, Urban *et al.* 1997, Borrow & Demey 2001, 2004) the total bird list for Congo-Brazzaville stands at 665. It is likely that the total will continue to rise given that relatively few sites have been studied. In particular, southern Congo-Brazzaville (Lekoumou and Bouenza regions) and the areas bordering northern (e.g. the proposed Ougoué-Leketi National Park, west Sangha region) and southern Gabon (e.g. Conkouati-Douli National Park, north Kouilou and Niari regions) have received little attention. Some species possibly use the open savanna habitats that run 300 km north–south across otherwise dense forest, such as those along the Likouala River in Lac Télé Community Reserve, as flyways to traverse the closed forest of the Congo basin. A number of taxa, including Wahlberg's Honeyguide *Prodotiscus regulus* and Forest White-eye *Zosterops (senegalensis) stenocricotus*, have been claimed but require confirmation. The possible presence of a crane species has been suggested by local people from the Bouenza region.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Aspinall Foundation, UK, and the Ministère de l'Économie Forestière for their collaboration and support during this study, particularly Domingos Dos Santos and Emile Ngouaka, in the Lac Télé Community Reserve, and Florent Ikoli in the Lesio-Louna Reserve. The staff of the LTCR Project including Bola Madzoké, Roger Mobongo, Sylvestre Dongo Vostel Gaïko, Nazaire Massamba, Rufin Ebiba, Valentin Bossela-Bibengo and Fulgence Dzibo provided field assistance. Thanks to BirdLife International and Ron Demey for assistance with references and to Christelle Chamberlan for photographs. Many thanks to Bob Dowsett for refereeing this paper and to him and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire for other comments and suggesting references.

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Received 15 January 2007; revision accepted 9 October 2008.

Quest for a phantom—the search for the winter quarters of the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

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À la recherche des quartiers d'hivernage du Phragmite aquatique *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Le Phragmite aquatique *Acrocephalus paludicola* est une espèce globalement menacée qui niche en Europe centrale et de l'est, ainsi que dans l'ouest de la Sibérie. Il migre via l'Europe de l'ouest vers l'Afrique sub-saharienne, mais ses quartiers d'hivernage étaient largement inconnus, avec seulement 32 données de novembre à février en Afrique. Pour mettre en place des stratégies de conservation pour des oiseaux migrateurs, il est nécessaire de prendre en compte l'ensemble des habitats utilisés durant un cycle annuel. En février 2007, l'AWCT a organisé une mission au Parc National du Djoudj, au Sénégal, où 19 personnes de dix pays européens ont été rejointes par 20 ornithologues sénégalais et mauritaniens. En deux semaines, 56 Phragmites aquatiques ont été capturés et d'autres observés. Avec ce résultat inespéré, l'expédition a découvert une importante zone d'hivernage pour l'espèce. À l'avenir, les contrôles de bagues, l'analyse des isotopes et des échantillons de sang, ainsi que l'étude des habitats utilisés par l'espèce devraient aider à localiser de nouveaux sites d'hivernage en Afrique de l'ouest et dynamiser la coopération internationale pour la conservation de cet oiseau.

Summary. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* is a globally threatened species which breeds in central and eastern Europe and in western Siberia. It migrates, via Western Europe, to sub-Saharan Africa, but its precise wintering grounds were hitherto unknown, with only 32 published records between the months of November to February from Africa. To develop conservation strategies for migratory bird species, all habitats used throughout the annual cycle must be considered. In February 2007 the AWCT led an expedition to Djoudj National Park, Senegal, where 19 members of the AWCT from ten European countries were joined by 20 ornithologists from Senegal and Mauritania. Fifty-six Aquatic Warblers were mist-netted and more observed in two weeks. With this unexpected result, the expedition had discovered an important wintering area of the species. In the future, ring recoveries as well as the analyses of isotopes of plucked feathers, blood samples and habitats used will help to indicate more potential sites where Aquatic Warblers may spend the non-breeding season in West Africa, and will stimulate further international cooperation for the species' conservation.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* is the only globally threatened passerine bird species found in continental Europe (BirdLife International 2004). Formerly widespread in all mires and riverine wetlands of eastern and central Europe, and with a distribution reaching as far west as northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands, the species' decline had already commenced in the 18th century with the first large-scale drainage activities for agricultural purposes. Aquatic Warbler became extinct as a breeder in France and Belgium as early as the 19th century. In the Czech Republic the last Aquatic Warblers bred in the early 1900s. In Austria the species bred until the 1920s, in the Netherlands until the 1940s and in Italy until the 1950s or

1960s. During this period populations in the former Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria probably also vanished (Schulze-Hagen 1991). In other parts of Central Europe populations also declined rapidly: in western Germany the species became extinct in the 1960s, but there were *c.*10 singing males in the extreme north-east of the country in 2007 (Tanneberger *et al.* in press). These birds belong, along with the birds on the Polish side of the River Oder, to the smallest of the four currently known, isolated, breeding populations, namely that restricted to Pomerania which totalled approximately 80 singing males, at seven sites, in 2007 (Tanneberger *et al.* in press). This population is declining rapidly and will probably become extinct soon, if the current trend continues (Flade

et al. 2006). A larger population, in the Hortobágy region of Hungary, showed a continuous upward trend after the first singing males—c.20—were discovered there in the early 1970s. However, since 2001 the population has collapsed from c.700 singing males to 60 in 2006 (Z. Végváry pers. comm.). The largest of the four known populations is found in Lithuania, Belarus, East Poland and Ukraine. There, up to 7,000 singing males occur in the Zvanets mire, Belarus, alone, and the total Central European population is estimated to comprise c.17,000 singing males. The fourth population, discovered in 2000 in west Siberia, is isolated by 4,000 km. It comprises c.50–500 singing males (Flade in prep.). The total world population of Aquatic Warblers is estimated to number c.18,000 males at fewer than 40 regular breeding localities in eight European countries, with four sites supporting over 80% of the world population (AWCT data base, Flade in prep.). The species is, therefore, the rarest breeding passerine in continental Europe and is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. At the European level, it is classified as Endangered (BirdLife International 2004) and the species is also included in Annex I of the EU Wild Birds Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, in Appendix II of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and in Appendix I of the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

Coordinating conservation activities on the breeding grounds

The rapid decline of Aquatic Warbler populations by c.95% within a century (AWCT 1999, BirdLife International 2004) led to concerns that the species may face extinction in the near future, although an expedition organised by M. Flade to Belarus in 1995, to confirm that the species was extinct there succeeded in discovering the largest known breeding population (AWCT 1999). The deteriorating situation led to international action in 1998, when the 'Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team' (AWCT) was founded at Brodowin, Germany, under the auspices of BirdLife International. The AWCT represents an informal association of researchers and conservationists working on the Aquatic Warbler, from all breeding-range states, some stopover and one win-

tering country, respectively. Currently, ornithologists from 11 European countries and Senegal are involved.

The AWCT organises at least one annual meeting and has undertaken 14 field expeditions to different parts of west Siberia, Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, European Russia, Poland and Hungary. During these expeditions, the AWCT has explored nearly the entire former central and east-European, as well as the Siberian, breeding range of the Aquatic Warbler, in search of remain-

Captions to photos on opposite page

Figure 1. Some members of the Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team (AWCT) in search for Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola*, February 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Quelques membres de l'Equipe de Conservation du Phragmite aquatique (AWCT) à la recherche du Phragmite aquatique *Acrocephalus paludicola*, février 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Figure 2. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* habitat in Djoudj National Park, Senegal, February 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Habitat du Phragmite aquatique *Acrocephalus paludicola* dans le Parc National du Djoudj, Sénégal, février 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Figure 3. Senegal ornithologist Ibrahim Gueye with the first Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* mist-netted by the AWCT in Senegal, 25 January 2007 (Martin Flade)

L'ornithologue sénégalais Ibrahim Gueye avec le premier Phragmite aquatique *Acrocephalus paludicola* capturé par l'AWCT au Sénégal, 25 janvier 2007 (Martin Flade)

Figure 4. The AWCT team discovered an important non-breeding area of Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* in Djoudj National Park, February 2007 (Volker Salewski)

L'équipe AWCT a découvert une importante zone d'hivernage de la Marouette de Baillon *Porzana pusilla* dans le Parc National du Djoudj, février 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Figure 5. The melanistic form of Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* is encountered regularly in Djoudj National Park, February 2007 (Volker Salewski)

La forme mélanique du Busard cendré *Circus pygargus* est rencontrée régulièrement dans le Parc National du Djoudj, février 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Figure 6. The rare Little (Kurrichane) Buttonquail *Turnix sylvaticus* was recorded by the AWCT, February 2007 (Volker Salewski)

Le rare Turnix d'Andalousie *Turnix sylvaticus* à été observé par l'AWCT, février 2007 (Volker Salewski)



ing populations, has taken DNA and feather samples of most subpopulations, developed joint standard methods for monitoring, habitat description and field research, and has initiated the Aquatic Warbler Memorandum of Understanding under the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Animals (2003, Minsk).

With the Pripyat marshes in Belarus and Ukraine, the population in the Hortobágy National Park, Hungary and other regions in eastern-central Europe (Biebrza and Chelm marshes in Poland, Supoy and Uday marshes in central Ukraine), the majority of Aquatic Warblers breed in protected areas (AWCT 1999) and, at least in the near future, the species' breeding habitats appear safe. However, Aquatic Warblers are long-distance migrants and populations of migratory birds may be affected by conditions or factors operating on migration or in the winter quarters (see Salewski & Cresswell in prep.). Therefore, long-term conservation strategies must consider all habitats, regions and conditions used by a migratory species throughout its annual cycle, and require collaboration by conservationists from different countries (Bibby 2003). A precondition for the development of such a strategy is knowledge of the migration routes, the areas where the non-breeding season is spent, and the habitats used on migration and in winter, but the precise wintering grounds of Aquatic Warblers were hitherto unknown (Schulze-Hagen 1991, AWCT 1999).

Where are the winter quarters?

The AWCT has run several desk studies aimed at narrowing down the potential wintering range of the species. Schäffer *et al.* (2006) reviewed all available information concerning the migration routes and winter quarters. Aquatic Warblers depart their breeding grounds between late June and mid August, migrating west and south-west through Western Europe (Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France) and Iberia to north-west Africa (Julliard *et al.* 2006). There are nine records from Morocco in August–October, after which the species seems to 'vanish' almost completely until it reappears in northern Africa in spring (44 records from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in February–May). There were only 16 records (of at least 19 individuals) of Aquatic Warblers in November–January from four countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Mauritania (4),

Senegal (6), Mali (5) and northern Ghana (1). There are a further 16 records from February, including some from northern Africa (Egypt: 1, Algeria: 1, Morocco: 7). This is an astonishingly small number of records given that, despite the species' status, thousands of birds migrate annually to Africa. Therefore, knowledge of the winter quarters was far from sufficient to draw conclusions concerning habitat requirements and potential threats in Africa. The few observations, however, suggested that the species probably winters in similar habitats (freshwater marshes, wet meadows, floodplains) compared to the breeding grounds. Because wetlands throughout Africa face threats from agricultural development, as well as on the breeding grounds in Europe (AWCT 1999), more research was urgently needed to locate the Aquatic Warbler's staging areas in Africa.

The activities of the AWCT included two analytical studies: (1) a project to study migratory connectivity of Aquatic Warblers using stable isotopes, which has resulted in identification of the probable wintering sites in Senegal, Mauritania and Mali (D. Pain pers. comm.). (2) A further study modelled the potential wintering areas using all previous observations (Walther *et al.* in press). The latter study came to more conservative conclusions concerning the suggested winter quarters, ranging from northern Senegal south to The Gambia, and through southern Mauritania, Mali and Burkina Faso west to northern Benin, southern Niger and western Nigeria. However, in coincidence with the isotope study (Pain *et al.* 2004), this study suggested that all known populations of Aquatic Warblers winter in West Africa.

Quest for a phantom—the AWCT in Senegal

Limited evidence suggested that Aquatic Warblers winter exclusively in wetlands within savanna habitats. Furthermore, there were substantial indications that a major wintering site was situated in the Senegal River estuary (Morel & Roux 1973, Rodwell *et al.* 1996). In contrast, an expedition by Spanish ornithologists failed to find any Aquatic Warblers in the Inner Niger Delta, in Mali, in December 2006 (C. Z. Martinez pers. comm.).

To protect Aquatic Warblers in all regions and habitats throughout its annual cycle the AWCT has been searching for partners in Africa since its foundation. Such a partner was found with

Ibrahima Diop, the Director of the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj in northern Senegal. Senegal is also the only African country, to date, to have signed the international memorandum for the protection of the Aquatic Warbler. In this memorandum, the countries agreed to implement measures to protect Aquatic Warblers according to an action plan and to report on progress every three years. The first meeting of the signatory parties was in 2006. During this conference highest priority was given to search for Aquatic Warblers in West Africa. In January 2007, 19 members of the AWCT from ten different European countries visited Djoudj National Park, where they joined 18 Senegalese colleagues. During several days, two colleagues from Diawling National Park on the Mauritanian side of the Senegal estuary also joined, as potential wintering habitats for Aquatic Warblers occur in their country.

The search for Aquatic Warblers started immediately. The few former records in the area were from cattail stands and from sedge, rush or reed vegetation in freshwater marshes or floodplains (Schäffer *et al.* 2006). Initially, therefore, efforts concentrated on *Typha* stands and on grassy and bushy savanna habitats, but no Aquatic Warblers were found. The search then shifted to wide flooded marshes with up to c.60-cm high grasses (*Scirpus maritimus*, *S. littoralis*, *Sporobolus robustus*) and few bushes. There, after seven days of search, the first Aquatic Warbler was mist-netted, on 25 January. Once the habitat preferences for the species were known, several birds were mist-netted almost every day and more were observed. The reason for the failure of former mist-netting projects within Djoudj National Park to capture more Aquatic Warblers was probably due to the species' special habitat preferences. Only a few other species were mist-netted in the marshes, in contrast to the bushes at their fringes, which were full of migrants—the target of most former projects. Mist-netting in homogeneous habitat with no shade, but knee-deep water that made it necessary to wear high gum boots revealed another surprise for the members of the AWCT: 16 Baillon's Crakes *Porzana pusilla* were captured and many more observed and heard. There were only two previous records from Senegal, but now it appears that an important wintering area was also discovered for this species.

Following two further weeks of mist-netting and observations, a total of 56 Aquatic Warblers had been captured—almost twice as many as the total number of winter records (November–February) to date. With this unexpected success, it was revealed that the region of Djoudj National Park appears to be one of the most important wintering areas of the species. In addition, more than 2,000 individuals of 22 other Palearctic migrants were mist-netted. All were ringed, standard measurements and blood samples were taken, and feathers were plugged. These samples will be analysed in the UK to garner knowledge as to the origin of those birds wintering in Djoudj National Park. Senegalese and Mauritanian AWCT members received training in ringing, to further the project. One of the mist-netted Aquatic Warblers had been ringed in Palencia, north-west Spain, during the preceding autumn migration.

The future—a model of successful inter-continental cooperation to protect globally threatened migratory species

Some areas where warblers were found are within the limits of Djoudj National Park and are therefore protected. There are, however, other sites outside the park, which may be threatened by grazing. Exploratory trips to northern Senegal have revealed that there is hardly any suitable habitat for Aquatic Warblers, due the transformation of natural floodplains of the Senegal River into arable land—a remarkable similarity to the threats on the European breeding grounds (Schulze-Hagen 1991, AWCT 1999, Poluda 2006). As the discovered wintering grounds appear safe, the main task for the AWCT will be to search for additional suitable habitats. These may occur in Mauritania, in Diawling National Park or around some lakes (Lac Aleg, Lac R'Kiz) in the south. Some preliminary work for further searches was made during the present trip: wherever Aquatic Warblers were mist-netted a detailed description of the habitat was made. Analyses of these descriptions, coupled with the use of satellite images, should reveal regions with similar habitats on which future searches can focus. Furthermore, analyses of the blood samples, and another study into isotopes of the collected feathers, may shed further light on which breeding population/s winter/s in the Djoudj area. Ringing recoveries may also help solve this question. In the latter case, the

habitat analysis may direct the AWCT to other potential wintering grounds in West Africa.

Another important result of the AWCT expedition was that ornithologists from many countries and two continents can work successfully together, to make a large step forward in the protection of a globally threatened species. This might encourage more countries to join the AWCT in its efforts, and also motivate international cooperation in other projects.

Acknowledgements

We thank all members of the AWCT for their assistance during the field work, with special thanks to the Senegal National Park authorities (Direction des Parcs Nationaux du Sénégal). The project was further supported by the British Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Bonn Convention Secretariat, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Bretagne Vivante, the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft (DO-G) and the Michael Otto Foundation for Environmental Protection.

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Received 22 November 2007; revision accepted 11 February 2008.

The seabirds of the Conrad Rise, Southern Ocean

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Les oiseaux de mer du Conrad Rise, Océan austral. À l'occasion d'un inventaire océanographique du Conrad Rise (51–55°S et 39–47°E) en avril 2008, les oiseaux de mer ont été recensés. Le Conrad Rise est une vaste zone relativement peu profonde où le fond sous-marin s'élève à <3.000 m, située juste au sud du Front polaire antarctique et 550–700 km au sud des Îles du Prince Edouard et Crozet. Au moins 28 espèces ont été observées, parmi lesquelles les puffinures *Pelecanoides* spp., le Prion bleu *Halobaena caerulea* et le Pétrel de Kerguelen *Lugensa (Aphodroma) brevirostris* étaient les plus abondants, tandis que le Manchot royal *Aptenodytes patagonicus* et le Gorfou doré *Eudyptes chrysolophus* représentaient la biomasse la plus importante. Le Pétrel bleu et le Puffin à menton blanc *Procellaria aequinoctialis* étaient les plus abondants pendant que le navire était immobile, malgré le fait que l'Albatros hurleur *Diomedea exulans* et le Pétrel de Hall *Macronectes halli* étaient les espèces les plus attirées par le navire. La plupart des espèces étaient plus abondantes au nord de la zone prospectée, mais le Puffin fuligineux *Puffinus griseus* a uniquement été recensé au sud de 56°30'S. Des photos numériques ont permis de confirmer l'identification des groupes d'espèces difficiles à distinguer en mer, surtout les prions. Le Prion de Belcher *Pachyptila belcheri* et le Prion colombe *P. turtur* étaient les prions les plus abondants, tandis que le Prion de la Désolation *P. desolata* a été observé en petit nombre, et le Prion de Salvin *P. salvini* pas du tout. Relativement peu de mammifères marins ont été observés; le Rorqual commun *Balaenoptera physalus* était toutefois commun au sud de 56°S. Le résultat des transects n'indique pas une abondance avienne plus importante dans les eaux peu profondes (<250 m). La fréquentation du navire par les oiseaux était toutefois la plus grande sur le Banc O'b, ce qui est peut-être indicatif d'activités de pêche récentes. La périphérie du Conrad Rise semble être une importante zone de nourrissage pour les puffinures et les manchots à cette époque de l'année.

Summary. Seabirds were counted during an oceanographic survey of the Conrad Rise (51–55°S and 39–47°E) in April 2008. The Conrad Rise is a large area of shallower water where the seafloor rises to < 3,000 m deep, lying just south of the Antarctic Polar Front and 550–700 km south of the Prince Edward and Crozet archipelagos. At least 28 species were observed, with diving petrels *Pelecanoides* spp., and Blue *Halobaena caerulea* and Kerguelen Petrels *Lugensa (Aphodroma) brevirostris* most abundant, but King *Aptenodytes patagonicus* and Macaroni Penguins *Eudyptes chrysolophus* dominating in terms of biomass. Blue Petrels and White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis* were most abundant while the ship was stationary, although Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* and Northern Giant Petrels *Macronectes halli* were most strongly attracted to the ship. Most species were more abundant in the north of the survey area, but Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* were only recorded south of 56°30'S. Digital photography was useful to confirm the identification of species groups that are tricky to discriminate at sea, especially prions. Slender-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri* and Fairy Prion *P. turtur* were the most abundant prions, with only small numbers of Antarctic Prions *P. desolata*, and no Salvin's Prions *P. salvini*. Relatively few marine mammals were observed, but Fin Whales *Balaenoptera physalus* were common south of 56°S. Transects provided no evidence of increased bird abundance at shallow (<250 m) seamounts, but ship attendance peaked on the O'b Bank, possibly reflecting recent fishing activities. The periphery of the Conrad Rise appears to be an important foraging area for diving petrels and penguins at this time of year.

The Conrad Rise is a large area of shallower water in the Southern Ocean between 51–55°S and 39–47°E, where the seafloor rises

from the abyssal plain >4,000 m deep to < 3,000 m deep (Fig. 1). This change in bottom topography apparently influences local oceanic circulation

patterns, resulting in eastward jets north and south of the rise. The Conrad Rise lies just south of the Antarctic Polar Front, *c.*550 km south-southeast of the Prince Edward Islands and 700 km southwest of the Crozet Islands. Both archipelagos are breeding sites for globally important seabird populations, notably large numbers of penguins, albatrosses and petrels (Williams 1995, Brooke 2004, Ryan & Bester 2008). The Conrad Rise lies in an area used extensively by King Penguins *Aptenodytes patagonicus* from the Crozets (Pütz *et al.* 1999, Charrassin & Bost 2001), and a Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus* tracked during its pre-moult fattening trip travelled 700 km south of the islands into the general vicinity of the rise (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

The Conrad Rise includes two seamounts, O'b Bank and Lena Seamount, which extend to within 250 m of the surface. Another, unnamed seamount lies just east of the Rise (Fig. 1). These seamounts have been fished for Patagonian toothfish *Dissostichus eleginoides*, but there are no published observations on the region's birds. Albatrosses and petrels at risk from long-line fishing have been tracked into the general area south of the Prince Edwards and Crozets (BirdLife International 2004). I accompanied an oceanographic survey of the region in April 2008 to record the distribution and abundance of seabirds associated with the Conrad Rise. The survey included the surrounding seas between 48–57°S and 38–48°E (Fig. 1), and took place in autumn, when sea-ice conditions were minimal around Antarctica. A satellite ice image for 4 April 2008 indicated no sea-ice north of 64°S in the sector of the Southern Ocean between 30–60° E.

