African Bird Club

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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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Student	Europe & Africa: UK£12	Rest of the World: UK£14
Supporting	UK£35 minimum	
Life	UK£500	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC website (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

ABC Website

http://www.africanbirdclub.org

Photographers and artists

ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, pleonard@care4free.net

Contact ABC

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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 publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

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

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Front cover plate

African Emerald Cuckoo / Coucou foliotocol *Chrysococcyx cupreus*, Kongelai Escarpment, Kenya, July 2011 (Adam Scott Kennedy)

Features

Club News

Figure 1. ABC stand at the Rutland Birdfair, August 2011 (Julie Curl)
Le stand du ABC au Birdfair de Rutland, août 2011 (Julie Curl)

2011 British Birdwatching Fair

Once again the Club attended the annual Birdfair held at Rutland Water. Described as the 'birdwatcher's Glastonbury' the event encompasses the entire spectrum of the birdwatching industry whilst simultaneously supporting global bird conservation. Around 20,000 enthusiasts attend over the three days. The Club's stand provided an opportunity to meet our members, recruit new ones, sell ABC goods and make personal contact with our Corporate Sponsors. In particular, we thank those members who helped on the stand and gave up their valuable time. The 2012 Birdfair dates are Friday 17th–Sunday 19th August. We look forward to seeing many members there.

ABC Conservation Tours

Following highly successful tours to Angola, Gabon, Sierra Leone and Rwanda (see pp. 3–5), we are pleased to announce plans for a 16-day tour of eastern Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique in November 2012. Following a route from Harare to the coast, the tour will cover habitats used by many of the region's special birds including African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*. The tour is being operated by Birding Ecotours. Their Managing Director, Chris Lotz describes the region's special birds and habitats on pp. 83–93. For more details e-mail: info@birdingecotours.za

Can you volunteer for ABC?

We are always interested in hearing from people who might volunteer for the Club in various ways. Perhaps you can give us some of your time to help at the Birdfair, or maybe you have the skills we need to take on a role within the Council. If you think you can help please do write to our Chairman, Keith Betton. E-mail: chairman@africanbirdclub.org

Volunteer book reviewers?

As members know, the Bulletin includes reviews of relevant books and other materials. We know several potential reviewers, but obviously we do not know all members and their expertise. If you are interested potentially in reviewing future titles, please contact the Editor (see inside front cover), noting the area or areas you consider yourself qualified to do this for.

Tour operators give free ABC memberships to clients

We are most grateful to three ABC Corporate Sponsors who have agreed to give free ABC membership to clients who travel on their African tours. These are Ashanti Tours, Birding Ecotours and Rockjumper. By introducing people to ABC when they travel to Africa these companies are helping the Club to grow its membership base. It is a terrific way to help the Club and helps us to engage with people interested in Africa and its birds.

ABC Conservation Fund awards total UK£100,000

Since the Club was founded the Conservation Fund has regularly assisted small projects that aim to further our ability to conserve birds in Africa. A new milestone was reached in 2011 when the total awarded to date reached UK£100,000. Since its launch, the Fund has assisted over 120 applicants in more than 30 African countries. These have ranged from bird and habitat surveys, to educational and promotional materials for use in community projects. The Club is particularly grateful to a number of individual members who have financed specific projects that ABC has selected for support. This is hugely valuable and permits the Club to support a larger number of projects than would otherwise have been possible. If you would like to help the Conservation Fund or apply for support please contact: conservation_fund@africanbirdclub.org

ABC website

Pages du site web ABC en français

Nous avons traduit quelques pages du site web ABC en français afin de présenter les objectifs du Club aux francophones intéressés et les stimuler à devenir membre. Consulter www.africanbirdclub.org/club/aboutABC_fr.html et www.africanbirdclub.org/sales/sales4_fr.html

Nous tenons à remercier ceux qui ont aidé l'ABC à réaliser ces pages et nous espérons en traduire d'autres en fonction de vos commentaires et vos besoins. Nous projetons également de traduire ces pages en portugais.

ABC website pages in French

We have translated a few pages of the ABC website into French in order to present the aims of the Club to French speakers and stimulate them to become members. See www.africanbirdclub.org/club/aboutABC_fr.html and www.africanbirdclub.org/sales/sales4_fr.html

We thank those who helped with this task and hope to translate more pages depending on your feedback and requirements. We also plan to translate the same pages into Portuguese.

Book and media sales and reviews

We have set up a new page on the ABC website for the purchase of books and media from WildSounds, the Club's official bookseller, at www.africanbirdclub.org/bookreviews/sales.html. ABC will receive a donation for its Conservation Fund for every item purchased from WildSounds via this page.

In addition, we are in the process of loading all the book and media reviews from past Bulletins. These can be found at www.africanbirdclub.org/bookreviews/Summary.html. To date, over 160 reviews have been loaded and links placed from the sales page to a review where available. Please consider using them for your purchases and in so doing generate money for bird conservation in Africa.

Painting sales

During 2011, we sold original paintings by three renowned bird artists: Martin Woodcock (who painted 215 of the 232 plates in the seven-volume *The Birds of Africa*), John Gale (one of the artists of the *Birds of East Africa* field guide) and Nik Borrow (the sole artist of the *Birds of Western Africa* field guide). ABC has received commission from these sales for our Conservation Fund. We hope to make further painting sales. Please look for announcements on the home page of the website and on AfricanBirding.

Contributed by John Caddick

ABC Conservation Tour to Rwanda, 10–17 July 2011

The 2011 ABC Conservation Tour followed the theme of previous tours by visiting a lesser known African country to find some unusual and rarely seen species and, in so doing, generate funds for ABC's conservation work. This was the fourth such tour following those to Angola (2005), Gabon, São Tomé & Príncipe (2006) and Sierra Leone (2009). The Rwanda tour with its seven participants was organised and expertly led by Callan Cohen and Deirdre Vrancken of Birding Africa, and was extremely successful.

I travelled on 8 July on a direct flight from Amsterdam to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, arriving in the early evening. This gave me the opportunity to go birding in Kigali next day with another tour participant who had also arrived early. The area near the golf course and lake yielded a surprising number of birds, including Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*, Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*, Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*, Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*, Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava*, Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans*, Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitorius*, Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* and a large party of Black-headed Weavers *Ploceus melanocephalus*.

On the first day of the tour, we travelled to Nyungwe National Park in the south, where we were to stay for four nights at the Gisakura Guest House. En route, we made short stops at a papyrus swamp near Kigali, where we saw a distant Papyrus Canary *Serinus koliensis*, and at the Butare Museum, where White-tailed Blue Flycatcher *Elminia albicauda*, Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* and Western Citril *Serinus frontalis* showed themselves. A further stop along the main road through Nyungwe overlooking a swamp brought our only Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri* of the tour.

The following three days were spent birding from dawn to dusk in a variety of habitats in Nyungwe National Park, home to 25 of the 35 Albertine Rift endemics and an outstanding area of montane forest (see *Bull. ABC* 17: 229–237). Our

Figure 2. Ruwenzori Turaco / Touraco du Ruwenzori *Ruwenzorornis johnstoni*, Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, July 2011 (John Caddick)

Figure 3. Red-throated Alethe / Alèthe à gorge rousse *Alethe poliophrys*, Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, July 2011 (John Caddick)

local guide was Claver Ntoyinka. The first of these days was spent near the visitors' centre at Uwinka, where the highlights included Ruwenzori Turaco *Ruwenzornis johnstoni* (Fig. 2), Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus*, White-headed Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus bollei*, an amazingly confiding Red-throated Alethe *Alethe poliophrys* (Fig. 3), White-bellied Robin Chat *Cossyphicula roberti*, Ruwenzori Batis *Batis diops*, Ruwenzori Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris stuhlmanni*, Regal Sunbird *C. regius* and Mountain Oriole *Oriolus percivali*. Mammals were plentiful and we had good views of L'Hoest's Monkey *Cercopithecus lhoesti*, Silver Monkey *C. nitis doggetti* and Boehm's Bush Squirrel *Paraxerus boehmi*.

On the following day, we took a long walk to Kamirazovu swamp, followed by birding along the old road at Karomba. Highlights included Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*, Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa* crossing a boardwalk in the swamp, Bar-tailed Trogon *Apaloderma vittatum*, Grey Cuckooshrike *Coracina caesia*, Archer's Robin Chat *Cossypha archeri*, Neumann's (Short-tailed) Warbler *Hemitesia neumanni*, Ruwenzori Apalis *Apalis ruwenzorii*, Mountain

Figure 4. Purple-breasted Sunbird / Souimanga à ventre pourpre *Nectarinia purpureiventris*, Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, July 2011 (John Caddick)

Figure 5. Red-collared Babbler / Phyllanthe à collier roux *Kupeornis rufocinctus*, Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, July 2011 (John Caddick)

Masked Apalis *A. personata*, Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis ardesiacus*, Grey-chested Illadopsis *Kakamega poliothorax*, Blue-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra alinae*, a very obliging Doherty's Bushshrike *Telophorus dohertyi*, Mountain Sooty Boubou *Laniarius poensis* and Sharpe's Starling *Pholia sharpii*.

Banda Forest was our destination the next day, followed by some late-afternoon birding along the main road near the visitor centre. The visit to Banda Forest required a long journey on some very poor roads, which necessitated the use of 4×4 vehicles. The highlights of this day were Mountain Buzzard *Buteo oreophilus*, Ruwenzori Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruwenzorii*, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill *Bycanistes subcylindricus*, Petit's Cuckooshrike *Campephaga petiti*, Grauer's Warbler *Graueria vittata*, Red-faced Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus laetus*, Banded *Prinia bairdii* and White-chinned Prinias *Schistolais leucopogon*, Black-throated Apalis *Apalis jacksoni*, Dusky Tit *Parus funereus*, Purple-breasted *Nectarinia purpureiventris* (Fig. 4) and Bronzy Sunbirds *N. kilimensis*, Mackinnon's Shrike *Lanius mackinnoni*, Luhder's Bushshrike *Laniarius luehderi*, Slender-billed *Onychognathus tenuirostris* and Waller's Starlings *O. walleri*, Strange *Ploceus alienus* and Brown-capped Weavers *P. insignis*, Dusky Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza jacksoni* and Black-crowned Waxbill *Estrilda nonnula*.

The final morning at Nyungwe was spent on the trails around the visitors' centre. Having heard but not seen Handsome Francolin *Francolinus nobilis* the previous evening, we initially concentrated on this species and were delighted to see a single bird running across the trail. We also had excellent views of a close African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix*, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx montana*, an obliging Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *Bradypterus cinnamomeus*, Chestnut-throated Apalis *Apalis porphyrolaema*, the local subspecies of White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis fischeri* (which lacks a broad white eye-ring) and Stripe-breasted Tit *Parus fasciiventer*. The best was left to last, however, as we had outstanding views of three Red-collared Babblers *Kupeornis rufocinctus* (Fig. 5) about ten minutes before we were due to leave for Kigali.

Early the following morning, we were joined at our hotel by Henriette Mutesi, a student who is writing a dissertation on the potential for bird

tourism in Rwanda. After breakfast, we left on a somewhat circuitous route to Akagera National Park, which took us close to the church at Nyamata, where some 10,000 people were killed in of one of the worst acts of the Rwandan genocide. The rest of the day was spent at three papyrus swamps and Lake Rumira, where we observed Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*, African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*, African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*, Blue-headed Coucal *Centropus monachus*, White-headed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne albiceps*, White-winged Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus carpalis*, Grey-capped Warbler *Eminia lepida*, and Papyrus *Laniarius mufumbiri* and Black-headed Gonoleks *L. erythrogaster*. At dusk, we arrived at the Akagera Game Lodge, where we stayed for two nights.

The following day we birded the hill close to the lodge and the area around Lake Ihema. Highlights included Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*, Meyer's Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri*, Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus*, Spot-flanked Barbet *Tricholaema lacrymosa*, Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudohirundo griseopyga*, Tabora Cisticola *Cisticola angusticauda* and White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas* as well as a host of waterbirds. Akagera still boasts an impressive selection of mammals, including Burchell's Zebra *Equus burchelli*, Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* and Giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis*. A late-evening watch by the swimming pool yielded wonderful views of a male Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* in full breeding plumage—one of the highlights of the tour for me.

The final morning at Akagera was spent in the same scrubby habitat and lake area as the previous day, with a visit to the campsite at Miyumba. Several species were added to the list, including soaring Martial *Polemaetus bellicosus* and Crowned Eagles *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops*, Miombo (Pale) Wren Warbler *Calamonastes undosus*, Buff-bellied Warbler *Phyllolais pulchella*, Grey Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus caroli* and Orange-breasted Bushshrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*. Finally, after a long search, we found two Red-faced Barbets *Lybius rubrifacies*, an Akagera speciality.

Rwanda and the tour itself both exceeded my expectations. The country has suffered badly in the recent past and as a result still has an unwarranted reputation in the eyes of the world. The reality in 2011 is that it is one of the safest, friendliest and cleanest countries in Africa. It also has one of the highest population densities and much of the country has been deforested. However, the national parks still hold numerous interesting birds making Rwanda an excellent birding destination. You can read more about Rwanda and its birds on the ABC website at www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Rwanda/introduction.html.

Contributed by John Caddick

Announcement

Patricia Hall 1917–2010

Ornithology has good reason to be thankful that Beryl Patricia (Pat) Woodhouse was born into a wealthy middle-class family, for she spent almost 35 years working more or less as a volunteer at the British Museum of Natural History's 'Bird Room' between 1947, following the breakdown of her marriage to John Hall, and 1971. During this period she played a key role in several ornithological expeditions to southern Africa, perhaps most notably Angola, as well as to Australia. Initially included on field work for her experience as a mechanic and driver (gained as an overseas ambulance driver in World War II), Pat Hall quickly became a tolerable shot and specimen preparator, and also took a major role in writing up. This culminated in her *An Atlas of Speciation in African Passerine Birds* (1971, with Reg Moreau, although Pat did the bulk of the work), but also led to a major work on Australian birds. Several subspecies are named for her, among them *Calendulauda barlowi patae* (Barlow's Lark), but Hall's Greenbul *Andropadus hallae* is now generally considered to represent a melanistic example of Little Greenbul *A. virens*. Fuller reviews of her life appear in Mearns & Mearns (1998: 362–366. *The Bird Collectors*) and her obituary in *Ibis* 153: 913–914.

African Bird Club *Conservation Fund*

New awards

The Conservation Committee reviewed 13 proposals ahead of the October 2011 Council meeting and recommended that three be funded, all of which Council approved—and all of which were fully funded by ABC's munificent sponsors! Four other applicants were offered advice on how to improve their proposals and were encouraged to resubmit. A total of UK£4,650 was released, as follows.

Current land use and trend analysis at the Tana River Delta (Kenya) IBA to evaluate bird species and habitat implications

This was a resubmission by Joseph Mwangi, a Research Fellow at the National Museums of Kenya, following suggestions from the Conservation Committee. The project aims to document current land use at the Tana River Delta in Kenya and to monitor the rate of conversion over a 30-year period, using remote-sensing techniques and historical data. The delta is threatened by several large agricultural projects including sugarcane / biofuel plantations. The project's specific aims are to: quantify land cover change over a 30-year period; assess land-use dynamics and their implications for the conservation of endangered fauna and flora; and propose ecologically and economically compatible land-use strategies that benefit people's livelihoods and the ecosystem. His request for UK£1,513 was generously supported by Tasso Leventis.

Search for Somali Pigeon in the Golis range of Somaliland

Abdi Jama of *Nature*Somaliland, a bird conservation NGO, requested UK£2,000 to survey the Golis range in Somaliland, from the Dubar / Busti Massif south-east of Berbera to Maydh Port 760 km to the east. The strip of habitat is largely narrow, spanning less than 10 km between the sea to the north and the mountains to the south with a few *Acacia*-fringed wadis. The project aims to assess the abundance of the Somali Pigeon *Columba oliviae*, a Data Deficient species; develop information on the effect of industrial quarries on the bird and its habitat; and check for the presence

Somali Pigeon / Pigeon de Somalie *Columba oliviae* (Nik Borrow)

of Speckled Pigeon *C. guinea*—a possible competitor—beyond the Dubar Mountains. The proposed survey will also visit the ranges of several other species of conservation concern—Warsangli Linnet *Carduelis johannis*, Somali Thrush *Turdus ludoviciae* and Somali (Golden-winged) Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus louisae*, for which the Conservation Committee advised that data also be collected. Tasso Leventis' generous sponsorship of this project is gratefully acknowledged.

Response of Sokoke Pipit to tree removal and other human activities in Arabuko-Sokoke forest, Kenya

Nickson Otieno of the National Museums of Kenya requested US$1,800 (UK£1,165) to study Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis*, a globally Endangered inhabitant of forests in coastal Kenya and Tanzania. In Kenya it principally occurs in Arabuko-Sokoke forest, mainly in fairly open areas dominated by *Brachystegia spiciformis* woodland and often near thickets of *Cynometra webberi*. It is also common in Dakacha further north-east where *B. spiciformis* also occurs. However, the bird faces human encroachment including illegal logging of *B. spiciformis*, removal of poles for construction, charcoal production and general disturbance including cattle grazing. Its population will be surveyed using point counts and general transect walks to estimate the species' density and assess its distribution across the *Brachystegia* zone in

Sokoke Pipit / Pipit de Sokoke *Anthus sokokensis* (Nik Borrow)

Spur-winged Goose / Oie-armée de Gambie *Plectropterus gambensis* (Dave Richards)

Arabuko-Sokoke. Characterisation of its habitat in terms of logging rates, canopy cover and height will also be assessed to evaluate their effect on Sokoke Pipit. Human activities in and around the forest that could be altering its habitat, and thus impacting the species' population, will also be ranked to identify which anthropogenic factors are most affecting its status. Olle Holst of Avifauna generously agreed to sponsor this project.

Reports received

Lake Kenyatta ecosystem

In June 2011 Council approved an award of UK£999.85, jointly sponsored by Paul Bristow and Tasso Leventis, for a study of the Lake Kenyatta ecosystem by Maurice Ogama (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 133). Two pairs of binoculars from the RSPB's binocular scheme were also provided. This freshwater lake lies just a few kilometres from the Indian Ocean in Lamu County. It is a major fishing and grazing resource for the local community, and a source of water for domestic use, cattle and wildlife. A preliminary report comprising data collected during 20 July–10 August 2011 has been received. Data were collected by Maurice Ogoma, Joseph Njoga, the Lake Kenyatta Beach Management Unit Chairman, and Jonathan Mwachongo, an experienced ornithological field assistant and member of the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Guides Association. They were always accompanied by at least one community guide who was trained in data collection and use of binoculars, telescope and field guides.

Two methods were used: waterbird counts and timed species counts (TSC), the latter to provide a more complete list of terrestrial bird species and check their abundance in adjacent riparian habitats. The counts were conducted in July in order to record migrants using the wetland for feeding and roosting. Opportunistic observations were also made.

Some 142 species were recorded in total. Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* was the most abundant waterbird counted followed by Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* and African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*. Of note was the globally Vulnerable Madagascar Pratincole *Glareola ocularis*, which was observed at nearby Lumshi wetland. Of terrestrial species, the globally Endangered Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* and two globally Near Threatened species (Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* and Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*) were recorded. Moreover, 29 bird species were Palearctic, Malagasy or Afrotropical migrants. The commonest terrestrial bird species recorded during TSCs were Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus*, Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* and African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*, followed closely by Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*, Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*, Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*, Golden Palm

Madagascar Pratincole / Glaréole malgache *Glareola ocularis* (Callan Cohen / www.birdingafrica.com)

Weaver *Ploceus bojeri* and Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*.

Survey of Karamoja Apalis in eastern Uganda

In June 2011 Council awarded UK£540, which sum was generously provided by Paul Lascelles (Hyde-Lascelles), for a short survey of Karamoja Apalis *Apalis karamojae* by *Nature*Uganda staff Roger Skeen and Michael Opige (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 134–135). The survey took place on 24–26 October 2011.

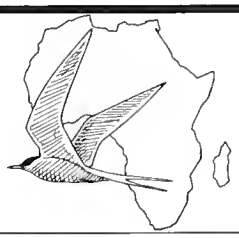
Eighteen 1-km transects were conducted in apparently suitable habitat. The apalis was found in just four, with *c.*10 individuals in total. The species appears to be very local and was found only in seasonally flooded grassland with *Acacia drepanolobium* the dominant shrub. Suitable areas 30 km east and 30 km west of Iriiri were also sampled. These transects were drier and are used by the local people for farming, charcoal production and grazing, which factors obviously affect the bird's distribution.

Phil Shaw—a previous recipient of two ABC conservation awards—provided recordings of Karamoja Apalis from southern Tanzania. Based on four playback experiments, it is the researchers' opinion that Ugandan birds do not respond to the songs of Tanzanian birds, which are apparently different. One pair was seen entering a nest, but given the species' apparently extremely small population in the area (just 6–8 pairs), the team did not check the nest's contents, although the birds were presumed to be incubating eggs or very young chicks. Given the study's results, it is recommended that an aerial survey or more detailed foot surveys be undertaken to determine the extent of the birds' preferred habitat, to better assess the population and possible threats, and that the potential isolation of the Tanzanian and Ugandan populations should be tested genetically.

Dr Chris Magin, on behalf of the Conservation Committee

The ABC website (www.africanbirdclub.org/club/consfund_projects.html) shows the full list of conservation projects and awards made since the inception of the programme over a decade ago. A remarkable total in excess of UK£106,000 has been donated during this period. You can also view many of the final project reports on this page.

Africa Round-up



General

Follow that cuckoo

In spring 2011, researchers at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) fitted 5-g solar-powered satellite tags to five Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* in eastern England to study their migrations. The results have been stunning. All five birds were still alive at the start of 2012 and have travelled 10,000 km to central Congo, where they appear to be spending the midwinter. The birds left the UK mostly in June and spent some time moving through mainland Europe to staging areas—the Po watershed in northern Italy being an area where three of the five birds paused. To depart Europe, the individuals took two different routes: two birds travelled south and west through France and Spain, and entered north-west Africa, while the remaining three took a more easterly route through Italy and across the Mediterranean to Africa. At one point the birds were spread over 3,000 km in Africa; by December 2011 they had converged on a small area in the Congo basin. The birds' travels, together with daily updates, can be viewed on the BTO website www.bto.org/cuckoos

Source: Phil Atkinson in litt. *2011*

The world's most important forests

As resources to address the world's growing environmental problems become increasingly limited, the ability to establish the top conservation priorities is more important than ever to achieve the greatest returns for the investment. A new paper published by BirdLife International scientists identifies those forests that appear to be the most important for birds and are in most urgent need of conservation. "The top three areas, according to our assessment are the forests of Hawaii; Palau in the Pacific; and the forests of the tropical African islands of São Tomé, Príncipe and Annobón", said Dr Stuart Butchart, BirdLife's Global Research and Indicators Coordinator. "Protecting these habitats is one of the ten key actions identified by BirdLife to prevent further bird extinctions."