Methods

Seabirds were counted during the day (roughly 06.30–17.30 hrs local time) on standard steaming transects (Tasker *et al.* 1984) as well as at oceanographic stations. Transects were conducted from the ship's bridge (9 m above sea level), looking beyond the bow on that side of the ship offering best visibility. Flying birds were counted, using binoculars, every minute by scanning a 300 m-block extending forward from the bow. Ship followers that repeatedly circled the ship were excluded. More frequent scans were made of the same area for birds on the water, such as penguins and diving petrels, which are easily overlooked,

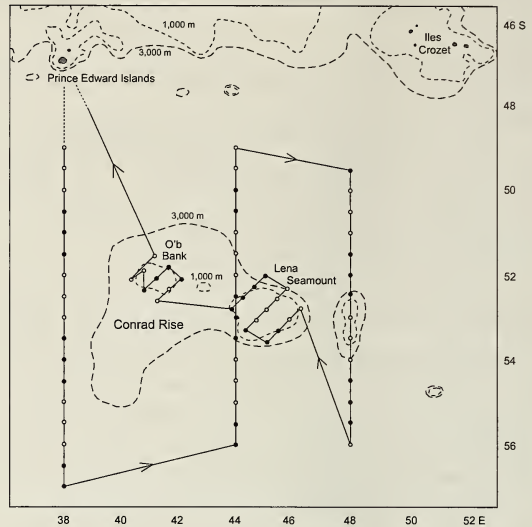


Figure 1. The study area in relation to the Prince Edward and Crozet islands and regional bathymetry, showing the cruise track, with arrows indicating the direction of travel. Circles along the cruise track are CTD stations (open = daylight, closed = night).

La zone d'étude par rapport aux Îles du Prince Edouard et Crozet et la bathymétrie régionale, avec le trajet du navire, les flèches indiquant la direction du navire. Les cercles le long du trajet du navire sont des stations CTD (conductivité, température, profondeur) (ouvert = de jour, fermé = de nuit).

especially when the sea is rough. All birds were recorded to the nearest minute, but were pooled into 30-minute minimum count blocks. Identification of tricky groups was confirmed, where possible, by photographing birds with a digital SLR and 500-mm telephoto lens.

The oceanographic survey departed Marion Island on 3 April, and commenced sampling at 49°S 38°E on 4 April. Initially a widely spaced grid was run with north–south legs at 38°E, 44°E and 48°E (Fig. 1). On these legs, CTD (conductivity, temperature, depth) stations were conducted every 30 nautical miles. This required the ship to stop on station for *c.*70–90 minutes while the CTD was lowered to 2,000 m. Stations were shorter where the water was shallower. Between stations, the ship steamed at 9–12 knots (16.5–22 km.h⁻¹), permitting 2.0–2.5 hours of transect counts. Counts did not commence until the ship had attained full speed and had left the last station by at least 2 km. On average, 5.3 hours of transects were conducted daily (3.5–7.5), all

made by the same observer. Crude estimates of seabird density (numbers.km⁻²) were made assuming the transect counts accurately reflected the abundance of flying birds in the 300-m wide count area. Apart from 18 April, when seas were exceptionally calm, no penguin groups were observed >200 m from the ship (80% ≤100 m, n=96 groups), and so a conservative estimate of 200-m wide effective transect width was assumed for all days except 18 April (300 m).

At each CTD station, counts of birds attending the ship (within c.500 m) were made for ten minutes shortly after arrival at the station, and again after 30 and 60 minutes. Dumping of galley waste (the only material dumped at sea) was only conducted after dark each evening and thus should not have overly influenced the behaviour of birds to the ship. After testing for consistent patterns in numbers of birds attending as a function of time on station, a single count for each station was taken to be the maximum number of each species seen during the three counts. Only one or two counts were made at stations conducted at dawn or dusk and at some shallow-water sites. Typically three stations were conducted daily, but on some days there were longer steams between stations (transits from 38–44°E, 44–48°E, 48°E to Lena Seamount, between Lena Seamount and O'b Bank, and from O'b Bank en route to Marion Island). Stern counts of birds following the ship were made during these legs and used in lieu of station counts to bring the sample size for each day to three counts. The ratio of birds attending the ship to those counted during transects was used to provide a crude index of ship attraction.

The course grid concluded at 56°S 48°E on 13 April. The ship then travelled to Lena Seamount, where 13 CTD stations were conducted 20 nautical miles apart and to O'b Bank, where nine stations were conducted 15 nautical miles apart (Fig. 1). This permitted 1.0–1.5 hours of transect observations between stations. Finally, the ship returned to Marion Island, arriving early on 19 April. Steaming transects were conducted until 48°S. During the survey we visited one iceberg at 55°36'S 47°21'E on 13 April. The only other ice encountered was three distant icebergs (>20 km off the cruise track) between 54°45'S and 55°20'S at 38°00'E on 6 April. No other shipping was encountered during the survey.

Results and Discussion

At least 28 seabird species were recorded, 24 during 80 hours of steaming transects and 25 at 35 oceanographic stations or during ten stern counts (Table 1). The most abundant birds during transects were diving petrels *Peleconoides* spp., Blue Petrels *Halobaena caerulea*, Kerguelen Petrels *Lugensa (Aphodroma) brevirostris* and crested penguins *Eudyptes* spp., whereas on stations Blue Petrels and White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis* predominated (Table 1). Most albatrosses and petrels exhibited a high index of ship attraction (Table 1), with Northern Giant Petrels *Macronectes halli* and Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* highest, followed by White-chinned Petrels, sooty albatrosses *Phoebastria* spp., Southern Giant Petrels *Macronectes giganteus*, Pintado Petrels *Daption capense* and Grey Petrels *Procellaria cinerea*. Only specialist diving species (diving petrels, penguins and shearwaters) were encountered much more frequently during transects than attending the ship (Table 1).

Species richness decreased with increasing latitude due to several species failing to penetrate south of 52°S (e.g. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*). Other species occurred further south, but were more abundant in the north (e.g. Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*, Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*, Grey Petrel). Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* was the only species that was recorded in the south of the survey area but was absent further north. The following sections report the distribution and abundance patterns of the species encountered.

Penguins

Given the general paucity of sightings at sea away from colonies in the Southern Ocean (Enticott 1986, Marchant & Higgins 1990), a large number of penguins was counted. However, some groups doubtless were overlooked, especially in rough seas, so the number counted represents a minimum estimate of penguin abundance. Most observations were of crested penguins. Both Macaroni and Southern Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes chrysocome* may occur in the region, but all crested penguins positively identified were Macaroni Penguins. Only four of 70 groups were thought to be possible Rockhoppers (one at 49°05'S 37°59'E, two at 49°15'S 44°00'E and one

Table 1. Numbers of birds counted during steaming transects (80 hours) and attending the ship (maximum counts at 35 stations and ten stern counts while steaming). Frequency of occurrence reports the percentage of 30-minute transect counts ($n=160$) and ship counts ($n=45$) for which a species was present.

Tableau 1. Nombre d'oiseaux de mer recensés en parcourant les transects (80 heures) et fréquentant le navire (totaux maximaux sur 35 stations et dix comptages à partir de la poupe en navigant). La fréquence de présence indique le pourcentage des comptages de transects de 30 minutes ($n=160$) et des comptages autour du navire ($n=45$) pendant lesquelles l'espèce était présente.

Species	Transects		Stations		Total	Ship attraction*
	<i>n</i>	% freq.	<i>n</i>	% freq.		
Emperor Penguin <i>Aptenodytes forsteri</i>	0	0	1	2	1	
King Penguin <i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>	132	16	3	4	135	—
Adélie Penguin <i>Pygoscelis adeliae</i>	1	1	0	0	1	
Crested penguins <i>Eudyptes</i> spp.	232	29	33	11	265	—
Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i>	6	4	89	80	95	+++
Grey-headed Albatross <i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>	14	9	44	69	58	+
Sooty Albatross <i>Phoebastria fusca</i>	4	3	13	29	17	++
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross <i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	16	11	36	56	52	+
Southern Giant Petrel <i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	5	3	37	53	42	++
Northern Giant Petrel <i>Macronectes halli</i>	4	2	109	71	113	+++
Southern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>	0	0	3	7	3	
Pintado Petrel <i>Daption capense</i>	2	1	22	36	24	+++
Blue Petrel <i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	286	84	478	100	764	
Antarctic Prion <i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	17	8	12	20	29	
Slender-billed Prion <i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>	65	29	112	71	177	
Fairy Prion <i>Pachyptila turtur</i>	48	23	71	67	119	
Kerguelen Petrel <i>Lugensa (Aphrodroma) brevirostris</i>	174	71	84	84	258	
Soft-plumaged Petrel <i>Pterodroma mollis</i>	9	5	3	7	12	—
White-headed Petrel <i>Pterodroma lessonii</i>	18	11	11	24	29	
Great-winged Petrel <i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	12	8	11	22	23	
White-chinned Petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	33	20	263	98	296	++
Grey Petrel <i>Procellaria cinerea</i>	5	3	12	24	17	+
Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	96	3	2	2	98	—
Little Shearwater <i>Puffinus assimilis</i>	2	1	0	0	2	
Diving petrels <i>Pelecanoides</i> spp.	378	66	10	22	388	—
Wilson's Storm Petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	1	1	0	0	1	
Black-bellied Storm Petrel <i>Fregatta tropica</i>	34	17	28	42	62	
Subantarctic Skua <i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	+	0	0	0	+	
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	0	0	1	2	1	
Total	1,593		1,487		3,082	

* ratio of transect to ship counts; + indicates more often at the ship,—more often on transects. Number of symbols denotes strength of difference: +++/—>tenfold, ++/—5–10 fold, +/–2–5 fold difference (no symbol implies either the sample size is too small, or difference <twofold).

at 49°06'S 44°50'E), but none was photographed to confirm identification. All groups photographed ($n=23$) were correctly identified as Macaroni Penguins (broad crest and large pink gape). They were observed south to 53°21'S, with peak densities at 50–52°S (Fig. 2). The density between 48–49°S is perhaps biased because the transects were relatively close to Marion Island. Group size during transects was 3.5 ± 3.6 ($n=65$ groups, mode 2, range 1–20), and all photographed birds were adults (based on well-developed crests). Macaroni Penguins also were observed at five stations, where group sizes averaged slightly larger (6.6 ± 4.5 , range 2–14,

$n=5$). The few at-sea sightings of Macaroni Penguins suggest they move south of the breeding islands in the south-west Indian Ocean (Marchant & Higgins 1990). Macaroni Penguins from Marion Island in the Prince Edwards have been tracked to 700 km south of the island during their pre-moult fattening trip (Hockey *et al.* 2005; R. J. M. Crawford pers. comm.).

King Penguins generally were easier to spot at sea than crested penguins, especially among large waves, because they usually extended their long necks to peer at the vessel. Unlike crested penguins, they seldom porpoised away from the ship. However, they were less often seen at stations,

despite being more curious of ships than crested penguins close to the Prince Edward Islands (pers. obs.). King Penguins were most common between 51°30'S and 54°S, although small numbers were seen further north (Fig. 2). Like diving petrels, there was a tendency for a lower density over the shallows of the Conrad Rise compared to the periphery. Group size during transects 4.3 ± 3.6 ($n=31$ groups, mode 2, range 1–18) was greater than that of groups visiting the ship on station (1.5 ± 0.7 , range 1–2, $n=2$). All but one (a lone immature at 53°S 38°E on 5 April) were adults with bright orange neck patches. King Penguins from the Crozet Islands forage south of 45°S irrespective of season, travelling 500–750 km from colonies in summer and up to 1,800 km during winter, including into the pack-ice to 62°S (Pütz *et al.* 1999, Charrassin & Bost 2001).

A single immature Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri* visited the ship while on station at 53°S 38°E on 5 April. It was next to a group of Macaroni Penguins, and there were King Penguins at the same station. It was readily identified by its large size, relatively short neck and bill, diffuse white neck patch, and humped back that protrudes much further above the surface than that of a King Penguin. The only penguin observed south of 54°S was tentatively identified as an adult Adélie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae* based on its all-dark head and throat, and short bill. However, light conditions were poor, and there is a chance it was a crested penguin (albeit well south of all other records). Both Emperor and Adélie Penguins typically remain further south, but vagrants reach the subantarctic (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

Albatrosses

Only four species of albatross were observed, although two others (Black-browed *Thalassarche melanophris* and Shy *T. cauta*) followed the ship at 46°59'S 38°10'E south-east of Marion Island on 3 April. Wandering Albatross was the most abundant albatross overall, with most at stations (Table 1). The largest aggregation was observed on O'b Bank on 17 April, when up to 11 gathered at the ship. With the exception of a stage 2 ('leopard stage') bird observed at 49°S 44°E, all were in adult plumage (Gibson stages 5–8), and south of 53°S most were 'terminal stage', presumably adult males. The youngster (an apparent female based on bill size and shape) landed with three adults,

resulting in display and calling. The predominance of adult males further south corroborates previous observations and tracking data in the southern Indian Ocean (Weimerskirch & Jouventin 1987, Weimerskirch 1998). However, it is unlikely that many breeding birds were in the area, as the survey took place during the brood/guard phase, when foraging trips tend to be localised around the breeding islands (Weimerskirch 1998, Nel *et al.* 2002). Based on limited tracking data, it is more likely the birds encountered came from the Crozets rather than the Prince Edwards or Kerguelen (BirdLife International 2004).

Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysotoma* was the next most abundant albatross and again adults predominated, with only four immatures (7%) seen. However, at least one apparent adult that was photographed still had a dark nail, indicating it was a subadult, perhaps 3–4 years old. Three of the immatures were seen north of 52°S (11% of birds in this area), with the other immature at 56°15'S 42°25'E (4% of birds south of 52°S). Latitudinal segregation of adults and immatures has not been reported in this species (Tickell 2000), although almost all records north of 40°S are immatures (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata* was the albatross least strongly attracted to the ship, although they were still more abundant in station counts than during transects. A higher proportion of this species (37%) was in mottled immature plumage and, unlike the other albatross species, immatures tended to be more common further south (21% north of 52°S, 29% between 52–54°S and 60% south of 54°S). Sooty Albatross was relatively scarce. All were adults and were only counted north of 53°S, but an adult visited the ship briefly at 55°50'S 38°00'E on 6 April. Sooty Albatrosses breeding at both Marion Island and the Crozets remain north of the Antarctic Polar Front at around 50°S (Berruti 1979, Cooper & Klages 1995, Weimerskirch 1998), whereas Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses forage south of the Front (R. J. M. Crawford unpubl.). However, Jouventin *et al.* (1981) reported both species to be common south to 56°S in the south Indian Ocean, and they occasionally eat Antarctic krill *Euphausia superba*, which must be caught south of the Front (Ridoux 1994).

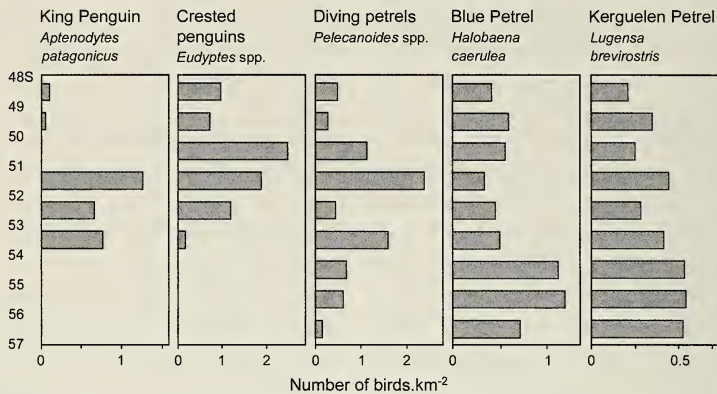


Figure 2. Average density of the most abundant seabirds counted in steaming transects as a function of latitude. Densité moyenne des oiseaux de mer les plus abondants recensés en parcourant les transects en fonction de la latitude.

Fulmarine petrels

Giant petrels occurred throughout the survey area, with Northern outnumbering Southern. No white-morph Southern Giant Petrels were observed. Both species were attracted to the ship, following while it was travelling and either circling or resting on the water next to the ship on station. The largest numbers of giant petrels were observed on O'b Bank on 17 April, when up to 27 (24 Northern and three Southern) gathered at the ship while on station. The greater aggregation of ship-attendant species on O'b Bank may possibly reflect recent fishing activities.

Other fulmarine petrels were surprisingly scarce, with only small numbers of Pintado Petrels and Southern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialisoides* seen. It was presumably just too early for these species to have dispersed north from their breeding areas (Marchant & Higgins 1990). There was no sign of the ice-specialist Snow *Pagodroma nivea* or Antarctic Petrels *Thalassoica antarctica*.

Blue Petrels and prions *Pachyptila*

Blue Petrels occurred throughout the survey area, with a tendency for higher densities at 54–56°S (Fig. 2), supported by larger mean numbers attending the ship at these latitudes. It was the most abundant species at stations, occurring at every station (Table 1), and, although second to diving petrels in terms of abundance during transects, had the highest frequency of occurrence in half-hour transect blocks (86%). Accurate transect counts were complicated by the habit of petrels accompanying the ship to fly ahead of it. It was possible to ignore such birds if they turned within

a few hundred metres of the bow, but some undoubtedly returned after flying further ahead and may have been counted in error. Although most were adults, some fresh-plumaged juveniles were photographed, distinguished by their more prominent pale feather fringes and paler crown and breast-band. Breeding Blue Petrels forage over a wide latitudinal range, often travelling into Antarctic waters >1,000 km from the breeding islands (Cherel *et al.* 2002). Stable isotope analysis of adult feathers suggests that they remain in these waters during the moulting period.

Reliable information on the distribution and relative abundance of prions at sea is limited by the difficulty of positively identifying them to species (Marchant & Higgins 1990). The use of digital photography was essential in this regard. On several occasions the presence of a species was only confirmed by examining photographs taken at a station. Three species of prions were observed in the area: Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*, Fairy Prion *P. turtur* and Slender-billed Prion *P. belcheri*. Fairy and Slender-billed Prions were most abundant and occurred throughout the survey area, although Fairy Prions were more abundant in the north, whereas Slender-billed Prions were more common further south, mainly south of the Antarctic Polar Front, with the greatest numbers at 54–56°S. The Slender-billed Prions presumably come from the large Kerguelen breeding population (Brooke 2004).

Antarctic Prions were relatively scarce and were only recorded south of 50°S. However, Antarctic Prions also were fairly common at 39–40°S on 28 March, en route between Cape

Town and Marion Island. Interestingly, most of these more northerly prions were moulting their primaries, whereas none of the birds south of Marion was replacing the flight feathers. Only one prion amongst hundreds photographed in the survey area was moulting its primaries: a Slender-billed Prion completing its primary moult on 10 April at 49°S 44°E.

No Salvin's Prions *P. salvini* were observed, either off Marion Island or further south, despite that a large population breeds at the Prince Edward and Crozet archipelagos (Marchant & Higgins 1990). Small numbers were photographed north of Marion Island (39–44°S) en route between the island and Cape Town in late March and the end of April, supporting their preference for warmer waters (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

Gadfly petrels

Kerguelen Petrel was the third commonest bird during transects, occurring throughout the region (Fig. 2). Although regularly attracted to the ship on station, they were more abundant in transect counts. On station, they tended to hang off the stern, fluttering high in the sky, or circle the ship a few times then depart. White-headed Petrels *Pterodroma lessonii* were the most abundant *Pterodroma*, also occurring throughout the area, but were relatively scarce. The other two gadfly petrels, Great-winged and Soft-plumaged Petrels, were both uncommon, with Soft-plumaged Petrels only recorded north of 52°S and all but two Great-winged Petrels north of 52°30'S (furthest south at 55°35'S 38°00'E).

Procellaria petrels and shearwaters

White-chinned Petrel was the second most abundant species at stations, occurring at all but one station. Relatively few were counted during transects but, like Blue Petrels, transect counts were complicated by White-chinned Petrels circling the ship, and often 'running' well ahead of the ship. Their numbers typically increased during the first hour of daylight, then remained relatively constant all day, suggesting the same individuals remained with the ship throughout the day. White-chinned Petrels have a very broad foraging range, from Antarctic to temperate waters (Weimerskirch *et al.* 1999). Grey Petrels were much less common than White-chinned Petrels, and although most were recorded on stations, they were less assiduous ship-

followers, seldom remaining at the vessel for more than a minute or two. All were north of 53°30'S.

Shearwaters generally were uncommon in the area. Sooty Shearwaters were only seen on the morning of 7 April, when numerous flocks of up to 50 were seen from dawn until 10.00 hrs. All were south of 56°30'S and travelling south-east. This was the only day of the survey spent south of 56°S. Little Shearwaters were rare, with two observed during transects at 50°30'–51°30'S. Neither species evinced any interest in the ship.

Diving petrels

Diving petrels were the most abundant species recorded during transect counts (Table 1). Both Common *Pelecanoides urinatrix* and South Georgian Diving Petrels *P. georgicus* can be expected to occur in the region, although Common Diving Petrels apparently tend to remain closer to their breeding islands, at least during the breeding season, than do South Georgian Diving Petrels (Marchant & Higgins 1990, Bocher *et al.* 2000). Even when photographed, the criteria to separate the two species in the field are not definitive (Shirihai 2007). The eight diving petrels photographed sufficiently well to identify appeared to be South Georgian (based on clean, black and white plumage, relatively broad white trailing edge to secondaries, and the presence of a pale 'C' around the ear-coverts). My impression is that most birds were this species, but some rather plain birds with dark heads and breasts may have been Common Diving Petrels. Based on stable-isotope signatures in feathers from adults, both species apparently forage on the same prey in offshore waters while moulting (Bocher *et al.* 2000).

Diving petrels occurred throughout the study area, but were most abundant at 51–52°S and 53–54°S, on the periphery of the Conrad Rise (Fig. 2). The highest abundance occurred south-east of Lena Seamount, where there were 10 petrels.km⁻². I have not seen anything like these densities away from breeding colonies previously. The area around the Conrad Rise appears to be a key foraging area, at least at this time of year.

Storm petrels

Although Grey-backed Storm Petrel *Oceanites nereis* was observed close to Marion Island on 3 April, only two species of storm petrel were seen during the survey. Black-bellied Storm Petrel

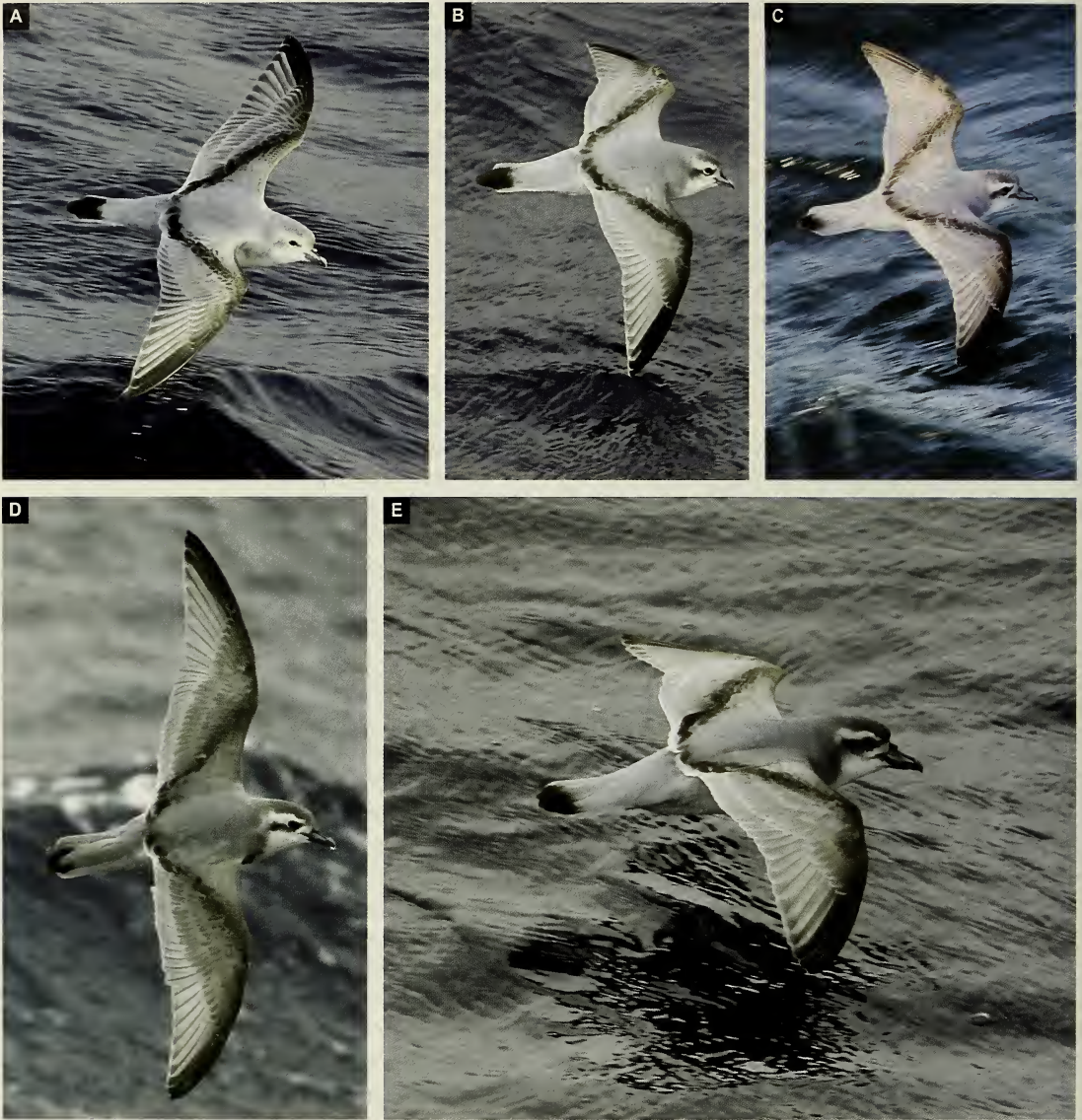


Figure 3. Prions are notoriously difficult to identify at sea. Photographing birds helps greatly, although not all individuals can be identified with certainty, especially between Slender-billed *Pachyptila belcheri*, Antarctic *P. desolata* and Salvin's Prions *P. salvini* (which was not recorded during the survey). The images here show typical birds: (E) Salvin's Prion (note large head, deep-based bill and steep forehead), (C) Antarctic Prion (smaller bill and more rounded forehead), (D) Slender-billed Prion (narrow bill, rather pale head with a prominent supercilium broadening behind the eye and narrow black tail tip) and (A & B) Fairy Prion *P. turtur* (short, stubby bill and more extensive black tail tip). Most Fairy Prions show rather plain faces, but some have stronger facial markings (Peter Ryan)

Il est notoire que les prions sont difficiles à identifier en mer. Même si photographier les oiseaux rend la tâche beaucoup plus facile, il ne faut pas s'attendre à pouvoir identifier tous les individus avec certitude, surtout quand il s'agit d'espèces comme le Prion de Belcher *Pachyptila belcheri*, le Prion de la Désolation *P. desolata* ou le Prion de Salvin *P. salvini* (qui n'a pas été noté pendant le recensement). Les photos présentées ici montrent des oiseaux typiques : (E) le Prion de Salvin (noter la tête et le bec forts et le front abrupt), (C) le Prion de la Désolation (bec plus petit, front plus bombé), (D) le Prion de Belcher (bec mince, tête plutôt pâle avec un sourcil très marqué s'élargissant derrière l'œil, queue avec étroite barre terminale noire) et (A & B) le Prion colombe *P. turtur* (bec court et tronqué, queue avec barre terminale noire plus large). La plupart des Prions colombes ont les côtés de la tête plutôt unis, mais certains individus présentent des marques faciales contrastées (Peter Ryan)

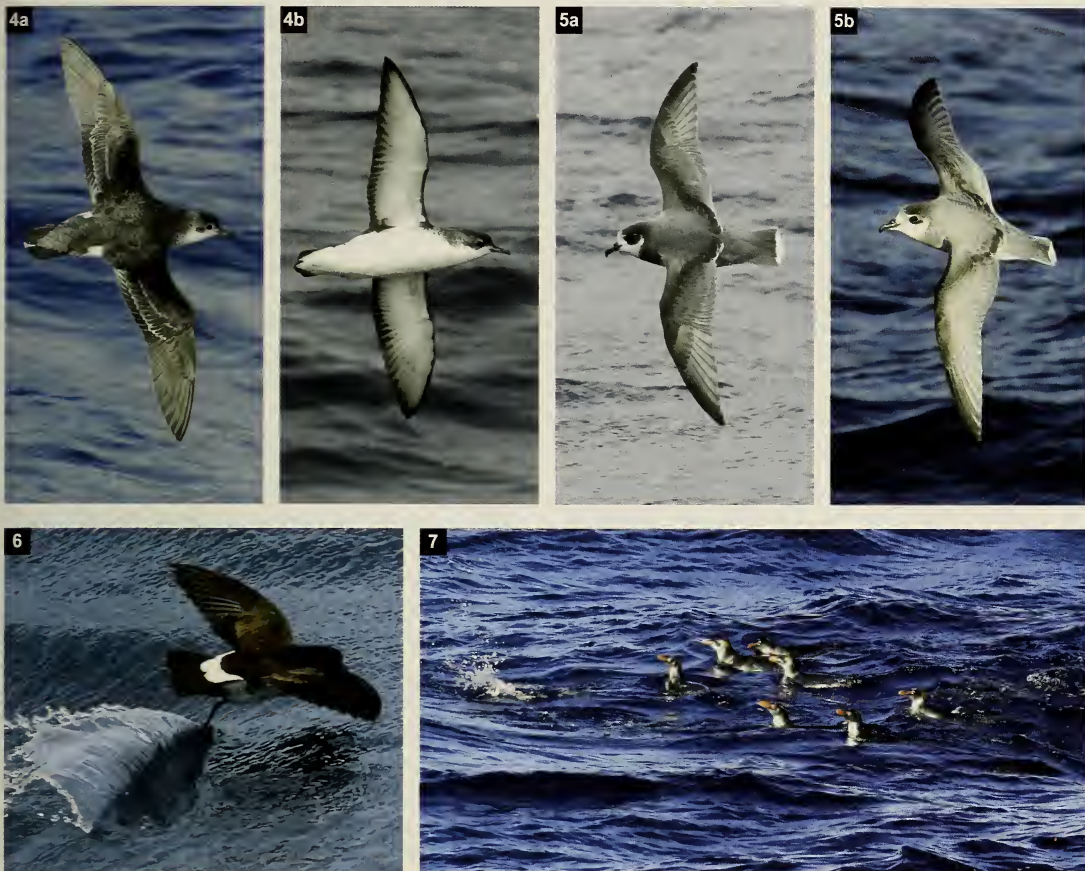


Figure 4. The Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis* encountered were of the subantarctic form *elegans*, which is treated as a distinct species by some authorities (Peter Ryan)

Les Petits Puffins *Puffinus assimilis* observés étaient de la forme subantarctique *elegans*, qui est traitée comme une espèce distincte par certains auteurs (Peter Ryan)

Figure 5. Blue Petrels *Halobaena caerulea* are not usually regarded as having a distinct juvenile plumage, but in addition to having pale fringes to their upperpart feathers, fresh-plumaged juveniles (b) typically have paler and less extensive dark feathering on the crown, face and breast than adults (a) (Peter Ryan)

D'habitude le Prion bleu *Halobaena caerulea* n'est pas supposé avoir un plumage juvénile distinct, mais en plus des liserés pâles aux plumes des parties supérieures, les juvéniles en plumage frais (a) diffèrent typiquement des adultes (b) en ayant la calotte, les côtés de la tête et la poitrine plus pâles (Peter Ryan)

Figure 6. Black-bellied Storm Petrels *Fregatta tropica* were the most abundant storm petrels in the area, but became scarce south of 50°S. They frequently 'water-ski' across the surface on one foot, making a distinctive 'rooster-tail' splash (Peter Ryan)

L'Océanite à ventre noir *Fregatta tropica* était l'océanite le plus abondant dans la zone, mais il devenait plus rare au sud de 50°S. Il 'glisse' fréquemment sur un pied à la surface de l'eau, produisant un éclaboussement caractéristique (Peter Ryan)

Figure 7. One of the many groups of Macaroni Penguins *Eudyptes chrysolophus* observed around the Conrad Rise (Peter Ryan)

Un des nombreux groupes de Gorfous dorés *Eudyptes chrysolophus* observés autour du Conrad Rise (Peter Ryan)

Fregatta tropica occurred throughout, but was six times more abundant north of 50°S (averaging 0.18 km⁻² compared with 0.03 km⁻² south of 50°S in transect counts). Comparable data for station counts were 2.1 and 0.3 birds per station north and south of 50°S. One Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* was observed at 50°S 38°E on 4 April.

Other birds and marine mammals

Only two non-procellariiform seabirds were observed: a Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica* at 56°35'S 40°20'E on 7 April, and an immature Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* visited the ship on station, at 52°43'S 45°39'E, on Lena Seamount on 15 April. A Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* briefly landed on the ship while on station at 50°S 48°E on 11 April. It was quite weak, and had trouble perching. It was blown off the ship after a few minutes and presumably perished.

Relatively few marine mammals were observed. Fin Whales *Balaenoptera physalus* were common on 7 April between 56°35'S 40°20'E and 56°14'S 42°10'E, with an estimated 30 animals seen in eight groups (positively identified as Fin Whales in three groups). Several groups comprised whales that apparently were feeding, surging to the surface, and lying on their sides, thrashing their tail flukes out of the water. No birds were closely associated with any of these whales. Another Fin Whale was photographed at 48°48'S 39°10'E on 18 April, with another two whales blowing further away. A single large baleen whale (possibly a Fin Whale) approached the ship on station at 51°S 44°E on 9 April. Only three other cetaceans were observed: an unidentified, 3–4-m dolphin showed briefly near 56°41'S 39°52'E on 7 April, a probable beaked whale breached several times near 50°42'S 48°00'E on 11 April, and a suspected Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus* was blowing at 51°55'S 41°12'E on 17 April. No seals were seen, which is perhaps not too surprising given that seals from the Prince Edward Islands typically forage south-west of the islands along the Southwest Indian Ridge (Ryan & Bester 2008).

Conclusions

Species richness in these peri-Antarctic waters is relatively low. With the exception of the Emperor Penguin and possible Adélie Penguin, no truly Antarctic species were observed, presumably due

to the absence of sea-ice. The only birds associated with the sole iceberg encountered on the survey were a mixed flock of 15–20 Blue Petrels and prions flying close below the cliffs of the iceberg. There was no sign of Chinstrap Penguins *Pygoscelis antarctica*, which are common in spring around 55°S (pers. obs.). The low diversity also results from the failure of many subantarctic species to penetrate southwards much beyond the Antarctic Polar Front.

The cumulative abundance of Blue and Kerguelen Petrels and Slender-billed Prions, especially from 54–56°S, is intriguing given the irruption of all three species into temperate waters off South Africa, Australia and eastern South America in the austral winter of 1984 (Ryan *et al.* 1989). It suggests that something peculiar happened at these latitudes that year causing large numbers of birds of all three species to move well north of their usual range. Blue Petrels breeding at Kerguelen experience periodic population crashes linked to increased winter mortality in anomalously warm years (Barbraud & Weimerskirch 2003). Unfortunately, records do not extend to the early 1980s, but this epoch corresponds with the end of a sustained period of unusually warm years in the Antarctic that resulted in an apparent shift in the functioning of pelagic ecosystems in the Southern Ocean (Jenouvrier *et al.* 2005).

Perhaps the most interesting finding of the study was the large numbers of diving petrels and penguins encountered. Diving petrels were the most abundant bird encountered during steaming transects, and penguins comprised some 80% of the avian biomass on transects. Clearly the periphery of the Conrad Rise is an important foraging area for diving petrels and penguins, at least at this season. Although there was no evidence of increased bird abundance in transects on the seamounts, ship attendance peaked on O'b Bank, and is possibly a consequence of past fishing activity on the seamounts.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Dr Isabelle Ansorge, University of Cape Town, for the opportunity to join the survey and for explaining the physical oceanography of the region. I also thank the oceanography team and the officers and crew of the MV *S.A. Agulhas* for their support and assistance. The survey was funded by the South African National Antarctic Programme, through

the National Research Foundation. John Cooper is thanked for his comments on the manuscript.

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Received 1 July 2008; revision accepted 8 October 2008.

First confirmed breeding record of Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* from St François Atoll and a new population estimate for Seychelles and the Afrotropical region

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Première nidification confirmée de la Sterne diamant *Sterna sumatrana* sur l'Atoll St François et une nouvelle estimation de la population pour les Seychelles et la région Afrotropicale. La Sterne diamant *Sterna sumatrana* niche du Pacifique occidental à l'Océan indien occidental. Les Seychelles abritent la seule population nicheuse connue de la région Afrotropicale, bien que certaines observations suggèrent qu'un petit nombre pourrait nicher ailleurs dans la région. Des cas anecdotiques de nidification depuis les années 1950 de l'Atoll St François, 400 km au sud de Mahé, et la présence de l'espèce toute l'année dans le groupe Alphonse semblaient indiquer que l'atoll pourrait abriter une colonie. Ceci a maintenant été confirmé et la population nicheuse a été estimée à 10–15 couples. Des recensements par la Fondation pour la Conservation des Îles ont par ailleurs fournis de nouvelles informations concernant la taille de la population seychelloise, qui est maintenant estimée à au moins 125–205 couples sur six sites (Aldabra, Cosmoledo, Farquhar, St Joseph, St François et African Banks); la nidification est suspectée sur deux autres (Astove et Bancs Providence). La population régionale ne compte probablement pas plus de 150–250 couples. St François répond aux critères pour être considéré comme Zone d'Importance pour la Conservation de la Sterne diamant (pour laquelle le seuil actuel est de seulement deux individus) ainsi que pour trois espèces d'oiseaux d'eau grégaires, le Drome ardeole *Dromas ardeola*, le Tournepierre à collier *Arenaria interpres* et la Sterne de Saunders *Sterna saundersi*.

Summary. Seychelles hosts the only known breeding population of Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* in the Afrotropical region. Anecdotal reports of breeding since the 1950s from St François Atoll, 400 km south of Mahé, and the year-round presence of the species in the Alphonse group suggested the atoll might host a breeding colony. This has now been confirmed with a population estimated at 10–15 pairs. Other surveys have revealed new information on the size of the Seychelles population, which is now estimated at a minimum of 125–205 pairs at six sites, with breeding suspected at two others. St François qualifies for consideration as an Important Bird Area for Black-naped Tern, as well as for three species of congregatory waterbirds, Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* breeds from the western Pacific to the western Indian Ocean, where it is represented by the race *mathewsi* (Gochfeld & Burger 1996). Seychelles lies at the western extremity of the species' range and holds almost the entire African regional population. As a result, the BirdLife International threshold for the species to qualify a site for consideration as an Important Bird Area (IBA) within the African region is currently just two birds (Fishpool & Evans 2001). In Seychelles, the species is currently known to breed on Aldabra, African Banks, St Joseph Atoll, Cosmoledo and Farquhar (Rocamora & Skerrett 2001, Skerrett et

al. 2001, Skerrett 2006). The species may also breed at Bancs Providence from where there are historical accounts (summarised in Diamond & Prÿs-Jones 1986: 542) but no recent observations except that territorial behaviour was reported in 1996 (Skerrett 1996). Astove has been named as a breeding site without details (Penny 1974), whilst in recent years the presence of small numbers has been noted there, suggesting that the species may breed on little-visited small islets near the lagoon entrance (AS & GR pers. obs.). It has been recorded as a vagrant to Bird, Aride, Cousin and La Digue (Skerrett et al. 2007).



Figure 1. Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* colony, Banc de Sable, Farquhar Atoll, Seychelles, 25 February 2006 (Adrian Skerrett)

Colonie de Sternes diamant *Sterna sumatrana*, Banc de Sable, Atoll Farquhar, Seychelles, 25 février 2006 (Adrian Skerrett)

St. François Atoll is an atoll with a land area of c.18 ha and a lagoon of c.5,700 ha. It lies close to Alphonse Atoll at the southern extremity of the Amirantes archipelago c.400 km south of Mahé, the main island of Seychelles. It is uninhabited, but on nearby Alphonse a small resort opened in 1999 and a conservation centre where the Island Conservation Society (ICS) has employed full-time staff since 2007. Black-naped Terns have been regularly observed for several years and breeding was suspected on St François Atoll. This has now been confirmed.

First breeding records of Black-naped Terns

On 26 February 2008, Wayne Haselau, a fly-fishing guide working for the Alphonse Island Resort, observed several pairs of Black-naped Terns roosting on a large sandbank c.1 km north of the island of St François. He noted some were displaying territorial behaviour. On closer inspection, he observed several further pairs of Black-naped Terns at rest, including an adult incubating an egg. The Alphonse Island Conservation Centre was informed of this discovery the same evening.

Six days later, Aubrey Rose and Pierre-André Adam (ICS) visited St François at 07.00 hrs to investigate. P-AA skirted the outer edge of the island, while AR walked across the reef flats to the

large sandbank where they presumed W. Haselau had made his observations. Ten active nests were found in a small coral rubble patch at the north end of the sandbank. Six nests contained a single egg and four had two eggs. The eggs were greenish blue with dark speckles. Another nest with two eggs was located on a sand bar, which has formed on the western side of St François within the last 5–6 years.

Earlier reports of Black-naped Terns

Désiré Gendron, manager of Alphonse in 1951–59, claimed in an interview with A. & J. Skerrett in 2000, shortly before his death, that *Dyanman* regularly bred on a sandbank off St François Island. This may have referred to Black-naped Terns but a firm identification is not possible as the Creole name *Dyanman* is applied to several species of tern, including Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* (Skerrett *et al.* 2003).

Since the establishment of the Alphonse Island Conservation Centre, the ICS has been eager to confirm St François Atoll as a breeding site for Black-naped Terns. In July 2007 recently fledged juveniles were sighted, which indicated that the species must be breeding somewhere close by. Fly-fishing guides working in the St François lagoon since 1999 believed that Black-naped Terns were nesting on shipwrecks at the southern edge of St

François Atoll reef. In February 2002, Wayne Haselau and Etienne Quilindo observed an adult tern with food in its bill entering the wreckage. Wayne Haselau also reported seeing chicks on the wreck. Nesting on shipwrecks has been recorded elsewhere in the world, including Australia (Kikkawa & Boles 1976, Walker 1986, Hulsman & Smith 1988), but has never been reported previously in Seychelles. ICS staff visited the wrecks and all of the sandbanks (exposed at high tide) around St François on 10 March 2008 and found no signs of nesting.

Regular monthly bird counts, commenced in February 2007, confirm that Black-naped Terns are present year-round. The following maxima have been recorded. Alphonse, 2 October 2007: 38 birds roosting on the sand flat at Pointe Dot; St François, 30 January 2008: 20 birds roosting on the sand bar opposite Pointe la Courte; Bijoutier, 20 April 2007: 26 birds; five pairs were observed copulating along the south beach. These figures suggest a minimum population size of 10–15 pairs for the Alphonse group, a figure borne out by the observations described here.

Population estimates for Seychelles and the Afrotropical region

Diamond & Prÿs-Jones (1986) summarise historical references to distribution and abundance in Seychelles, whilst the total Seychelles population has been estimated at 250–350 birds (Dodman 2002 *in* Wetlands International 2006). Recent discoveries at Farquhar Atoll, St Joseph Atoll and now St François Atoll indicate this estimate is almost certainly too low.

Based on current knowledge, we estimate the total Seychelles population as follows:

Aldabra	50–70 pairs	(Betts 2000)
Cosmoledo	30–50 pairs	(Skerrett <i>et al.</i> 2001, Rocamora <i>et al.</i> 2003)
Farquhar	20–40 pairs	(Skerrett 2006, Skerrett & Rocamora 2007)
St Joseph	10–20 pairs	(Skerrett & Skerrett 2005)
St François	10–15 pairs	(this paper)
African Banks	5–10 pairs	(C. Feare pers. comm. <i>in</i> Rocamora & Skerrett 2001)
Bancs du Sud	may breed	(Diamond & Prÿs-Jones 1986, Skerrett 1996)
Astove	may breed	(Penny 1974)
Total	Minimum 125–205 pairs (or 375–615 birds <i>as per</i> Wetlands International 2006)	

Seychelles hosts the only confirmed breeding sites in the Afrotropics for this species, but other colonies may exist. On Africa's east coast, small numbers of non-breeders have been occasionally recorded in Tanzania (e.g. nine birds at Latham Island in November 1987: Baker & Baker 2001) to Mozambique and KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, to where the birds may have been driven by cyclones (Ginn *et al.* 1989, Ryan 1997). In addition, the following observations have been made on islands of the western Indian Ocean other than Seychelles. Îles Glorieuses: first observed by Abbott in 1893 (Ridgway 1895); no reports for more than a century until observed in small numbers in recent years by M. Le Corre (pers. comm.). Madagascar: one at Maroalika, Mahajanga province, on 4 February 1993 (Hawkins 1993); two at Baie d'Ambavatory on 23 January 2008 (G Rocamora & G. Jessy pers. obs.). Mayotte: photographed by F. Adriansen at L'Îlot du Sable Blanc, Mayotte, in November 1995 (Louette *et al.* 2004); up to 60 at offshore coralline islets in November 2003 (Rocamora 2004). Some of these sightings probably concern birds that breed in Seychelles, but undiscovered colonies may exist elsewhere. However, the regional population of this species numbers probably no more than 150–250 pairs (*c.* 450–750 birds).

St François as an Important Bird Area (IBA)

St François Atoll was proposed as an IBA in the first inventory of Important Bird Areas presented to a national workshop in August 1998 (Rocamora & Skerrett 1998). Although the workshop accepted the proposal, the site was removed from the IBA list (Rocamora & Skerrett 2001), following concerns expressed by BirdLife Seychelles (now Nature Seychelles) that there were insufficient data to support inclusion.

Our estimate indicates that the IBA threshold of two birds is too low and, given that Seychelles holds most of the regional population, it might be raised to 4–7 birds. Even so, St François Atoll clearly meets the IBA criterion of international importance for the Black-naped Tern.