Coastal forest / Forêt côtière, Príncipe (Nik Borrow)

The authors of the report used species distributions and forest cover from satellite imagery to estimate the contribution that 25 km^2 blocks of forest make toward conserving the world's birds. By combining these data with rates of forest clearance (mainly logging), the most important forests for conservation were identified. Around 6,000 species of the world's birds (60%) are dependent to a considerable extent on forests, and some of these are the most threatened species on Earth.

Graeme Buchanan from the Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK) said "More birds are dependent on forests than any other habitat. Our analysis makes an objective assessment of the importance of every patch of forest on the globe for birds. This is a particularly timely analysis, because the world's governments have recently agreed to increase the global coverage of protected areas, through the Convention on Biodiversity. Legal protection is one method by which areas could be safeguarded, and our analysis is a contribution towards deciding where new protected areas would have the greatest impact."

Source: BirdLife International press release, December 2011; www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0029080

BirdLife's message at the Durban climate change talks

Climate change during the coming decades is projected to dramatically alter current patterns of temperature and precipitation across Africa, with huge implications for both humans and biodiversity. Ecosystems and biodiversity will play a critical role in supporting adaptation from the worst impacts of climate change, a meeting organised by BirdLife International was told at the sidelines of UNFCCC COP 17, which took place on 28 November–9 December 2011, in Durban, South Africa.

The BirdLife event, attended by over 40 participants from government and civil society, was held at the Durban Natural Science Museum and was funded by the MacArthur Foundation, with additional support from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development. BirdLife's climate change work in Africa and Asia combines underpinning science with policy interventions and conservation action on the ground. Participants were informed about BirdLife projects funded by the MacArthur Foundation. An Adaptation Framework has been developed aimed at enhancing resilience to climate change at site level. Presenters were drawn from Nepal, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya.

Attendees at the meeting were informed that ecosystem-based

approaches to adaptation may have some costs but the benefits are immense, and often provide a cost-effective and accessible approach for rural and poor communities. Melanie Heath, Head of Policy at BirdLife International said: "Ecosystems underpin life on Earth and many sectors such as water, forestry, agriculture and health. An integrated approach of socially and environmentally sound adaptation that is cross-sectoral and recognises the role of natural systems in adaptation and resilience, should be integral to any adaptation strategy or plan."

The key messages from the BirdLife event were as follows: climate change is happening now; solutions must address both immediate and future needs; adaptation plans must be implemented and linked in an integrated way across the globe; ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation should be recognised in national plans and strategies for their role in reducing human vulnerability to climate change; and finance needs to urgently flow to the most vulnerable countries to support adaptation actions.

It is hoped that among other pressing issues such as the second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol, parties will consider these issues in both adaptation and mitigation negotiations and put necessary and sufficient measures for the benefit of current and future generations, especially the poor communities.

Source: BirdLife International press release, December 2011

Some Lesser Spotted Eagles go west

Although most Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* migrate to their winter quarters in eastern and southern Africa via the eastern Mediterranean corridor (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 139), a few seem to follow a more westerly route. During systematic raptor migration monitoring at Gibraltar, the southernmost point in Iberia, during 1998–2009, one or more Lesser Spotted Eagles were recorded annually. In total, 47 eagles passed between 6 August and 12 October. Of 13 aged birds, ten were non-juveniles. Six of 86 Lesser Spotted Eagles fitted with satellite transmitters at the western limit of the species' distribution followed the western route. Three of these reached Africa via the Strait of Gibraltar, one of which was tracked as far as eastern Côte d'Ivoire (where the species has never been observed), before the signal was lost. It is unknown whether this minor south-western migration route is a recent phenomenon, and the wintering sites of the birds following it remain a mystery.

Source: Ardea *99, pp. 113–116*

North Africa

New bird recorded in Egypt

Hadoram Shirihai and colleagues have recently described the so-called 'Basalt Wheatear', which until now has been considered a dark morph of nominate Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*, as a new subspecies of the latter, *O. l. warriae*. The subspecific name of the new taxon honours Mrs F. E. Warr, a former employee of the Natural History Museum, Tring. As a breeder this wheatear is apparently confined to the basalt deserts of north-east Jordan and neighbouring Syria, but it appears to wander in winter to some extent, and it has reached Africa at least twice, both times in Egypt, a 'Gould' specimen collected sometime in the 19th century and, more recently, a bird photographed in December 2010 (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 97).

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *131, pp. 270–291*

Autumn migration through the Suez area threatened by wind farms

Zeit Bay on the Gulf of Suez, in Egypt, is a prime target area for potential wind farms as it experiences strong northerly winds especially in autumn, which is when many soaring birds take advantage of the same winds to continue their southbound migration. A survey in autumn 2006 by Gudman Hilgerloh and colleagues counted just over 145,000 soaring birds over *c.*450 hours between 20 August and 29 October. The considerable majority were White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* (134,000 individuals) with the next commonest species being European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* with rather over 8,000. Both are relatively early migrants and hence most birds had passed by the end of September. Relative numbers of several of the less common species were different to nearby sites and it appears that individual species use slightly different routes. Clearly this area is important for migrant soaring birds and, as many fly relatively low, wind farms could pose a threat.

White Stork / Cigogne blanche *Ciconia ciconia* (Adam Scott Kennedy)

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *21, pp. 365–375*

Mountain birds in eastern Egypt

A survey of the Red Sea mountains in eastern Egypt during November and December 2010 found 46 species. Compared to some nearby massifs in the Sahara, the area supports restricted-range species both from the Palearctic such as Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus* and Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciata*, and from the Saharo-Sindian region such as Hume's Owl *Strix butleri* and Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe*

monacha, as well as migrants following the Red Sea corridor.

Source: Alauda *79, pp. 237–240*

Eurasian Collared Dove spreading in Libya

A recent short communication in the magazine *Dutch Birding* has highlighted the spread of the Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* across Libya (in common with its increase in several other North African nations). Originally found in western Libya, in 2005, it is now breeding in Tripolitania, and there are a number of records from Fezzan and as far east as Cyrenaica.

Source: Dutch Birding *33, pp. 248–250*

New breeding site for Greater Flamingo in Algeria

A new breeding site for Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* has been found at Safioune, 40 km north-east of Ouargla, which is the second such locality in the Sahara and the third in Algeria. A total of 1,500 pairs bred successfully in 2011, with 600 chicks fledged despite attacks by Golden Jackals *Canis aureus* when the lake dried out. The birds were discovered to have originated from the western Mediterranean population, which otherwise occupies France, Italy and Spain.

Source: Alauda *79, pp. 321–324*

Cricket Warblers breeding in Morocco

Recent years have seen the exploration by birders of the sourhernmost regions of Morocco and the consequent discovery of several species previously unknown or virtually so in the country and in the whole of Palearctic Africa. One of those species is Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans*, which has recently been confirmed (unsurprisingly) to be breeding in rhe far south of the country.

Source: Dutch Birding *33, pp. 229–233*

Cricket Warbler / Prinia à front écailleux *Spiloptila clamans* (Nik Borrow)

Knob-billed Duck / Canard à bosse *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (Ian White)

Knob-billed Duck in Mauritania

Kees Hazevoet and Marcel Haas have recently provided details of the observation of a Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* at the Banc d'Arguin in December 1984, providing the first record for northern Mauritania. The bird's precise location is also deemed to have been within the limits of the Western Palearctic, providing the only record of the species for this biogeographical region.

Source: Dutch Birding *33, pp. 247–248*

Atlantic Ocean Islands

Zino's Petrel bounces back!

Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* was Europe's rarest seabird even before a wild fire hit the heart of Madeira's central massif, where this globally endangered bird breeds (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 9). The fire, in August 2010, had dire consequences: 25 young and rhree adults died, and of the 13 young found alive, just one fledged. However, financial and logistical support permitted *c.*100 natural nests to be restored, while 60 artificial nests were built. A protective cordon was also placed around the known breeding areas, with cat rraps and bait boxes. When the surviving adults returned in April 2011, conservationists were expectant. As the summer progressed, monitoring indicated that 45 nests were occupied, with eggs laid in 43. Although breeding success was lower than before the fire, with only 19 nestlings hatching, fledging success was good, with 16 of the 19 young eventually flying.

Source: BirdLife International press release, February 2012

Confusing falcons on the Canary Islands

The taxonomic status of the Barbary Falcon has been controversial for years, it being variously considered a subspecies of Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*) or treated as a full species (*F. pelegrinoides*). Furthermore, some other subspecies of Peregrine, such as *F. p. brookei*, exhibit several plumage characteristics similar to those of Barbary Falcon. The authors of a recent study have quantitatively described the plumage patterns of Barbary Falcons breeding in the Canary Islands, based on a variety of reliable sources. They also compared these Canaries falcons with a sample of museum specimens labelled as *F. p. brookei*. Males of both taxa are usually paler and possess less barred underparts than females. The majority (>60%) of birds in the Canaries have a Barbary Falcon-like appearance, bur there is much overlap with *F. p. brookei*. This variation in coloration could be natural or relate to escaped falconry birds, meaning that molecular studies are needed to clarify the idenrity of wild falcons on the Canary Islands.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *131, pp. 140–153*

West and Central Africa

The status of Baumann's Greenbul

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and her colleagues have recently published

a detailed review of the status of Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, a species first tape-recorded in 2001. Since then this discreet bulbul, which has often been misidentified in the past, has been found at many new localities from north-west Guinea to western Cameroon, with an altitudinal range of 10–1,500 m. As well as describing the species' distinctive vocalisations, the authors list all of the new localities discovered as a result of modern field work, and include details of its ecological preferences. The species appears to be locally common in the forest-savanna (or Guineo-Congolian / Sudanian) transition zone, but is rather scarce at the margins of the Guineo-Congolian forest biome except in the Nimba / Loma highlands. It invariably occupies low, dense growth 1–2 m above ground (rarely up to 4–5 m), including fallow fields and *Chromolaena* farmbush to thickets in transition woodland or in open semi-evergreen forest, under broken canopy. In the last situation it frequently comes into contact with White-throated Greenbul *P. albigularis*. It avoids closed, mature forest.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *131, pp. 154–164*

Grasshopper Warbler migration strategy

Migration and fuelling strategies of Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* in autumn and spring were studied by Bayly *et al.* at ringing stations in both Portugal and Senegal. In autumn it was found that <10% of birds had stored sufficient fuel to get further than north-west Africa from Portugal in one hop. Similarly, in spring, birds commence leaving Senegal in mid January, meaning these individuals must spend up to two months at an unknown site or sites in North Africa (given arrival dates in Europe). Rates of fuelling were very low in Senegal and took a long time, presumably due to the low level of available resources at that time of year. The strategy does seem to vary annually and is correlated with Sahel rainfall, but there could well be shortfalls in some years. Clearly, North Africa is a vital region to this species during both migration periods.

Source: J. Ornithol. *152, pp. 933–946*

African Swallow-tailed Kite / Élanion naucler *Chelictinia riocourii* (Nik Borrow)

Huge roost of Lesser Kestrels and African Swallow-tailed Kites monitored

The huge roost of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* and African Swallow-tailed Kites *Chelictinia riocourii* on Kousmar Island, in the Saloum River, near Kaolack, Senegal, has been monitored since its discovery in January 2007. Up to 28,000 Lesser Kestrels and 36,000 African Swallow-tailed Kites were counted in mid January 2007–10, the former figure comprising 30–50% of Western Europe's breeding Lesser Kestrels. The roosting African Swallow-tailed Kites presumably represent a major part of this species' global population, which is estimated at max. 10,000 individuals by BirdLife International. The majority of the kestrels were males, suggesting most females have different winter quarters. The island has been a forest reserve since 1936 and there is currently no major threat from human activities, but there is a risk of the incorrect use of insecticides against locusts in surrounding areas, making conservation action imperative to ensure the roost's safety and continued protection.

Source: Alauda *79, pp. 295–312*

Heuglin's Wheatear new to Senegal

A record of a Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini*, which was observed in Djoudj National Park, north-west Senegal, in January 2007, is documented in the latest issue of *Malimbus* and constitutes an addition to the country's list. The species is a rare visitor on the other side of the border, in southern Mauritania.

Source: Malimbus *33, pp. 86–87*

Sierra Leone protects climate by saving its largest forest

As the world's richest countries once again played brinkmanship at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Durban (see pp. 9–10), Sierra Leone was embracing the vital role tropical forests play in preventing climate change by conserving its most important forest, locking up an estimated 13.6 million tonnes of carbon and protecting one of West Africa's most threatened and wildlife-rich habitats. The President of Sierra Leone—the world's seventh poorest country—launched the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) in early December 2011. If Gola Forest were razed to the ground, the release of carbon would be equal to the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by almost 14 million cars in a year. Initiated in 1989, a partnership agreement between the Forestry Division of the government of Sierra Leone, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK) was reached in 1990 to develop a new management plan, maintain the forest boundaries and to operate an environmental education programme. These partners have worked under the banner of the Gola Forest Programme since then, and the work forms an important

Gola Forest / Forêt de Gola, Sierra Leone (David Zeller)

component of the RSPB's tropical forests programme, which is active in six other African and Asian countries. The Gola Rainforest National Park covers > 71,000 ha. The long-term governance of natural resources was long argued to be at the heart of the decade-long civil conflict that raged in the 1990s. The creation of the national park should subdue ongoing threats from logging and mining. The full support of the country's president gives confidence for the future of the forest, especially as Sierra Leone is also looking at new mechanisms to attract long-term funding through the UN's Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) programme. REDD promotes cooperation between developed and developing countries to agree on forest management and should provide a financing mechanism to avert deforestation, forest and ecosystem degradation and destruction, while protecting the rights of indigenous people.

Source: BirdLife International press release, December 2011

Records of Kupe Bushshrike in Nigeria

The presence in south-east Nigeria of the elusive Mount Kupe Bushshrike *Telophorus kupeensis*, an Endangered species previously thought to be endemic to three forests in western Cameroon, has now been documented. It was first recorded at *c.*1,500 m in Boshi Extension Forest of Cross River National Park in December 2004 (see *Bull. ABC* 12: 187). Subsequently, two individuals were observed in the same area in June 2007, whilst a pair was found at *c.*850 m in Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary in May 2010. These records suggest that this very unobtrusive species may also occur in other remnant montane forests of Cameroon and Nigeria.

Source: Malimbus *33, pp. 92–95*

Sunbirds keep each other apart in Cameroon

A study of the feeding regimes of two Nectariniidae, the Orange-tufted *Cinnyris bouvieri* and Northern Double-collared Sunbirds *C. reichenowi* by Jan Riegert *et al.*, undertaken in the Bamenda Highlands of Cameroon, found that the two species had very similar daily rhythms with intensive feeding at 08.00–09.00 and 15.00–16.00 hrs, with a distinct break between 11.00 and 14.00 hrs. The preferred source of nectar by both species was *Lobelia columnaris*, but Orange-tufted Sunbirds were interspecifically aggressive towards Northern Double-collared Sunbirds, forcing individuals of the latter to spend most time visiting other flower species, especially *Hypoestes aristata.*

Source: J. Ornithol. *152, pp. 819–825*

Northern Double-collared Sunbird / Souimanga de Preuss *Cinnyris reichenowi* (Nik Borrow)

First photographs of the nest and juvenile of Loango Weaver

The first published photographs of the nest and the juvenile of Loango Weaver *Ploceus subpersonatus* are presented in a paper on the breeding biology of this Vulnerable species. The nest resembles that of Black-necked Weaver *P. nigricollis* but with a shorter entrance tube. One was attached to a White Mangrove *Laguncularia racemosa* in farmland near an industrial area of Port-Gentil, Gabon, whilst another was found in a *Eucalyptus* tree; both were *c.*1.5 m above water. The juvenile matches descriptions in the literature, being as the adult female, but duller and having a paler, greyish-pink bill.

Source: Malimbus *33, pp. 78–85*

Margaret's Batis / Pririt de Boulton *Batis margaritae* (Nik Borrow)

The nest and eggs of Margaret's Batis

Michael Mills and Alexandre Vaz have provided the first description of the nest and eggs of the Margaret's Batis *Batis margaritae*, a species endemic to south-central Africa. The nest itself is now held in the Natural History Museum, at Tring, UK.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *133, pp. 208–210*

East Africa

Death threats received by opponent of jatropha project in Tana Delta

Private companies have been using threats to silence those opposed to massive developments in the Tana Delta, an Important Bird Area in coastal Kenya. In September 2011, Hajj Idris Bakero, a religious leader in Garsen Division, and his family received death threats, presumably for his opposition to a jatropha project. The previous week, officials of Bedford Biofuel, a foreign investor planning to grow jatropha plantations on local ranches, held a meeting at Hamesa estate in Garsen to convince local people of the value of jatropha growing. It was there that Mr. Bakero raised concerns that the project might affect future generations. Bedford Biofuels, a Canadian company, was granted a licence by the government agency in Kenya to plant jatropha on 10,000 ha of the delta despite intense opposition by *Nature*Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya) and other environmental

organisations. Following the earlier news that Kenya's National Environment Management Authority had decided, on the basis of new scientific evidence, to advise the Kenyan government to halt the planting of the biofuel crop, it is now widely expected that the Bedford licence will be revoked. Environmental organisations were quick to applaud this news, hoping that the Tana Delta can now be saved.

Source: BirdLife International press releases, September and October 2011; World Birdwatch *34(4), p. 10*

Fears in Uganda for Mabira as sugar company renews its demands

Uganda's Mabira Central Forest Reserve, an Important Bird Area harbouring *c.*300 bird species including the Endangered Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani*, is once again threatened by proposals to degazette almost 25% of its area for conversion to a sugarcane plantation. "Our campaign now targets Uganda's MPs, as parliament will have the final decision over the forest", reported Achilles Byaruhanga, Executive Director of *Nature*Uganda (BirdLife in Uganda). The NGO even organised a field trip to Mabira for a busload of MPs to explain to them the community issues and environmental problems surrounding the proposed degazettement. The 'Save Mabira' delegation presented the results of a study that comprehensively refuted the sugar corporation's arguments that 7,186 ha of the reserve should be allocated to the company. The Mabira Economic Valuation report, funded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), was formally launched in Kampala—together with a short documentary film about the forest—on 6 October 2001. Dr Chris Magin, Partner Development Officer of the RSPB said "It is easy to propose destroying natural habitats if you do not realise their true value. This report redresses that [...] and presents arguments in the economic terms that politicians can easily understand." The giving away of any part of a gazetted forest reserve is not permitted under Uganda's constitution, and the High Court has recently declared one such 'give-away' for sugarcane growing, at the Butamira Forest Reserve, to be null and void. Furthermore, Uganda is signatory to several key international and regional conventions that protect forests, and in 2001 signed an agreement with the World Bank which committed the government to protect the wider Mabira ecosystem, including the Central Forest Reserve. President Museveni has expressed willingness to consider alternatives for sugarcane production without changing the land use of Mabira Central Forest Reserve, as well as airing the government's wish to increase the acreage of Mabira Central Forest Reserve from the current 30,600 ha by purchasing additional land. He has pledged that any decision to change the land use or degazette the forest reserve will be made by parliament, and that the government will follow all the policy requirements and legal procedures if a decision is made.

Source: BirdLife International press release, October 2011; World Birdwatch *34(4), p. 10*

No soda ash mining at Lake Natron without addressing environmental concerns

In the latest twist in a long tale (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 144), the Vice President's Office has affirmed that it will not compromise its position on environmentally damaging projects (see www.ippmedia.com/frontend/index.php?l=34206). "This is very good news and in my opinion, Dr Julius Ningu has stated the government position that no approval will be given for the mining of soda ash until the issues raised in the review of the first EIA are counteracted" said Lota Melamari, an avid campaigner for the conservation of Lake Natron and former Chief Executive of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (BirdLife in Tanzania). BirdLife has welcomed the progressive views expressed recently by the Tanzanian government, both in safeguarding the world-famous Serengeti National Park (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 143) and now Lake Natron.

Source: BirdLife International press release, October 2011; World Birdwatch *34(4), p. 10*

Indian Ocean islands

Seychelles Warbler on the up

In the 1960s, Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis* became one of the world's rarest birds when the population slumped to just 26 individuals, all on Cousin Island. Formerly more widely distributed in the archipelago, habitat destruction and non-native species brought the warbler perilously close to extinction, but now the species' fortunes are looking much brighter, due in large part to a programme designed to redistribute these birds to other islands in the Seychelles.

In the latest move, 59 warblers were transferred from Cousin Island Special Reserve to Frégate—a privately-owned luxury resort—making it the fifth island in Seychelles to hold this species. "It will pave the way for this bird, once said to be 'one of the rarest birds in the world', to eventually come off the Red List of threatened birds of the world [...] We have been trying to get this project off the ground for a very long time and we have to thank the company managing the island [...] for agreeing to take the warblers", said Nirmal Shah, CEO of Nature Seychelles.

The project was funded by a US$18,000 Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund grant to Nature

Seychelles Warbler / Rousserolle des Seychelles *Acrocephalus sechellensis* (Jon Hornbuckle)

Seychelles through the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK), the Seychelles Warbler Research Group (a collaboration between the universities of East Anglia and Sheffield in the UK, and the University of Groningen, Netherlands) and Frégate Island Private. Birds were captured in the morning, transferred by helicopter and were released on Frégate by afternoon of the same day.

Prior to the transfer there had been preparations on both islands. Frégate was surveyed for its suitability to carry the warblers. The population on Cousin, which now numbers >300 birds, was also surveyed to identify territories from which to catch individuals. Cousin's 'original' population, which harbours the greatest genetic diversity, has been monitored for over two decades by the research group, who will now also survey the birds on Frégate for the next few years.

Source: BirdLife International press release, January 2012

Nature Seychelles receives international prize

Nature Seychelles has won the 2011 International Innovation Prize from the World Leisure Organisation. This is not the first time the association has won such an award—it has collected international awards in several fields ranging from education to ecotourism. "The best way to promote protection of the environment is to get people to value nature. We have been implementing environmental programmes that provide values of one kind or another to various groups over the years. Recently we have focused on linking nature to people's physical and mental well being. It's wonderful that a leading international organisation has recognized this innovation. This is a team effort and the coordinators of our various programs need to be congratulated for their hard work", Dr Nirmal Shah, CEO of Nature Seychelles, said.

Source: BirdLife International press release, September 2011

Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher / Tchitrec des Seychelles *Terpsiphone corvina* (Jon Hornbuckle)

Good and bad news for Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher

The illegal felling of mature trees on La Digue Island, the stronghold of the Critically Endangered Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina* was exposed on the front page of the newspaper *Le Seychelles Hebdo* in December 2011. The owner of the land had applied for a tourism development, but the Department of Environment had put this on hold in order to undertake a survey, whereupon the owner apparently went ahead with land clearance. The landowner and the contractor who undertook the works have been fined *c.*US$4,000 by the environment authorities. According to sources on La Digue those fined are refusing to pay and have issued their own case against the government.

Nature Seychelles, the BirdLife Species Guardian for the flycatcher has recently (October 2011) commenced a small education and advocacy project on La Digue in collaboration with the Seychelles National Parks Authority, and further supported by the island's development board. The project is funded by Viking Optical, the BirdLife Species Champion.

"The habitat on this tiny island will always be under threat because of increasing development, and consumerism. This is why we established a second population on Denis Island", said Dr Nirmal Shah, who heads Nature Seychelles. There is a now a breeding population on Denis following the translocation of 23 birds in November 2008 by the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology and Nature Seychelles. The flycatcher is the only Seychelles bird still listed as Critically Endangered: Seychelles Magpie Robin *Copsychus sechellarum*, Seychelles White-eye *Zosterops modestus*, Seychelles Scops Owl *Otus insularis* and Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis* have all been downlisted as a result of relatively recent conservation action.

La Digue is a picturesque but rapidly changing island. The Seychelles government is now investigating the possibility of making La Digue carbon neutral after Cousin Island Special Reserve, managed by Nature Seychelles, showed the way forward by becoming the world's first carbon neutral nature reserve. "In fact, recent news that the government will phase out all fossil fuel vehicles on La Digue so that only electric ones are used in the future is an excellent move for general environmental protection and ecotourism on the island", said Shah.

Sources: BirdLife International press releases, October and December 2011;
World Birdwatch *34(4), p. 3*

New primate species discovered on Madagascar

A Malagasy / German research team has discovered a new primate species in Sahafina Forest, near Mantadia National Park in eastern Madagascar. The new species, which belongs to the group of small nocturnal mouse lemurs *Microcebus* spp., has been named Gerp's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus gerpi*, in honour of the Malagasy research group GERP (Groupe d'Étude et de Recherche sur les Primates de Madagascar). GERP

researchers visited Sahafina Forest in 2008 and 2009 and captured several mouse lemurs, took measurements, photographs and small biopsies for genetic analyses, and released the animals. The new species weighs *c.*68 g and is thus one of the larger mouse lemurs: the minute Goodman's Mouse Lemur *M. lehilahytsara*, which occurs 50 km away in Mantadia National Park, weighs just *c.*44 g. Gerp's Mouse Lemur is probably restricted to the remaining lowland rainforest fragments in eastern Madagascar, where ongoing deforestation poses a serious threat to its survival.

Source: Primates *DOI: 10.1007/s10329-011-0290-2*

Southern Africa

Population of Yellow-throated Apalis larger than previously thought

Yellow-throated Apalis *Apalis flavigularis*, sometimes treated as a subspecies of Bar-throated Apalis *A. thoracica*, is endemic to south-east Malawi, where it is restricted to three massifs: Mount Mulanje, Mount Zomba and Mount Malosa. Its population is estimated at 2,320–4,408 individuals and is considered to be declining; it is therefore classified as Endangered. A recent survey to assess the population size on Mount Mulanje found that densities in the forest fragments averaged 10–12 individuals. The minimum number in forest patches with the endemic Mulanje Cedar *Widdringtonia whytei* (which cover 845 ha in total) was conservatively estimated at 7,900 individuals. Taken with the equally high densities in forests lacking cedars, and given that the species occurs on two other massifs, BirdLife International's estimate of population size appears too low. The species' global conservation status is thus probably less precarious than that of the closely related Namuli Apalis *A. lynesi*, which is restricted to Mount Namuli and Mount Mabu in Mozambique.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding *16(6), p.22*

Damara Tern needs protection in winter quarters

Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum* breeds along the desert mainland of southern Africa (mainly in Namibia) during the austral summer and migrates *c.*4,000 km to West Africa for the non-breeding season. The species is classified as Near Threatened as it is threatened by habitat loss and disturbance at its breeding sites. A study based on ten years of capture-mark-recapture data estimated adult annual survival to be 0.87. Mean annual immature survival from nest stage to breeding was estimated to be just 0.59. Post-fledging, young birds were not observed for two years and probably remained in their winter quarters. First breeding occurred when birds were three years old (27% of the surviving birds), whilst all terns bred when four years old. This is comparable to other plunge-diving migratory terns which have extended periods of post-fledging dependence (the latter being explained by the fact that plunge-diving requires considerable time to perfect). Adequate protection of Damara Tern thus also requires protection in its winter quarters (where unknown numbers are being killed by local people) in addition to conservation of breeding sites.

Source: Ardea *99, pp. 185–190*

Rhino poaching in South Africa increases

Despite increased law enforcement efforts, rhino poaching accelerated in South Africa in 2011, with 448 rhinos killed, including 19 of the Critically Endangered Black Rhino *Diceros bicornis*, of which fewer than 5,000 remain in the wild. In 2010, 333 South African rhinos were killed by poachers, nearly three times the number killed in 2009. More than half of the rhino deaths occurred in Kruger National Park, which lost 252 rhinos in 2011. The recent upsurge in rhino poaching has been tied to increased demand for rhino horn in Asia, particularly Vietnam, where it carries prestige as a luxury item, as a post-partying 'cleanser', and also as a purported cancer cure. Because it is home to most of the world's rhinos, South Africa has been the epicentre of poaching. However, rhinos in other African countries are also being targeted by poachers.

Source: http://www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/rhino-poaching-2011.html#cr

Taxonomic proposals

Amsterdam Albatross confirmed to be a distinct species

Recent DNA analysis of Amsterdam Albatross *Diomedea amsterdamensis*, the rarest albatross in the world, has confirmed that its treatment as a species is entirely justified. Although it was previously given species status based on its browner plumage and slightly smaller size, some authors still treated the taxon as a subspecies of Wandering Albatross *D. exulans*. Because Amsterdam Albatross numbers just 170 individuals, including 26 pairs breeding annually on Amsterdam Island in the Indian Ocean, it has been classified as Critically Endangered. The authors of the molecular study strongly recommend further conservation measures, especially in relation to longline fisheries and other threats such as disease and introduced predators.

Source: J. Avian Biol. *42, pp. 69–79*

Latest BOURC taxonomic recommendations

The seventh report of the Taxonomic Sub-Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) contains taxonomic recommendations that refer to a number of species that occur in the ABC region. Thus it is recommended that Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus* (monotypic) be split from the polytypic Eurasian Whimbrel *N. phaeopus*. Mitochondrial DNA sequences suggest that African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* (*c.*14–17 subspecies) should be split from European Stonechat *S. rubicola* (two subspecies). As phylogenetic studies indicate that Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama*, Western Olivaceous Warbler *H.*

opaca and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* are more closely related to the genus *Acrocephalus* than to other *Hippolais*, they appear to be better placed in a separate genus, for which the name *Iduna* is available. It has been suggested that African Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis*, Mountain Yellow Warbler *C. similis* and Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon* should also be moved to *Iduna*. Their names thus become *Iduna aedon*, *Iduna rama*, *Iduna pallida*, etc. Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula murina* is raised to species level. Finally, changes are proposed to the generic arrangement of North American wood warblers, many of which occur as vagrants on the Azores.

Source: Ibis *153, pp.883–892*

A 'new' scops owl from Madeira!

Sadly, not a previously overlooked extant endemic, the newly described Madeiran Scops Owl *Otus mauli* is known solely from fossil bones found at Quaternary sites on Madeira. It has the distinction of being the first extinct bird to be described from the archipelago and the first extinct owl species known from anywhere in Macaronesia. The available data suggest that it was a ground-dwelling bird, meaning that human arrival and subsequent habitat changes probably caused its extinction. The same species or a close relative has also been documented from dunes on the island of Porto Santo, but material from this site has not been certainly identified.

Source: Zootaxa *3182, pp. 29–42*

Vanga relationships

Vangas form one of the two larger groups of passerines endemic to the island of Madagascar. Primarily insectivorous, molecular studies have recently demonstrated that several other species endemic to Madagascar and classified in other families belong with the vangas. These newly classified vangas had formerly been placed with nuthatches (*Hypositta*), sylviid warblers (*Newtonia*), babblers (*Mystacornis*), bulbuls (*Tylas*) and platysteirids (*Pseudobias*). Using DNA sequences from 13 genes and representatives of all 15 vanga genera, Sushma Reddy and her colleagues found strong support for the monophyly of Malagasy vangids and their inclusion in a family along with six aberrant genera of shrike-like corvoids found in the Old World tropics, of which the largest is *Prionops* (helmetshrikes). Biogeographic reconstructions of these lineages included both Asia and Africa as possible dispersal routes to Madagascar. The authors also demonstrated that speciation rates in vangas decreased dramatically through time following the island's colonisation, and that foraging strategies among these birds show remarkable congruence with phylogenetic relationships, indicating that adaptations to feeding specialisations have played a role in diversification.

Source: Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond. B, *doi:10.1098/rspb.2011.2380*

Blue Tits 'under the knife' again!

A Finnish-German-Spanish team have further investigated the phylogeography of south-western populations of Blue Tits (a subject recently illustrated by a Photospot in these pages; *Bull. ABC*: 15 255–259). The team used nuclear and mitochondrial markers to study the Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Canary Blue Tit *C. teneriffae* and Azure Tit *C. cyanus*, and also attempted to assess the role of the Canary Islands in any geographic structure to the genetic variation. Canary Blue Tits are known to exhibit strong genetic differentiation within the Canary Islands, but the researchers uncovered evidence of gene flow between *C. caeruleus* and *C. teneriffae* thereby suggesting a dynamic process with multiple phases of colonisation and overlapping ranges, although there is limited contemporary gene flow between continental and insular populations, or between different islands. Diversification in the complex is estimated to have started during the early Pliocene, coincident with the end of Messinian salinity crisis, a period which may have given rise to many speciation events within the region of the Mediterranean Basin. Phylogenetic analyses indicated that the North African Blue Tit is derived from the Canary Blue Tit, a pattern known as avian 'back colonisation', which contrasts with more traditionally held views of islands being sinks rather than sources.

Source: Mol. Ecol. *20, pp. 4123–4139*

The genus *Foudia* in the spotlight

A paper by Ben Warren *et al.* has provided a phylogenetic hypothesis for a the phenotypically diverse fody (genus *Foudia*) radiation, which is endemic to the western Indian Ocean islands. The team found that each island-endemic *Foudia* population is a monophyletic entity for which speciation can be considered complete. In explaining the only exceptions—mismatches between taxonomy, mitochondrial and nuclear data—phylogenetic and coalescent methods support introgressive hybridisation rather than incomplete lineage sorting. Human introductions of single-island endemics to all surrounding archipelagos provide two fortuitous experiments; population sampling at known times in recent evolutionary history, and bringing allopatric lineages of an island radiation into secondary contact. Warren and his colleagues found that hybridisation only exists between those species in natural parapatry, but not between those in natural allopatry brought into contact by human introduction. They suggest that time in allopatry, rather than in sympatry, appears to be key in the reproductive isolation of *Foudia* species.

Source: Evolution, *DOI: 10.1111/j.1558-5646.2011.01550.x*

Internet resources

Conservation in Angola

Michael Mills has produced his annual report on bird conservation and research work in Angola. He has done a good deal of it himself during three month-long visits, to Mount Moco and other areas including the northern scarp forests. The status

of targets set last year and those for 2012 are listed. The report can be downloaded free from http://www.birdsangola.org/latest.htm.

Source: African Birding e-mail group

New website for Seychelles

Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) has a new website: www.seychellesbirdrecordscommittee.weebly.com. The site contains, among other items, up-to-date information on Seychelles birds, including an exhaustive bird list of 257 accepted species, gives access to papers and reports, and presents the latest sightings in the archipelago.

Source: Adrian Skerrett in litt. *2011*

Tsitongambarika Forest, Madagascar

Asity Madagascar, the BirdLife partner in the country, has taken the lead in producing a detailed account of the biodiversity, including birds, harboured by Tsitongambarika Forest, in the south-east of the island. The work can be downloaded freely from www.birdlife.org/community/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/BirdLife-2011-Tsitongambarika-book-En.pdf (English) or www.birdlife.org/community/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/BirdLife-2011-Tsitongambarika-book-Fr.pdf (French).

Source: World Birdwatch *34(4), p. 5*

Madagascar Conservation & Development

The electronic, open-access journal *Madagascar Conservation & Development* released its latest issue (Vol. 6, no. 2) in December 2011. This peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary journal is devoted to the swift dissemination of current original research in and on Madagascar and the western Indian Ocean islands. All volumes are available at no charge at www.journalmcd.com

Source: Lucienne Wilmé in litt. *2011*

'Meet Kipunji'

The Kipunji (or Highland Mangabey) *Rungwecebus kipunji* is an enigmatic primate endemic to the highland forests of Tanzania and was described to science as recently as in 2005. Its discovery not only meant a new species to science but the description of a new genus of African monkey. The mammal collection at The Field Museum, in Chicago, holds the only specimen of this species, and you can learn more about it and this bizarre monkey via the following video link: http://fieldmuseum.org/explore/multimedia/video-meet-kipunji

New program for *Roberts VII Multimedia*

Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa is a comprehensive and interactive multimedia program. It combines multimedia data on over 960 southern African bird species, with eight interactive modules that facilitate almost every aspect of 'computer birding'. The database contains all the information contained in the 5-kg *Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa* (seventh edn.), updated and expanded, 962 individual bird pages, >1,700 illustrations, 6,000 photos, 900 bird sounds, 500 nest photos, 700 egg photos, colour-coded distribution maps, and much more. For information about the software, visit www.sabirding.co.za

Announcement

The next Pan-African Ornithological Congress—an update

Over the past 20 years, on three occasions conditions beyond the control of ornithologists have led to a change in venue for the PAOC. The Congress Committee had already planned a move within Nigeria, from the Jos region to Ibadan, where the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture provides excellent and secure facilities. While there have been no incidents in Lagos or Ibadan, the local organising committee in Nigeria have agreed that this is not an appropriate time to host the PAOC in their country. We hope that PAOC14 will return to West Africa.

Meanwhile plans are now well underway for Tanzania to host PAOC13 on 14–21 October 2012 at Arusha. There is a wide range of accommodation available including camping, and of course several iconic East African national parks are within easy reach of the town, which is served by an international airport. The theme of the congress is 'Birds in a changing environment', but papers on all aspects of African ornithology will be included in the programme. The scientific programme already has an impressive array of plenary speakers, and a call for other potential participants to submit abstracts of oral and poster presentations will appear shortly. Information on registration and accommodation costs, and excursions linked to the congress, is available on the PAOC website hosted by BirdLife International (www.birdlife.org/community/tag/paoc).

The Pan-African Ornithological Congress Committee looks forward to welcoming many delegates to Arusha, to share in the new information that will be presented, and to debate what we need to do most urgently at this critical time for both the birds and the environment in Africa. And always keep your binoculars close at hand—according to the latest Tanzanian Bird Atlas data, more than 640 species have been recorded in the Arusha square.

Adrian Craig, Chair, PAOCC

Discovery of Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* in south-eastern Benin

Wouter Plomp[a], Bruno Portier[b] and Julien Gonin[c]

Découverte de l'Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* dans le sud-est du Bénin. L'Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* n'était jusqu'ici connu que du delta du Niger et d'une donnée isolée à l'ouest de Lagos, au Nigéria. La découverte de l'espèce dans plusieurs localités de la Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, sud-est du Bénin, à quelques dizaines de kilomètres seulement de Cotonou, dans un habitat relativement répandu au sud du Bénin et similaire à ce que l'espèce fréquente dans le sud du Nigéria, laisse supposer qu'il s'agit d'une population distincte et viable. Cette découverte, éloignée de l'aire principale de répartition précédemment connue, vient profondément modifier les connaissances sur l'espèce. De plus amples investigations seront nécessaires pour évaluer l'effectif de cette population, ainsi que son niveau de conservation.

Prior to the observations reported here, Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* was known only from a few localities in southern Nigeria, from the Lower Niger to the extreme south-west of the country, and from a single record at Badagri (*c.*06°25'N 02°53'E) in west-coastal Nigeria *c.*20 km from the Benin border (Elgood *et al.* 1994). There are few documented sightings and the species, with a world population estimated at just 250–1,000 individuals, is classified as Vulnerable (Serle 1957: 681; BirdLife International 2008). Although reportedly common at one locality (Onitsha) in the Niger Delta in 1954, there have been only a few records since 1980, despite considerable field work effort (Roux & Otobotekere 2005, BirdLife International 2011). The known population thus appears to be very small, despite the existence of large areas of apparently suitable habitat. However, BirdLife International questions if this apparent rarity is genuine or is simply the result of lack of knowledge. The discovery of the species in 2010 in south-eastern Benin, in habitats similar to those where the species is present in southern Nigeria, thus represents a significant finding and perhaps the first step towards answering the distribution question.

Observations

On 8 August 2010, WP observed two unfamiliar-looking waxbills in a marshland near Sèdjè-Dénou, *c.*35 km north of Cotonou in the Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé (06°43'30"N 02°23'15"E). The birds had a similar structure but different plumage coloration compared to the common Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*, being overall buffy-brown, slightly greyer over the head, with a striking red bill and red rump, but lacking any red / orange on the face. Pale eyes were also noted. All these features are indicative of Anambra Waxbill (Borrow & Demey 2001, Fry & Keith 2004). On 22 August, in the same place, at least three, perhaps four, individuals were seen and photographed (Fig. 3), thereby confirming the identification. Unusually severe floods due to heavy rain prevented further visits until 23 October, when WP & BP observed two birds at the same spot. The entire area, still under *c.*1 m of water, was only accessible with a pirogue, which prevented an intensive search. Unaware of the observations made by WP & BP, JG found *c.*20 birds north of Ganvié along the Sô River in November. On 12 December, WP observed several individuals on the east bank of the Ouémé River, in Dangbo, north-west of Porto-Novo. On 10 January 2011, BP found three birds, probably immatures, at Sô-Ava, a fourth locality, <10 km from Cotonou. Subsequently, six adults, two of which were extremely confiding, were observed on 26 February (Figs. 4–5), two on 19 June and one on 28 August 2011. On 9 October 2011, a group of six adults was seen north-east of the Zinvié area (Table 1).

Description

From these observations and our photographs, the following description of adults can be given: small, dull-brown estrildid; thick, bright red bill and orange-red rump; brown, slightly scaly back; slightly darker brown tail and wing feathers; overall buffish underparts somewhat orange-washed on lower flanks; head slightly greyer

Table 1. Observations of Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* in south-east Benin.
Tableau 1. Observations de l'Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* au sud-est du Bénin.

Date	No. of birds / Nombre d'oiseaux	Observer / Observateur	Locality / Localités	Coordinates / Coordonnées
08/08/2010	2	WP	Sèdjè-Dénou	06°43'30"N 02°23'15"E
22/08/2010	3 (or 4)	WP	Sèdjè-Dénou	06°43'30"N 02°23'15"E
23/10/2010	2	WP & BP	Sèdjè-Dénou	06°43'30"N 02°23'15"E
22–23/11/2010	c.20	JG	Ganviè	c.06°29'N 02°24'30"E
12/12/2010	3	WP	Dangbo	c.06°35'25"N 02°30'13"E
10/01/2011	3 (immatures)	BP	Sô-Ava	06°31'13"N 02°24'01"E
26/02/2011	4 + 2	BP	Sô-Ava	06°29'34"N 02°23'32"E and 06°31'13"N 02°24'01"E
19/06/2011	2	BP	Sô-Ava	06°29'34"N 02°23'32"E
28/08/2011	1	WP	Sô-Ava	06°29'34"N 02°23'32"E
09/10/2011	6	WP & BP	Zinvié	c.06°39'N 02°24'E

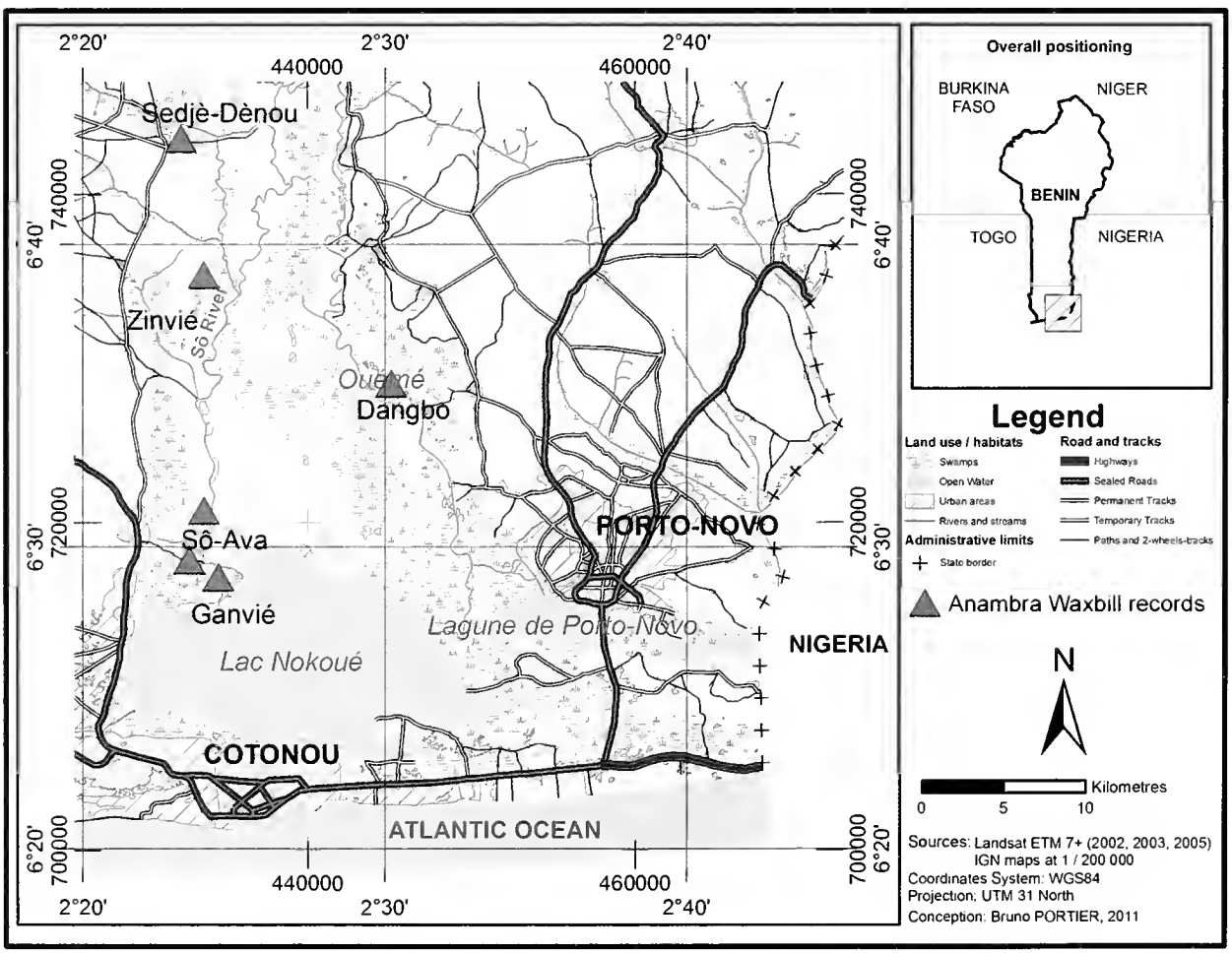


Figure 1. Map showing our records of Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* in south-east Benin.
Carte montrant nos observations de l'Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* dans le sud-est du Bénin.