Regular counts have also confirmed that bird populations at St François consistently exceed IBA thresholds for Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi* (Skerrett 1996, 2001, Betts

2007). Finally, while numbers of Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (600 birds) and Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (250 birds) are below the IBA thresholds, they are the largest recorded in Seychelles, further illustrating the importance of St François (Betts 2007). Therefore, St François Atoll meets IBA criteria for four species of congregatory waterbirds under IBA category A4i. In addition, the presence on neighbouring Alphonse Atoll of full-time conservation staff and an ecofriendly tourism operation makes St François relatively easy to protect and thus even more relevant as an IBA.

Other observations

This observation is just the latest discovery since ICS commenced surveys of bird populations in the outer islands. Other discoveries include the first confirmed breeding in the Alphonse group of Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* and White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*, whereas previously only Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* and Fairy Tern *Gygis alba* were known to breed. Elsewhere, Black-naped Terns have also been confirmed as a breeding species on St Joseph Atoll (Skerrett & Skerrett 2005), where first reported in 2002 (Millett & Bristol 2002). The species has also been confirmed as a breeder on Farquhar, where newly fledged juveniles were first observed in 2004 (G. Rocamora & T. Cafrine pers. obs. in Skerrett & Rocamora 2007), nests with eggs were found in 2006 (Skerrett 2006) and nests with chicks in 2008 (C. & G. Savy pers. comm.). In addition, Roseate Terns have been discovered breeding on Goëlettes (Farquhar) for the first time since 1897 (Farquhar 1900, Skerrett & Rocamora 2007) and on St Joseph Atoll for the first time ever (Skerrett & Skerrett 2005).

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the management and staff of Alphonse Island Fishing Company Limited, especially Wayne Haselau, and to Alphonse Island Conservation staff, especially Aubrey Rose, for support to confirm the observations on St François Atoll. Robert Prÿs-Jones and Roger Safford provided useful advice and some references during the preparation of this paper. We thank Mathieu Le Corre for supplying observations on Îles Glorieuses and Guy and Claudine Savy for the same on Farquhar.

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Received 27 May 2008; revision accepted 27 August 2008.

Occurrence of White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* near Negele, Ethiopia

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Présence de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* près de Negele, Éthiopie. Les auteurs présentent des observations récentes de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* dans la plaine de Liben, près de Negele, Éthiopie du sud. Jusqu'à présent cette espèce globalement menacée y a été observée (et quelques fois photographiée) en juin et octobre–février, mais il reste à confirmer qu'elle est sédentaire dans la région, comme l'affirment des habitants locaux. Des observations supplémentaires devraient essayer de vérifier si l'espèce est résidente dans la zone et si elle est présente dans d'autres zones situées entre la plaine de Liben et son aire de distribution connue antérieurement, dans la région de Yabelo–Mega à environ 120 km vers le sud-ouest.

White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* (Vulnerable: BirdLife International 2006a) has one of the smallest ranges of any hirundine, being confined to c.5,500 km² of arid, open *Acacia–Commiphora* savanna and scrub in the Yabelo–Mega region of southern Ethiopia (Fig. 1; BirdLife International 2006a, Mellanby *et al.* in press). This range overlaps almost perfectly with

that of Ethiopian Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* (Endangered: BirdLife International 2006b) and the ecological causes of these curiously restricted and coincident ranges are unknown and intriguing (Collar & Stuart 1985).

The Liben Plains, 10 km east of the town of Negele in Ethiopia's southern Borana Zone, form another site of significant endemism. They com-

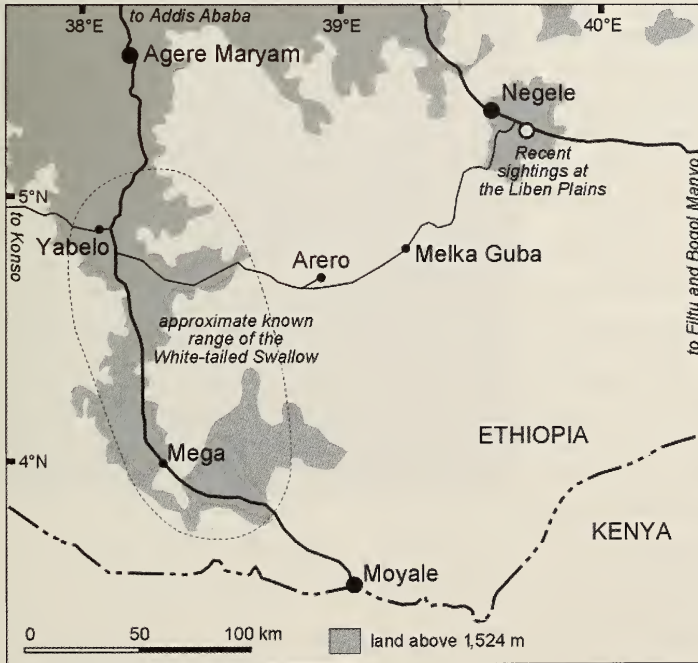


Figure 1. Map of the Yabelo–Negele region, southern Ethiopia, showing the approximate previously known range of the White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*, and the sightings reported here.

Carte de la région de Yabelo–Negele, Éthiopie du sud, avec l'aire de distribution antérieure de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis*, et les observations rapportées ici.

prise the known world range of Sidamo Lark *Heteromirafra sidamoensis* (Endangered: BirdLife International 2006c) and consist of a well-defined, isolated area of open, gently sloping grassland at c.1,650 m, with a total span of c.10 × 20 km and bordered to the west, south and east by denser *Acacia-Commiphora* thornbush, cleared in places for cultivation. The vegetation is predominantly short open grass in which *Themeda triandra*, *Cymbopogon* sp., *Hyparrhenia* sp. and *Chloris* sp. are conspicuous elements. There are also widely scattered small thorn bushes (mainly whistling-thorn *Acacia drepanolobium*), numerous herbaceous plants and areas of bare ground created by the high density of harvester ant *Messor cephalotes* nests, overgrazing and cattle drove lines. Three decades ago it still held antelope such as Beisa Oryx *Oryx beisa* and Grant's Gazelle *Gazella granti* (Ash & Olson 1985) but since at least the early 1990s (Robertson 1995) the only large ungulates are the substantial numbers of cattle based at the numerous small villages and homesteads scattered over the plains, part of which was formerly a military training ground (now largely abandoned) (Robertson 1995, EWNHS 2001). C. W. Benson, the discoverer of the White-tailed Swallow, visited the Negele area in the 1940s and commented that although it looked suitable for this species he recorded none (Benson 1946). Here we report numerous independent sightings of White-tailed Swallows on the Liben Plains, which, if a regular occurrence, would extend the known range of the species north-east by c.120 km.

On 29 June 2006 (at 14.30–17.30 hrs), 23 km south-east of Negele, MNG, CNS, DP and LF watched several loose groups of White-tailed Swallows foraging around herds of cattle being driven south from an artificial waterbody in the centre of the plains—known as Abaya—towards a village called Ariro. The first herd was being followed by c.5 White-tailed Swallows (Fig. 2a). We then walked to meet two other cattle herds, each of which had three White-tailed Swallows in attendance. Two individuals were subsequently seen flying singly, away from the cattle. The group of five included at least one immature (Fig. 2b), distinguished by a duller grey tone (interspersed with whitish feathers or feather fringes) to its metallic blue head and upperparts; this is consistent with the April–May breeding season reported from Yabelo (Holtam 1998, EWNHS 2001). The

swallows were clearly feeding in association with the cattle, closely following the fairly rapidly moving herds, and swooping down among the animals. One or two individuals perched briefly on low bushes or tall herbs (Fig. 2b). The birds were silent throughout. The area within which the birds were seen was c.2 × 2 km, centred on 05°15'N 39°46'E, and is locally known as Asido.

The birds were distinguished from Ethiopian Swallow *H. aethiopica* (at least two of which were also seen at the site on the same day) by the extensive area of white visible on the uppertail, and the unmarked white throat lacking a black semi-collar (Fig. 2). The same features distinguished them from the larger Barn Swallow *H. rustica*, a few of which were seen nearby on 3 July (see below).

On the same day, MNG interviewed a group of Borana herdsmen 'driving' one of the groups of cattle, who recognised the swallows, specifically pointing out their white tails. They used the term 'raree' for them, which is also used for the species in Yabelo but refers to swallows in general (and to bats) rather than to White-tailed Swallow in particular (Holtam 1998). They reported that they saw this bird with a white tail during all months of the year, commonly following cattle, and that, although they had seen individuals collecting mud, they did not know where the birds nested.

These sightings prompted MNG, CNS and LF to return to the Liben Plains on 3 July 2006, and to spend a full day walking from the Arero turn-off near the western border east to where the swallows had been seen on 29 June. We checked all cattle herds encountered and visited the watering hole mentioned above, at which they were concentrated. The only swallows seen were a handful of Barn Swallows. Moreover, on 2 October 2006, MNG, CNS and Callan Cohen visited the Liben Plains again and made a particular effort to scan herds of cows for swallows, but again saw only Barn Swallows. Similarly, MNG, CNS *et al.* spent eight days on the Liben Plains surveying Sidamo Larks in June 2007 and saw no White-tailed Swallows.

However, since then further records of White-tailed Swallow at this locality have been made (and one previous observation has come to light), all made 9–20 km from Negele, along the road to Bogol Manyo, on the Liben Plains and its wooded fringes, as follows: (1) five on 29 January 2005 (EF *et al.*), two adults and seven immatures on 31



Figure 2. White-tailed Swallows *Hirundo megaensis* at the Liben Plains, Ethiopia, on 29 June 2006: (a) several individuals in flight over herds of cattle, showing their diagnostic white rectrices, and (b) a perched immature (Claire N. Spottiswoode)

Hirondelles à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* sur la plaine de Liben, Éthiopie, le 29 juin 2006 : (a) plusieurs individus en vol au-dessus de troupeaux de bétail, déployant leurs rectrices blanches diagnostiques, et (b) un immature perché (Claire N. Spottiswoode)

October 2006 (AL), eight on 23 October 2006 (MNG *et al.*), one on 29 November 2006 (NT *et al.*), three on 1 December 2006 (RT, who saw no cattle in the vicinity), one on 5 February 2007 (MNG *et al.*), and two on 2 January 2008 (NT *et al.*).

Were these sightings of White-tailed Swallows, recorded in most seasons except the breeding season (April–May), merely on passage? If so, to and from where? Could the species be a partial migrant or show limited post-breeding dispersal? Despite our failure to find birds on 3 July and 2 October 2006, and in June 2007, the contrasting seasonality of the several sightings and local people’s assertions do raise the possibility that the species might regularly occur at the Liben Plains.

The open grassland where the birds were seen at Negele contrasts with the habitat in the Yabelo–Mega region, where naturally open grasslands do not exist and the species instead frequents a wide range of wooded habitats, from open *Acacia* savanna to fairly dense *Acacia–Commiphora* thornbush, and is commonest in open areas with sparse scrub and tree cover such as grazed areas around villages (Mellanby *et al.* in press). Another potentially important difference between the Yabelo area and the Liben Plains is the latter’s lack of tall, columnar termite mounds. Termite mounds have been suggested to be at least the ancestral nesting sites of White-tailed Swallows (Benson 1946), although the only reported nests were on buildings and in deep traditional wells (Holtam 1998).

It would be very interesting to establish this species’ seasonality

and regularity at the Liben Plains, and to conduct surveys between Negele and Arero (the easternmost boundary of the previously known range) to discover whether there is a continuous population between Negele and the Yabelo–Mega region. Certainly, the Liben Plains form a strikingly isolated habitat and it is by no means clear that the rather dense *Acacia–Commiphora* thornbush between there and Arero is appropriate habitat for the swallow. If it does occur regularly in the Negele area and elsewhere, then its world range could be enlarged by perhaps a factor of two (Fig. 1), which would probably have implications for its conservation status. We urge birders searching for Sidamo Larks or en route to Bogol Manyo to pause and check cattle herds, and any swallows seen on the Liben Plains.

Acknowledgements

We thank Nigel Collar for comments, whilst CNS's visits to Ethiopia were supported by Julian Francis.

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Received 10 March 2008; revision accepted 5 June 2008.

First record of Totoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis* nesting on the ground

Lily-Arison Rene de Roland^a and Russell Thorstrom^b

Première observation de nidification au sol du Petit-duc de Madagascar *Otus madagascariensis*. La nidification au sol du Petit-duc de Madagascar *Otus madagascariensis* a été observée pour la première fois le 25 novembre 2007. L'oiseau couvait quatre œufs de couleur blanche placés dans une petite dépression dans le sous-bois de la Réserve Spéciale de Berenty, dans le sud de Madagascar.

Summary. The Malagasy endemic Totoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis* was recorded for the first time nesting on the ground. The bird was incubating four white eggs placed in a small depression in the forest substrate at Berenty Special Reserve, southern Madagascar, on 25 November 2007.

Totoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis* (Rasmussen *et al.* 2000) is one of the smallest of the seven species of owls in Madagascar, with a mean weight of 108 g ($n=8$ individuals) in the Antsalova region of western Madagascar (Ramamonjisoa 2007). Ravokatra *et al.* (2003) reported a mean weight of 100.9 g ($n=28$) for Madagascar Scops Owl *O. rutilus*, but this study did not separate *O. madagascariensis* and *O. rutilus*. Totoroka Scops Owl is a common nocturnal species in forest and wooded habitat along western and southern coasts of Madagascar (Rasmussen *et al.* 2000, Schulenberg 2003). The species' natural history is poorly known, except for a recent study of its breeding ecology and diet by Ramamonjisoa (2007) in deciduous forest of central western Madagascar. Langrand (1990) reported nesting in November and December for Madagascar Scops Owl, which probably includes both species since this predates their specific separation. Nests are placed in tree cavities, and occasionally in 'abandoned nests'. Clutch size ranges from 2–5 eggs (Langrand 1990, Ramamonjisoa 2007).

During November 2007, L-ARdR visited Berenty Special Reserve (BSR) in southern Madagascar. BSR is in the southern biogeographic domain and is characterised by sparse and irregular annual rainfall, averaging 500 mm, and supports an endemic vegetation of spiny forest with some riparian gallery forests (Langrand 1990). Within a gallery forest at 16.35 hrs on 25 November, L-ARdR observed an adult Totoroka Scops Owl flush from the ground, exposing four

white eggs in a small depression on the forest floor. The leaf litter had been pushed or scraped away from the nest to leave a depression. The depth of the nest was 20 mm, and no nesting material was found in the nest or supporting the eggs (see Fig. 1). After taking photographs of the eggs, L-ARdR moved 25 m from the nest and after five minutes the adult returned, settled on the eggs and commenced incubating (Fig. 2). The bird incubated until 17.40 hrs, whereupon L-ARdR left the site and owl undisturbed. He did not have the opportunity to return to the nest site in order to determine if the eggs hatched. Madagascar Scops Owl, and probably Totoroka Scops Owl, are known to nest in tree holes (cavities), and infrequently in abandoned stick nests (Langrand 1990, König *et al.* 1999). Madagascar Scops Owls have also been observed occupying tree cavities in the humid rainforest of the Masoala Peninsula for roosting (*pers. obs.*), whilst in the dry deciduous Tsिमembo Forest of the Antsalova region of central western Madagascar, Totoroka Scops Owls nested in natural tree holes averaging 5.8 ± 2.2 m ($n=7$) above the ground, with a mean clutch size of 2.4 ± 0.9 eggs ($n=5$) (Ramamonjisoa 2007). There have been no other reports of ground-nesting by either Madagascar or Totoroka Scops Owls, and ground-nesting by *Otus* spp. has not previously been documented, making this the first record of such behaviour for the genus (König *et al.* 1999).

This observation of ground-nesting by Totoroka Scops Owl suggests a possible shortage of natural tree cavities in the Berenty region due to the forest structure and type of trees or to intra-



Figure 1. Ground nest of Torotoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis*, Berenty Special Reserve, Madagascar, 25 November 2008 (Lily-Arison Rene de Roland)

Nid au sol du Petit-duc de Madagascar *Otus madagascariensis*, Réserve Spéciale de Berenty, Madagascar, 25 novembre 2008 (Lily-Arison Rene de Roland)

and interspecific competition (e.g. by Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni* and Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*). Other possible causes for this ground-nesting attempt might be a low density of terrestrial predators in the area permitting ground nesters to survive, or that this was an inexperienced pair that did not select a tree cavity for nesting. It would be interesting to search BSR and other gallery forests in the dry southern biogeographic region to determine whether Torotoroka Scops Owls might regularly make ground-nesting attempts, and if they are successful.

Acknowledgements

We thank Bill Clark for allowing L-ARdR to accompany him and Jean De Heulme for permission to visit BSR. Roger Safford made useful comments on a draft of this note.

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Figure 2. Incubating Torotoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis*, Berenty Special Reserve, Madagascar, 25 November 2008 (Lily-Arison Rene de Roland)

Petit-duc de Madagascar *Otus madagascariensis* en train de couver, Réserve Spéciale de Berenty, Madagascar, 25 novembre 2008 (Lily-Arison Rene de Roland)

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Received 13 May 2008; revision accepted 11 November 2008.

A record of Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* in southern Africa

Jörgen Sagvik

Un Étourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus* en Afrique australe. Un Étourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus* a été observé et photographié le 15 juillet 2005 dans le Parc National de Kgalagadi, au point d'eau Craig Lockhart, 18,8 km au sud du Mata Mata Rest Camp, Afrique du Sud. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays et la deuxième pour la région afro-tropicale. Il est vraisemblable qu'il s'agisse d'un oiseau échappé de captivité, surtout vu la date inhabituelle de l'observation.

On 15 July 2005, while in South Africa on a birding trip, I visited Kgalagadi National Park, near the Namibian border in the Kalahari Desert, Northern Cape. Around 16.30 hrs, at the Craig Lockhart waterhole, 18.8 km south of Mata Mata Rest Camp, I noticed a bird that appeared familiar, but which I could not initially identify. It was accompanied by several adult and juvenile Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* as well as a Cape Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis nitens*, and was obviously also a starling. It recalled a Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, but my southern African field guide (Sinclair *et al.* 2002) did not even mention this species. I took some photo-

graphs through my telescope but, as the adapter was broken, I had to handhold the camera, and the pictures were not very good.

I observed the bird for *c.*30 minutes from a distance of *c.*20 m and compiled a written description. The bird possessed a black head, throat and upper breast, black wings, a brownish-pink back and uppertail-coverts, pink belly and flanks, black thighs and a black tail. The undertail-coverts were black with a scaly appearance. The bill was pinkish red with a black base, the legs pinkish red. The bird was similar in size to a juvenile Wattled Starling, but appeared less slender.



Figures 1–2. Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Kgalagadi National Park, South Africa, 15 July 2005 (Jörgen Sagvik)
Étourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus*, Parc National de Kgalagadi, Afrique du Sud, 15 juillet 2005 (Jörgen Sagvik)

Eventually, as I moved somewhat closer to obtain better photographs, a car flushed all of the birds. The starling, which by now I felt quite certain must be a Rose-coloured Starling, was not seen again. I subsequently consulted several rangers at the camps, but none could help with the identification. Back in Sweden, I contacted Callan Cohen in Cape Town, who placed the photographs on the Birding Africa homepage and the bird was soon confirmed to be a Rose-coloured Starling. The brownish tone to the back suggests that it was probably a second calendar-year bird yet to attain full adult plumage (Cramp & Perrins 1994).

This is the first record of Rose-coloured Starling for southern Africa and only the second south of the Sahara, following one in Ethiopia *c.* 4 months previously (Fry *et al.* 2000, Schollaert 2006), though the possibility that the bird was an escape cannot be eliminated, especially considering the unusual date of the record. More recently a third record, again from Ethiopia, concerned two birds in breeding plumage photographed amidst a flock of Wattled Starlings in Abiatta-Shalla Lakes National Park, in late April 2007 (R. Tizard in *Bull. ABC* 14: 222).

Acknowledgements

I thank Callan Cohen for placing the photographs on Birding Africa's homepage. Thanks also to David Fisher, Jeremy Lindsell, Mike Meidlinger, Killian Mullarney, Dick Newell, Georges Oliosio, Philip Whittington and Chris Wormwell for their valuable comments, and to Ron Demey for helping me draft this note.

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Received 20 October 2005; revision accepted 12 April 2008.

First record of Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* for The Gambia

Kevin Roy

Première mention de l'Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* pour la Gambie. Un Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* a été observé à Kulari Swamp (13°23'N 14°06'W), Upper River Division, Gambie, le 30 septembre 2006. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays, les mentions précédentes les plus proches provenant du Mont Nimba à la frontière entre la Guinée et le Liberia.

On 30 September 2006, at 12.30 hrs, whilst birding around Kulari Swamp (13°23'N 14°06'W), near my home in the Upper River Division of The Gambia, I observed a plain, dull-plumaged, sparrow-sized bird with an undulating flight and conspicuous white outer rectrices emerge from a dense savanna woodland and land, *c.* 1 m above ground, in a *Mimosa pigra*, an invasive

prickly shrub, at the swamp edge. For 3–4 minutes it flitted between low perches in isolated specimens of those shrubs at a distance of 10–30 m, occasionally flicking and flaring its tail. It picked an insect from the ground and finally disappeared in the adjacent woodland, not to be seen again.

Initially I thought it was a Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*, a rare bird in the Upper River

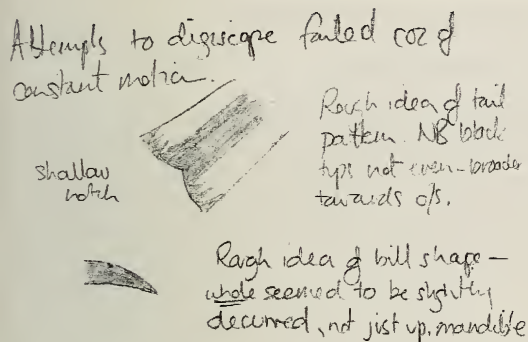


Figure 1. Sketch of Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*, at Kulari Swamp, Upper River Division, The Gambia, 30 September 2006 (Kevin Roy)

Croquis de l'Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus*, Kulari Swamp, Upper River Division, Gambie, 30 septembre 2006 (Kevin Roy)

Division, but when I observed it with my telescope at 28× magnification it was immediately obvious this thought was incorrect, as the bill was slender, slightly decurved and entirely dark grey to blackish, whereas *I. minor* has a stubby, pink-based bill (Fry *et al.* 1988). Furthermore, the bird had a plain, all-grey head with no hint of the malar or loreal markings characteristic of *I. minor*. The tail was shallowly forked, with black central rectrices and black tips to the white outer rectrices, which were slightly broader on the outer webs (see Fig. 1). The legs were dark grey to blackish. Attempting in vain to obtain a digiscoped photograph, I failed to note any details for the rest of the plumage, which appeared rather nondescript greyish. The bird seemed to possess no obviously worn or damaged plumage.

On my return home I consulted Barlow *et al.* (1997), but could find no 'match' for the bird. However, using Borrow & Demey (2001), I identified it as a Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*. The slender decurved bill suggested the bird was a *Prodotiscus* rather than an *Indicator* species, which supposition was supported by its active, rather erratic, flycatcher-like behaviour, undulating flight and the habit of flaring its tail (Fry *et al.* 1988). Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis*, of which there is a single record from

coastal northern Senegal (Barlow *et al.* 1997, Borrow & Demey 2001), has white outer rectrices, but these are all white, whereas those of the bird observed were tipped black. The only other similar-sized bird with white outertail-feathers known from The Gambia is Lead-coloured Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus*. This species, with which I am also familiar, is eliminated by its entirely white outer rectrices, white supra-loreal streak and eye-ring, and comparatively straight bill.

This is the first record of Wahlberg's Honeybird for The Gambia, the nearest previous records being from Mt. Nimba, on the Guinea-Liberia border (Fry *et al.* 1998, Borrow & Demey 2001). There are two isolated records in West Africa, from Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, as well as four records from Enugu in south-east Nigeria (Borrow & Demey 2001). The species' main range is in South and East Africa, with outlying populations in Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as in Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Clive Barlow for detailed comments on an earlier draft of this note, and for help with references. Thanks also to Ron Demey for helpful comments, to Tim Wachter for identifying *Mimosa pigra*, and to Pete Leonard for assistance with the graphics.

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Received 5 November 2007; revision accepted 15 April 2008.

Birding in Sierra Leone: an emerging West African destination

Frank Lambert

Observer les oiseaux en Sierra Leone: une destination ouest africaine qui gagne en popularité. Cet article, fondé sur l'expérience de l'auteur en décembre 2006, présente quatre des meilleurs sites pour observer les oiseaux en Sierra Leone: la zone de Freetown (pour, entre autres, le Picatharte de Guinée *Picathartes gymnocephalus*), l'île de Tiwai, la forêt de Gola (le seul site du pays où se trouve le Malimbe de Ballmann *Malimbus ballmanni*) et la Sierra Leone du Nord.

Until recently, Sierra Leone was a country that no 'sensible' birder would dream of visiting, ravaged by more than ten years of civil wars that were exemplified by the horror and barbaric practice of amputation by machete. Since 2004, however, the situation has dramatically changed, and whilst there is no denying that the scars of war and poverty are still very much part of everyday life in Sierra Leone, the country is now safe to visit and birders, and other tourists, are beginning to return.

Because Sierra Leone is of similar size to the Republic of Ireland, it is fairly easy to visit most parts of the country during a relatively short trip. Despite its small size, this West African country supports a remarkable diversity of birds, many of which are virtually impossible to see elsewhere. The other large areas of forest where birders might encounter most of the restricted-range species that occur in Sierra Leone are mainly in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, both of which are currently less easy to visit. Another advantage, especially for Anglophones, to visiting Sierra Leone is that it is primarily an English-speaking country.

Lying between 7° and 10° north of the equator, Sierra Leone not only boasts some of the richest accessible rainforests west of the Dahomey Gap, but also has much drier savanna forests in the north, with their own distinctive avifauna. The rainforests in this part of West Africa, which once covered hundreds of thousands of square kilometres, form the Upper Guinea Forests Endemic Bird Area, but are now much reduced (by nearly 80%). BirdLife International considers this EBA to be of critical priority for conservation efforts.

From a conservation standpoint, Sierra Leone is hence of great importance, and it is notable that 15 of the 16 bird species restricted to the Upper Guinea Forests EBA occur in Sierra Leone.

Amongst them are a number of threatened species, the best known of which is probably the **White-necked Picathartes** *Picathartes gymnocephalus* whose remarkable appearance and nesting habits are highly unusual (Thompson *et al.* 2004). Also found in Sierra Leone are the near-mythical **Gola Malimbe** *Malimbus ballmanni* (Endangered), as well as other globally threatened species such as **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* (Vulnerable), **Rufous Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia ussheri* (Endangered) and **Green-tailed Bristlebill** *Bleda eximius* (Vulnerable). Many threatened mammals, including **Pygmy Hippopotamus** *Hexaprotodon liberiensis*, also occur in these forests, and whilst these were heavily hunted in recent decades, it is hoped that a greater conservation awareness may start to reverse this trend.

Logistics and travel

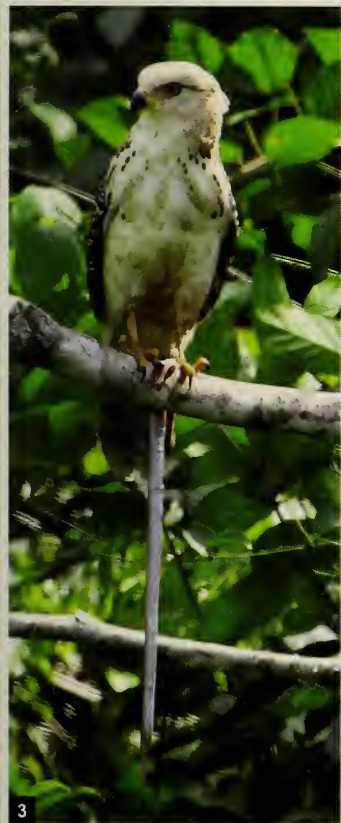
I visited Sierra Leone in December 2006 on an 18-day private birding trip with two friends (see Jon Hornbuckle's report on the WorldTwitch website www.worldtwitch.com). It was my first visit to West Africa, and my first serious taste of African rainforest birding. Compared to some other tropical forest regions, particularly those in the Neotropics, West Africa is relatively species poor, but it is nevertheless just as exciting and there are many superb birds to find. Like rainforests anywhere, however, those in Sierra Leone contain a significant number of low-density (e.g. **Western Wattled Cuckooshrike** *Lobotos lobatus*, **Nimba Flycatcher** *Melaenornis annamarulae*, **Gola Malimbe**), shy or skulking species (e.g. **White-breasted Guineafowl**, **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis haematopus*, **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* and **Black-headed Rufous Warbler** *Bathmocercus cerviniventris*) that are a serious challenge to find or see well. We therefore arranged our trip though



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Figure 1. Gola forest from the air (David Zeller)
Vue aérienne de la forêt de Gola (David Zeller)
Figure 2. White-throated Blue Swallow / Hironde à
bavette *Hirundo nigrita* (Keith Valentine)

Figure 3. Congo Snake Eagle / Serpenteaire du Congo
Dryotriorchis spectabilis (Keith Valentine)
Figure 4. White-necked Picathartes / Picatharte de
Guinée *Picathartes gymnocephalus* (Guy Shorrocks)

a local guide, Kenneth Gbenga, who did a great job of organising our transport and accommodation, and knew the layout of the main birding sites. However, unless you have a lot of time on your hands, it is advisable to join an organised tour led by an experienced birding guide to optimise your chances of seeing a larger proportion of the birds.

Travelling within Sierra Leone is relatively tough, with very dusty dirt roads in many areas, fairly long drives between some sites, very few tourist-class hotels, and the need for permits and to negotiate with villagers to visit certain sites—all of which are disincentives to independent travel. The best time to visit is from December to February, when it is relatively dry. During the wetter months, many of the roads are difficult to traverse without a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

Birds and birding sites

Freetown area

There is excellent birding within an hour or so of the capital, Freetown, on the Western Peninsula. The easiest access is at Guma Dam, from which one can bird along an almost unused road. Most of the birds found here are widespread and liable to be encountered at other localities visited, but of particular note are **Melancholy Woodpecker** *Dendropicos lugubris*, **Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapillus* and **White-tailed Alethe** *Alethe diademata*. To see the star bird here requires the observer to wait patiently in the forest, after climbing a short but obscure narrow trail from the road. Here, after a half-hour wait in nervous anticipation, we had excellent views of several **White-necked Picathartes** an hour or so before dark, one of which was very inquisitive, hopping to within a few metres of us.

Freetown Golf Course harbours a patch of gallery forest where several special species occur, most notably **Crimson Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes sanguineus* and **Turati's Boubou** *Laniarius turatii*.

Also perhaps worth visiting near Freetown is the Regent Forest area, where there is a Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Sanctuary, although it was officially closed during our visit, allegedly because a Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes* had killed one of its keepers. This site has productive secondary forest along the entrance road where we saw our only **Forest Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas leucos-*

ticta. **Capuchin Babbler** *Phyllanthus atripennis* may also be found along the entrance track, but this species is probably more easily seen elsewhere.

We also visited an area of mangroves east of the city, near 'No. 2 River Resort', where there is good food and **Brown Sunbirds** *Anthreptes gabonicus* around the restaurants. Although we spent two hours in an engine-less boat on the river, vainly hoping to see **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolopha* or **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus*, we saw almost nothing here (though we probably glimpsed the night herons at dusk). Other birders, however, have managed to see these species near the river resort.

Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary

Tiwai Island (12 km²) is situated in the Moa River, 10 km north-west of Gola West, and is the site of the country's only community-based conservation programme. It supports a superb tract of tall rainforest and was my favourite locality that we visited; it is certainly worth spending at least two days here. There is no accommodation nearby, but there is an excellent tented camp within an area of concrete shelters in a large forest clearing, whilst the local villagers can cook for you, provided that you bring sufficient food. There is a modest fee for visiting. Visits should be arranged in advance (e-mail: tiwai_island@hotmail.com; website: <http://www.tiwaiisland.org/tiwai.htm>).

We found the best of the many trails to be that emanating from the far left corner of the research station: this trail has a number of good side trails that can also be explored. During our visit we found many interesting species, and bird activity was much higher here than at any other rainforest site we visited. Hornbills seemed to be everywhere. Some of the birds possible here include **Spot-breasted Ibis** *Bostrychia rara*, **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubii*, **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus*, **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Spizaetus africanus*, **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis*, **Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis*, **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*, **Bates's Swift** *Apus batesi*, **Chocolate-backed Kingfisher** *Halcyon badia*, **Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys*, **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus*, **Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata*, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus*, **Little Green Woodpecker** *Campethera maculosa*, **Fire-bellied Woodpecker**

Dendropicos pyrrhogaster, African Pitta, Blue Cuckooshrike *Coracina azurea*, Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush *Stizorhina finschii*, Sharpe's *Apalis Apalis sharpii*, Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens*, Buff-throated Sunbird *Chalcomitra adelberti*, Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus fulgidus*, Red-vented Malimbe *Malimbus scutatus*, Maxwell's Black Weaver *Ploceus albinucha* and Yellow-mantled Weaver *P. tricolor*. Night birding was not rewarding when we visited, but several species of eagle owl and two species of fishing owl have been reported from the area.

Many mammals are also present here, but most are very shy and some very rare. Pygmy Hippopotamus, Chimpanzees and several species of monkey (including the spectacular Diana Monkey *Cercopithecus diana*) could potentially be encountered.

Gola area

The forest reserves of Gola, in the south-eastern extremity of the country, have long been recognised as being of spectacular importance for birds and other wildlife (Allport *et al.* 1989, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2008). These include Gola North (45,800 ha), Gola East (22,800 ha) and Gola West (6,200 ha). The two best areas to visit are Gola East, which is on fairly level ground, and Gola North, which is hilly, with most land lying above 300 m. Accessible areas of Gola East (and Gola West) are fairly close to the town of Zimmi, which in turn is c.2 hours drive from Tiwai Island. We visited all three forest reserves, but concentrated our time in Gola East, which is easily visited from a hotel base in Zimmi. Gola West is also close to Zimmi, but we found that the one trail into the area was overgrown and very difficult to follow; Spotted Honeyguide was the only notable bird seen. To visit Gola North one can either stay in Belebu village, where there is a simple guesthouse, or opt for a difficult drive, followed by a 12-km walk and camping. I would like to have spent longer at Gola North, since the forest here was excellent, but Gola East also has an abundance of good birds.

At Gola East we concentrated on a trail that started on the main road, some 1.5 km from the boundary. This trail had been used by the Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (the BirdLife partner in the UK) for survey work. Birding here

was often slow, but over time we saw many interesting species, including Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *Accipiter erythropus*, White-breasted Guineafowl, Red-billed Dwarf and Black Dwarf Hornbills *Tockus hartlaubi*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Ceratogymna cylindricus*, Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis*, Lowland Akalat *Sheppardia cyornithopsis*, Kemp's Longbill *Macrosphenus kempii*, Red-billed Helmetshrike *Prionops caniceps*, Green-tailed Bristlebill, many greenbuls and sunbirds, including Buff-throated, four species of malimbe, Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch *Nigrita bicolor*, Crimson Seedcracker and Red-fronted Antpecker *Parmoptila rubrifrons*. Western Wattled Cuckooshrike also occurs in Gola East, although we failed to find this rare canopy species, as well as Yellow-footed *Melignomon eisentrauti* and Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksii*, and the poorly known Rufous Fishing Owl (a bird of smaller forest streams).

Roadside farmbrush en route between Zimmi and Gola East, just beyond a large marshy area that the road traverses, was also very productive. Here we found Red-cheeked Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia blissetti*, Puvell's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puvelli*, Capuchin Babbler, Fiery-breasted Bushshrike *Malaconotus cruentus* and Sooty Boubou *Laniarius leucorhynchus*.

We accessed Gola North from the village of Belebu, which is only about two hours drive from Gola East, but at the end of a very bad road with hazardous log bridges. Despite this, we made the journey in a two-wheel-drive vehicle and spent the night in the village. From here one needs a guide who knows the trails to take you into the forest. We hoped to find Gola Malimbe here, but failed. Birds we did find on our short visit included Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Bristle-nosed Barbet *Gymnobucco peli*, Brown-eared Woodpecker *Campethera caroli* and a displaying Rufous-sided Broadbill. Nimba Flycatcher has also been reported from this area. Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus* can also be found in the primary forests of Gola North.

Flooded fields near Kenema, within driving distance of Gola East, hold some interesting species, including the locally uncommon Forbes's Plover *Charadrius forbesi*. Kenema is another gateway to Gola North; from here it is possible to reach a remote camp in the Lalehun Forest of Gola



Figure 5. Johanna's Sunbird / Souimanga de Johanna *Cinnyris johannae* (Keith Valentine)

Figure 6. Buff-throated Sunbird / Souimanga à gorge rousse *Chalcomitra adalberti* (Keith Valentine)

Figure 7. Stone Partridge / Poulette de rocher *Ptilopachus petrosus* (Keith Valentine)

Figure 8. Black Dwarf Hornbill / Calao de Hartlaub *Tockus harilaubi* (David Hoddinott)

Figure 9. Blue-throated Roller / Rollier à gorge bleue *Eurystomus gularis* (Keith Valentine)

Figure 10. Standard-winged Nightjar / Engoulevent à balanciers *Macrodipteryx longipennis* (David Shackelford)

North. We did not have time to visit this area, or a four-wheel-drive vehicle, which is essential, but several of the commercial bird tour companies who have visited the area recently have been successful in finding a range of exciting species, including one of the rarest birds in Africa, Gola Malimbe. White-breasted Guineafowl and the skulking Grey-throated Rail *Canirallus oculeus* are other exciting prizes here. All of the aforementioned sites hold populations of other skulking species, such as forest rails and Latham's Forest Francolin *Francolinus lathamii*, so these should be looked for at all of these sites.

Northern Sierra Leone

A day's drive north from Zimmi is the town of Magburaka, where we stayed at the Pampana Guesthouse. From here it is easy to visit the Bumbuna area, where savanna and scrub provides a very different type of birding and a completely different avifauna. Roadside birding near Bumbuna can produce species such as Ahanta Francolin *Francolinus ahantensis*, Green Turaco *Tauraco persa*, Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumannii*, Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*, Green-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra verticalis*, Turati's Boubou, Emerald Starling *Lamprotorornis iris* and the host-mimicking Jambandu Indigobird *Vidua raricola* and Cameroon Indigobird *V. camerunensis*. Indigobirds are best searched for along the road from Kenema to Makeni.

Of course, there are many more species to be seen on any trip to Sierra Leone than are mentioned here, and needless to say there is much yet to be discovered about the avifauna. This article is merely designed to whet your appetite and to encourage more birders to explore the exciting birding that await in this relatively 'new' West African destination.

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Received 9 February 2009.

Gola Forest—a park in progress

The Gola Forest Reserves have been the subject of an ambitious project to protect these magnificent forests in perpetuity. The Sierra Leone government's Forestry Division has been working with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) to protect these forests since 1990. In 2002, a new phase was begun to establish the Gola Forest as the country's first Rainforest National Park and only the country's second park, after Outamba Kilimi National Park. With support from the European Union, FFEM, Conservation International and the Darwin Initiative, the partners have been recruiting and training the 100 staff that are needed to protect the forest, support community development and education work, and undertake much-needed biological surveys.

The Forestry Division has recently established visitor fees and an entry permit system for the forest, as well as opening new trails and access roads. It is still early days and this year the project will be developing a park headquarters closer to the forest and basic visitor facilities.

Permits to enter the forest can be obtained from the Gola Forest Programme offices in Kenema, two hours away. The project can also provide guides for visitors, and basic camping equipment. Contact the office on +232 (0) 76 420218 or e-mail golaforest@yahoo.com for more information.

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Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; records are mostly from 2008, 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 & 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.

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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 2008; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes. Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recomman-

dons 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 & 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.

Angola

A team of seven ornithologists led by Michael Mills and supported by the ABC Conservation Fund visited Angola's largest collection of bird skins, housed in Lubango, Angola, for two weeks during June 2008. Little time was spent in the field, but several short outings were made. Fülleborn's Longclaw *Macronyx füllebornii* was seen between Lubango and Humpata. Leba produced the fourth Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* for the country, Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, Angola Batis *Batis minulla* and Montane (Ludwig's) Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis*. At Tundavala another Booted Eagle was seen (fifth record). An excursion to the Quipungo area, c.100 km east of Lubango, produced woodland species such as African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*, Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus*, Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*, Racket-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulatus*, Arnot's Chat *Myrmecocichla arnoti*, Böhm's Flycatcher *Muscicapa boehmi*, Sharp-tailed Starling *Lamprolornis acuticaudus* and Chestnut-backed

Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus*. Other birds recorded in the area included Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris*, Red-throated Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon rufigula*, Hartlaub's Babbler *Turdoides hartlaubii* and Brown Firefinch *Lagonosticta nitidula* (MM).

A Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* was observed c.90 nautical miles offshore from Soyo, at the Congo River mouth, on 5 August 2008 (IW). This is much further out at sea than the one photographed c.10 km offshore from Cabinda on 26 July 2006 (Bull. ABC 14: 92).

Azores

The following records are from June–December 2008. A Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* stayed on Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, from 9 November. An adult Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* was photographed six nautical miles south of Pico on 10 August and another was seen 160 nautical miles south of Faial on 13 August. On 15 August, a juvenile White-tailed Tropicbird *P. lepturus* was photographed 340 nautical miles

west-southwest of Flores. The first Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* for the Azores was an adult photographed four nautical miles off Cedros, Faial, on 1 August. A first-year Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* was found at Porto Martins, Terceira, on 7 November. A frigatebird *Fregata* sp. (either Ascension *F. aquila* or Magnificent *F. magnificens*) was photographed off Corvo, Flores and Terceira on several dates between 12 and 29 October.

Unusually high numbers of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were recorded with, for example, a flock of 19 on São Miguel on 10 December and up to eight on Terceira on 18 December. A Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* was photographed at Fajã Grande, Flores, on 11 October. American Great Egrets *E. alba egretta* were observed on São Miguel (one, from June until December), on Pico (one, from 24 October), on Corvo and Flores (one on each island, from 27 October) and on Terceira (up to two in December). On Corvo, a Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* found in mid February was still present on 31 July. One of three Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* on São Miguel

had been ringed in the Netherlands, but died. A **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, from 2 December was the third for the Azores. Also there, a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was seen on 16 September.

A raptor reported on São Miguel from 24 August to 7 September was identified from photographs as an **American Swallow-tailed Kite** *Elanoides forficatus*; previous records from the ABC region include one reportedly photographed on Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, in March 1993, and an undocumented sighting from Flores, Azores, on 15 March 2007. The first **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* for the Azores was identified at Serra Devassa, São Miguel, on 6 July; the second was a wing-tagged individual on Corvo on 3 November. Single **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* were observed on Santa Maria on 4 August and 1 December, and at Lagoa do Negro, Terceira, on 25 August. A **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* on Corvo on 19 October was another first for the islands. An **American Coot** *Fulica americana* was present at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, from 2 December.

On São Miguel, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* and a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* were found on 5 June, and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* on 6 June. On Terceira, up to three **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* were present from 17 June into September, two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla* from 28 August until 12 September (with one on São Miguel on 12 September), up to eight **Pectoral Sandpipers** (with about seven on São Miguel) and a **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata* on 31 August. On São Jorge, two **Lesser Yellowlegs** were seen on 13 August, and, on Faial, a **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* two nautical miles south of Horta on 28 August. A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* was at Santa Cruz da Graciosa on 5 September. A tattler *Tringa brevipes* *l. incanus* was reported from Ponta

Delgada harbour, São Miguel, on 7 September.

In late September–December a variety of Nearctic waders was reported, including several **Semipalmated Plovers**, several **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*, several **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, a **Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri*, two **Least Sandpipers** *C. minutilla*, several **White-rumped Sandpipers**, several **Pectoral Sandpipers**, a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis*, several **Wilson's Snipes**, a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, a few **Hudsonian Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*, at least three **Lesser Yellowlegs**, a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* and several **Spotted Sandpipers**.

Nearctic gulls reported for the period include an adult **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, from 7 December, and single **Laughing Gulls** *L. atricilla* at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 4 and 16 June, at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 10 September into November, and at Lagoa do Peixinho, Pico, on 27 August.

A pair of **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata*, of which one had been ringed on Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, on 4 June 2001, was incubating an egg on Ilhéu da Praia, Graciosa, on 27 May; one of the two was still there in July, but the breeding attempt seemed to have failed. On Ilhéu da Vila, one was seen on 27 June and 4 July, and from 2 August. A **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* was found on Ilhéu de Santo António, Pico, on 1 June. On 17 August, the first **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* for the Azores was photographed 200 nautical miles west of Flores.

Five **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* were seen at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 4 December; this species is apparently colonising the islands; a singing male was noted at Nordeste, São Miguel, on 8 December. The second **Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* for the archipelago was at Fajã Grande on 23 October. A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* was at Lagoa do Paul, Pico, on 29

November. On Corvo, a juvenile **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* was photographed on 13–19 October, whilst the first **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus varius* stayed from 11 October into November.

American Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster* were photographed at Fajã Grande on 15 October and on Terceira on 18 October. A **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* was seen at Terra Nostra Park, Furnas, on 19 December, and a **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus* on Corvo on 12 October. The first **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* for the Azores was trapped on Corvo on 19 September. Two **Red Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* were at Miradouro da Tronqueira, São Miguel, on 7 June.