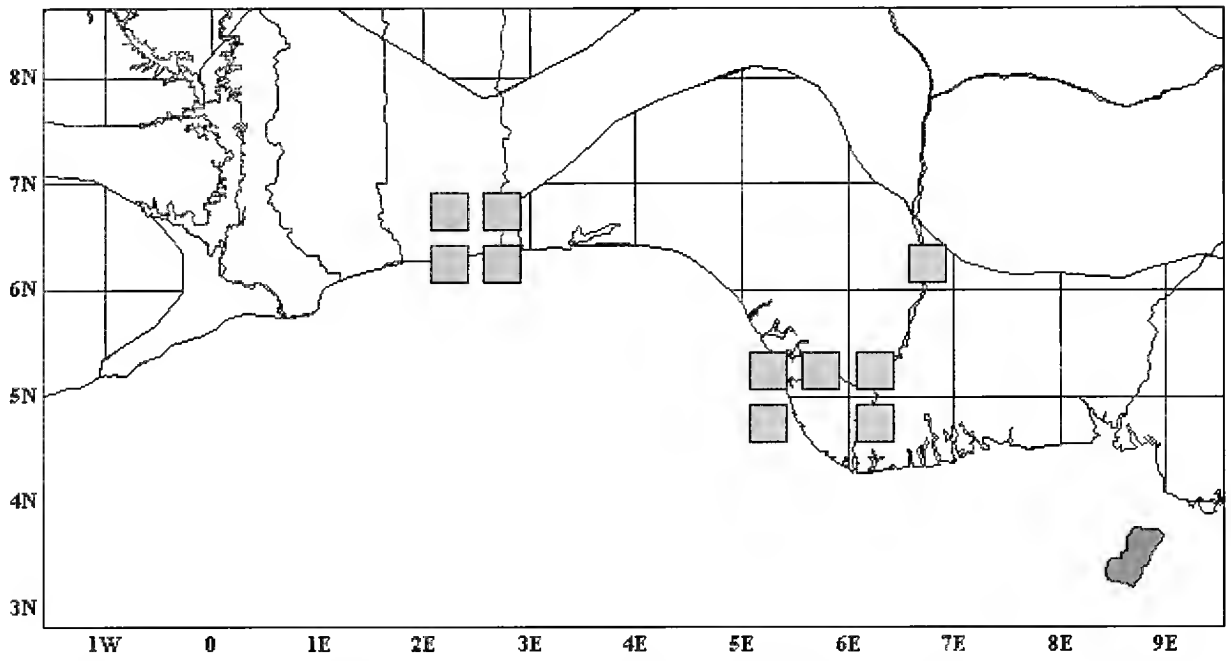


Figure 2. Map showing the overall known range of Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* (squares of 30 minutes × 30 minutes). The shading represents the transition zone, between the forest (Guineo-Congolian) and savanna (Sudanian) zones.

Carte montrant la répartition actuellement connue de l'Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* (carrés de 30 × 30 min). La surface grisée représente la zone de transition entre la zone de forêt (Guinéo-Congolaise) et la zone de savane (Soudanienne).

(but not always obvious); no orange on lores or face; and pale brownish-grey irides (but not as white as in Guus Hak's photographs *in* Roux & Otobotekere 2005).

Three slightly duller coloured birds with dark (black?) bills seen briefly seen by BP on 10 October 2010 were thought to be immatures. The only vocalisations heard were some waxbill-type alarm-calls given on take-off (low, short and nasal *chip*s notes, nervously repeated at 4–5 per second).

Confusion with related species (mostly other *Estrilda*) can readily be excluded based on plumage and overall colour, except perhaps with its two closest relatives, Fawn-breasted Waxbill *E. paludicola* and Abyssinian Waxbill *E. ochrogaster*, although their ranges do not overlap. Anambra and Abyssinian Waxbills have often been treated as races of Fawn-breasted Waxbill (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993). However, *E. poliopareia* differs from the nearest population of *E. paludicola*, *E. p. ruthae* (which occurs at Lékoni, Gabon, 01°35'S 14°16'E; R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2011) in lacking white / whitish underparts and the pale grey head contrasting with a white throat (Fry & Keith 2004). Immature

Figure 3. Anambra Waxbill / Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia*, Sèdjè-Dénou, Benin, 22 August 2010 (Wouter Plomp)

Zebra Waxbill *Amandava subflava*, which species has also recently been discovered in the area (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 2011), may appear very similar initially, but has a dark red eye, a dark bill and a dull brown (not orange) rump. Most female and immature firefinches *Lagonosticta* spp. can be excluded by virtue of their dark irides, bright red rump and less deep-based bill.

Figure 4. Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* feeding on *Eleusine indica* (Poaceae), Sô-Ava, Benin, 26 February 2011 (Bruno Portier)

Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* se nourrissant de graines d'*Eleusine indica* (Poaceae), Sô-Ava, Bénin, 26 février 2011 (Bruno Portier)

Figure 5. Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* feeding on *Echinochloa colona* (Poaceae), Sô-Ava, Benin, 26 February 2011 (Bruno Portier)

Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* se nourrissant de graines d'*Echinochloa colona* (Poaceae), Sô-Ava, Bénin, 26 février 2011 (Bruno Portier)

Location and habitat

All of our records of Anambra Waxbill are from the Lower Ouémé floodplain. The Ouémé River flows from northern Benin south to the Gulf of Guinea. The lower part of the river expands into a large delta with floodplains that flood seasonally. The western arm discharges into Lake Nokoué and the eastern part into Porto-Novo Lagoon. The delta extends north of Lake Nokoué for *c.*70 km, decreasing in width from 31 to *c.*7 km (Fig. 1).

Figure 6. Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* feeding on *Echinochloa colona* (Poaceae), Sô-Ava, Benin, 26 February 2011 (Bruno Portier)

Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia* se nourrissant de graines d'*Echinochloa colona* (Poaceae), Sô-Ava, Bénin, 26 février 2011 (Bruno Portier)

The Lower Ouémé–Lake Nokoué–Porto-Novo Lagoon complex, which covers an area of 91,600 ha, is an Important Bird Area (IBA BJ004) (Cheke 2001) and a Ramsar Site (no. 1018; Ramsar 2011). It comprises a varied ecosystem with scattered small trees (*Mimosa pigra*, *Sesbania* sp., *Hallea stipulosa*, *Raphia vinifera*) in the seasonally flooded grassland, flooded prairies of *Paspalum vaginatum* and *Typha australis*, and floating vegetation dominated by exotic water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*). The area covered by *Rhizophora* mangroves and periodically inundated forests of *Berlinia grandiflora* and *Dialium guineense* has declined dramatically, mainly due to clearance by the local human population, and is currently restricted to small remnant patches or young plantations.

Other than the Dangbo sighting, which comes from the east bank of the Ouémé, all of our records were made in the Plaine du Sô, along the Sô River, the westernmost tributary of the Ouémé. The Plaine du Sô is mainly a marshy area dominated by flooded *Paspalum* grasslands with a mixture of fields (mainly tomatoes), young fallow areas, small tree clumps, some open water and large sand extraction holes. Lying in the immediate vicinity of Cotonou, the economic capital of Benin, the area is heavily disturbed by human activities such as construction, agricultural production, fishing and fish farming. There are

Figures 7–8. Track where two birds fed on the ground, Sô-Ava, Benin, 26 February 2011 (Bruno Portier)
Piste sur laquelle deux oiseaux se nourrissaient au sol, Sô-Ava, Bénin, 26 février 2011 (Bruno Portier)

numerous tracks through the swamps and many villages and encampments; the human population density is 150–285 inhabitants per km^2.

In line with the findings of Roux & Otobotekere (2005), we never encountered Anambra Waxbill more than 1 km from riverbanks. The birds mainly fed on small seed-bearing herbaceous plants in the dry season (Figs. 4–6) and on the seed heads of tall partially inundated grasses in the rains. They occurred in pairs, small monospecific groups or larger mixed flocks (of up to 30–40 birds) with Orange-cheeked Waxbills, Red-billed Firefinches *Lagonosticta senegala*, Red-headed Queleas *Quelea erythrops* or Pin-tailed Whydahs *Vidua macroura*. As also noted by Roux & Otobotekere, they were much easier to approach when not in mixed flocks. On 26 February, two very confiding birds were seen feeding on the ground in the middle of a track, and could be approached to 2 m (Figs. 5–6). They did not even flush, but remained hidden in the herbaceous plants, when a motorbike drove past just *c.*1 m away (Figs. 7–8).

Discussion

Based on present knowledge and following careful comparison of the few available photographs and descriptions, those birds further east (i.e. in the Niger Delta) appear to possess brighter white irides and a brighter plumage and bill than those in Benin. One possibility is that there is some seasonal change in the intensity of colours related to breeding condition. Or, it might imply some genetic differences between the two populations, suggesting a possible (sub)specific splitting into western and eastern Anambra Waxbills. This requires further investigation.

Anambra Waxbill is obviously tolerant of human disturbance and adapts readily to human-modified habitats (Roux & Otobotekere 2005; pers. obs.). In Benin, apparently suitable habitat occurs over *c.*54,000 ha in the Lower Ouémé basin. On the basis of the nearby Badagri record in western Nigeria and satellite images of the area, we estimate that suitable habitat might extend continuously east into Nigeria (thus including the Badagri record located *c.*45 km east of our easternmost record). However, due to the vicinity of large, densely populated urban areas (Cotonou and Porto-Novo), and the absence of national legal protection measures (despite its status as a Ramsar Site), the riverside habitat favoured by the species could be at risk.

The present note should spur additional surveys of the entire Lower Ouémé basin and neighbouring Nigeria. Field work is needed to collect further data on the species' habitat and distribution in order to assess its population size and the need for adequate conservation measures.

Acknowledgements

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L'avifaune aquatique de la Garaet de Timerganine et des zones humides des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien

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Waterbirds of the Garaet Timerganine and the wetlands of the east Algerian Hauts Plateaux. Garaet Timerganine (35°39'N 06°57'E), a Ramsar Site and the only freshwater body on the eastern Algerian Hauts Plateaux, represents the most diverse wetland of the region. It is attended regularly by 78 species of waterbirds belonging to 19 families, the most important being Scolopacidae (17 species) and Anatidae (17 species). Twenty-three species, including four of global importance, frequently breed: White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*. Five were recorded for the first time on the Hauts Plateaux: Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Slender-billed Gull *L. genei* and Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*. The presence of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*, Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegytiacus* and Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* is also noteworthy.

Résumé. La Garaet de Timerganine (35°39'N 06°57'E) représente la zone humide la plus diversifiée des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien. Constituant l'unique plan d'eau douce de la région, c'est une zone classée site Ramsar. Elle est fréquentée régulièrement par 78 espèces d'oiseaux d'eau appartenant à 19 familles, dont les plus importantes sont les Scolopacidés (17 espèces) et les Anatidés (17 espèces). Vingt-trois espèces, dont quatre importantes à l'échelle mondiale, y nichent fréquemment : l'Erismature à tête blanche *Oxyura leucocephala*, le Fuligule nyroca *Aythya nyroca*, la Sarcelle marbrée *Marmaronetta angustirostris* et la Talève sultane *Porphyrio porphyrio*. Cinq espèces sont mentionnées pour la première fois pour les Hauts Plateaux : l'Echasse blanche *Himantopus himantopus*, l'Avocette élégante *Recurvirostra avosetta*, la Mouette rieuse *Larus ridibundus*, le Goéland railleur *L. genei* et la Sterne hansel *Sterna nilotica*. La présence de la Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra*, le Flamant nain *Phoeniconaias minor*, la Nette rousse *Netta rufina*, l'Ouette d'Egypte *Alopochen aegytiacus* et le Pluvier guignard *Charadrius morinellus* est aussi à signaler.

Ce n'est que récemment que l'hivernage et la reproduction de l'avifaune aquatique des zones humides saumâtres des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien ont commencé à être étudiés (voir : Boulekhssaim *et al.* 2006, Saheb *et al.* 2006, Samraoui *et al.* 2006, Houhamdi *et al.* 2008, 2009, Aissaoui *et al.* 2009). Nous présentons ici une synthèse des résultats des études et dénombrements effectués en 2002–09 dans la Garaet de Timerganine (Oum El-Bouaghi ; 35°39'N 06°57'E) et les autres zones humides des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien. Le mot arabe et berbère 'garaet' désigne un plan d'eau vaste, peu profond et riche en végétation et 'Timerganine', pluriel de 'amerguen', signifie un ensemble de plans d'eau douce, indiquant ainsi une plaine qui se remplit suite aux débordements des oueds pendant la période des crues.

Description du site

Les Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien comprennent l'un des complexes de zones humides les plus vastes et les plus diversifiés du pays. Quinze plans d'eau peu profonds et plus ou moins salés composent cet éco-complexe (Tab. 1) qui s'étend sur près de 300 km d'est en ouest, à des altitudes variant entre 800 et 1.200 m (Fig. 1). Le climat régional est semi-aride à hiver froid et été très chaud. De ce fait, la majorité des sites dont l'alimentation en eau est très dépendante de la pluviométrie, s'assèchent dès le mois de juin. Le substrat pédologique dominant étant riche en chlorures de magnésium ne permet que le développement d'une flore halophile composée principalement de chénopodiacées (*Atriplex halimus*, *A. patula*, *Salsola fruticosa* et *Salicornia fruticosa*) et de crucifères (*Mauricaundia arvensis*, *Matthiola fructicosa*, *Diplotaxis muralis*). La Garaet de Timerganine (Figs. 2–3) représente l'unique plan d'eau douce de la région et s'étale sur

Tableau.1. Les principales zones humides des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien.

Table 1. The most important wetlands of the east Algerian Hauts Plateaux.

Zone humide / Wetland	Coordonnées / Coordinates	Superficie / Surface area	Statut / Status
Garaet Tarf	35°38'42"N 07°01'281"E	25.500 ha	Site Ramsar (2004)
Garaet Ank-Djemel	35°45'225"N 06°54'442"E	6.750 ha	Site Ramsar (2004)
Garaet El-Maghssel	35°49'581"N 06°43'529"E	110 ha	Site Ramsar (2004)
Garaet Guellif	35°45'225"N 06°54'442"E	5.500 ha	Site Ramsar (2004)
Chott Tinsilt	35°53'975"N 06°29'581"E	3.600 ha	Site Ramsar (2004)
Garaet Ezzemoul	35°53'137"N 06°30'200"E	6.400 ha	Site Ramsar (2010)
Garaet de Timerganine	35°39'241"N 06°57'468"E	250 ha	Site Ramsar (2010)
Lac Boulhilet	35°44'542"N 06°47'222"E	175 ha	Site Ramsar (2010)
Ougla touila (Garaet Boucif)	35°47'829"N 07°04'494"E	175 ha	–
Garaet Djendli	35°41'466"N 06°31'193"E	3.800 ha	–
Garaet Gémot	35°38'303"N 07°00'506"E	57 ha	–
Chott Melah	35°36'446"N 07°05'136"E	85 ha	–
Chott Zehar	35°36'135"N 07°03'314"E	76 ha	–
Garaet Ouled Amara	35°20'261"N 07°15'429"E	340 ha	–
Garaet Ouled Mbarek	35°23'378"N 07°20'315"E	950 ha	–

250 ha. C'est une zone classée site Ramsar depuis le 2 février 2010 du fait qu'elle héberge plus de 1% de la population mondiale de l'Erismature à tête blanche *Oxyura leucocephala* (Houhamdi *et al.* 2009).

Matériel et méthodes

L'étude a été conduite de janvier 2002 à décembre 2009 à raison d'une sortie d'une journée entière par semaine. Nos observations ont été réalisées avec des longues vues (20×60) et des jumelles (15×45). Dans la majorité des cas, nous avons dénombré les oiseaux d'eau individuellement, surtout en période estivale, quand les effectifs sont assez bas. En période hivernale, le comportement grégaire de la majorité des espèces dans leurs lieux de remise diurne nous a imposé de faire des estimations visuelles. Pendant la saison de reproduction, nous avons cherché des nids dans toutes les zones humides des Hauts Plateaux. Le nombre d'œufs et certaines données concernant la biologie et l'écologie de la reproduction ont été notés.

Résultats

Pour la liste complète des espèces : voir Tableau 2.

Notes sur des espèces choisies

Grèbe castagneux *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Niche régulièrement : 32 nids en moyenne chaque saison dans la garaet.

Grèbe huppé *Podiceps cristatus*
Niche régulièrement ; 47 nids en moyenne chaque saison.

Grèbe à cou noir *Podiceps nigricollis*
Visiteur en période estivale et nicheur occasionnel dans les zones humides des hauts plateaux de l'Est algérien (quatre couples en 2006, deux en 2008).

Pélican blanc *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
Une seule observation : sept individus au centre de la garaet, le 19 janvier 2008.

Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus*
A niché dans les phragmitaies à *Phragmites australis* bordant la garaet en 2004 (13 nids) et 2006 (19 nids). Les nids contenaient 1–4 œufs. Cette nidification représente la première donnée pour les zones humides continentales du pays.

Anatidés

Dix-sept espèces, dont sept sédentaires et dix hivernantes. Parmi les quatre espèces

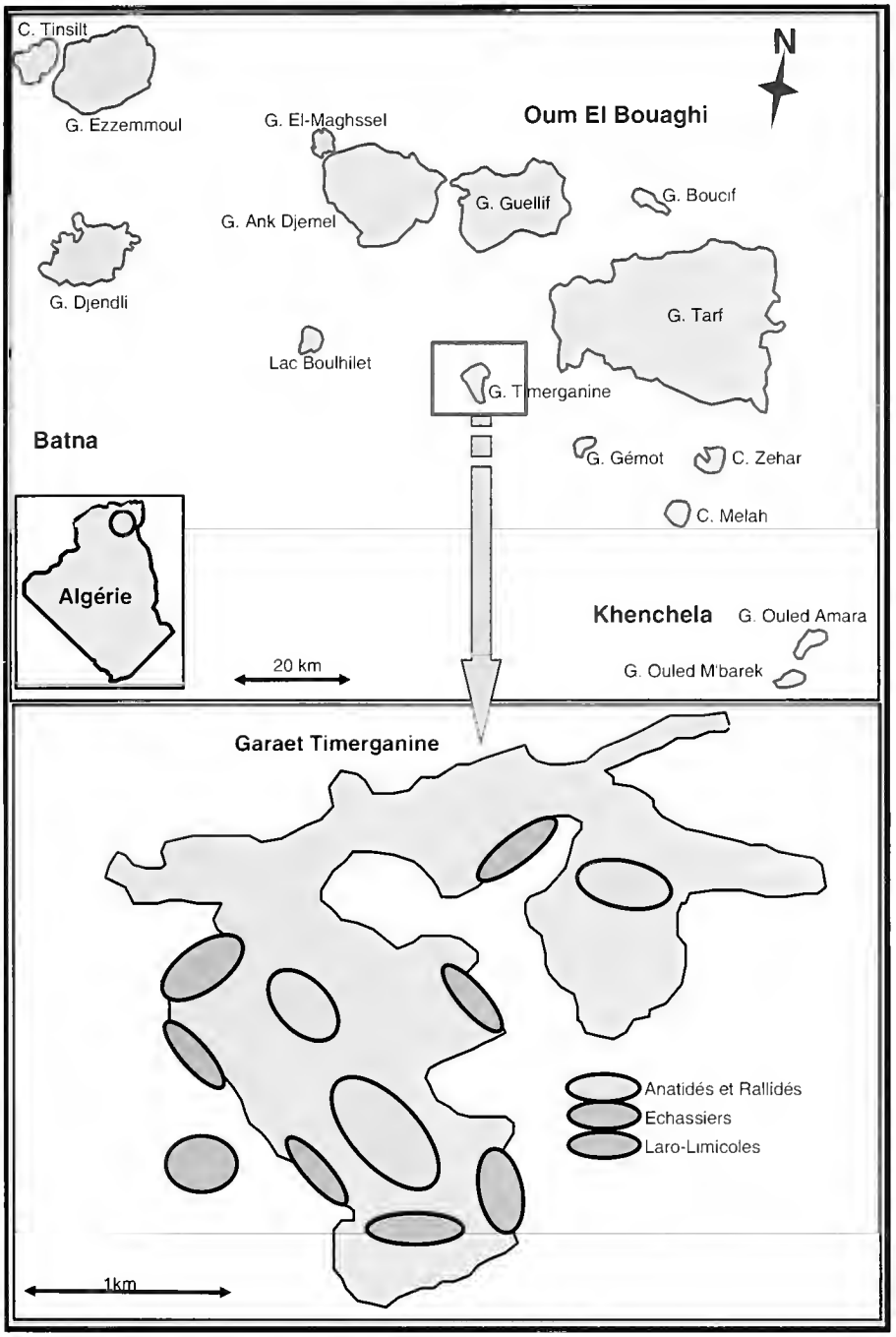

Figure 1. Carte des zones humides des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien et de l'occupation spatiale par l'avifaune aquatique de la Garaet de Timerganine.

Map of the wetlands of the eastern Algerian Hauts Plateaux, and the occurrence of waterbirds at Garaet Timerganine.

nicheuses, trois sont très importantes à l'échelle internationale : la Sarcelle marbrée *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, le Fuligule nyroca *Aythya nyroca* et l'Erismature à tête blanche *Oxyura leucocephala*. Les deux dernières nichent dans quatre zones humides de la région (Garaet de Timerganine, Chott Tinnsilt, Garaet d'Ouled Amara et Garaet d'Ouled M'barek) alors que la Sarcelle marbrée ne niche que dans les Garaets de Timerganine et de Gémot (Tab. 3). Le Fuligule nyroca est l'espèce la plus abondante avec un effectif variant entre 432 et 650 individus dans la Garaet de Timerganine et entre 743 et 1.072 dans tout le complexe de zones humides. Les effectifs de la Sarcelle marbrée varient entre 183 et 245 individus à la Garaet de Timerganine et entre 603 et 873 pour tout le complexe. Enfin, l'Erismature à tête blanche peut atteindre les 173 individus, dont 154 à la Garaet de Timerganine. Peu de variations interannuelles sont observées, sauf pendant les années de grandes sécheresses, telle qu'en 2005 où les plans d'eau étaient pratiquement à sec dès le mois de mai

Tableau 2. Oiseaux d'eau recensés à la Garaet de Timerganine et dans les Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien, janvier 2002–décembre 2008. Statut : S : Sédentaire, E : Estivant, H : Hivernant, N : Nicheur, NN : Non nicheur, R : Rare.

Table 2. Waterbirds recorded at the Garaet Timerganine and the eastern Algerian Hauts Plateaux, January 2002–December 2008. Status: S: sedentary, E: oversummering, H: wintering, N: breeder, NN: non-breeder, R: rare.