Once again, an impressive number of New World passerines was reported. Up to five **Red-eyed Vireos** *Vireo olivaceus* stayed on Corvo in October. Also on Corvo, the second **White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus* was found on 24 October and the first and second **Yellow-throated Vireos** *V. flavifrons* on 11 October and 17–18 October. A third **Yellow-throated Vireo** was at Sete Cidades, São Miguel, on 13 October, whilst yet another was seen at Fajãzinha, Flores, on 21 October. Two more firsts on Corvo were a **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* on 11 October and a **Black-throated Green Warbler** *Dendroica virens* on 22–23 October, with a second on 24–26 October. **Myrtle Warblers** *D. coronata* were found on Flores on 13 October and on Corvo on 24 October. The third **Blackpoll Warbler** *D. striata* was photographed on Corvo on 13 October. Up to two **Ovenbirds** *Seiurus aurocapilla* were recorded at Serreta, Terceira, on 18–31 October, and up to five **Common Yellowthroats** *Geothlypis trichas* on Corvo in October, with one at Lagoa Seca, Flores, on 7 October. The second **Hooded Warbler** *Wilsonia citrina* was an adult male on Corvo on 11 October. **Scarlet Tanagers** *Piranga olivacea* occurred at Ponta da Fajã, Flores, on 11–12 October and 15–16 October,



Hooded Warbler / Paruline à capuchin
Wilsonia citrina (Pete Leonard)

and a first-year male was found dead on Corvo on 30 October. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* were observed on Corvo on 17 October and at Fajá Grande on 19–20 October. A **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* stayed at Ponta Delgada, Flores, on 14–20 October (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 262–267, 347–352, 417–437; 31: 50–55; *Birding World* 21: 281, 324, 383, 423–424, 456, 496–497; 22: 13).

Botswana

The following records are from July 2008–January 2009. At Shashe Dam, in eastern Botswana, 42 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were counted on 3 August (*NBo*), whilst 14 were observed at Lake Ngami on 27 July and six on the Boteti River near Samedupi on 3 August (*PH*, *MK*). In the Okavango Delta, c.57 **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* were noted on the Jao / Kwetsani flats on 4 August (*MKa*, *GS*). At two breeding colonies in Moremi Game Reserve, 132 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were seen at Xaxanaka Lediba on 13 August and 25 at Gadikwe Lediba on 14 August (*PH*, *MK*, *MS*). Over 1,500 **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* were observed on the Chobe floodplain near Kasane on 3 July, with a **Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* along the river on the same date (*MV*, *PL*). In December, a **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*, hunting over Impalila Island, and an **African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* were noted (*DM* & *LM*). On 21 December, a male **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*, 12 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* and 300 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola*

nordmanni were found on Dautsa Flats, west of Sehitwa (per *ST*).

In the south-east, a total of 119 **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* was seen at five sites in July. A single **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* was at Bokaa Dam on 20 July and single **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* at Thagale Dam on 20 July and Sojwe Pan on 12 August (*CBr*). A **Baillon's Crane** *Porzana pusilla* was seen at Planet Baobab near Gweta, north of the Makgadikgadi, in late November (*JH*). On 12 December, c.100 **Chestnut-banded Plovers** *Charadrius pallidus* were seen at Rysana Pan and 23 at Mopipi Dam, where over 4,000 waders and terns were counted, including 1,000 **Black-winged Pratincoles**, 1,500 **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus* and two **White-fronted Plovers** *C. marginatus* (*CBr*). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*, 304 **Black-winged Pratincoles** and a **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* were at Bokaa Dam on 18 January (*CBr* & *KM*).

In the Makgadikgadi Pans, 31 **Chestnut-banded Plovers** and three **Caspian Terns** were seen between Sua Spit and Nata Delta, in the north of Sua Pan, on 10 August (*GMc*, *NBo*). A flock of 500 pratincoles, most of which were **Black-winged Pratincoles**, was at Mopipi Dam, in the south of the Makgadikgadi system, on 30 November (*PH*). In Moremi Game Reserve, a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* seen at Xakanaxa on 18 November (*JH* et al.) was possibly the same as that seen on 21 August at Dead Tree Island (*GL*). At Maun, a **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* was seen at the sewage ponds on 20 January (*RR*), whilst a **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audebertii* was of note in November (per *MMU*).

At Lake Ngami c.28,500 waterbirds were counted on 14–16 December, including 550 **Fulvous Whistling Ducks**, 200 **Black-winged Pratincoles**, two **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola*, a **Pectoral Sandpiper**, ten **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* and 18 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* (*CBr*).

Pink-billed Larks *Spizocorys conirostris* were numerous west of Rysana Pan and at the edge of the central Kalahari Game Reserve in mid August (*CBr*). A **Rosy-throated Longclaw** *Macronyx ameliae* was found on the Jao / Kwetsani flats, in the Okavango, on 4 August (*MKa*, *GS*). Ten **Bronze Mannikins** *Spermestes cucullatus* were drinking at a garden pool in Francistown on 31 October; this is outside their usual range (*MSz*). Two **Common Mynas** *Acridotheres tristis* were also seen in Francistown (*TB*), consolidating their hold in east and south-east Botswana (all per *ST*).

A trip along the border with Namibia, east of Mohebo, on 17–18 December produced an **African Hobby**, a **Corncrake** *Crex crex* in 1821B, pairs of **Mosque Swallows** *Hirundo senegalensis* at three locations, **Purple-banded Sunbirds** *Cinnyris bifasciatus* in 1822A2 and 1822B1, and six **Sharp-tailed Starlings** *Lamprolornis acuticaudatus* (*CBr*).

Cameroon

In May 2008, in Lobeke National Park, **Dja River Warbler** *Bradypterus grandis* was common at one but absent from another swamp. On the Sanga River between Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville, small numbers of **Grey Pratincoles** *Glareola cinerea* and **Egyptian Plovers** *Pluvianus aegyptius* were seen. **Violet-backed Hyliota** *Hyliota violacea* was found in the forest. Near Boumba-Bek National Park, a pair of **Tessmann's Flycatchers** *Muscicapa tessmanni* was observed (*JvdW*).

Canary Islands

Records from July 2008–January 2009 include the following. A female **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* was reported between Tenerife and La Palma on 16 September (per *Birding World* 21: 383). The **Tricoloured Heron** *Egretta tricolor* first seen on Gran Canaria from 15 November to 2 December 2007 (see photo *Bull. ABC* 15: 129) remained on Tenerife from 8 December 2007 into July 2008 (per



Figure 1. Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* with Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*, Djibouti harbour, 20 March 2008 (Abdi Jama)

Goélands railleurs *Larus genei* avec Aigrette à gorge blanche *Egretta gularis*, port de Djibouti, 20 mars 2008 (Abdi Jama)

Figure 2. Male Green-winged Teal / Sarcelle à ailes vertes mâle *Anas (crecca) carolinensis*, Ribeira da Janela, Madeira, 19 October 2008 (John Caddick)

Figures 3–4. Richard's Pipit / Pipit de Richard *Anthus richardi*, Sidi Wassai, Morocco, 31 October 2008 (Fanny Ellis)

Figure 5. Hybrid male Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus* x Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus*, Aguelmouss, near Tizi-n-Tichka, High Atlas, Morocco, 27 October 2008 (Fanny Ellis)

Mâle hybride Rougequeue noir *Phoenicurus ochrurus* x Rougequeue à front blanc *P. phoenicurus*, Aguelmouss, près de Tizi-n-Tichka, Haut Atlas, Maroc, 27 octobre 2008 (Fanny Ellis)

Figure 6. Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris* (far left and far right) with Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* and Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, Barra Peninsula, near Inhambane, Mozambique, 20 September 2008 (Maans Booysen)

Bécasseaux de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* (à l'extrême gauche et à l'extrême droite) avec Pluvier argenté *Pluvialis squatarola* et Barges rousses *Limosa lapponica*, péninsule de Barra, près de Inhambane, Mozambique, 20 septembre 2008 (Maans Booysen)

Figure 7. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* flying over Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, Barra Peninsula, near Inhambane, Mozambique, 20 September 2008 (Maans Booysen)

Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* volant au dessus de Bécasseaux cocorlis *Calidris ferruginea*, péninsule de Barra, près de Inhambane, Mozambique, 20 septembre 2008 (Maans Booysen)

Dutch Birding 30: 262). A pair of Lesser Scaups *Aythya affinis* stayed on Gran Canaria from 19 November until at least 6 December; the male was still present on 3 January (per *Birding World* 21: 497; 22: 13). A pale-morph Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* was observed near Breña Baja, La Palma, on 18 and 20 December (GPS). A first-winter Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* was photographed at Maspalomas pond, Gran Canaria, on 26 December (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 53).

A Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* was at Tias golf course, Lanzarote, on 1 November (per *Birding World* 21: 456). Up to two Little Stints *C. minuta* were at Fuencaliente salt pans, La Palma, on 14–19 December (GPS). A Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* was claimed from El Medano, Tenerife, on 12 October, whilst a Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* stayed at Salinas de Janubio, Lanzarote, from 24 September until at least 15 October (per *Birding World* 21: 424).

A male Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava feldegg* was seen on Lanzarote on 5 May (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 269) and a Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* at Pajara, Fuerteventura, on 15 December (per *Birding World* 21: 497). Three Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were near Breña Baja, La Palma, on 14 December (GPS).

Cape Verde Islands

In September, a presumed intermediate morph Herald (Trindade) Petrel *Prerodroma arminjoniana* was videotaped off Brava (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 417).

Côte d'Ivoire

A juvenile Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* fitted in the nest in Germany with a satellite transmitter in 2008 and wintering in Côte d'Ivoire was tracked to 69 km east of Abidjan. The bird had migrated via Gibraltar and crossed the Sierra Leone–Liberia border on 27 November and the Liberia–Côte d'Ivoire border on 1 December. On 21 December it flew high over

Abidjan; the next day it was recorded for the last time. This is the first record not only for Côte d'Ivoire, but also for all the other West African countries it crossed (BM).

Djibouti

Two Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* were photographed (Fig. 1) at the entrance to Djibouti's harbour on 20 March 2008 (AJ per JM).

Egypt

In July–December 2008 the following were reported. A juvenile Striated Heron *Butorides striata* was at Hurghada on 13 November (per *Birding World* 21: 456). On 29–30 July, an adult Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* was again seen at Wadi Lahami, where the species successfully bred in April 2006 (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 347). A Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* and c.15 African Skimmers *Rynchops flavirostris* were observed on the Nile below Edfu on 5 November (per *Birding World* 21: 456). The two Three-banded Plovers *Charadrius tricollaris* first reported from Tut Amon resort village, Aswan, on 24 February (*Bull. ABC* 15: 266) were still present on 2 August (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 348). A snipe, presumed to be either a Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* or Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala*, was photographed at Sharm el Sheikh, Sinai, on 22 October (per *Birding World* 21: 424). A Common Gull *Larus canus* was seen north of Aswan on 9 December (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 55).

On 19 November, at least two Siberian Buff-bellied Pipits *Anthus rubescens japonicus* were present at Sharm el Sheikh (per *Dutch Birding*

31: 59). If accepted, a Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* on the Red Sea coast at Lahami Bay Hotel, near Hamata, from 30 October to at least 4 November, and a juvenile Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* at Hurghada on 13 November are both first records for Egypt (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 436; 31: 60). Three Trumpeter Finches *Bucanetes githagineus* were observed at Komombo temple on 8 November (per *Birding World* 21: 456).

The Gambia

Twenty-five Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* were resting on a sandbar in the River Gambia between Kantaur and Janjangbureh on 24 January 2009 (DB & YB). An Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii* was observed near Farafenni on the opposite side of the river on 1 February 2009 (VS).

Ghana

Noteworthy records from May 2008 include the following. A Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus* flew over the canopy walkway in Kakum National Park on 13 May. A white-headed Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii* was observed at Atewa; there are few records from this locality. A calling Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* was also seen at Atewa, with another about halfway between Atewa and Cape Coast; both localities appear to be on the edge of the species' known range. A male Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was observed at Aboabo and another north of Assin Fosu; this species is rarely seen in West Africa. In the Shai Hills, an African Barred Owllet *Glaucidium capense* was found; this species was first observed at this site in 2005 (NB). A Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* was photographed at Sakumo Lagoon on 16 October 2008 (XV).

Guinea

During survey work in the south-east, in October–November 2008, two male Blue Rock Thrushes *Monticola solitarius* were observed at Pic de Fon on 20 October; this is a new species for Guinea. With 352



Three-banded Plover / Pluvier à triple collier *Charadrius tricollaris* (Wayne Jones)

species recorded at Pic de Fon to date, the site is the country's Important Bird Area with the longest birdlist. **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica* was found at 24 locations at 955–1,560 m, totalling 55 individuals (26 pairs or family groups and one single). The presence of **White-necked Picathartes** *Picathartes gymnocephalus* was revealed by photographs taken by a camera trap. A pair of **Sierra Leone Prinias** was also found at nearby Pic de Tibé and no fewer than 15 pairs were discovered at Mt Tétini Forest Reserve, to the south-east; neither site had ever been surveyed for birds. At Tétini, the Data Deficient **Emerald Starling** *Lamprotornis iris* was observed in flocks of up to 22 birds. A few species were added to the list of Ziama Forest Reserve, including **Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufescens* and **Copper-tailed Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis cupreocauda*. **Yellow-bearded Greenbul** *Criniger olivaceus* appeared to be remarkably common and a few **Black-headed Rufous Warblers** *Bathmocercus cerviniventris* were also noted (RD, MBC & KS).

Kenya

The following records are from June–December 2008. A pair of **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* was observed at Manguo Pond, Limuru, on 25 October; this species was formerly far more common. Unusually high numbers of **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* were counted at Lake Nakuru, with over 1,000 on 10–23 November and an estimated 5,000 on 13 December. **Dwarf Bitterns** *Ixobrychus sturmii* were reported from 10 km south of Ologosailie on the Lake Magadi road on 16 June (one), Splash Waterworld, Nairobi, on 12 November (two) and Ngulia, Tsavo West National Park (=NP), on 29 November (one). Six **Madagascar Pond Herons** *Ardeola idae* were at Musiara Swamp, Masai Mara, on 1 July; there were 19 at this site in 2007. A subadult **Rufous-bellied Heron** *A. rufiventris*, a rare bird east of the Rift Valley, was found at

Amboseli on 16 November. A **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber roseus* was noted at Nairobi NP on 12 December; this is not a common sight on the plains south of Nairobi. An unusual record was a male **Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* on Lake Nakuru on 24 June.

An **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* was observed at Karen, Nairobi, on 19 July, whilst two adults and a juvenile were at Tigoni on 29 November; there are only a couple of previous breeding records in Kenya. **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Nairobi NP on 18 October and from Chyulu Gate, Tsavo West NP, on 15 November. A subadult **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* at Nairobi NP on 18 October is the first for Nairobi district. An adult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* at Musiara Swamp, Masai Mara, on 25 November was a good record for a species that is now rare throughout its range (CJ). A **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was seen over the Dida Galgalu Desert in November; there are increasing numbers of records of this vulture in the region (NB). A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* of the nominate subspecies at Lake Nakuru on 27 June was present unusually late. An **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* was at Nairobi NP on 29 October. A **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* along the Kakamega–Kisumu road on 28 June is a surprise sighting at this time of year; a single at Nairobi NP on 5 October is an early record (CJ). A perched adult **Sooty Falcon** *F. concolor* was observed in Shaba Game Reserve on 3 November; two more were on the move with other falcons including **Lesser Kestrels** *F. neumannii* and **Eurasian Hobbies** over Marsabit on 5 November (NB).

An adult **African Crane** *Crex egregia* with a small chick was seen at Ahero Rice Scheme on 29 June; this is an interesting breeding record for this relatively little-reported species (CJ). An adult male **Heuglin's Bustard** *Neotis heuglinii* was found in Tsavo East NP in November (NB). An immature **Black-winged**

Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* stayed at Lake Nakuru from 7 November until at least 23 November; this is a rare bird in Kenya. A single **Madagascar Pratincole** *G. ocularis* was at Nguu Tatu, Mombasa, on 20 September; this species is more frequently seen in the Malindi area. A **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* at Nairobi NP on 12 December is unusual at this site. For the third consecutive year there were no November records of **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* in the Masai Mara or Amboseli, areas that in previous years held substantial numbers. In the Pemba Channel three **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were seen on 23 November. Unusual June records include **Common Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia* on 18 June (two at Nairobi National Park), **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* on 17 June (one roosting on a pool at Mountain Lodge), 23 June (one at Amboseli) and 24 June (two at Naro Moru), and a **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* on 26 June (at Lake Baringo). A **Slender-billed Gull** *L. genei* first reported at Lake Nakuru on 23 November was still present on 13 December. Also there was an **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavivirostris* on 10 November (CJ).

A pair of **Black-billed Turacos** *Tauraco schuettii* was seen in Kakamega Forest in November; this is a rare bird in Kenya these days (NB). A black-morph **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* was at Nairobi NP on 5 October; this cuckoo is not frequently recorded at this site. Nine **Marsh Owls** *Asio capensis* together were observed at Masai Mara on 14 September (CJ). Birds resembling **Forbes-Watson's Swift** *Apus berliozi* were seen flying low over Sokoike Forest on 20 November (NB). A **Least Honeyguide** *Indicator exilis* was recorded at Kichwa Tembo Camp on 2 July.

The enigmatic **Friedmann's Lark** *Mirafra pulpa* was seen in Shaba Game Reserve on 3 November (NB) and at Saltlick Lodge, Taita Hills, on 1 December. An impressive roost of over 200 **Banded Martins** *Riparia*

cincta was found in rank grass at Nairobi NP on 12 November. A **Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* was near the Oloololo Gate, Masai Mara, on 30 June; this is a scarce species in the Mara. A **Bush Pipit** *Anthus caffer* was at Lukenya, near Machakos—an usual location and date for this uncommon bird. A **Grey-olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris* at Tsavo West NP on 20 June constitutes a new location for this species.

Although **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* is always the commonest species at the Ngulia Ringing Project, Tsavo West NP; a record 11,938 were ringed in 2008 (or 58.9% of the 20,278 trapped birds), including 1,344 on 28 November, 1,932 on 29th and 1,525 on 30th. There were two retraps, a French bird and a Slovenian one (for more information visit <http://arochakenya.wildlifedirect.org/2008/12/19>). A **Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* responded to playback on the Naro Moru track on 18 November; this is never a common species in this region. A **Black-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola eximius* was near Oloololo Gate, Masai Mara, on 24 November; until its rediscovery in Ruma NP a few years ago this species was considered extirpated in Kenya. A **Whistling Cisticola** *C. lateralis* was at Mungatsi on 27 June. A **Turner's Eremomela** *Eremomela turneri* at Shiru Forest, near Kakamega, on 22 October suggests the presence of a 'new' population of this Endangered species (*CJ*).

Three **Mountain Illadopsis** *Illadopsis pyrrhoptera* were seen in Kakamega on 12 November; this species is rare at this site (*NB*). A male **Olive-bellied Sunbird** *Cinnyris chloropygius* at Kichwa Tembo, Masai Mara, on 1 July constitutes a new species for the Mara. An adult and an immature **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* were observed at Nairobi NP on 23 October, with another adult on 8 November; this is an unprecedented number on southbound migration (*CJ*). On 5 November another Lesser Grey Shrike was seen near Marsabit,

slightly outside the range given in Zimmerman *et al.* (1996. *Birds of Kenya and northern Tanzania*). Two groups of **Grey-crested Helmetshrikes** *Prionops poliophus* were seen in Lake Nakuru NP; the first was a mixture of apparently pure individuals, hybrids and the *cristatus* race of White-crested Helmetshrike *P. plumatus*. The hybrids resembled Grey-crested in size and plumage but had variably coloured crests and sported small eye wattles. The second small group only contained hybrids (*NB*). A male **Sharpe's Starling** *Cinnyricinclus sharpii* was at Karen Club, Nairobi, on 24 October; there are few records for Nairobi.

Ten **Red-billed Buffalo Weavers** *Bubalornis niger* of the isolated population at Ahero Rice Scheme were encountered on 29 June; this species is rarely seen here. The third record for Kenya of **Rufous-tailed Weaver** *Hirundo ruficaudus* concerned three birds on the hills behind Mara Sarova Camp, Masai Mara, on 13 November. An adult male **Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps*, a rare species for Nairobi, was at the main entrance of Nairobi NP on 29 October. Three **Parasitic Weavers** *Anomalospiza imberbis* were near Oloololo Gate, Masai Mara, on 24 November; this is never a common species in the Mara. Two **Black-cheeked Waxbills** *Estrilda charmosyna* at Baringo cliffs on 26 June are unusual for this site (*CJ*).

Liberia

During field work at Mts Tokadeh and Gangra and the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR), in the Nimba Mountains, in June–July 2008 and January 2009 the following were recorded. The most interesting find was perhaps that of two pairs of **Sierra Leone Prinias** *Schistolais leontica* at the old LAMCO mine site. Other species of conservation concern included **Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata* (rare; only one location), **Western Wattled Cuckooshrike** *Lobotos lobatus* (a male at ENNR), **Green-tailed Bristlebill** *Bleda eximius* (all three sites), **Yellow-bearded Greenbul** *Criniger olivaceus*

(all three sites), **Black-headed Rufous Warbler** *Bathmocercus cerviniventris* (six singing males), **Nimba Flycatcher** *Melaenornis annamarulae* (three locations), **Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufescens* and **Copper-tailed Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis cupreocauda*. Other noteworthy species included **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubii* (a pair in a swamp at Tokadeh), **Bates's Swift** *Apus batesi* (two sites), **Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri* (at all three sites), **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* (one in a patch of savanna at Tokadeh on 22 January; this Palearctic migrant is rarely recorded in Liberia), **Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga phoenicea* (an independent juvenile at Mt Gangra on 13 January; this partial intra-African migrant is a rare visitor to the north), **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* (all three sites), **Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* (at least two at the old LAMCO mine; a rare and local winter visitor), **Grey Tit-Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus* (three at Tokadeh; first record for Nimba, representing a southward range extension) and **Fiery-breasted Bushshrike** *Malaconotus cruentus* (at all three sites) (*RD*).

Libya

Records from May 2008 include the following. Two occupied nests of **Eurasian Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter nisus* at Cyrene apparently constitute the first breeding records for the country, whilst at least four pairs of **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* at old Al Marj are the second breeding record for Libya. Species not mentioned on the ABC Checklist for the country and thus apparently firsts for Libya are a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* observed at Benghazi Lake on 30th, two calling **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* on 24th and an **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* at old Al Marj on 27th (per *Birding World* 21: 324).

Madeira

Records from May 2008–January 2009 include the following. A

Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* was observed five nautical miles south of Porto Santo on 20 September. A Great Egret *Egretta alba* was at Porto Moniz on 14–15 September, whilst an exceptional 25 Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* were counted at Ponta São Lourenço on 17 December. The long-staying first Green-winged Teal *Anas (crecca) carolinensis* for the island remained at Ribeira da Janela throughout the period (Fig. 2), and was joined by a second in December–January. A male and an immature Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope* were at the same site on 10 December. Two other firsts for Madeira were at Lugar de Baixo: a Blue-winged Teal *A. discors* on 4 October and an American Wigeon *A. americana* from 4 November until 4 December.

On 22 June a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* was seen at Pico Ruivo, whilst a pale-morph Booted Eagle stayed at Caniçal on 6–22 July. Two Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* remained until 14 June. Two Peregrine Falcons *F. peregrinus* were at Ponta do Pargo from 21 June until 19 July, with another at Porto Moniz on 12 July.

Noteworthy waders include an American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* at Caniçal on 18–29 September (second record), a Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* at Ribeira de Janela on 13 September, a Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* at Ponta do Pargo on 14 September, a Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* at Ribeira de Janela on 18 September and another at Machico on 3 October, and a Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in non-breeding plumage (only the second for Madeira) seen from the Funchal to Porto Santo ferry on 30 July.

A Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* was observed at Porto Moniz on 7 September. An adult Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* at Machico on 6 September appears to be another first for Madeira. On 18 December a Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus* was found at Ribeira da Janela. Tern records include a Gull-billed

Tern *Sterna nilotica* at Caniçal on 19 September (third record), c.200 Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea* at Porto Moniz on 7 September, a Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* on Selvagem Pequena, Selvagens, on 27 July, with four adult Sooty Terns *S. fuscata* there from 20 June until 4 July.

Two Alpine Swifts *Tachymarptis melba* were seen on 26 June. A Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* and a Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* were found dead on Selvagem Grande, Selvagens, on 29 May. Two Greater Short-toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* were reported on 3 October (fourth record for Madeira) and at Caniçal on 29 January; also there on the latter date were five Calandra Larks *Melanocorypha calandra*. A Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* was noted on Deserta Grande on 11 December. A high total of 62 Rock Sparrows *Petronia petronia* was counted at Caniçal on 10 January (per *Dutch Birding* 30: 352, 421–426; *Birding World* 21: 242, 281, 324, 383, 424, 497; 22: 13)

Morocco

In October 2008, 13 Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca* were observed at Oued Massa on 31st and 2,340 Audouin's Gulls on the beaches between Agadir and Tamri on 30th. In the south-west, nine Richard's Pipits *Anthus richardi* were seen at Sidi Wassai, Oued Massa, on 31st (Figs. 3–4). A male hybrid Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus* × Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus* was photographed at Aguelmouss, near Tizi-n-Tichka in the High Atlas, on 27th (Fig. 5). At the Tagdilt Track c.50 Trumpeter Finches *Bucanetes githagineus* were present on 28th (HD).

In January 2009, a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* was found at Oued Souss on 12 January 2009 and a Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* at Oued Massa the next day (SL).

Mozambique

In October 2008, a multidisciplinary survey of the previously virtually unexplored Mabu Mountain, northern Mozambique, was conducted.

Mabu (1,700 m) rises a short distance east of Chiperoone and is covered by 60–70 km² of mid-altitude and Afromontane rainforest. Bird species of conservation concern observed during the survey include: Southern Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus* (for which Mabu represents a small range extension), Cholo Alethe *Alethe choloensis* (common; Mabu holds one of the two most important populations of this localised species, with Mt Mulanje in adjacent Malaŵi), Spotted Ground Thrush *Zosterops guttata* (rare, despite the surprising absence of Orange Ground Thrush *Z. gurneyi*), Gunning's Akalat *Sheppardia gunnigi* (important population at 400–1,350 m), Swynnerton's Robin *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* (new for northern Mozambique; not uncommon above 1,350–1,400 m), Namuli Apalis *Apalis (thoracica) lynesi* (rare above 1,400 m; Mabu is only the second locality known) and Dappled Mountain Robin *Modulatrix orostruthus* (rare above 1,400 m; Mabu represents a slight range extension south from Namuli). Mabu also holds the most important population of the endangered race *belcheri* of Green Barbet *Stactolaema olivacea*, which is common from 750 m to the peak, as the one on Mt Thyolo has been eradicated through deforestation and numbers on Namuli are low. Other species of interest include Rameron Pigeon *Columba arquatrix* and Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon *C. delegorguei* (which replace each other altitudinally), Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum* and Grey Cuckooshrike *Coracina caesia*. The densities of Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula* (very common at 400–1,550 m) are remarkably high (FD-L, RJD & LF).

Not a single Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* was seen in a month spent in northern Mozambique and adjacent southern Malaŵi: what has happened to this bird? (FD-L, RJD).

Records from May–December 2008 include the following. An Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* was reported from Tsetsserra Mountain

on 10 December (per *TH*). At Ponta da Barra, southern Mozambique, over 30 **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were still present on 3 May (*EM*), with only two remaining on 19th (*DW*). Two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were seen at the San Sebastião Peninsula, on Bazaruto Island, on 23 November (per *TH*). Three **Great Knots** *Calidris tenuirostris* were photographed (Figs. 6–7) near White Sands on the Barra Peninsula, near Inhambane, on 20 September; there is one previous record of this vagrant at this locality, from December 2004 (*MB* per *EM*). Three **Lesser Noddies** *Anous tenuirostris* located on a beach at Bazaruto, on 1 May (*PS*), remained in the area until at least 19th, when up to five were present (per *TH*). Two **Brown Noddies** *A. stolidus* in a tern roost at Inhambane were photographed on 12 December (per *TH*). A large flock of **Mascarene Martins** *Phedina borbonica* was observed at the Rio Savane in late June (*EM*).

During a pelagic trip into the Mozambique Channel in mid-October two **Jouanin's Petrels** *Bulweria fallax* were found 100 nautical miles north-east of Vilanculos; this constitutes the sixth record for southern Africa, all of them from the Mozambique Channel. Other noteworthy species seen include **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor*, **Lesser Frigatebird** *F. ariel* and numerous flocks of **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata*, some comprising up to 100 individuals (per *TH*).

Namibia

A **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* was discovered at Walvis Bay on 24 November 2008; this is the fourth record for southern Africa following the recent sighting of three at Inhambane in Mozambique reported above (*JE* per *TH*). Two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* reported from Mile 4 Salt Works in Swakopmund on 24 May (*SB*) remained until June, with up to three there in July–August, up to four in September–October and one in November–December; the species is

now annual at this site (per *TH*). Up to 13 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were at Walvis Bay on 23 September, with up to 14 there in early November. The continued presence of **Shelley's Sunbird** *Cinnyris shelleyi* at Kalizo Lodge near Katimo Mulilo has been confirmed; it has been recorded regularly since 2004 and has now been found breeding—the first confirmed nesting record in the subregion (per *TH*).

Niger

A **Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* of the subspecies *rufescens*, photographed near Niamey in November 2008, represents the first recent positive record (*UL* per *JB*); this taxon is not shown as occurring in Niger by Borrow & Demey (2001. *Birds of Western Africa*) and Giraudoux *et al.* (1988. *Avifaune du Niger*. *Malimbus* 10: 1–140) mention it only in very general terms. Thiollay (1977. *Distribution saisonnière des rapaces diurnes en Afrique occidentale*. *Oiseau & R.F.O.* 47: 253–285), however, mentioned it as nesting in small numbers in rocky areas from Dogondoutchi to the Air, and possibly also in trees. On 25 May 2008, a **Western Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais opaca* was photographed at Termit, which is rather far east for this species (*TR* per *JB*).

Rwanda

Records from Nyungwe Forest from the period June–October 2008 include the following.

Breeding records include the following species seen on the nest: **Mountain Buzzard** *Buteo oreophilus* (13 June), **Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* (3 August), **Red-faced Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus laetus* (15 June), **Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher** *Melaenornis ardesiacus* (3 August), **African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* (12 July), **Waller's Starling** *Onychognathus walleri* (13 June), **Strange Weaver** *Ploceus alienus* and **Dark-backed Weaver** *P. bicolor* (28 June). An **African Dusky Flycatcher** *Muscicapa adusta* was seen feeding a nestling on 2 August. A flock of ten

Red-collared Mountain Bblers *Kupeornis rufocinctus* with two short-tailed juveniles were found on Biguung trail on 25 July and on 2 August an adult was seen carrying nesting material (all *CN*). A **Dusky Crimsonwing** *Cryptospiza jacksoni* was nest building in vine tangles near Kamiranzovu swamp on 13 September (*JCNy*).

Notable migrants in Nyungwe included a flock of 12 **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorvus* flying south on 12 October, an **African Blue Quail** *Coturnix adansonii* at Kitabi, at over 2,000 m, on 22 August, and three large flocks of **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* on 13 October (*CN*).

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* has now reached Rwanda: it was observed in Gitarama in June and in Kigali in September (*CNs*).

São Tomé & Príncipe

Two **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* were photographed in the estuarine area of the Rio Papagaio, Príncipe, on 6 June 2008 (Fig. 8). The only recent records mentioned by Jones & Tye (2006. *The Birds of São Tomé & Príncipe with Annobón. An Annotated Checklist*) are of a pair seen on the same river in June 1997 (per *RL*).

Senegal

A French seawatching team claimed a **Black Guillemot** *Cephus grylle* in non-breeding plumage off Dakar on 11 and 12 October 2008 (per *NH*); as this would be the first record not only for Senegal but also for the whole of Africa, details are eagerly awaited. The same team recorded a total of 22,304 seabirds in 61.3 hours of seawatching from the terrace of the Calao, on Isle N'Gor, on 5–12 October, including seven **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulweri*, 447 **Cape Verde Shearwaters** *Calonectris edwardsii*, 4,245 **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus*, 1,421 **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus*, 1,200 **Arctic Skuas** *S. parasiticus*, 262 **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus*, a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla*, a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan*, 2,610 **Sabine's Gulls** *Xema sabini*, 539 **Lesser Crested Terns** *Sterna*

bengalensis, 5,298 **Sandwich Terns** *S. sandvicensis*, 49 **Roseate Terns** *S. dougalli*, 2,869 **Common Terns** *S. hirundo*, 1,020 **Arctic Terns** *S. paradisaea*, 138 **Little Terns** *S. albifrons* and 1,318 **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger*. Fifteen **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were also observed (PC, PD, J-YF, ER & AV).

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) for June–December 2008 include an **Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus* and a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* at the airstrip on Alphonse from 26 October, representing the fifth and sixth reports for Seychelles respectively; both were still present in early December. Three **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* at Grand Anse, Praslin, on 9 July were the fifth report of this species.

An exceptional invasion of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus* began with six on Praslin on 17 November and six on Denis Island on 18 November. Numbers built up dramatically on 20–24 November with up to 500 on Denis, 120 at St Joseph Atoll, 100 on D'Arros, 50 on North Island, 35 on Praslin, 30 on Silhouette, 30 on Desroches, 30 on Mahé, 18 on Aride, 15 on Anonyme, ten on Cousine and five on Alphonse (Fig. 9). Numbers declined thereafter but a few were still present in early December on all of the islands listed. This is the second time in living memory that a mass invasion of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters has been witnessed in Seychelles. On the first occasion, hundreds or perhaps thousands of birds were seen on 15 different islands, arriving in early November 2001, with a few remaining as late as mid-June 2002. Apart from these two mass invasions, there have been only 14 previous records.

Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* also arrived in significant numbers around the same time as the Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, with up to 50 on Denis from 21 November; numbers declined thereafter but a few were still present in early December. There was one at North Island on 21

November, nine on 22 November and two still present in early December (Fig. 10). There was also one at Glacis, Mahé on 21–22 November, up to 20 at D'Arros from 24 November and two at Point Larue, Mahé on 1–2 December. **Amur Falcons** were seen to take **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** on D'Arros and Denis, and a **Madagascar Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia picturata* was also taken on Denis. **Amur Falcons** are now annual visitors to Seychelles although the species was unrecorded prior to 1995.

Reports of **European Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*, a species with only 11 previous records, include a male found dead on D'Arros on 26 September (the earliest arrival in Seychelles), a male and a female / immature on Praslin on 11 October, and one at St François on 28 October.

Other sightings of interest during the period were a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Denis Island on 3 October (34 previous records), a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* at Alphonse on 17 September (an annual visitor to the Aldabra group with 11 previous records east of there) and a **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* on North Island on 6 October (16 previous records) (all per AS).

South Africa

Records from May–December 2008 include the following. **Albatrosses** observed during pelagic trips out of Simon's Town, Western Cape, in July–September included several **Southern Royal Albatrosses** *Diomedea (e.) epomophona*, several **Northern Royal Albatrosses** *D. (e.) sanfordi* and at least three **Grey-headed Albatrosses** *Thalassarche chrysostoma*. Also noteworthy were a possible **Slender-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri* on 27 July, a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* of the race *elegans* in early August and, also in early August, unseasonal records of **Great-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma macroptera*, **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*, **Pomarine Skua**

Stercorarius pomarinus and **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*.

A **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea* was photographed at the Agulhas Banks between 80 and 140 nautical miles offshore on 23 September. A **Little Shearwater** of the white-faced nominate race *assimilis* was seen on 8 October and a **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria (aequinoctialis) conspicillata* in mid October. A trip aboard a tuna longliner working 40–90 nautical miles south-west of Cape Point in mid October produced at least 20 (possibly up to 32) **Wandering Albatrosses** *Diomedea exulans*, eight **Northern Royal Albatrosses** and three **Southern Royal Albatrosses**.

Southern Africa's fourth **Chatham Albatross** *Thalassarche (cauta) eremita* was spotted c.30 nautical miles south-west of Cape Point, Western Cape, on 28 June. An adult **Buller's Albatross** *T. bulleri* 25 nautical miles south-west of Cape Point on 15 November constitutes the fourth record for the southern African sub-region and the African continent. A pelagic trip out of Simon's Town on 8 November produced an adult **Wandering Albatross**, which is quite late in the season for this species, as well as a single **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus caneipes*, another rather uncommon species here. Two pelagic trips between Cape Town and Walvis Bay in late November and early December yielded several **Madeiran Storm Petrels** *Oceanodroma castro*—an addition to the southern African list—and **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii*, an extremely rare species in southern African waters, as well as a **White-bellied Storm Petrel** *Fregatta grallaria* and several flocks of **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata*.

A young **Wandering Albatross** was watched from shore at Cape Point, Western Cape, on 2 October; this species is very rarely seen from land. During a pelagic trip out of Durban no fewer than 14 **Barau's Petrels** *Pterodroma barau* were seen 20–80 nautical miles offshore on 10 October.

The second **Northern Rockhopper Penguin** *Eudyptes chrysol-*

come for 2008 came ashore on Noordhoek Beach, Cape Town, Western Cape, on 17 July; the bird was taken to a rehabilitation centre, where it was found to be in arrested moult but healthy (Fig. 11). Southern Africa's sixth **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was at Rondevlei, in Wilderness National Park, Western Cape, on 21 September. At St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, a **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* first seen on 14 November was still in the area on 10 December. A **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus* on Bird Island in Algoa Bay, Port Elisabeth, Eastern Cape, on 18 November is probably the same individual that has been returning to the site every season since at least 2005. Also there on the same date was an **Australian Gannet** *Morus serrator*; there has been a regular Australian Gannet on the island for the past few years. Two unringed **Australian Gannets** were discovered on Malgas Island, near Saldanha Bay, Western Cape, on 6 November; all previous individuals there have been ringed. There was a **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* on a pelagic trip from Durban in early July and c.1 month later another was seen at Cape Vidal, KwaZulu-Natal.

A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was calling at Ntsikeni Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, from at least 2 September and was seen on 13 September and again in early December. The alleged second **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* for the subregion was relocated on the Olifants River at Papendorp, Western Cape, in early August after an absence of 247 days; it was first seen here on 10 November 2001. **Slaty Egrets** *E. vinaceigula* were reported from Marievale Bird Sanctuary, near Nigel, Gauteng, on 30 August, from Mkhombo Dam, Gauteng, on 30 November (still present on 7 December) and from Nyamithi Pan, Ndumo Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, from 24 October until at least 30 November.

In Kruger National Park, a juvenile **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was at a waterhole

between Skukuza and Talamati on 12 October. The **Rüppell's Griffon Vulture** *Gyps rueppellii* that has been resident in the colony of Cape Vultures *G. coprotheres* at Blouberg Nature Reserve, Limpopo, for the last few years was still present in September and is apparently breeding with one of the Cape Vultures. **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* were reported from Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 10 August and 9 November; there was also one between Shingwedzi and Pafuri in Kruger National Park in November.

Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* were recorded at the Gamtoos River mouth, near Port Elisabeth, on 22 June, at Yzerfontein, Western Cape, from 5 December until 11 December, at the Umfolozi River mouth, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 November, and at St Lucia on 10 December. In West Coast National Park, Western Cape, a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was seen on 11–17 September and 18 October–16 November. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was at Muzi Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, in late October. The 14th southern African **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii*, discovered at Wadriif Salt Pan, north of Eland's Bay, Western Cape, on 16 December (Fig. 13), was still present on 30 December. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* was reported near Derby, south-west of Rustenburg, North West Province, in early December. The third **Dunlin** *C. alpina* for southern Africa was at Geelbek in West Coast National Park, Western Cape, on 21 September. Also there was a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, from 16 November until at least 27 December. Five **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* at Spitskop Dam, near Kimberley, Northern Cape, were still present on 30 November; one was briefly at Rocher Pan, north of Velddrif, Western Cape, in late November. **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were in the Western Cape at Geelbek, West Coast National Park, on 10 May and from

17 September until at least 31 November; one was also on the Berg River at Velddrif on 7 November. The fourth **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* for South Africa was at Sappi Stanger Wetlands, KwaZulu-Natal for three days from 24 December (Fig. 12). **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported from the Zaagkuildrift area and Rust de Winter Nature Reserve, Gauteng, in late November and 7 December; from Kruger National Park, Polokwane Game Reserve, and the Crocodile River west of Koedoesdorp, Limpopo, in early December; from the Sabi Sand Game Reserve, Mpumalanga, in mid November; and from Northern District Sewage Works, KwaZulu-Natal, on 15 December. A **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was at Lake Phobane, near Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal, on 4 October.

A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan*, found at Centurion Lake, Gauteng, on 13 August and last seen on 7 September, is the second inland record. A **Common Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus* stayed at Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Western Cape, on 18–20 October. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* first seen on 23 August at Leeupan, near Leandra, Mpumalanga, was last reported on 30 August; another was in a roost of Kelp Gulls *L. dominicanus* at the Umgeni River mouth, KwaZulu-Natal, on 9 November. On 17 May, southern Africa's 28th **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* was observed at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape. On 2 November, a juvenile **Sooty Tern**, initially at Vetch's Pier in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, was seen again (presumably the same individual) five hours later and c.50 km further north at Salt Rock; another was at Eland's Bay, Western Cape, on 20 December.

Madagascar Cuckoos *Cuculus rochii* were reported from Kruger National Park on 31 October and 16 December. Five **White-throated Bee-eaters** *Merops albicollis* were briefly at Winston Park, Hillcrest, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 October; there are only nine previous records in the subregion. A **Eurasian Reed Warbler**



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Figure 8. Pied Kingfisher / Martin-pêcheur pie *Ceryle rudis*, Papagaio River, Príncipe, 6 June 2008 (Ricardo Rocha)
 Figure 9. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* with female Lesser Green Emperor *Anax guttatus*, Cousine Island, Seychelles, 24 November 2008 (Jock Henwood)
 Guépier de Perse *Merops persicus* avec Anax empereur *Anax guttatus* femelle, Cousine, Seychelles, 24 novembre 2008 (Jock Henwood)
 Figure 10. Male Amur Falcon / Faucon de l'Amour mâle *Falco amurensis*, North Island, Seychelles, 22 November 2008 (Jaco Reymecke)
 Figure 11. Rockhopper Penguin / Gorfou sauteur *Eudyptes chrysocome*, Noordhoek Beach, Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa, 17 July 2008 (Trevor Hardaker)
 Figure 12. Lesser Yellowlegs / Petit Chevalier *Tringa flavipes*, Sappi Stanger Wetlands, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 24 December 2008 (Richard Hurt)
 Figure 13. Baird's Sandpiper / Bécasseau de Baird *Calidris bairdii*, Wadriift Salt Pan, Western Cape, South Africa, 16 December 2008 (Trevor Hardaker)
 Figure 14. Pacific Golden Plover / Pluvier bronzé *Pluvialis fulva*, Lake Edward Flats, Ishasa, Uganda, 1 January 2009 (Fred Hodgson)

Acrocephalus scirpaceus was mist-netted and ringed at Boschenvaal, along the Vaal River, c.10 km west of Dasolburg, Free State, on 18 November (all per TH).

Sudan

Notable species observed near Juba, south Sudan, in October 2008 include an adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* on 25th, a **Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus* on the same date, with two the next day and another single on 28th, a **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* on 26th, and several **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* and a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* on 25th (BP).

Tanzania

A small tern, seen in flight and at rest in the company of *Chlidonias* terns and Gull-billed Terns *Sterna nilotica* at Speke's Bay lodge, Lake Victoria, on 26 February 2008, was either a **Little Tern** *S. albifrons* or **Saunders's Tern** *S. saundersi*; both species are rarely observed inland. Two **Grey Wagtails** *Motacilla cinerea* were observed at a pool near Ngorongoro Crater Sopa Lodge on 4 March; this Palearctic migrant is generally uncommon in Tanzania (PR).

Uganda

In July 2008, several **Striped Crakes** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* were flushed during a boat trip on Lake Bisina on 8 July; this was presumably a seasonal influx of this rarely seen species for which *The Bird Atlas of Uganda* (Carswell et al. 2005) gives only three previous sight records. A

pair of **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* was found on recently burnt ground in Lake Mburo National Park on 29 July; according to the *Atlas* there have been no records of this species since 1971. A juvenile **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was seen well near Soroti on 7 July; this appears to be a little-known species in Uganda (NB).

In December, **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* was recorded from Kibimba; this constitutes a new distribution record of this rarely recorded Palearctic migrant (MW).

Also in late 2008, **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* was found at Hoima, south of Murchison Falls National Park, and at Kabale, in the south-west; these records plug a gap between Iganga (Kibimba), where the species was first recorded for Uganda, and the west of the country (HB).

Four **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* were on Lake Edward Flats, Ishasa, on 1 January 2009 (Fig. 14; FH & EG).