		Garaet de Timerganine		Hauts plateaux de l'est algérien		
Espèces	**Statut**	**Maximum observé**		**Statut**	**Maximum observé**	
		Nombre	**Date**		**Nombre**	**Date**
PODICIPEDIDÉS						
Tachybaptus ruficollis Grèbe castagneux	SN	221	21 août 2007	SN	457	1 nov 2004
Podiceps cristatus Grèbe huppé	SN	109	13 juil 2003	SN	109	21 mai 2005
Podiceps nigriceps Grèbe à cou noir	EN	23	7 nov 2005	EN	37	13 mars 2006
PHALACROCORACIDÉS						
Phalacrocorax carbo Grand Cormoran	HR	7	19 jan 2008	HR	13	14 fév 2004
PÉLÉCANIDÉS						
Pelecanus onocrotalus Pélican blanc	R	7	7 juin 2004			
ARDÉIDÉS						
Ixobrychus minutus Blongios nain	EN	36	14 juil 2006	E	45	22 juin 2005
Nycticorax nycticorax Héron bihoreau	R	9	3 juin 2008	ENN	45	11 mai 2006
Ardeola ralloides Héron crabier	ENN	17	5 mai 2004	ENN	26	3 avr 2007
Bubulcus ibis Héron garde-bœufs	SNN	248	3 juin 2008	SN	3.500	21 juil 2005
Egretta garzetta Aigrette garzette	HR	5	8 déc 2003	H	73	15 jan 2006
Egretta alba Grande Aigrette	HR	2	14 nov 2005	H	14	3 déc 2003
Ardea cinerea Héron cendré	H	27	27 oct 2004	H	31	2 déc 2006
CICONIIDÉS						
Ciconia nigra Cigogne noire	R	1	11 déc 2006			
Ciconia ciconia Cigogne blanche	EN	274	11 août 2003	EN	572	13 août 2006
THRESKIORNITHIDÉS						
Plegadis falcinellus Ibis falcinelle	R	9	17 fév 2005	H	21	13 jan 2008
Platalea leucorodia Spatule blanche	HR	6	3 fév 2004	H	33	15 mars 2006
PHOENICOPTÉRIDÉS						
Phoenicopterus roseus Flamant rose	SNN	213	14 jan 2003	SN	27.000	14 déc 2005
Phœniconaias minor Flamant nain	R	1	4 jan 2004	R	4	3 mars 2004
ANATIDÉS						
Anser anser Oie cendrée	H	38	20 fév 2007	R	67	26 fév 2007
Alopochen aegytiacus Ouette d'Egypte	R	2	1 nov 2003			
Tadorna ferruginea Tadorne casarca	SNN	37	4 déc 2004	SN	775	23 nov 2003
Tadorna tadorna Tadorne de Belon	SNN	350	4 déc 2004	SN	64.650	21 fév 2005
Anas penelope Canard siffleur	H	2.700	3 nov 2003	H	27.500	14 déc 2006
Anas strepera Canard chipeau	H	173	13 nov 2004	H	860	11 déc 2006
Anas crecca Sarcelle d'hiver	H	15.000	17 déc 2002	HR	23.400	3 jan 2004
Anas platyrhychos Canard colvert	SN	243	3 nov 2006	SN	1.430	11 jan 2004
Anas acuta Canard pilet	H	42.000	1 déc 2003	H	53.700	17 fév 2007
Anas querquedula Sarcelle d'été	ER	9	14 août 2005	E	23	11 mai 2006
Anas clypeata Canard souchet	H	14.500	1 déc 2003	H	27.600	15 mars 2006
Marmaronetta angustirostris Sarcelle marbrée	SN	245	15 oct 2006	SN	873	3 nov 2008
Netta rufina Nette rousse	R	2	21 jan 2004			
Aythya ferina Fuligule milouin	SNN	18.000	17 mars 2003	SNN	34.750	10 fév 2002
Aythya nyroca Fuligule nyroca	SN	650	2 déc 2006	SN	1.072	17 nov 2004
Aythya fuligula Fuligule morillon	H	98	13 jan 2004			
Oxyura leucocephala Erismature à tête blanche	SN	154	19 déc 2002	SN	173	10 fév 2002
ACCIPITRIDÉS						
Circus aeruginosus Busard des roseaux	SNN	2	25 déc 2007	SN	6	1 mars 2006

Espèces	Statut	Garaet de Timerganine		Statut	Hauts plateaux de l'est algérien	
		Maximum observé			Maximum observé	
		Nombre	Date		Nombre	Date
RALLIDÉS						
Rallus aquaticus Râle d'eau	H	3	27 fév 2004	H	5	10 fév 2003
Porphyrio porphyrio Talève sultane	SN	7	15 déc 2006	SN	13	3 oct 2003
Gallinula chloropus Gallinule poule-d'eau	SN	8	13 oct 2003	SN	128	2 nov 2005
Fulica arta Foulque macroule	SN	28.600	14 fév 2003	SN	42.350	10 jan 2006
GRUIDÉS						
Grus grus Grue cendrée	H	850	13 nov 2003	H	2.683	1 jan 2007
BURHINIDÉS						
Burhinus oedicnemus Œdicnème criard	SNN	3	14 déc 2008	SN	16	1 mai 2004
RECURVIROSTRIDÉS						
Himantopus himantopus Echasse blanche	ENN	127	15 août 2006	EN	4.750	2 juin 2006
Recurvirostra avosetta Avocette élégante	ENN	207	15 août 2006	EN	6.500	13 mai 2006
GLARÉOLIDÉS						
Glareola pratincola Glaréole à collier	ER	2	1 juil 2005	ENN	4	1 juil 2005
CHARADRIIDÉS						
Charadrius hiaticula Grand Gravelot	R	3	4 sept 2003	R	9	4 sept 2003
Charadrius dubius Petit Gravelot	R	9	2 août 2004	R	18	4 sept 2003
Charadrius alexandrinus Gravelot à collier interrompu	SN	17	1 août 2008	SN	217	24 juil 2005
Charadrius morinellus Pluvier guignard	R	1	2 août 2004	R	2	15 août 2004
Charadrius apricaria Pluvier doré	R	2	11 juil 2006			
Pluvialis aquatarola Pluvier argenté	R	2	10 août 2006	R	4	23 juil 2005
Vanellus vanellus Vanneau huppé	H	43	11 fév 2007	H	637	28 jan 2005
SCOLOPACIDÉS						
Calidris minuta Bécasseau minute	H	21	14 août 2005	H	57	12 juin 2003
Calidris ferruginea Bécasseau cocorli	R	7	13 juil 2005	H	13	21 juin 2002
Calidris alpina Bécasseau variable	R	13	2 juil 2006	H	27	12 juin 2003
Philomachus pugnax Chevalier combattant	HR	2	8 juil 2006			
Gallinago gallinago Bécassine des marais	H	2	11 mars 2004	SNN	4	6 avr 2007
Limosa limosa Barge à queue noire	H	74	13 jan 2008	H	325	1 fév 2006
Numenius phaeopus Courlis corlieu	HR	5	13 juin 2008	H	26	8 mai 2006
Numenius arquata Courlis cendré	HR	7	23 déc 2005	H	47	30 mars 2002
Tringa erythropus Chevalier arlequin	HR	2	29 juin 2002			
Tringa totanus Chevalier gambette	HR	5	17 juil 2004	H	13	5 juin 2002
Tringa stagnatilis Chevalier stagnatile	H	3	23 juin 2002	H	12	2 juin 2005
Tringa nebularia Chevalier aboyeur	H	2	19 mai 2006	H	8	1 mars 2002
Tringa ochropus Chevalier cul blanc	R	1	25 juil 2006	H	3	12 mai 2004
Tringa glareola Chevalier sylvain	HR	1	24 mai 2007	H	3	13 mai 2003
Actitis hypoleucos Chevalier guignette	H	3	12 juil 2005			
LARIDÉS						
Larus ridibundus Mouette rieuse	ENN	9	21 juin 2005	EN	11	19 mai 2003
Larus cachinnans Goéland leucophée	R	9	13 juin 2005	R	23	1 août 2006
Larus genei Goéland railleur	ENN	207	11 août 2007	EN	4.632	22 mai 2006
STERNIDÉS						
Sterna nilotica Sterne hansel	ENN	174	18 juil 2007	EN	1.320	30 mai 2006
Chlidonias hybridus Guifette moustac	ER	5	13 juin 2006	ER	9	21 mai 2006
Chlidonias niger Guifette noire	ER	4	21 mai 2007			
Chlidonias leucopterus Guifette leucoptère	ER	2	25 mai 2003			
ALCÉDINIDÉS						
Alcedo atthis Martin pêcheur d'Europe	R	2	25 jan 2004			

Tableau 3. Caractéristiques écologiques des nids (2002–09).
Table 3. Ecological characteristics of the nests (2002–09).

Espèce / Species	Sites de nidification / Nesting sites	Maximum de nids observés pendant une saison / Maximum number of nests recorded in one season	Support des nids / Nest support plant or structure	Nombre moyen d'œufs / nid Mean number of eggs / nest	Composition des nids / Nesting material
Grèbe à cou noir	Tinnsilt	3	*Phragmites australis*	4 [3–5]	Les nids sont construits avec le même matériel végétal. Les espèces les plus utilisées sont :
Grèbe huppé	Timerganine / Tinnsilt	53	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus maritimus*	4 [2–5]	
Grèbe castagneux	Timerganine / Tinnsilt	35	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus maritimus*	4 [3–5]	
Héron garde-bœufs	Timerganine	127	*Populus alba* / Eucalyptus	3 [2–5]	
Blongios nain	Timerganine	19	Phragmites australis	3 [1–4]	
Cigogne blanche	Timerganine	28	Eucalyptus / poteaux électrique	5 [4–6]	*Phragmites australis*
Flamant rose	Ezzemoul	6.000	Ilots	1	
Canard colvert	Toutes les zones humides	23	Berges / *Scirpus maritimus* / *Phragmites australis*	11 [9–13]	*Scirpus lacustris*
Sarcelle marbrée	Timerganine/ Gemot	5	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus maritimus*	6 [4–8]	
Fuligule nyroca	Timerganine / O. Amara / O. Mbarek / Tinnsilt	18	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus maritimus*	12 [10–13]	*Scirpus maritimus*
Erismature à tête blanche	Timerganine / O. Amara / O. Mbarek / Tinnsilt	14	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus maritimus*	16 [12–16]	*Cynodan dactylon*
Tadorne de Belon	Toutes les zones humides	9	Terrier (ilots et berges)	11 [10–13]	
Tadorne casarca	Toutes les zones humides	15	Terrier (ilots et berges)	11 [10–12]	*Paspalum distichum*
Œdicnème criard	Toutes les zones humides sauf Timerganine	16	Berges	3 [3–4]	*Salicorna fruticosa*
Busard des roseaux	Tinnsilt	1	*Phragmites australis*	3	
Poule d'eau	Timerganine / O. Amara / O. Mbarek / Tinnsilt	15	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus maritimus*	6 [5–8]	*Carex divisa*
Poule sultane	Timerganine / Tinnsilt	7	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus lacustris*	8 [7–10]	*Melilotus sp.*
Foulque macroule	Timerganine / O. Amara / O. Mbarek / Tinnsilt	63	*Phragmites australis* / *Scirpus lacustris*	8 [7–12]	*Ormenis mixta*
Echasse blanche	Toutes les zones humides	658	Ilots et berges	5 [2–6]	*Atriplex halimus*
Avocette élégante	Toutes les zones humides	1.662	Ilots et berges	3 [2–7]	
Gravelot à collier interrompu	Toutes les zones humides	63	Ilots et berges	3 [2–4]	*Salsola fruticosa*
Goéland railleur	Guellif/Tinnsilt/Ezzemoul	1.743	Ilots	3 [2–5]	
Mouette rieuse	Guellif	1	Ilots	3	
Sterne hansel	Guellif/Tinnsilt/Ezzemoul	238	ilots	3 [2–5]	

NB. La nidification ne se fait pas toutes les années, elle est tributaire de la présence de l'eau dans la zone humide. Pour la Mouette rieuse, un seul nid a été trouvé (en 2005) pendant toute la durée de l'étude.

Figure 2. Vue du secteur sud de la Garaet de Timerganine, 25 février 2009 (Moussa Houhamdi)

View of the southern sector of the Garaet Timerganine, 25 February 2009 (Moussa Houhamdi)

Figure 3. Vue du secteur nord de la Garaet de Timerganine, 12 janvier 2009 (Moussa Houhamdi)

View of the northern sector of the Garaet Timerganine, 12 January 2009 (Moussa Houhamdi)

jusqu'en septembre. Parmi les trois espèces rares observées, deux (l'Ouette d'Egypte *Alopochen aegytiacus* et la Nette rousse *Netta rufina*) sont nouvelles pour la région (Metallaoui & Merzoug 2009).

Echasse blanche *Himantopus himantopus et* **Avocette élégante** *Recurvirostra avosetta*
Présentes de février à septembre. Nichent en colonies de 43 à 627 nids pour l'Echasse blanche et de 146 à 1.842 nids pour l'Avocette élégante (Saheb et *al.* 2009).

Mouette rieuse *Larus ridibundus*
Rarement observée sur les plans d'eau de la région, mais a niché sur les îlots de la Garaet Guellif : un nid contenant trois œufs le 12 juin 2005.

Goéland railleur *Larus genei*
Niche en colonies dans la majorité des plans d'eau de la région. Les plus grandes colonies se trouvaient sur les îlots de la Garaet Guellif en juin 2005 (1.743 nids) et celui de la Garaet Ezzemoul en juin 2007 (837 nids).

Sterne hansel *Sterna nilotica*
Aménage généralement ses petites colonies (27–68 nids) sur les berges près de l'eau (Saheb et *al.* 2009).

Discussion

Au total, 79 espèces d'oiseaux d'eau appartenant à 19 familles ont été observées sur la Garaet de Timerganine durant les sept années d'étude (Tab. 2), parmi lesquelles 12 espèces nicheuses (23 pour l'ensemble de zones humides des Hauts Plateaux) (Tab. 3). Les effectifs les plus élevés ont été enregistrés durant les périodes de passage pré- et postnuptiaux, en novembre et février–mars. Bien que les zones humides des Hauts Plateaux de l'est algérien soient réputées pour la sédentarité et la reproduction du Flamant rose (Saheb *et al.* 2006, Samraoui *et al.* 2006), la Garaet de Timerganine par sa qualité d'eau douce est plutôt un refuge et un quartier d'hivernage pour la majorité des espèces d'Anatidés de la région. Parmi les neuf espèces nicheuses sur ce plan d'eau, trois sont sur la Liste Rouge : le Fuligule nyroca, la Sarcelle marbrée et l'Erismature à tête blanche (BirdLife International 2008). L'Erismature à tête blanche et la Talève sultane sont souvent observées avec des effectifs dépassant largement les critères 1 et 6 de la Convention de Ramsar et de ce fait, l'écosystème aquatique de la Garaet de Timerganine mérite le statut de Site Ramsar. Pour ce qui concerne le nombre d'Erismatures à tête blanche, la Garaet de Timerganine détient le second rang national après la Garaet de Hadj-Tahar (Metallaoui *et al.* 2009, Houhamdi *et al.* 2009).

La concentration hivernale d'oiseaux d'eau attire souvent des braconniers et des chasseurs. Nous espérons que le classement comme Site Ramsar de la Garaet de Timerganine permettra d'une part une meilleure gestion de cette zone humide et d'autre part allégera la pression de chasse.

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Persistence of a dark form of Madagascar Magpie Robin *Copsychus albospecularis* in central-east Madagascar

Friederike Woog

Persistance d'une forme sombre du Shama de Madagascar *Copsychus albospecularis* au centre-est de Madagascar. Le Shama de Madagascar *Copsychus albospecularis* est généralement considéré comme comprenant trois sous-espèces : *C. a. albospecularis* (Madagascar du nord-est) a le ventre noir et la queue entièrement noire, *C. a. inexpectatus* (du centre-est au sud-est de Madagascar) a le ventre blanchâtre, la poitrine noire et la queue entièrement noire, et *C. a. pica* (Madagascar de l'ouest au nord) ressemble à *C. a. inexpectatus* mais est plus grand et le blanc du ventre s'étend davantage vers la poitrine, tandis que les rectrices externes sont blanches. À Maromizaha, près d'Andasibe, au centre-est de Madagascar, 5,5% des Shamas de Madagascar *C. a. inexpectatus* capturés étaient sombres, ressemblant à la sous-espèce nominale pour certains traits morphologiques, mais pas tous. Le plumage d'un individu capturé deux fois en trois ans n'avait pas changé. Les mensurations des oiseaux sombres rentrent bien dans celles de *C. a. inexpectatus.*

Summary. Madagascar Magpie Robin *Copsychus albospecularis* is generally considered to comprise three subspecies: nominate *C. a. albospecularis* (north-east Madagascar) has a black belly and all-black tail, *C. a. inexpectatus* (east-central to south-east Madagascar) has a whitish belly, black breast and all-black tail, and *C. a. pica* (western and northern Madagascar) is similar to *C. a. inexpectatus* but larger, while the white on the belly extends more towards the breast and the outer tail feathers are white. At Maromizaha, near Andasibe, in central-east Madagascar, 5.5% of Madagascar Magpie Robins *C. a. inexpectatus* mist-netted were dark, resembling the nominate subspecies in some but not all morphological aspects. One individual was caught again after three years and its plumage was unchanged. Measurements of dark birds were well within the range of *C. a. inexpectatus.*

The genus *Copsychus* (Turdidae) occurs mostly in Asia (Collar 2005) from where it has successfully spread to the south-west Indian Ocean, on Seychelles and Madagascar (Sheldon *et al.* 2009). In Madagascar, three subspecies of Madagascar Magpie Robin *Copsychus albospecularis* (Eydoux & Gervais, 1836) are currently recognised (Morris & Hawkins 1998, Sinclair & Langrand 1998): the nominate (north-east Madagascar), *C. a. inexpectatus* Richmond, 1897 (east-central to south-east Madagascar), *C. a. pica* Pelzeln, 1858 (western and northern Madagascar) and possibly a fourth, *C. a. winterbottomi* Farkas, 1972, which according to some authors is a synonym of *C. a. inexpectatus.*

During mist-netting work at Maromizaha (18°95'S 48°47'E), Andasibe (Perinet), central-east Madagascar in 2003 (20 September–20 October), 2004 (29 October–27 November), 2005 (19 November–27 December), 2006 (25 November –11 January) and 2007 (26 November–17 December), 26 male *C. albospecularis* were caught that mostly resembled *C. a. inexpectatus* with a whitish belly clearly separated from the black breast, all-black tertials and an all-black tail (Morris & Hawkins 1998). The greater and median coverts were mostly black, although the innermost did show some white, and were thus intermediate between *C. a. inexpectatus* and *C. a. pica.* Two males (5.5% of the total number of males trapped) differed from the rest in showing a very black belly with only a few white feathers on the posterior half, and thus resembled the nominate form but differed in having a white spot on one of the tail feathers (Fig. 1). Differences in plumage characteristics between the different subspecies are summarised in Table 1.

Prior to release, the birds were ringed (with rings provided by SAFRING, Cape Town, South Africa), and measurements and photographs taken. Results are presented in Table 2. Measurements of the two dark individuals were well within the range of the other magpie robins caught at Maromizaha. Two-tailed T-tests were used to test for differences between the sexes. Males had longer wings, eighth primaries, skulls and tails. There was no overlap in tail measurements between the sexes, with males having a significantly longer tail.

Recapture rates in subsequent years were 8.3% for males (n=26) and 10% for females (n=10).

Table 1. Differences between subspecies of Madagascar Magpie Robin *Copsychus albospecularis*, as expressed in males (based on my own field data, specimens at the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN) Paris, supplemented with information in Eydoux & Gervais 1836, Pelzeln 1858, Richmond 1897, Farkas 1972, Morris & Hawkins 1998, and Sinclair & Langrand 1998).

Tableau 1. Différences entre les mâles des sous-espèces du Shama de Madagascar *Copsychus albospecularis* (basé sur mes propres données de terrain, des spécimens du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN) Paris, et des informations dans Eydoux & Gervais 1836, Pelzeln 1858, Richmond 1897, Farkas 1972, Morris & Hawkins 1998, et Sinclair & Langrand 1998).

Subspecies	Belly	Undertail-coverts	Tertials	Greater coverts	Tail feathers	Range
C. a. albospecularis	Black, some with pale brown / whitish- to reddish-brown tips of varying extent	Black, in fresh plumage with white or reddish tips	Black	Outer black, inner 4–6 white or mix of black and white, sometimes only outer vanes white and inner ones black (5/6)	Black	North / eastern humid forests
C. a. inexpectatus (e.g. at Maromizaha)	Whitish, less than *pica*	Pure white with black base underneath	Black, rarely outer edge spotted white (Ivohibe)	Outer three black and innermost white with inner fringes of greater coverts 5 and 6 partially black	Black	East / central to south-east
C. a. pica	White	White with black base underneath	From completely black to some with white outer fringes	Extent of white broadest of all subspecies, also extending to median coverts	Outermost two white, outer fringes white	West, north, south
C. a. winterbottomi	White	White	Outer fringes white	White	Black with white spots on three outermost	Ihosy
Maromizaha dark form	Black, few feathers with white tips or shafts	Black with white to reddish fringes, extent depending on feather wear	Black	Outer ones black, inner ones either have broad white tips or are entirely white, some as in *inexpectatus*	With white tips or entirely black	East / central to south-east

Retrapped birds exhibited high site fidelity during the breeding season and were trapped in the same net or adjacent ones (<100 m distant) in subsequent years. The adult dark-bellied male ringed on 4 October 2003 (ring no. FA47345) was recaptured at the same site close to my base camp on 15 December 2006. On both occasions the bird had a well-developed cloacal protuberance, being reproductively active.

Although my data are limited, it appears that the dark form of the magpie robin at Maromizaha is a persistent phenomenon in a region where white-bellied *C. a. inexpectatus* is usually found (Fig. 1). The recapture of FA47345 three years later revealed that the plumage coloration of this bird remained the same including the presence of a small white spot on the fifth rectrix (the second outermost) on the left.

The occurrence of a dark form in this region has been known for some time, e.g. Langrand (1990) states 'Individuals with characters intermediate between the subspecies *C. a. albospecularis* and *C. a. inexpectatus* ... are found locally'. Among specimens of Madagascar Magpie Robins at the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN), Paris, two dark forms were collected in 1929 at Sianaka Forest (Fig. 2) which probably refers to the Sihanaka Forest (18°41'S 48°75'E) west of Tamatave and east of Lake Alaotra in the corridor between Mantadia and Zahamena national parks. Delacour (1931) described much variation in magpie robins at this site and nearby Fanovana (18°92'S 48°57'E) with seven of 16 males collected having a white belly, seven having a black belly and two having a white belly and white on the three outermost rectrices (both sides). Unfortunately, Delacour (1931) did not provide exact localities for the latter two birds. He speculated them to be some form of *C. a. pica*. Anecdotal evidence of dark-bellied forms as described for Maromizaha has also been reported by bird guides working in the region of Andasibe and a dark form was observed by me as far south as Ranomafana National Park (in the district of Fiarantsoa, 20°52'S 46°77'E). Stresemann (1926) mentioned an individual from Fenoarivo Atsinanana (18°92'S 48°57'E), on the east coast just south of île St. Marie) that resembled *C. a.*

Table 2. Measurements of adult male and female Madagascar Magpie Robins *Copsychus albospecularis* from Maromizaha (two males of dark form at right), with results of a two-tailed T-test between males and females shown. Males had longer wings, eighth primaries, skulls and tails than females.

Wing: max. chord (Svensson 1992); eighth primary (=third primary in Svensson 1992); tarsus: metatarsal bone or 'minimum' tarsus (Redfern & Clark 2001); Kipp measure: distance between the tip of the first secondary and the tip of the wing (Baldwin 1931, Berthold & Friedrich 1979); DT: distance between the tip of the outermost primary and the tip of the wing (Leisler & Winkler 1991).

Tableau 2. Mensurations de mâles et femelles adultes du Shama de Madagascar *Copsychus albospecularis* de Maromizaha (deux mâles de la forme sombre à droite), avec les résultats du test bilatéral de Student entre mâles et femelles. Les mâles avaient les ailes, la huitième rémige primaire, le crâne et la queue plus longs que les femelles.

Aile : longueur maximale (Svensson 1992) ; huitième rémige primaire (=troisième remige primaire in Svensson 1992) ; tarsus : metatarse (Redfern & Clark 2001) ; mesure Kipp : distance entre le bout de la première rémige secondaire et le bout de l'aile (Baldwin 1931, Berthold & Friedrich 1979) ; DT : distance entre le bout de la rémige primaire la plus à l'extérieur et le bout de l'aile (Leisler & Winkler 1991).

Variable	Mean		Standard Error		Sample size		Differences between males and females*			Dark-bellied males (*n*=2)	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	T=	*P*=	Df=	Mean	Standard Error
Wing	77.39 (73.5–81.5)	74.05 (72.0–76.0)	0.42	0.48	22	10	4.8	0.000	30	79.0 (78.5–79.5)	0.5
Eighth primary	56.72 (53.5–60.5)	54.19 (53.0–56.5)	0.41	0.43	20	8	3.63	0.001	26	58.0	*
Tarsus	26.1 (24.6–26.9)	25.75 (24.3–26.8)	0.12	0.23	24	10	1.48	0.148	32	26.2 (25.5–26.9)	0.7
Mass	23.97 (21.9–26.3)	24.59 (20.2–28.6)	0.22	0.98	23	8	-0,92	0.365	29	24.6 (23.6–25.6)	1.0
Tip of bill to nostrils	10.17 (9.1–11.6)	10.29 (9.5–11.4)	0.12	0.18	23	9	-0.52	0.605	30	9.9 (9.8–10.0)	0.1
Height of bill at nostrils	4.49 (4.1–4.8)	4.41 (4.1–4.8)	0.03	0.06	24	10	1.26	0.216	32	4.75 (4.7–4.8)	0.05
Width of bill at nostrils	4.22 (3.8–5.0)	4.22 (3.9–4.8)	0.07	0.08	24	10	0.01	0.994	32	4.2	*
Skull	18.19 (17.0–19.4)	17.43 (16.4–18.4)	0.13	0.24	23	10	3.06	0.004	31	18.2 (17.9–18.5)	0.3
Tail	72.5 (67.5–79.0)	64.25 (63.0–66.0)	0.95	0.63	12	4	4.81	0.000	14	72.5	*
Kipp	11.37 (10.2–12.8)	12.32 (10.3–14.0)	0.22	0.68	15	5	-1.79	0.090	18	12.15 (11.5–12.8)	0.65
DT	36.12 (26.0–58.0)	40.45 (27.2–49.0)	2.28	3.50	15	6	-1.02	0.319	19	32.25 (31.2–33.0)	0.75

* Two-tailed t-test: T = T-value; *P* = Probability; Df = Degrees of freedom.

albospecularis but had some white tail spots and white undertail-coverts with black marks thus displaying some *C. a. pica* characters. Delacour (1931) mentioned an *inexpectatus* type with small white spots towards the tips of the tail feathers (but which lacked the black belly that the two Maromizaha birds possessed). In summary, considerable phenotypic variation appears to exist in central-east Madagascar.

Figure 1. Madagascar Magpie Robins *Copsychus albospecularis inexpectatus* trapped at Maromizaha, Madagascar. Column 1: the predominant phenotype in this region. Column 2: an individual of the dark form (FA47345) in 2003. Column 3: the same bird (FA47345) in 2006 (Friederike Woog)

Shamas de Madagascar *Copsychus albospecularis inexpectatus* capturés à Maromizaha, Madagascar. Première colonne : le phénotype prédominant dans cette région. Deuxième colonne : un individu de la forme sombre (FA47345) en 2003. Troisième colonne : le même oiseau (FA47345) en 2006 (Friederike Woog)

Figure 2. Specimens of Madagascar Magpie Robin *Copsychus albospecularis inexpectatus* held at the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN) Paris, a (CG1964-1109) and b (CG1964-1108) from Perinet (910 m, 15 November 1958, coll. C. W. Benson), c–h from Sianaka Forest, October 1929, Mission Franco-Anglo-Americaine, coll. P. Milon, c (CG1974-364), d (CG2005-2239), e (CG1932-1918), f (CG1974-361), g (CG1932-1901); f and g represent dark forms similar to those described from Maromizaha (Friederike Woog)

Spécimens du Shama de Madagascar *Copsychus albospecularis inexpectatus* du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN) Paris, a (CG1964-1109) et b (CG1964-1108) de Périnet (910 m, 15 novembre 1958, coll. C. W. Benson), c–h de la forêt de Sianaka, octobre 1929, Mission Franco-Anglo-Americaine, coll. P. Milon, c (CG1974-364), d (CG2005-2239), e (CG1932-1918), f (CG1974-361), g (CG1932-1901) ; f et g représentent des formes sombres ressemblant à celles décrites de Maromizaha (Friederike Woog)

The reasons for this variation have been debated. My recapture supports Stresemann's (1926) assumption that such variation is not age-related, as the bird's plumage was identical after three years. But is the dark form observed at Maromizaha simply a morph of *C. a. inexpectatus* or a hybrid between *C. a. inexpectatus* and *C. a. albospecularis*?

Stresemann (1926) did not even afford *albospecularis* taxonomic status, preferring to consider such individuals as melanistic morphs of *C. pica*. In contrast, Delacour (1931) recognised two subspecies, *C. a. albospecularis* (in the humid east) and *C. a. pica* (over the rest of the island) and postulated the existence of a hybrid zone between them extending from Fanovana to Andapa (excluding the Masoala Peninsula). Similarly, in Indonesia, white-bellied subspecies of the Oriental Magpie Robin appear to hybridise with black-bellied subspecies: on Java, white-bellied *Copsychus s. musicus* is distributed in the west and the black-bellied *C. s. amoenus* in the east, with a contact zone between them and, similarly, on Borneo white-bellied *C. s. musicus* occurs in the west, and the black-bellied *C .s. adamsi* and *C. s. pluto* in the east (Sheldon *et al.* 2009).

The situation in Madagascar may be comparable, and the dark birds in the range of *C. a. inexpectatus* may signal a rather extended zone of intergradation between the subspecies (see also Collar 2005). Within such a zone, however, one should always find both parents of the intergrade, i.e. at Maromizaha in addition to *inexpectatus*, one would also expect to find some individuals

of *albospecularis* which, however, I never found, although this could be explained by their rarity. Alternatively, the dark forms observed within a region otherwise occupied by *C. a. inexpectatus* might indeed represent a morph. To answer these questions, more detailed information about the frequencies in which the various subspecies of *C. albospecularis* and other apparently mixed phenotypes occur in the east of the island is needed, on north–south and east–west gradients. In sum, a detailed study of the phylogeography of the genus in Madagascar is needed because, at present, our understanding of the clearly complex morphological variation observed is rather poor, and the mechanisms driving these differences rather unclear.

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Une importante colonie d'Ardéidés et de Threskiornithidés dans l'estuaire de la Loza au nord-ouest de Madagascar

Paul Koenig

An important colony of Ardeidae and Threskiornithidae in the Loza estuary, north-west Madagascar. During five visits between April 2004 and June 2006, a heron and ibis colony was surveyed on the island of Ambarimboro, in the Loza estuary, north-west Madagascar. The colony, which appears to be the largest of its kind described from northern Madagascar to date, comprised six heron species, including Humblot's Heron *Ardea humbloti* (Endangered), two ibises, among them Madagascar Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis bernieri* (Endangered), and one spoonbill. In addition, two species of raptor bred in the Loza estuary, one of these being Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* (Critically Endangered).

L'île d'Ambarimboro, située dans l'estuaire de la Loza, au nord-ouest de Madagascar (14°41'S 47°56'E) est connue par les pêcheurs locaux comme l'île aux oiseaux. L'île est difficile d'accès : située à huit heures de pirogue d'Antsohihy, elle est entourée d'immenses vasières, mises à jour à marée basse, qui en interdisent alors toute pénétration humaine. L'estuaire de la Loza fait 60 km de long et très peu peuplé. Plusieurs grands fleuves s'y jettent tels que la Tsinjomorona, la Maevarano et l'Anjingo. De rares petits villages sont installés entre les mangroves à proximité des sources d'eau douce.

Flore et faune

L'estuaire est bordé à 70% de mangroves. Le reste se compose de forêts sèches résiduelles et de quelques terres défrichées à vocation agricole (riziculture, cocotiers et anacardiers). Les mangroves sont composées de cinq espèces de palétuviers, dont les plus communs sont le Manglier blanc *Rhizophora mucronata* et, surtout, le Manglier rouge *Avicennia marina*. Les forêts sèches sont parsemées de quelques pieds de *Pachypodium* et de nombreux palmiers *Raphia farinifera*.

On y rencontre plusieurs espèces de lémuriens dont le Propithèque de Coquerel *Propithecus verreauxi coquereli* et le Lémur fauve *Eulemur fulvus*. Une espèce de mégachiroptère, probablement *Pteropus rufus*, dont les effectifs ont été estimés à environ 5.000 individus, utilise l'île comme reposoir. Les mangroves sont le refuge de nombreuses espèces de crabes violonistes dont *Uca lactea* et du Périophthalme de Koelreuter *Periophthalmus koelreuteri*. Pour ce qui concerne les oiseaux, le site accueille un nombre important d'hivernants paléarctiques, dont les plus nombreux sont le Chevalier guignette *Actitis hypoleucos*, le Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus*, le Drome ardéole *Dromas ardeola*, ainsi que divers gravelots *Charadrius* et bécasseaux *Calidris*.

La colonie d'Ambarimboro

Entre avril 2004 et juin 2006 j'ai pu faire, à cinq reprises, le tour de l'île en bateau et y observer une importante colonie d'Ardéidés et de Threskiornithidés de neuf espèces, ainsi que deux espèces de rapaces.

Plus de la moitié des nids, environ 1.500–1.700, appartient au Héron gardebœufs *Bubulcus ibis* (Tableau 1). Dans la chronologie de la nidification il niche en premier lieu : les premiers jeunes apparaissent hors des nids alors que les autres ardéidés n'en sont qu'au stade de la ponte et de l'incubation et que les ibis et les spatules sont au stade de la construction.

Avec environ 800 nids l'Aigrette dimorphe *Egretta dimorpha* arrive en seconde position. Les deux formes, blanche et gris de plomb, sont représentées. Etant donné le mélange des couples toutes les formes de gris intermédiaires sont observées. Il n'est pas rare de voir des nids avec un jeune tout blanc et un autre plus ou moins gris.

Les deux espèces d'ibis, l'Ibis sacré de Madagascar *Threskiornis bernieri* et l'Ibis falcinelle *Plegadis falcinellus*, comptaient environ 200–250 nids chacune en 2004–05. En 2006, les effectifs de l'Ibis sacré de Madagascar ont connu une chute importante avec une perte d'environ 100 nids. Ceci est probablement dû au déplacement vers des petites colonies en bordure de l'estuaire ou vers le nord, notamment à Sahamalaza où les petites colonies ont été étudiées en vue de la mise en place d'un parc naturel (Andrianarimisa

Tableau 1. Composition de la colonie d'Ardéidés et de Threskiornithidés à Ambarimboro, nord-ouest de Madagascar, avril 2004–juin 2006.
Table 1. Composition of the heron and ibis colony at Ambarimboro, north-west Madagascar, April 2004–June 2006.

Espèces / Species			Nombre de nids / Number of nests
Ardeidae			
Nycticorax nyxticorax	Bihoreau gris	Black-crowned Night Heron	20
Bubulcus ibis	Héron gardebœufs	Cattle Egret	1.500–1.700
Egretta ardesiaca	Héron ardoisé	Black Heron	10
Egretta dimorpha	Aigrette dimorphe	Dimorphic Egret	800
Ardea cinerea	Héron cendré	Grey Heron	5–6
Ardea humbloti	Héron de Humblot	Humblot's Heron	5–6
Threskiornithidae			
Threskiornis bernieri	Ibis sacré de Madagascar	Madagascar Sacred Ibis	200–250 (en 2004–05) / 100–150 (en 2006)
Plegadis falcinellus	Ibis falcinelle	Glossy Ibis	200–250
Platalea alba	Spatule africaine	African Spoonbill	3–4
Accipitridae			
Milvus migrans parasitus	Milan parasite	Yellow-billed Kite	15–20
Haliaeetus vociferoides	Pygargue de Madagascar	Madagascar Fish Eagle	3

2006). L'Ibis sacré de Madagascar est l'espèce qui souffre le plus des rares incursions de l'homme dans la héronnière. Sa taille assez importante en fait un gibier intéressant et les jeunes s'élèvent bien en basse-cour. Quasiment tous les pêcheurs fréquentant les abords de l'île ont, un jour ou l'autre, récupéré un ou plusieurs jeunes afin de les élever et ensuite les manger. L'influence à long terme de ces prélèvements sur la population de l'île est inconnue. Longtemps on a considéré que cette espèce nichait au début de la saison des pluies (Langrand 1990) mais à Ambarimboro la nidification ne débute qu'au mois de mars. Les premiers jeunes apparaissent au milieu du mois d'avril alors que la saison des pluies touche à sa fin et la mise en culture (notamment pour le riz) des zones humides commence. Ces activités humaines peuvent être suffisamment perturbantes pour les espèces dépendant de ces zones, en particulier les oiseaux (Langrand & Goodman 1995).

Les cinq autres espèces sont en nombres beaucoup moins importants (voir Tableau 1). Deux espèces de rapaces opportunistes occupent la colonie. Le Milan parasite *Milvus migrans parasitus* y compte environ 15–20 nids. Il profite surtout des jeunes ardéidés tombés du nid.

Un nid de Pygargue de Madagascar *Haliaeetus vociferoides*, espèce classée comme « Gravement menacée d'extinction » (BirdLife International 2011a), se trouve à faible hauteur en plein milieu de la colonie. Nous avons pu observer un Pygargue tuer une jeune Aigrette dimorphe sur une vasière et l'emporter ensuite au nid. Trois couples de cette espèce menacée nichent dans l'estuaire de la Loza. Deux de ces couples ont produit, avec certitude, une jeune chacun en 2005.

Conclusion

La colonie d'Ardéidés et de Threskiornithidés de l'estuaire de la Loza est l'une des plus grandes du nord du pays—jusqu'à présent aucune autre colonie de cette importance n'a été décrite de cette région. Elle draine une grande partie des individus qui fréquentent tous les points d'eau et les rizières à des dizaines de kilomètres à la ronde. Sa sécurité et une certaine pérennité sont assurées par son isolement et la difficulté d'accès qu'elle présente. De plus les effectifs d'Ibis sacré de Madagascar, espèce classée comme « Menacée d'extinction » (BirdLife International 2011b), outre les 500 individus comptés dans le delta de la Betsiboka (Thorstrom & Rabarisoa 1998),

paraissent représenter une des plus importantes populations naturelles dans l'aire de distribution.

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Notes on the nesting biology of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*

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Notes sur la nidification de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis*. Les premières données sont présentées concernant la nidification de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis*, une espèce classée comme « Gravement menacée d'extinction » endémique des Taita Hills du sud du Kenya. Quatre nids ont été observés entre novembre 2010 et janvier 2011. Tous se trouvaient dans des petites trouées de la forêt naturelle et contenaient 2–3 œufs. Les nids étaient typiques du genre *Apalis* : une boule ovoïde, construite de mousse et de brindilles, avec une entrée latérale. La période de nidification, de la construction du nid à l'envol des jeunes, comprend environ 5–6 semaines. En général, la nidification de *A. fuscigularis* ressemble à celle de l'Apalis à collier *A. thoracica*.

Summary. We report the first detailed data concerning the nesting biology of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*, a Critically Endangered species endemic to the Taita Hills of southern Kenya. Four nests were observed between November 2010 and January 2011. All were located in small gaps in natural forest and contained 2–3 eggs. The nests were typical of the genus *Apalis*, ovoid domed structures with a lateral entrance, and constructed of mosses and grass stems. The nesting period, from nest building to fledging of young, lasted *c.*5–6 weeks. In general, the nesting biology of *A. fuscigularis* resembles that of the closely related Bar-throated Apalis *A. thoracica*.

Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis* is a small-sized (11–12 cm), arboreal warbler that has traditionally been treated as a subspecies of the widespread and geographically variable Bar-throated Apalis *A. thoracica*, which ranges from South Africa to Kenya (Erard *et al.* 1997). However, in view of their marked morphological and vocal variation, some montane populations previously ascribed to *A. thoracica* are often considered separate species (Collar *et al.* 1994). Recent texts (e.g., Ryan *et al.* 2006) split *A. thoracica* into four separate species, namely the broad-ranging *A thoracica* and three restricted-range taxa: Namuli Apalis *A. lynesi*, endemic to Mount Namuli, Mozambique, Yellow-throated Apalis *A. flavigularis*, of south-east Malawi, and *A. fuscigularis*, endemic to the Taita Hills of southern Kenya.

Taita Apalis is restricted to montane forest at 1,500–2,200 m (authors' unpubl. data). It inhabits forest understorey, favouring gaps and edges with dense undergrowth, where it gleans insects from vegetation mainly 0–2 m above ground (BirdLife International 2011). A survey undertaken in 2001 revealed that the species had at that time a range of >500 ha and that its global population was as small as 310–654 individuals (Borghesio *et al.* 2010). However, recent monitoring suggests a marked decrease (BirdLife International 2011). For these reasons, *A. fuscigularis* is currently considered Critically Endangered (BirdLife International 2011).

Data on the breeding biology of threatened species are very important for conservation, as breeding success is a key component of population dynamics and viability. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known of the nesting biology of *A. fuscigularis*, apart from clutch size, which is reported to be 2–4 eggs (Ryan *et al.* 2006). Here, we provide the first detailed description of the species' nest and nesting biology, and compare it with information available for other taxa in the *A. thoracica* species-group.

Study area

The Taita Hills (03°25'S 38°20'E) form an isolated massif *c.*20 × 20 km in size, rising to more than 2,200 m above the surrounding dry plains at 900 m. Deforestation has been severe, and indigenous forest is now restricted to the highest peaks and steepest slopes, surrounded by a matrix of human settlements. The total extent of closed-canopy natural forest on the hills is *c.*400–600 ha, subdivided into 12 fragments that are 1–220 ha in size (Rogo & Oguge 2000, Pellikka *et al.* 2009). The flora of the fragments is influenced by human disturbance (Aerts *et al.* 2010). Logging was intense prior to the 1970s, and most of the commercially valuable timber species (e.g. *Ocotea usambarensis*, *Podocarpus* spp.) have been

removed, resulting in sometimes discontinuous canopy cover and increased dominance of early successional trees (Wilder *et al.* 2000, Chege & Bytebier 2005).

Taita Apalis is known from only five forest fragments: Ngangao, Vuria, Chawia, Yale and Mbololo (BirdLife International 2011), of which Ngangao hosts approximately two-thirds of the species' global population (Borghesio *et al.* 2010). Ngangao is the second-largest fragment in the Taita Hills (altitude 1,750–2,000 m) with a size of 206 ha, of which 120 ha are natural forest and the rest exotic plantations and rocky outcrops (Pellikka *et al.* 2009). The eastern side of the forest is steep and forested with indigenous trees, while the western side is more open, with rocky outcrops and patches of exotic trees (*Pinus patula*, *Acacia mearnsii*).

Methods

Nests of *Apalis fuscigularis* were found by chance in Ngangao Forest during the execution of bird monitoring activities. At each nest, the coordinates were recorded using a GPS and observations were made at irregular intervals (of 1–11 days) due to time constraints imposed by other ongoing research activities.

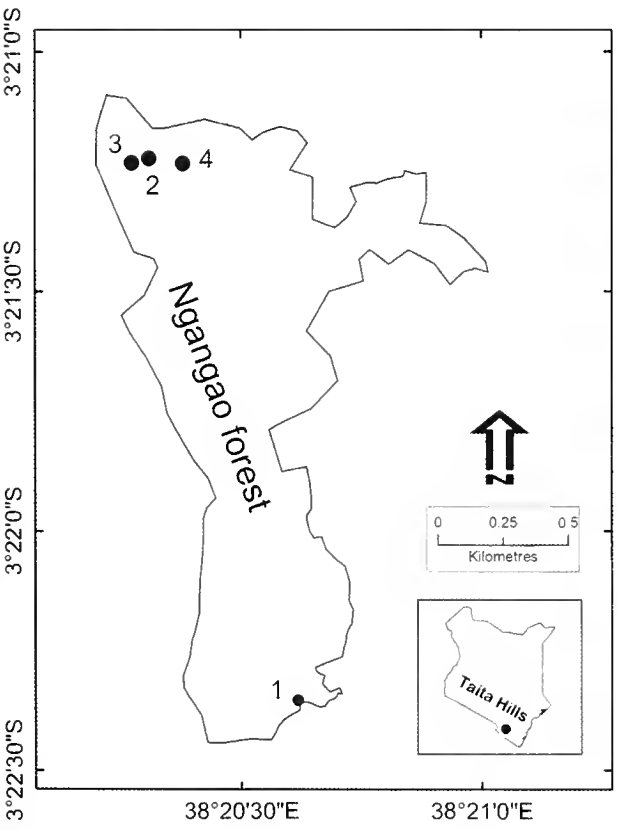

Figure 1. Location of the Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis* nests in Ngangao forest fragment, Kenya.

Localisation des nids de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis* dans la forêt de Ngangao, Kenya.