Zambia

On 8 October 2008, a tagged **White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* was seen in South Luangwa National Park, 1,945 km from the Askham District of Northern Cape, South Africa, where it was ringed and tagged as a pullus on the nest on 30 October 2007; this is the furthest north that any of the birds tagged in South Africa has been recorded. A ringed **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* was recovered in Southern Province, north of the town of Choma, around 23 November 2008, 7,770 km from Olsztynek, Olsztyn, Poland, where it had been ringed on 10 July 1992, 5,980 days (or more than 16 years and four months) previously. This is the oldest recovery for Zambia and one of the oldest individuals of the species ever recovered, the record being 26 years for a bird ringed in Latvia in 1931. Average longevity of this species is c.10.5 years (LR).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Clive

Barlow (CB), Maans Booysen (MB), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Nicky Bousfield (NB), David Bree (DB), Yvette Bree (YB), Chris Brewster (CB), Joost Brouwer (JB), Tracy Buchan (TB), Stefaans Buys (SB), Herbert Byaruhanga (HB), Mohamed Balla Condé (MBC), Pierre Crouzier (PC), Ron Demey (RD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Philippe Dubois (PD), Hugues Dufourmy (HD), Josh Engel (JE), Lincoln Fishpool (LF), Jean-Yves Frémont (J-YF), Emmy Gongo (EG), Jeff Harding (JH), Pete Hancock (PH), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Fred Hodgson (FH), Niklas Holmström (NH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Abdi Jama (AJ), M. Kamakami (MK), Martin Kays (MKa), Peter Levens (PL), Ulf Liedén (UL), Ricardo Lima (RL), Steve Lister (SL), Geoff Lockwood (GL), Duncan Mackenzie (DM), Linda Mackenzie (LM), Etienne Marais (EM), Graham McCulloch (GMC), Bernd Meyburg (BM), Michael Mills (MM), John Miskell (JM), Kedy Mooketsa (KM), Mark Muller (MMu), Claudien Nsabagasani (CN), Claver Ntoyinkima (CN), Jean-Claude Nyirimbabazi (JCNy), Bram Piot (BP), Thomas Rabeil (TR), Richard Randall (RR), Peter Roberts (PR), Elise Rousseau (ER), Lizanne Roxburgh (LR), Volker Salewski (VS), M. Samati (MS), Gerd Peter Schulze (GPS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Graeme Skinner (GS), Mike Soroczynski (MSz), Kadiatou Soumah (KS), Peter Spence (PS), Steph Tyler (ST), Xavier Vandevyure (XV), Mike Vandewalle (MV), Jaap van der Waarde (JvdW), Alain Verneau (AV), Iain Whyte (IW), Derick Williams (DW), Malcolm Wilson (MW), and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, capebirdnet, SARareBirdAlert and www.zestforbirds.co.za.

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Van der Heimstraat 52, 2582 SB Den Haag, Netherlands and also by e-mail: rondemey@cs.com



Great Spotted Cuckoo / Coucou geai
Clamator glandarius (Pete Leonard)

Reviews



The Birds of Zambia. An Atlas and Handbook.

R. J. Dowsett, D. R. Aspinwall (†) & F. Dowsett-Lemaire, 2008. Liège, Belgium: Tauraco Press and Aves a.s.b.l. 606 pp, numerous photographs (15 pages in colour), over 700 maps. ISBN 2-87225-005-0. Softback, UK£29.99. Available from www.nhbs.com.

Relatively speaking, this publication comes hard on the heels of the atlas for a neighbouring country—*The Birds of Malawi* (2006) (which was reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 14: 110–112, and by myself in *Ibis* 149: 177–178)—and is the work of the same core team. Unsurprisingly therefore *The Birds of Zambia* is almost identical in appearance, format and layout to its sister publication that set a remarkably high benchmark for such publications covering part of the Afrotropical region. As a result this review is unavoidably comparative in part.

These two land-locked countries lie at the heart of the Zambezian biogeographic region. Zambia is considerably larger, extending 1,350 km east to west by an average 500 km north to south. The distances and limited resources for such an ambitious project dictated that atlas work was based on half-degree squares, rather than the quarter-degree interval used for Malaŵi. However, Zambia has a greater variety of main habitat types and accordingly has considerably greater avian diversity, with 753 recorded species.

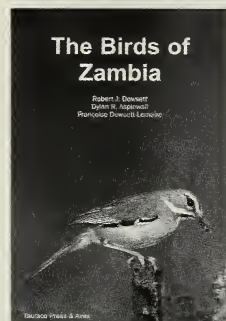
As with the Malaŵi work, to call this book an atlas is an understatement: it is a milestone event in the country's ornithology. The 447 pages of distribution maps and species accounts are sandwiched between equally comprehensive introduction and reference sections. The introduction comprises six concise accounts of

physical features, vegetation and habitats, biogeography, a fascinating account of the history of ornithology in the country (something of a who's who), a summary of the composition of Zambia's avifauna, and conservation. The accounts include somewhat limited maps and 15 pages of superb colour photographs of typical habitats and associated key species. Alone, this section of the book provides an excellent introduction to Zambia's ornithology.

The list and atlas results are inevitably a statistician's dream: 303 atlas squares populated with 81,141 species records. Distilling this into meaningful results of field work, nearly all squares have 200 species records, whilst no less than 487 species were recorded in three well-watched locations—a direct result of observer coverage and indicative of potential records elsewhere. These results are remarkable and a tribute to the dedication of the relatively small number of field workers involved.

Moving on to the systematic list, the reason for deficiencies in the records will be self-evident from the statistics summarised above. More importantly, the book provides a permanent record of the incidence of many species over a large part of the African landmass. Each species account succinctly covers distribution, ecology, status, conservation, breeding records and taxonomy.

After the species accounts there are still 81 pages to go. A summary of ringing recoveries (with maps) reveals a surprising number of Palearctic recoveries including a Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, ringed as a nestling in Finland. Also, there are the astonishing first and second Zambian records of (probable) Greater Spotted Eagles *Aquila clanga* from Poland, satellite-tracked for two successive seasons but



never seen in Zambia due to their inaccessible location. (Further details of results from the limited ringing activity in Zambia are available from the authors.) Finally, for any visitor there is a vital gazetteer of localities followed by no less than 31 pages of references.

One criticism—as with the other work—is that such a heavy reference work is published only in softback form: presumably economic realities precluded a hardback edition. This is especially a pity as the book will be an indispensable companion for any birdwatching trip to the country and it is somewhat 'delicate' for the rigours of the African bush.

A word must be said of the middle author who disappeared from Lusaka under presumed tragic circumstances in 1995. Dylan Aspinwall was the driving force behind Zambian ornithology for two decades and a substantial proportion of the field records were as a result of his dedication to the project, as well as a greater understanding of intra-African migration and species movements generally. In summary, the Dowsetts are to be congratulated on the completion of two remarkable pieces of work—from inception, through the years of active and coordinating fieldwork, and the thoroughness of the end-product. With the rapidly changing demography and land-use in this part of the

world, it may be many years before it is replaced and then, undoubtedly, such replacement work will record a severe decline in both natural habitat and bird species.

Bob Medland

Sounds of Zambian Wildlife

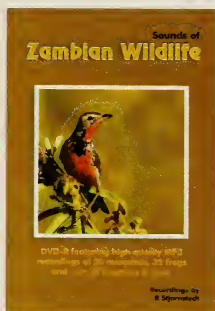
R. Stjernstedt, 2008. Salthouse: WildSounds. DVD-ROM featuring over 600 species. ISBN 9-78189866-518-2. UK£24.46.

What with a new IBA book, a new avifauna and a new Luangwa Valley checklist (the latter two also reviewed herein), something of a glut of resources for Zambia has appeared within the last couple of years. With this DVD, the feast continues and a very welcome addition it is too.

Bob Stjernstedt has been recording African bird sounds for several decades now and he has published a number of collections previously, mainly on cassette. These have been invaluable to birders not only in Zambia, but also further afield in Africa. However, we now leap into the digital age and on this single disk are mp3 recordings of over 570 bird species, 20 mammals and 32 frogs found in Zambia.

To navigate, you can either print one of several .pdf indices from the disk, or open an HTML index, which allows you to view the species list in several permutations and access them via hyperlinks to the sound files. The format makes finding and listening to individual tracks extremely easy.

As one would expect, the quality of the recordings varies from excellent to adequate, depending on the species, and for many, several different vocalisations are included. The only anomalies I found were as follows. The recording of Red-necked Falcon *Falco chiquera* is not listed in the indices and is, in fact, tagged onto the end of the recording of Grey Kestrel *F. ardosiaceus*, whilst Usambara Weaver *Ploceus nicolli* is included, apparently in place of the very similar Olive-headed Weaver *P. olivaceiceps*, despite not actually occurring in Zambia.



To have mammal and frog sounds included as well is a tremendous bonus. For many birders, the frog recordings in particular will open up an entirely new nocturnal soundscape. The only thing I felt was lacking was information on the localities and dates of the recordings, which data are essential for students and serious researchers, and sometimes even for birders too. Admittedly this would be a time-consuming addition, but one well worth considering for a future edition.

Returning to the birds, this is a remarkably comprehensive collection, littered with regional specialities such as Chaplin's Barbet *Lybius chaplini*, Bocage's Akalat *Sheppardia bocagei* and Babbling Starling *Neocichla gutturalis* and even mouth-watering enigmas such as Chestnut-headed Flufftail *Sarothrura lugens*. There are also surprises. How many people have heard the long series of hoots given by an African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis* at night?

There are a few omissions, but the majority concerns either silent non-breeding migrants or extreme rarities. When one considers that this is the work of one person, the coverage seems astonishing and I hope that if anyone raises an eyebrow at the price, they will pause to consider that this disk represents thousands of hours in the field, endless technical hitches, vehicle breakdowns, doses of malaria, broken bones and even police arrests. It is a mammoth achievement and Bob is to be warmly congratulated.

Pete Leonard

The Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng

Etienne Marais & Faansie Peacock, 2008. Centurion: Mirafr Publishing. 384 pp, more than 300 colour photographs, 96 maps. Softback. ISBN 978-1-873671-00-9. R199.00.

Gauteng is a small province of South Africa that includes Johannesburg and is home to 450 bird species, including many sought-after specials and endemics. This book extends well beyond this area to encompass birding sites within neighbouring regions too. In total 101 birding sites are categorised under the following sections: Greater Johannesburg, Pretoria and Surrounds, North-Western Bushveld, North-Eastern Woodlands, South-Eastern Highveld, South-Western Grasslands, and Further Afield: Top Weekend Trips.

The book is packed with information on each site, with details on access, birding habitats, seasons, routes, and how to go about finding target species. Areas detailed include key sites such as Rietvlei, Suikerbosrand and Marievale, as well as further afield sites such as Zaagkuildrift, Nylsvley, Magoebaskloof and Wakkerstroom. It also includes a number of areas not previously described elsewhere in birding site guides such as Mkhombo Dam, the Cradle of Humankind, Vredefort Dome and Mapungubwe National Park.

Each site is illustrated by a map with numbered points that are cross-referenced to the text. Key species are listed at the beginning of each site and are referred to throughout the suggested route. Directions are given, and suggestions are made for accommodation options with contact



details. Not only birds are covered, with information also provided on other wildlife of particular interest.

Keith Betton

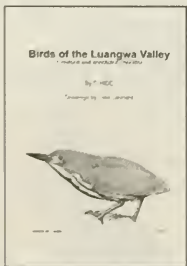
Birds of the Luangwa Valley. A Revised and Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Luangwa Valley National Park and Adjacent Areas

F. Hide, with drawings by Pete Leonard, 2008. Lusaka: Zambian Ornithological Society. 144 + xv pp. Softback. ISBN: 978-9982-22-077-4. Price unknown.

This is the third revision of this list (the most recent was in 1993) and incorporates additions to June 2008. It commences with the usual sections on sources of information, brief notes on habitat types (thickets, plains, miombo and mopane woodland, the river, oxbow lakes and riparian forest), climate and the area covered, which includes four national parks, although most of the records come from the South Luangwa National Park. The bulk of the book comprises a fully annotated checklist (of 487 species) with a gazetteer, index, references and a straight 'tick list' bringing up the rear.

Each species account contains a summary table of the status, visibility (i.e. likelihood of seeing it) and a specific note on recorded occurrence in South Luangwa, North Luangwa and Luambe national parks. A paragraph of text details records (of rarities) or a summary of habitat and status (for species of more regular occurrence), and whether the species has been recorded breeding in the area. It also records, where they exist, local names together with a translation.

As with all such lists, it will be an essential part of your luggage if you



are visiting the area in question. It also represents an excellent summary of the status and occurrence of birds in an important part of south-east Zambia. All is enhanced by Pete Leonard's excellent drawings.

Peter Lack

Petrels Night and Day

Magnus Robb, Killian Mullarney & The Sound Approach, 2008. Poole: The Sound Approach. 300 pp, many colour photographs, colour maps and sonograms, and two free CDs. Hardback. ISBN 987-90-810933-2-3. UK£34.95.

This large-format, full-colour book represents the exciting second output of The Sound Approach team. It is a guide, in photographs, beautiful colour paintings (by Killian Mullarney), many sonograms and two CDs, to 22 taxa of Procellariidae and Hydrobatidae that breed in the Western Palearctic (though not made explicit, the region's definition is that of *BWP*). One of these, Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, has only recently been discovered in the north-east Atlantic and its precise status still requires elucidation. In addition, three other non-breeding visitors are illustrated in colour plates, Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, Sooty Shearwater *P. griseus* and Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, and a vagrant (a Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* encountered during one of the author's research trips to the Azores) is depicted only photographically. Of the 22, one (Monteiro's Storm Petrel) has but recently been named (Bolton *et al.* 2008) and another, Cape Verde Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma (castro) jabejabe*, has lain in synonymy for many years. A mere handful, Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and Mediterranean Storm Petrel *Hydrobates (pelagicus) melitensis* do not breed in the ABC region, and probably all of these have been recorded as non-breeders.

Unsurprisingly, the taxonomy employed in this book, whereby all 22 taxa are treated as species, effectively mirrors that in the most recent



Dutch Birding list of Western Palearctic birds, which was also published in 2008. Thus Fea's *Pterodroma feae* and Desertas Petrels *P. deserti* are treated specifically, as are all three taxa within the old Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, two species of 'Little Shearwater' are recognised (Barolo's *Puffinus baroli* and Boyd's *P. boydi*), and Band-rumped Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* has become four species, and that doesn't even fully address the problems posed by other populations elsewhere in the world! If that's not enough, it seems likely that other once-familiar species might be 'reorganised' too, as I discovered whilst throwing oil, rotting fish and popcorn over the side of a boat off southern Baja California two years ago, to attract Leach's Storm Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* within range of Hadoram Shirihai's lens (you can gain some insight into what's going on by turning to p. 226 of this book). Before twitchers get too carried away, however, it must be noted that positively identifying this 'new' biodiversity at sea seems to involve detailed evaluation of moult state or is impossible.

Each 'species' is subject to its own section and all are illustrated by stunning colour photographs, from an evocative image of a Leach's Storm Petrel 'riding the storm' in an autumnal north-west England (p. 212), to stunning portraits of Mediterranean Storm Petrels 'crawling' to their burrows in the 'brain-like' rock surface of a Sicilian sea-cave (p. 204). Reminders of how far seabird photography at sea has progressed since Harrison published his guides are innumerable. Furthermore, we never lose sight of the birds' dramatic environments, from the wonderful photograph on p. 14 of the breeding

grounds of Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira*, they are almost as closely in focus as the birds themselves.

The species texts range quite widely, covering historical issues and conservation to the inevitable latest modern genetic 'thinking', via the author and his colleagues' obviously life-affirming experiences in search of petrels, literally 'night and day'. They focus on the beautiful recordings presented on the accompanying CDs (best listened to, as the author often reminds us, using headphones), describing them (and frequently the efforts made in their acquisition) and what they tell us about sexing petrels by voice, geographical variation in vocalisations, and taxonomy. Many of the photographs were taken simultaneously with the recordings. Use of vocalisations to determine species limits in Procellariiformes is not new, but does not possess a long history. For instance, Bretagnolle (1995) split Northern and Southern Hemisphere populations of 'soft-plumaged' petrels on the basis of vocal differences, but his analysis of those northern populations is postulated to be at fault in this book, and certainly division of north-east Atlantic birds into two species, rather than one, had already been widely accepted, *contra* Bretagnolle's treatment. Now, as earlier speculated by Ratcliffe *et al.* (2000), vocalisations (this book) and molecules (*cf.* van den Berg & Haas 2008) provide support to recognise a third species in this region. What I missed in the present work was more than passing reference to studies such as those by James (1985) and Ratcliffe *et al.* (1998), which have found evidence for geographical (dialectal) variation in vocalisations of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and British Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, which lead to questions as to why variation in vocalisations described here should be regarded differently (*i.e.* to support specific status). Nor do we learn why playback studies cited to support taxonomic treatments adopted here should be regarded as more robust than, for instance, those of Mitchell *et al.* (2004), which found that

British Storm Petrel can respond to playback of Leach's Storm Petrels, or Carruthers *et al.* (1989), wherein it was revealed that Swinhoe's Storm Petrels might dive into mist-nets in response to broadcasting of British Storm Petrel vocalisations. Such results suggest that we do indeed need to treat playback trials cautiously, as effectively recommended by Helbig *et al.* (2002), notwithstanding the discovery by Bretagnolle (1996) that vocalisations appear to be inherited, rather than learned, in at least some tubenoses. Evidence that in others learning might play a part is debated (James 1985, Slater 1991). As such, Robb's fascinating research tends to throw up as many new questions as it deals out answers, with which observation I'm sure he would be in general agreement.

Discussions of sonographic minutiae are inevitably hard to convey in the same style as the rest of the book's prose, which is refreshingly readable (rarely can I claim to have truly *read* a bird book sent for review, but this was one exception that proved the rule). It is also mercifully free of typographical or other errors, though the author does make that age-old slip of thinking that birds (and ships) pass through the Straits of Gibraltar, rather than the Strait.

Despite quite some reservations as to whether the 'expansive' taxonomy adopted by the guide represents a genuine step forward in our understanding of petrel systematics, I am nonetheless left full of praise for this multi-media extravaganza. It merits attention from all those who love Western Palearctic birds, seabirds in general, or the north-east Atlantic Islands in particular. In recalling an encounter with a flock of Great Shearwaters off western Ireland recounted in this book's pages, Anthony McGeehan concluded 'A lesson confirming humankind's place in evolution: above rodents, below seabirds'. He might just as well have been describing this book.

Guy M. Kirwan

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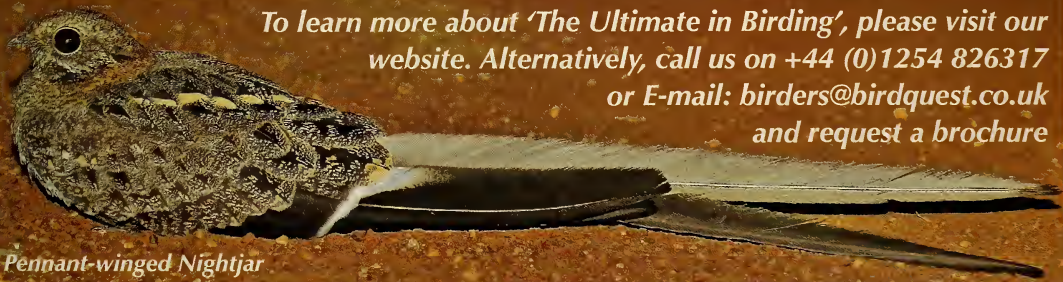
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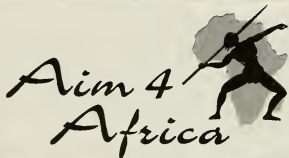
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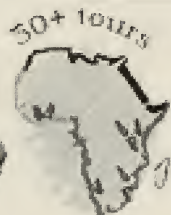
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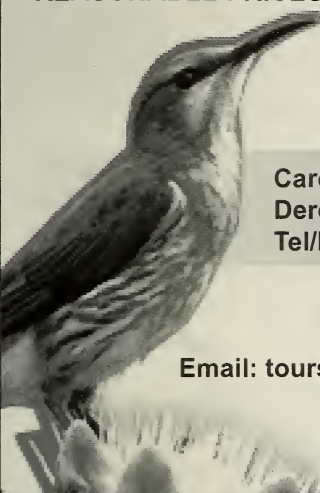
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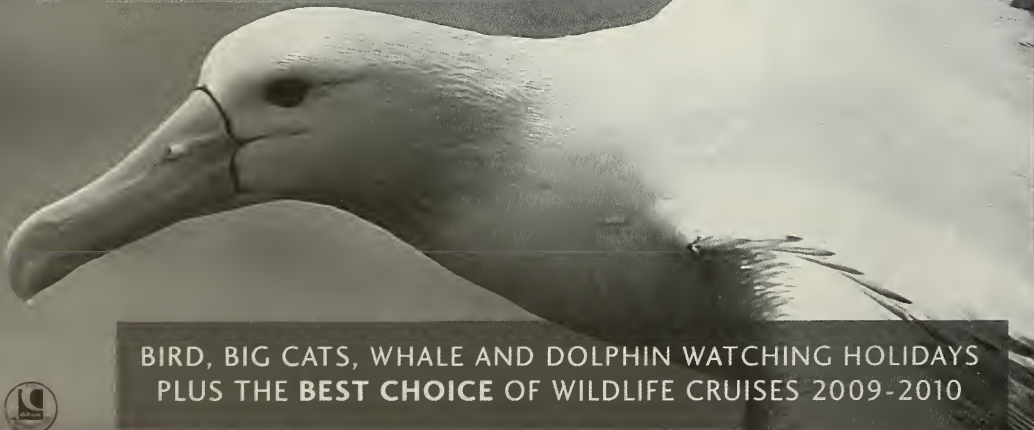
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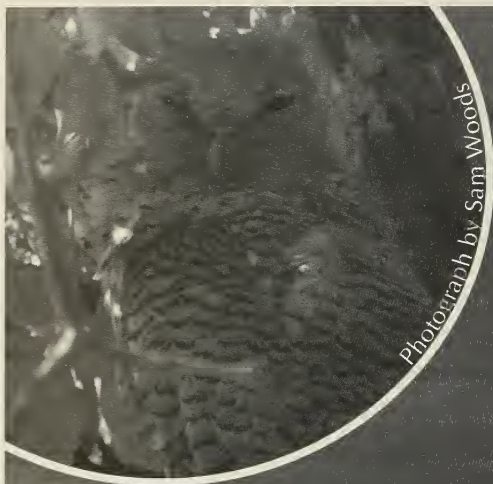
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Somaliand/Somalia: Abdi Jama, c/o Guelle Osman Guelle, PO Box 239, Djibouti City, Republic of Djibouti. E-mail: abdi.jama@ymail.com.

South Africa: Steven Evans, PO Box 1994, Cresta 2118. E-mail: stevene@ewt.org.za.

Swaziland: Dr Ara Monadjem, UNISWA, P/Bag 4, Kwaluseni. E-mail: ara@uniswacc.uniswa.sz.

Tanzania: Maurus Msuha, Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, PO Box 661, Arusha. E-mail: carnivores@habari.co.tz.

Tunisia: Hichem Azafaf, 11 rue Abou el el el maari, Cité el houda, 2080 Ariana. E-mail: azafaf@gnet.tn

Uganda: Prof. Derek Pomeroy, Makerere University Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources, PO Box 7298, Kampala. E-mail: derek@imul.com.

USA: Jon King, EDAW Inc., 2022 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95811. E-mail: jon.king@edaw.com

Zimbabwe: The Executive Officer, BirdLife Zimbabwe, PO Box RVL100, Runiville, Harare. E-mail: birds@zol.co.zw.

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 the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org.

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Algeria, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Senegal, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

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£30 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£30 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, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. 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@yahoo.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.



Crowned Eagle / Aigle couronné *Stephanoaetus coronatus* by Hugh Chittenden