Results

Nesting dates and locations

Four nests were found, one in November 2010, one in December 2010 and two in January 2011. The nests were located within natural forest (Fig. 1), at 1,750–1,840 m. All were sited in small forest gaps *c.*8–15 m in diameter, at a distance of 40–150 m from the forest edge. The gaps had dense shrubby vegetation and abundant lianas. The nests were placed at a mean height of 1.5 m (range 0.8–1.8 m) on tree saplings (Fig. 2). The plants on which the nests were placed were *Dichapetalum eickii* (Dichapetalaceae) (twice), *Cola greenwayi* (Sterculiaceae) and *Acokanthera oppositifolia* (Apocynaceae).

Nest construction

Both pair members were responsible for nest construction. They were domed, irregular oval

Figure 2. Nest of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis* in a small canopy gap, *c.*1.5 m above ground, Ngangao forest, Kenya, 10 December 2010; the support plant is a sapling of the liana *Dichapetalum eickii* (Lawrence Wagura)

Nid de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis* sous une petite ouverture de la canopée, à environ 1,5 m de hauteur, forêt de Ngangao, Kenya, 10 décembre 2010 ; la plante sur laquelle le nid est placé est une jeune liane de *Dichapetalum eickii* (Lawrence Wagura)

balls, broader at the base, with a circular lateral entrance located near the top. They were attached to the trunk or branches of the supporting tree using mosses and grass stems. External measurements of three of the nests were 12–17 cm (height) × 6–15 cm (diameter) (the fourth nest was destroyed by a predator before measurements could be taken). The entrance was almost circular with a diameter of 4–8 cm. The outer part of the nest was constructed of loosely woven mosses and thin stems of grass (Fig. 3). The interior was lined with a layer of cotton-like material and scattered but well lined with thin grass stems. Feathers were apparently not used in the structure.

Figure 3. Nest and eggs of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*, Ngangao forest, Kenya, 10 December 2010 (Lawrence Wagura)

Nid et œufs de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis*, forêt de Ngangao, Kenya, 10 décembre 2010 (Lawrence Wagura)

Eggs

Of three observed clutches two had two eggs and the third had three. The fourth nest was found after the young had hatched and contained three pulli, suggesting another clutch of three eggs. The eggs were subelliptical, pale blue and speckled dirty brown (Fig. 3). Of the seven eggs, only one did not hatch (Table 1).

Incubation and nestling stages

As the development of the nesting activities could not be followed at regular intervals, the duration of the different stages is probably slightly

Table 1. Sequence of events at four nests of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*. Nest numbers (1–4) correspond to those in Fig. 1. Day 1 = the day the nest was found.

Tableau 1. Déroulement de la nidification pour les quatre nids de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis*. Les numéros des nids (1–4) correspondent à ceux de la Fig. 1. Day 1 = le jour que le nid à été trouvé.

Days	Nest 1 (day 1 = 19 Nov 2010)	Nest 2 (day 1 = 1 Dec 2010)	Nest 3 (day 1 = 11 Jan 2011)	Nest 4 (day 1 = 20 Jan 2011)
1	Nest 70% completed	Nest 10% completed	3 pulli	Nest 60% completed
3				Nest completed, empty
5			3 pulli	
6	Nest completed, empty	Nest completed, empty	2 pulli alive, 1 dead	3 eggs
8			2 pulli	
10		2 eggs		
11			Nest empty, fledged?	
15	2 eggs	2 eggs		3 eggs
19		2 eggs		
24	2 eggs	2 eggs		2 pulli + 1 egg
28		1 pullus + 1 egg		
29		2 pulli		
31	Nest predated			
35		Nest predated		2 pulli + 1 egg
37				Fledged

Figure 4. Adult Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis* near its nest, Ngangao forest, Kenya, 19 December 2010 (Lawrence Wagura)

Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis*, adulte près du nid, forêt de Ngangao, Kenya, 19 décembre 2010 (Lawrence Wagura)

over-estimated. Table 1 shows the sequence of events observed at the four nests. Based on our observations, nest building took five days at nest 2, which was found during the initial moments of the building phase. Incubation and nestling periods lasted 31 days in nest 4, assuming that incubation commenced on day 5, when three eggs were observed in the nest. The maximum length of time elapsed from the deposition of the first egg to hatching was 20 days (nest 2) to 21 days (nest 4).

During incubation, we observed the female in the nest on four occasions, while the male was very vocal nearby. Post-hatching, both adults were seen feeding the young at short intervals during the morning hours. Feeding reduced as the day progressed and completely ceased between *c.*13.00 hrs and 15.00 hrs. The principal food items were small Orthoptera and moths.

Two of the four nests were destroyed by unidentified predators before the young fledged, while at nest 3 we are unable to assess whether the two nestlings, which had reached an advanced development stage, fledged: the nest was found empty but without any damage or signs of predation (Table 1). Two young successfully fledged at nest 4 and were observed with the adults for several days in the nest's vicinity.

Discussion

This is the first detailed description of the nest, eggs and nesting behaviour of *A. fuscigularis*. The period during which we observed the nests, November–February, encompasses the short rains and the subsequent short dry season in the Taita Hills. As we were unable to undertake field work in March–April (the long wet season), we are unaware if the nesting season of *A. fuscigularis* extends to that period, but our preliminary data suggest that the species' breeding season corresponds to that of most other insectivorous forest birds in the Taita Hills region, i.e. November–April (Brown & Britton 1980).

According to our observations, *A. fuscigularis* constructs its nests in forest gaps on low trees / saplings. This matches the habitat choice of *A. thoracica* in its East African range (Erard *et al.* 1997, Ryan *et al.* 2006). Since treefalls that create forest gaps are usually the result of physical disturbance (e.g., wind, landslides, fires or human activities), our findings suggest that *A. fuscigularis* is a disturbance-dependent species, as has also been suggested for *A. thoracica* (Erard *et al.* 1997) and *A. lynesi* (Ryan *et al.* 1999). This hypothesis requires confirmation based on a larger sample of nests in future studies.

Nest structure and dimensions, clutch size, egg colour patterns, and parental behaviour during the incubation and nestling stages correspond to what is known for *A. thoracica*, *A. lynesi* and *A. flavigularis* (Ryan *et al.* 2006). At one nest, we estimated a total of 31 days for the incubation and nestling stages combined, which falls exactly in the middle of the 27–35 days reported for *A. thoracica* (Erard *et al.* 1997).

Nesting success is low in the Cisticolidae (Ryan *et al.* 2006), and this would be crucial information for evaluating the conservation status of *A. fuscigularis*. We observed successful fledging in one, possibly two, out of four nests. Unfortunately, this sample is too small to permit any precise estimation of nesting success.

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First record of Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni* breeding in an urban area, with notes on semi-colonial breeding

Marco Thoma

Première donnée de nidification de la Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni* en milieu urbain. En septembre 2009, un couple de Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni* a été découvert nichant sur un bâtiment à Bamako, au Mali. C'est la première fois que l'on observe une nidification de cette espèce sur une structure artificielle et c'est la deuxième fois qu'un nid de cette espèce est décrit. Le plumage des jeunes est également décrit et illustré pour la première fois. Par ailleurs, la reproduction de l'espèce en colonies lâches est décrite pour la première fois.

Summary. In September 2009, a pair of Neumann's Starlings *Onychognathus neumanni* was observed nesting on a man-made structure for the first time, in Bamako, Mali. The nest, sited on a ledge on a building, is only the second of this species to be described. The plumage of freshly fledged juveniles is also described and illustrated for the first time. Additionally, this is the first reported instance of semi-colonial breeding for this species.

Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni* is a characteristic element of the West African cliff-dwelling avifauna, with a patchy, rather local distribution throughout its range (Borrow & Demey 2001, Craig & Feare 2009). It breeds on cliffs, rocky outcrops and inselbergs (Feare & Craig 1998) and was long considered to be conspecific with the allopatric Red-winged Starling *O. morio* from South and East Africa. However, due to morphological differences, *O. neumanni* is now widely considered to be a separate species (Craig 1988, 2000). In September 2009, I found a pair of Neumann's Starlings nesting on a house in Bamako, Mali. The species has not previously been reported to nest on man-made structures. In addition, this is only the second nest of this species to be described. Descriptions and photographs of a freshly fledged young are also presented here for the first time.

Description of nest site and nest

On 9 September 2009, I observed a pair of Neumann's Starlings at the Laboratoire Central Vétérinaire (LCV), the national veterinary institute, near Sotuba, in the eastern outskirts of Bamako, Mali. On 13 September, I found a nest containing at least one pullus. The nest was sited under a roof on the west-facing wall of a single-storey building, in the corner of a ledge *c.*3 m above the ground (12°40'01.6"N 07°54'55.7"W). The nest was a cup constructed mainly of dry leaf stalks of *Lannea acida* (Fig. 1–2); the base was of mud. The nest was *c.*20 cm high and *c.*30 cm in diameter. This is only the second nest of this species to be described (Craig 2000). Previously, nests were found in Côte d'Ivoire (Parelius 1967)

Figure 1. (left) Nest site of Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, Laboratoire Central Vétérinaire, Bamako, Mali, 13 September 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Emplacement du nid de Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, Laboratoire Central Vétérinaire, Bamako, Mali, 13 septembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Figure 2. (right) Nest of Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, Bamako, Mali, 13 September 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Nid de Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, Bamako, Mali, 13 septembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

and in Nigeria (Woods 1967). The structure of the nest in Bamako corresponds with the former, which was described as a 'simple cup of straw' (Parelius 1967). In Nigeria, Woods (1967) found 'ragged nests of grass and sticks' but did not provide any further details. Regretably, the nest at the LCV was destroyed by institute staff shortly after the young had fledged and therefore could not be analysed in detail. No egg shells were found. Rocky hills, which presumably offer the closest suitable natural breeding habitat, are located *c.*3 km south-east and *c.*3 km north of the LCV.

Breeding phenology and additional observations

The nestlings fledged between 13 and 17 September, most probably around 15th. Assuming that Neumann's Starling has a similar incubation and nestling period to that of Red-winged Starling, the date of egg laying and hatching was calculated according to Rowan (1955). The mean incubation period for the last eggs of Red-winged Starlings using man-made structures at Tierbos, South Africa, was 15 days and the young fledged after 22–28 days (n = 14). Based on these data, hatching in Bamako probably occurred around 21 August and the last egg would have been laid between 5 and 10 August.

A family group was observed on 18 and 27 September with two juveniles present on 27th. Thereafter, no more than one juvenile was seen until 16 October. On 22 October three individuals were observed foraging with *c.*150 glossy starlings *Lamprotornis* sp., several Piapiacs *Ptilostomus afer*, one Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* and at least two Senegal Coucals *Centropus senegalensis*, but the age of the birds could not be assessed. The adults were observed regularly at the LCV until 30 January 2010. On different occasions they were seen near the former nest site, especially in the evening. They were not observed again until 13 February when I last worked at the LCV. The adults made no attempt to construct a new nest.

Between September 2009 and February 2010 Neumann's Starlings were also observed at Korofina-Nord (12°40'01"N 07°57'17"W), a densely populated area *c.*3 km west of the LCV. Single individuals were heard on 2 and 26 December and 9 January, one was observed on a mosque on 7 December, and two were seen flying east on 5 January.

Figure 3. Juvenile Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, *c.*3 days after leaving the nest, Bamako, Mali, 18 September 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, juvénile, environ trois jours après avoir quitté le nid, Bamako, Mali, 18 septembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Semi-colonial breeding in Mali

Neumann's Starlings were rather common around two hills *c.*25 km south-west of Bamako. There I observed three nests with adults feeding young within an area <100 m on an east-facing cliff (12°31'45"N 08°09'06"W) on 31 October and 8 November 2009. In all three cases both adults fed the young. The nests were well concealed inside crevices, but begging calls were heard when the adults arrived. Semi-colonial breeding by Neumann's Starling does not appear to have been reported previously (Feare & Craig 1998, Craig & Feare 2009).

Description of juvenile plumage

The juvenile observed on 18 September had a swollen, whitish gape, brown-tinged black plumage and rectrices that were still growing (Fig. 3). Primaries were already like those of adults, although the rufous coloration appeared slightly duller. By 27 September gape swelling was reduced by *c.*50 %, with the still-swollen parts white (Figs. 4–5). The juvenile observed on 16 October had a slightly swollen rear edge to the gape (Fig. 6).

Figure 4–5. Juvenile Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, *c.*13 days after leaving the nest, Bamako, Mali, 27 September 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, juvénile, environ 13 jours après avoir quitté le nid, Bamako, Mali, 27 septembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Figure 6. Juvenile Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, *c.*1 month after leaving the nest, Bamako, Mali, 16 October 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, juvénile, environ un mois après avoir quitté le nid, Bamako, Mali, 16 octobre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Based on photographs, the feathers of the upper breast and throat had paler shaft-streaks, which were already visible on 27 September, becoming more pronounced by mid October. By this time, the juvenile had a greyish wash to the head, chin and upper breast (Fig. 6). The iris was brown, as in adults (Figs. 7–8) and this colour did not change during my observations. The inside of the upper mandible was whitish (Fig. 3), whereas in adults it is black (Fig. 7). The wing-coverts already appeared glossy. On 22 November, a juvenile was observed near the site where semi-colonial breeding was observed. Its precise age could not be assessed. However, it had a slightly swollen rear edge to the gape and was still being fed by adults. Based on the photograph, this individual also had a greyish wash to the head and upper breast (Fig. 9).

Discussion

This record of Neumann's Starlings nesting on a man-made structure indicates that the species may potentially extend its range by adapting to urban environments, hence following a strategy already adopted by Red-winged Starlings in southern and eastern Africa (Rowan 1955, Craig & Feare 2009). It is difficult to determine whether this is a recent trend or not. Madsen (*in* Paludan 1936) observed Neumann's Starlings 'at the houses' in Bamako in 1927, which may suggest earlier associations with human settlements. Several observations in Senegal far from suitable natural breeding habitats may be indicative of the species' exploratory capabilities (Morel 1985). However, no other observations of Neumann's Starlings from cities or villages have been published. As the species is omnivorous, dispersive and, as reported here, also able to use urban environments, range expansions may be observed in future.

Figure 7. Adult male Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni* (with adult female in background), Bamako, Mali, 13 September 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Adult male Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, mâle adulte (avec femelle adulte en arrière-plan), Bamako, Mali, 13 septembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Figure 8. Adult female Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, *c.*25 km south-west of Bamako, Mali, 22 November 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, femelle adulte, environ 25 km au sud-ouest de Bamako, Mali, 22 novembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

The calculated start of breeding for the pair in Bamako lies outside the breeding period mentioned by Lamarche (1981) for Mali (September–March). However, in neighbouring countries such as Côte d'Ivoire (Parelius 1967) and Burkina Faso (Thonnerieux 1988) breeding has been recorded as early as July.

Semi-colonial breeding has never been explicitly reported. However, Newton (*in* Bannerman 1948) indicates the presence of at least two breeding pairs on the same cliff in Cameroon, and Woods (1967) reports several nests on a cliff at Kigom Hills, Nigeria. Although this may indicate semi-colonial breeding, spatial information is lacking in both cases so that the proximity of nests cannot be evaluated. According to Feare & Craig (1998), Red-winged Starlings are semi-colonial breeders.

Juveniles are reported to resemble adult males but have duller plumage (e.g., Feare & Craig 1998). The juvenile observed on 16 October had already developed a greyish head *c.*1 month after fledging. Hence it resembled an adult female, even though the greyish coloration was less extensive and intense. In Red-winged Starlings the development of sexual dimorphism commences at *c.*6 months (A. Craig *in litt.* 2011). Although the description of head coloration is based only on a limited number of photographs and its further development could not be followed after mid October, my observations may indicate swifter

Figure 9. Juvenile Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*, *c.*25 km south-west of Bamako, Mali, 22 November 2009 (Marco Thoma)

Rufipenne de Neumann *Onychognathus neumanni*, juvénile, environ 25 km au sud-ouest de Bamako, Mali, 22 novembre 2009 (Marco Thoma)

development of sexual dimorphism in Neumann's Starling.

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Interesting sightings from south-east Sierra Leone, including the first Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* for the country and the first evidence of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* for West Africa

David Monticelli

Observations intéressantes du sud-est du Sierra Leone, dont la première mention du Pipit rousseline *Anthus campestris* pour le pays et la première preuve concernant la présence de la Rousserolle verderolle *Acrocephalus palustris* pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest. L'auteur présente des observations faites dans les rizières de Kenema, au sud-est du Sierra Leone, en 2010, dont celle du premier Pipit rousseline *Anthus campestris* pour le pays, photographié le 20 janvier. Des photos sont présentées d'un *Acrocephalus* identifié comme une Rousserolle verderolle *A. palustris* ; ceci constituerait la première preuve concernant la présence de cette espèce en Afrique de l'Ouest. Les autres espèces pour lesquelles des données sont fournies sont le Jacana nain *Microparra capensis*, la Rhynchée peinte *Rostratula benghalensis*, la Bécassine double *Gallinago media*, le Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* et le Pipit à gorge rousse *Anthus cervinus*.

From November 2009 to November 2010, I lived in Kenema, south-east Sierra Leone. On the southern side of the town there is a large area of flooded rice paddies, which I visited fairly regularly, either alone or accompanied by Alhaji M. Siaka. During our year-round survey, we observed some African bird species rarely reported in Sierra Leone, as well as good numbers of Palearctic migrants, including the first Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* for Sierra Leone and the first evidence of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* for West Africa. Details of our most noteworthy records, augmented by those of other observers, are presented below.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

On 20 January 2010, I briefly observed and photographed a pipit that I almost immediately identified as a Tawny Pipit, based on my previous experience with the species in Europe (Fig. 1). At first sight, the jizz, size, slim-bodied shape and overall sandy-coloured plumage were strongly reminiscent of *A. campestris*. Following further examination of a combination of plumage features such as the pale supercilium, dark loral stripe, unstreaked crown and mantle, buff-white tips to the median coverts, whitish underparts and the relatively short hindclaw, I became rather confident that the bird was an adult Tawny Pipit. In particular, the short hindclaw eliminated similar-looking Palearctic species such as Richard's Pipit *A. richardi*. At least two other closely related

Figure 1. Adult Tawny Pipit / Pipit rousseline *Anthus campestris*, Kenema, Sierra Leone, 20 January 2010 (David Monticelli)

pipits are known to occur in this region, but the unstreaked upperparts were not a good match for Long-billed Pipit *A. similis*, which, moreover, is usually found in different habitat (rocky outcrops with sparse vegetation), while the overall sandy plumage was not as buffy as would be expected for Plain-backed Pipit *A. leucophrys*.

This observation represents the first documented record for Sierra Leone. It should be noted, however, that the known wintering range of Tawny Pipit includes the northern part of the West African sub-region, and there are numerous previous records in nearby countries

(Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana; see Borrow & Demey 2001), which makes it a good candidate for more frequent occurrence in Sierra Leone than currently reported.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

On the evening of 11 November 2010, I noticed two warblers foraging in fallow land with tall herbs and scattered bushes (2–3 m high) at the margins of the flooded rice fields. The first was a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, but the second, rather elusive bird appeared different and was heard to utter a short hard *chrek*. Initially, it was reminiscent of a reed warbler (either Eurasian *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* or African *A. baeticatus*), but the overall plumage was not as warm brown as would be expected for these species (Figs. 2–3). Both Western *Hippolais opaca* and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers *H. pallida* were also considered, but the long undertail-coverts typical of *Acrocephalus* species, rather pale yellowish-brown legs (not bluish grey) and overall olive-brown appearance tended to eliminate both *Hippolais* species. A third option, Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*, crossed my mind, but despite my familiarity with this species in Europe I left the area with serious doubts as to the bird's identity, especially given that Marsh Warbler is a Palearctic migrant wintering in East Africa (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987), and hence is not to be expected in Sierra Leone or this part of the African continent.

After returning to Belgium a few days later, I sought the opinions of members of the Belgian Rarities Committee and other specialists.

Features visible in the photographs indicative of a first-winter Marsh Warbler (*cf.*, e.g., Beaman & Madge 1998, Kennerley & Pearson 2010) are (1) overall 'rounded' appearance, with rounded head and rather strong bill; (2) olive-brown upperparts, with yellowish-buff flanks, whitish chin and throat with buffy tinge; (3) long primary projection with eight visible primary tips; and (4) pale yellowish-brown legs and short, pale claws. The long primary projection rules out similar small warblers, such as African Reed Warbler, which has a short wing and a short primary projection. Similarly, the absence of a conspicuous pale supercilium and the long primary projection eliminate Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola* (Kennerley & Pearson 2010), a species unknown in West Africa. Eurasian Reed Warbler is more difficult to separate but should typically be warmer toned, with buffier flanks and darker legs / claws.

David Pearson commented: "...these photos are very convincing. The head and bill shape are exactly right, as are the olive upperparts and yellowish-buff underparts. The yellowish-brown legs and palish claws also fit perfectly. It looks from its general plumage like a first-winter bird, and this seems to be confirmed by the pale primary tips. This being so the leg colour should rule out Eurasian Reed, the only real confusion

Figures 2–3. Marsh Warbler / Rousserolle verderolle *Acrocephalus palustris*, Kenema, Sierra Leone, 11 November 2010 (David Monticelli)

source. My view is that this is a first-winter Marsh Warbler".

Marsh Warbler breeds mainly in temperate Europe (from eastern France to Russia, north to Sweden and south to Greece and Turkey) and western Asia. It is a long-distance migrant to East Africa, travelling along a very narrow route, including Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to reach its winter quarters further south, from Tanzania to South Africa (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987, Thorup & Rabol 2001). There is no previous record for Sierra Leone (Atkinson *et al.* 2011) and of the 22 countries included in the West African sub-region, vagrants have been claimed only from Senegal and Nigeria (Borrow & Demey 2001). However, these few records are insufficiently documented to eliminate closely related species (R. Demey *in litt.* 2011).

Other noteworthy records

Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*
One on 8 May 2010. Also one on 7 June 2008 (A. Siaka *in Bull. ABC* 15: 275). Only one previous record is mapped for Sierra Leone in Borrow & Demey (2001).

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*
At least a pair present on 8 May and through May–June 2010 (Fig. 4). Also one on 13 March 2008 (R. Demey *in litt.* 2011) and one on 15 December 2009 (J. Caddick & D. Hoddinott *in litt.* 2010). Considered to be an intra-African migrant in Sierra Leone, but there are no previously published records (Dowsett 1993, Atkinson *et al.* 2011).

Great Snipe *Gallinago media*
One to four present in November–February 2010 (e.g., one on 12 February: N. Borrow *in Bull. ABC* 17: 248). Previous records include four on 6 December 2007 (D. Hoddinott *in Bull. ABC* 15: 136), two on 12–13 March 2008 (R. Demey & A. Siaka *in Bull. ABC* 15: 275) and five on 15 December 2009 (J. Caddick & D. Hoddinott *in litt.* 2010). Apparently a few Great Snipe are regularly present in November–March each year at this site, at least since 2008 (A. Siaka pers. comm.). No previous precise records for Sierra Leone, although the species was known from the country: Field (1974) mentions it occurs on inland marshes and Bouet (1955) reports it was shot near the Guinea border in January–February.

Figure 4. Male Greater Painted-snipe / Rhynchée peinte *Rostratula benghalensis*, Kenema, Sierra Leone, 8 May 2010 (David Monticelli)

Figures 5–6. Red Phalaropes / Phalaropes à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Kenema, Sierra Leone, 13–14 March 2010 (David Monticelli)

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*
Two photographed on 13–14 March 2010 (Figs. 5–6). Only two previous records mapped for Sierra Leone, along the coast, in Borrow & Demey (2001).

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*
One to three present in November–February 2010 (e.g., three on 12 February 2010: N. Borrow *in Bull. ABC* 17: 248). Also one on 12 March 2008 (R. Demey *in litt.* 2011) and four on 15 December 2009 (J. Caddick & D. Hoddinott *in litt.* 2010). Only one previous record for Sierra Leone: two at Freetown on 1 February (no year given: Field 1974).

Other Palearctic migrants commonly present in and around the Kenema rice fields in November–March included Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Eurasian Reed Warbler and Willow Warbler.

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First record of Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris souimanga* as a host of Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii*, at Ankamenabe, Madagascar

A. Solohery Rasamison[a] and Friederike Woog[b]

Première donnée du Souimanga malgache *Cinnyris souimanga* parasité par le Coucou malgache *Cuculus rochii*, à Ankamenabe, Madagascar. Cette note rapporte la première observation d'un jeune Coucou malgache *Cuculus rochii* nourri par un couple de Souimangas malgaches *Cinnyris souimanga*, dans la zone d'extension du Parc National de Tsimanapetsotsa, sud de Madagascar, le 7 décembre 2010.

The endemic Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii* has been reported as brood parasite of at least nine bird species: Grey-crowned Greenbul *Bernieria cinereiceps* (Hawkins & Goodman 2003), possibly Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* (Milon 1959), Madagascar Brush Warbler *Nesillas typica* (Sikora 1892), *Acrocephalus* warblers (Davies 2000), Common Jery *Neomixis tenella* (Fry *et al.* 1988, Langrand 1990), Madagascar Cisticola *Cisticola cherina* (Sikora 1892, Milon 1959, Fry *et al.* 1988, Langrand 1990), Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata* (Milon 1959, Fry *et al.* 1988, Langrand 1990), Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris souimanga* (Fry *et al.* 1988, Payne 1997) and possibly White-headed Vanga *Leptopterus viridis* (Wilmé 1994). Some of the host records are doubtful and possibly were repeated from previous sources. We did not find a trustworthy original description of the Souimanga Sunbird being a host of the Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo and do not know from where Fry *et al.* (1988) and Payne (1997) acquired their information. Baron (1881) describes a Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo egg he found in the nest of a Souimanga Sunbird, along with three sunbird eggs. Milon (1959) doubts this record because the >100 clutches of Souimanga Sunbirds he found consisted of two eggs, with only a single clutch of three eggs. He therefore suggested that the Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo egg Baron described was found in a nest of *Cisticola cherina*. Therefore, our record may be the first.

On 7 December 2010, we observed a young Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo being fed by a pair of Souimanga Sunbirds in their nest at Ankamenabe (24°10'09"S 43°56'10"E; 165 m), within Tsimanampetsotsa National Park, southern Madagascar (Figs. 1–2). The nest was

Figure 1. Male Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris souimanga* with Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii* chick inside the nest, Ankamenabe, southern Madagascar, 7 December 2010 (A. Solohery Rasamison)

Souimanga malgache *Cinnyris souimanga*, mâle, avec jeune Coucou malgache *Cuculus rochii* dans le nid, Ankamenabe, sud de Madagascar, 7 décembre 2010 (A. Solohery Rasamison)

80 cm above the ground in a deciduous bush that, at the time, had no leaves. The nestling was already fully feathered and exhibited the typical black-and-white barring (Fig. 3). To feed the young cuckoo, the Souimanga Sunbirds had to perch on the border of the entrance. Shortly after landing on the rim of the nest, the sunbirds would regurgitate some unknown type of food into the nestling's mouth. When the sunbirds approached the nest, the cuckoo emitted a hissing sound and opened its bill, revealing its bright red gape. This behaviour appeared to somewhat alarm the sunbirds so that they only spent a short time feeding the chick, moved away from the nest

Figure 2. Female Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris souimanga* at the parasitised nest, Ankamenabe, southern Madagascar, 7 December 2010 (A. Solohery Rasamison)

Souimanga malgache *Cinnyris souimanga*, femelle, au nid parasité, Ankamenabe, sud de Madagascar, 7 décembre 2010 (A. Solohery Rasamison)

Figure 3. Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii* chick inside the nest of Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris souimanga*, Ankamenabe, southern Madagascar, 7 December 2010 (A. Solohery Rasamison)

Jeune Coucou malgache *Cuculus rochii* dans le nid d'un Souimanga malgache *Cinnyris souimanga*, Ankamenabe, sud de Madagascar, 7 décembre 2010 (A. Solohery Rasamison)

briefly and then approached again to continue feeding. The nest was observed from a distance for 90 minutes. During this time the male provided food three times (mean feeding bout = 3 seconds ± 1), whereas the female fed the chick ten times (mean = 2.8 seconds ± 0.2). The female was also seen removing a faecal sac from inside the nest. No trace of the Souimanga Sunbird eggs or chicks was found in the vicinity of the nest. If there had been any such remains they probably would have been taken by scavengers, as the cuckoo chick was already well grown. A short sequence of the male Souimanga Sunbird feeding the cuckoo chick is also available on film.

Souimanga Sunbird is mainly nectarivorous but also feeds on small insects, such as beetles, wasps and bugs, or other arthropods, such as spiders, which are gleaned from leaves or spider webs (Morris & Hawkins 1998, Cheke & Mann 2008). Invertebrate prey is especially important for rearing young. Sunbirds appear to be rather small to provide sufficient food for a cuckoo chick and their nest is also rather small with a usually narrow opening. Sikora (1892) doubts that sunbirds could host *Cuculus rochii* but our record now provides solid evidence for this. It may be less surprising if one considers that among >100 species parasitised by Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* are small species such as Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and some *Phylloscopus* warblers (Cramp 1985, Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1980). For none of the four *Cuculus* species breeding in Africa has a species of Nectariniidae been reported as host, but *Chrysococcyx* spp., which are smaller than *Cuculus* spp., are known to parasitise sunbirds (Fry *et al.* 1988).

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First breeding record of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in Libya

Jens Hering[a] *and Elmar Fuchs*[b]

Première donnée de nidification du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* en Libye. Un nid abandonné contenant trois œufs du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* a été trouvé en bordure de l'Oasis de Taurgha, Tripolitaine, Libye, le 28 avril 2010. Ceci constitue la première donnée documentée de nidification de cette espèce pour le pays.

In North Africa, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* is known to breed in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (Goodman & Meininger 1989, Isenmann & Moali 2000, Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Isenmann *et al.* 2005). In Libya, breeding was suspected in Cyrenaica, but to date no proof of this has been forthcoming (Bundy 1976, Brehme *et al.* 2002, Gaskell 2005).

On 27 April 2010 we observed two Little Ringed Plovers at the Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania. We initially considered that they must be on passage, but next day one of our Libyan companions found a clutch, in the same place where we had observed the birds, which JH identified as Little Ringed Plover eggs. A check on 29 April revealed that the clutch had been abandoned: the eggs were cold, and after an extended period of observation no adults were seen in the area. The eggs were then collected as evidence and will be deposited in the Senckenberg Naturhistorische Sammlungen, Dresden, Germany.

The find was made on the western fringe of the oasis in the vicinity of a fenced-off pond (32°31'N 14°26'E; 5 m) several hectares in extent. Salt-loving vegetation *Salicornia* spp. grows in

Figure 1. Breeding habitat of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania, Libya, 29 April 2010 (Jens Hering)

Milieu où le nid du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* a été trouvé, Oasis de Taurgha, Tripolitaine, Libye, 29 avril 2010 (Jens Hering)

Figures 2–3. Nest of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in a wetland on the western fringe of Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania, Libya, 29 April 2010 (Jens Hering)

Nid du Petit Gravelot *Charadrius dubius* dans une zone humide en bordure occidentale de l'Oasis de Taurgha, Tripolitaine, Libye, 29 avril 2010 (Jens Hering)

clumps over the *c.*800-m^2 salt-encrusted open area (Fig. 1). It is surrounded by small pools fringed by reeds (including *Phragmites australis*, *Typha* spp.) and tamarisks *Tamarix* spp. There are also several wet and open biotopes nearby, as well as a human settlement sited in the shade of the palms. The nest depression, some 10 cm in diameter and lined with small, dead tamarisk twigs, was *c.*6 m from the nearest vegetation (Figs. 2–3). The basically pale grey eggs possessed a large number of dark grey and blackish-brown spots and speckles. Measurements of the three eggs were 29.75 × 22.10 mm, 29.25 × 22.62 mm and 29.20 × 21.95 mm; these are consistent with morphometrics for Little Ringed Plover eggs in Schönwetter (1963).

We suspect that more Little Ringed Plovers could breed in this area given its many wet biotopes: on 28 April we observed two birds displaying at another wetland *c.*500 m to the north-east. The species probably also breeds at other suitable locations in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, with a similar distribution to that in neighbouring Tunisia and Algeria, where it is a migrant breeder in areas of permanent fresh or brackish water (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

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First records of Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina* for Senegal

Nacho Aransay[a], Liliana Pacheco[b] and Iñaki Zabala[c]

Premières données du Trogon narina *Apaloderma narina* pour le Sénégal. En avril 2010, jusqu'à deux ou trois Trogons narina *Apaloderma narina* ont été observés à quatre reprises dans des forêts galeries près de Dindéfélo (12°38'N 12°32'W), dans l'extrême sud-est du Sénégal, à quelques kilomètres de la frontière avec la Guinée-Conakry. Un mâle a pu être photographié. Il s'agit des premières données de cette espèce pour le pays.

In the late afternoon of 13 April 2010, while conducting field work in semi-deciduous forest in a ravine near Dindéfélo (12°38'N 12°32'W) in extreme south-east Senegal, NA & LP watched a Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina* for several minutes before it became too dark to observe the bird further. Its bright green head, throat and upper breast, and vivid red lower breast and belly identified it as an adult male. Next day, the bird was seen again in the same tree, but flew away on our approach and could not be relocated. It was not seen the following day, but on 20 April LP & IZ observed two trogons perched in gallery forest within another gorge near Dindéfélo, *c.*1 km from the original sighting. Photographs of the male were obtained confirming the identification (Fig. 1). On 24 April, LP & IZ again photographed a male at the same site. No further searches were conducted in 2010, but LP again observed a trogon on 23 March 2011, less than 1 km from the first sighting.

Figure 1. Male Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*, Dindéfélo, Senegal, 20 April 2010 (Liliana Pacheco)

Trogon narina *Apaloderma narina* mâle, Dindéfélo, Sénégal, 20 avril 2010 (Liliana Pacheco)

In West Africa, Narina's Trogon is a widespread but generally uncommon to scarce resident, occurring in primary and old secondary forests, and in gallery forest in savanna (Collar 2001, Borrow & Demey 2004). It reaches the western limits of its range in Guinea-Conakry and south-east Mali, but was not previously known from Senegal or The Gambia (Borrow & Demey 2004).

Dindéfélo is located in the Région de Kédougou, just a few kilometres from the border with Guinea-Conakry, within a newly proposed 13,000-ha communal protected area, where the Instituto Jane Goodall España is implementing a project to conserve Chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* and to develop community-based tourism. The village is situated at the base of a low cliff that forms the first step of the Fouta-Djalon Massif, which extends through Guinea-Conakry. Altitude ranges from *c.*200 m in the village to slightly above 400 m on the cliffs. Several ravines dissect the cliff, some of them cloaked in well-developed gallery forests in the valley bottoms and semi-deciduous forests on their slopes. Predominant tree species in the gallery forests are *Carapa procera*, *Ceiba pentandra*, *Pseudospondias microcarpa*, *Cola cordifolia* and *Borassus aethiopum*, and the liana *Saba senegalensis*. Characteristic species of the semi-deciduous forests include *Bombax costatum*, *Vitellaria paradoxa*, *Cassi siberiana*, *Combretum glutinosum*, *Ficus* sp., *Nauclea lautifolia*, *Parkia biglobosa*, *Piliostigma thonningii*, *Afzelia africana* and *Pterocarpus erinaceus*.

Given that Narina's Trogon is generally sedentary in West Africa, with, for instance, a pair remaining virtually constantly within a small territory of *c.*1–2 ha (Collar 2001), our observations suggest that there is a previously unrecorded population in the Dindéfélo area.

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First record of Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* for The Gambia

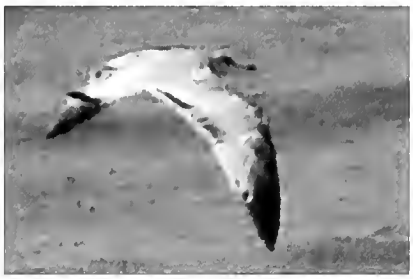
Clive R. Barlow[a] and Anthony S. Disley[b]

Première mention du Goéland à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis* pour la Gambie. Un Goéland à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis* a été photographié à Tanji (13°22'N 16°39'W), en Gambie, le 3 décembre 2008. Ceci constitue la deuxième observation documentée pour l'Afrique sub-saharienne, la première ayant été faite dans le Delta du Saloum, Sénégal, en octobre 1985.

In the mid morning of 3 December 2008, during favourable weather conditions, CRB was searching for colour-ringed gulls and terns at the southern end of Tanji Bird Reserve (13°22'N 16°39'W), in Western Division, The Gambia. An unfamiliar medium-sized gull was noticed on the tideline beside a group of mixed aged Grey-headed Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus*. The bird strutted in and out of the shallows, avoiding the large numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* and a few Kelp Gulls *L. dominicanus* that were also present. A series of digiscoped images was taken and the gull eventually took flight, permitting a distant photograph showing the open wings and tail. His initial thoughts were of a first-winter Common Gull *L. canus*, a Palearctic vagrant to The Gambia with fewer than five modern records (Barlow *et al.* 1997). However, subsequent inspection of the photographs on the computer made him doubt this identification and the photographs were sent to ASD, who immediately identified the bird as a first-winter Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, a species that he is very familiar with in the UK. ASD also circulated the images to other gull experts in the UK for comment.

First impressions from the photographs were of a small- to medium-sized gull in first-winter plumage, larger and bulkier than the nearby Grey-headed Gulls. Head and underparts were whitish with extensive smudging and spotting, especially on the lower nape, crown and flanks. The bill pattern was reminiscent of first-winter Glaucous Gull *L. hyperboreus*, the base being pale pink with the other two-thirds being black, apart from a very small amount of pink on the tip; the bill also appeared fairly heavy and robust. The eyes were blackish, and the legs a very similar pink colour to the bill, or slightly paler. Mantle and scapulars were grey (paler than the nearby Grey-headed Gulls in the photograph),





Figures 1–3. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Tanji Bird Reserve, Western Division, The Gambia, 3 December 2008 (Clive R. Barlow)

Goéland à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis*, 1er hiver, Tanji Bird Reserve, Western Division, Gambie, 3 décembre 2008 (Clive R. Barlow)

Figure 4. Adult winter Common Gull *Larus canus*, Norfolk, UK (Jason Waine)

Goéland cendré *Larus canus*, adulte internuptial, Norfolk, Royaume-Uni (Jason Waine)


Figures 5–6. Head and bill of Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, The Gambia (Clive R. Barlow) and Common Gull *L. canus*, Norfolk, UK (Jason Waine)

Tête et bec du Goéland à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis*, Gambie (Clive R. Barlow) et du Goéland cendré *L. canus*, Norfolk, Royaume-Uni (Jason Waine)

with conspicuous whitish tips and pale brownish subterminal marks to most of the scapulars, affording the upperparts a distinctive pattern. The brown lesser coverts formed a warm bar, with the lower band of coverts clearly possessing pale notches, bordered by a paler greater covert bar appearing as a pale mid-wing panel at rest and in flight. One retained brown juvenile greater covert clearly had a distinctive notched pattern, while the other grey feathers were newly acquired first-winter feathers. The tertials were brown and quite worn, with one newly acquired grey upper tertial. Primaries were blackish brown with very slightly paler brown fringes to the tips. The tail at rest (Fig. 1) clearly had a dark blackish band with a smudgy dusky area just above it; in flight the dark tail band contrasted clearly with the white rump and rest of the tail (Fig. 3). Furthermore, in flight the pale grey inner primaries and primary-coverts contrasted with the blackish outer primaries and primary-coverts, and there was a dark, white-tipped, trailing edge to the inner wing—all of these features are indicative of a first-winter Ring-billed Gull.

The shape and depth of the bill, mantle pattern, notched greater covert and some lesser coverts, pale greater wing-coverts bar, and smudging above

Figure 7. Head and bill of adult winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, UK (Jason Waine)

Tête et bec du Goéland à bec cerclé *Larus delawarensis*, adulte internuptial, Cornwall, Royaume-Uni (Jason Waine)

the tail band all separated the bird from Common Gull. The combination of the bird's size compared to Grey-headed Gull, pale grey upperparts and the pale greater wing-coverts eliminate the possibility of a small Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*. This observation is the first record of Ring-billed Gull in The Gambia and the second for sub-Saharan Africa. Two other Nearctic gulls have been recorded in The Gambia; Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* and Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan*.

Ring-billed Gull breeds in North America, especially in the Great Lakes region, where it is abundant (500,000 pairs) and regularly moves as far south as Mexico in the non-breeding season. Its winter quarters are reached in September (Olsen & Larsson 2004). A record from the Saloum Delta, in Senegal, in 1985 (Baillon 1991), is the only other substantiated record for sub-Saharan Africa. A claim from Mauritania on 1 April 1988 (Lamarche 1988) was not accepted by Isenmann *et al.* (2010) as it was a single-observer record unsupported by a description. Ring-billed Gull is an increasing winter visitor to Western Europe, first recorded in the Azores in 1945, Spain in 1951, and the UK in 1973, with up to 100 individuals observed in the latter country per annum, e.g. in 1992 (Olsen & Larsson 2004). It was first reported in Morocco in 1982, with *c.*40 records to date (Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Bergier *et al.* 2011).

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First records of Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* for Mali and its status in Western Africa

Marco Thoma

Premières données de l' Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* pour le Mali et son statut en Afrique occidentale. En janvier 2010 trois Indicateurs de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* ont été observés dans une petite vallée à 30 km au sud-ouest de Bamako, Mali. Ces observations représentent les premières mentions de l'espèce pour le pays. La zone principale de répartition de l'Indicateur de Wahlberg se trouve dans l'est et le sud du continent, mais il n'y a que peu d'observations en Afrique de l'Ouest ; le statut de l'espèce dans cette région est analysé.

Summary. In January 2010 three Wahlberg's Honeybirds *Prodotiscus regulus* were observed in a small valley 30 km south-west of Bamako, Mali. These constitute the first records of the species for the country. Wahlberg's Honeybird occurs widely in eastern and southern Africa, but there are only a few records in western Africa. Its status in West Africa is discussed.

In January and February 2010, I spent a total of 42 hours birding over four days in a small valley *c.*30 km south-west of Bamako, Mali. During my first visit, on 6 January, I observed a small, dull-coloured bird with a conspicuous, strongly undulating, flight recalling a small woodpecker. When perched it had an upright posture recalling a flycatcher. Adding to the confusion, the bird had a fine, pointed bill with a convex culmen, recalling that of, e.g., Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*, which was also present in the valley. During my third visit, on 29 January, I observed two individuals of the same species. All three birds were photographed and identified as Wahlberg's Honeybirds *Prodotiscus regulus*. These observations constitute the first record for Mali and only the fifth record west of Nigeria.

The bird on 6 January (bird A) was observed for *c.*2 minutes from a minimum distance of *c.*10 m, around 10.15 hrs, at 12°27'38"N 08°11'54"W. The first bird on 29 January (bird B) was seen around 08.30 hrs for one minute, at 12°27'15"N 08°11'34"W, whilst the second (bird C), was observed around 09.50 hrs for *c.*2–3 minutes from a distance of 5–10 m, at the same location as bird A, *c.*1 km from bird B. The species was not recorded during my second and fourth visits to the area on 17 January and 7 February. Observations were made using 10×42 binoculars. The following description is based on field notes and photographs.

Description

Size, shape and general impression. Small and passerine-like. Bird A was seen next to Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weavers *Plocepasser superciliosus* and appeared to be smaller. Upright posture when perched, and fine, pointed bill gave a flycatcher-like impression.

Plumage. Head dark grey or grey-brown. Upperparts more or less uniformly dark grey to grey-brown. Median and greater coverts and secondaries with pale fringes. Throat pale, contrasting with the darker head, in birds B and C, but only slightly paler and inconspicuous in bird A. Upper breast greyish (A) or pale brownish-grey (B and C), becoming paler towards the belly. Undertail-coverts white. Tail rather long; the distinctive pattern with all-white outer three rectrices and blackish central rectrices was only seen well in bird C (tail pattern inadequately seen in flight in B and not at all in A).

Bare parts. Bill fine and pointed with a broad base and a convex culmen; black. Birds B and C had slightly swollen, pale-coloured gapes. Legs black.

Ageing. The difference in head coloration between bird A and birds B and C is probably related to age, as juveniles have paler upperparts than adults (Borrow & Demey 2001, Short & Horne 2001). Only B and C can be aged reliably as juveniles, due to the swollen gapes and the all-white outer rectrices (seen well in C).

Table 1. Published records of Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* from western Africa (ordered from west to east). Coordinates shown only if mentioned in the respective publication.

Tableau 1. Données publiées de l'Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus* pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest (d'ouest en est). Les coordonnées sont incluses uniquement si elles sont mentionnées dans la publication en question.

Country / Pays	Locality / Localité	Coordinates / Coordonnées	Date	Number / Nombre	Reference / Référence
Gambia	Kulari Swamp, URD	13°23'N 14°06'W	30.9.2006	1	Roy (2009)
Mali	30 km SW Bamako	12°27'22"N 8°12'W	6.1.2010	1	This paper
	30 km SW Bamako	12°27'22"N 8°12'W	29.1.2010	2 immatures	This paper
Liberia[1]	Mount Nimba		Jan. 1968	1 immature	Colston & Curry-Lindahl (1986)
Côte d'Ivoire	23 km S Ferkessédougou		1.5.1989	1	Demey & Fishpool (1991)
Togo	Kolokopé	07°48'N 01°18'E	30.8.1969	1 adult	de Roo *et al.* (1971)
Nigeria[2]	Enugu	06°20'N 07°29'E	27.6.1954	1 male	Serle (1957)
	Enugu	06°20'N 07°29'E	27.9.1954	1 female	Serle (1957)
Cameroon[3]	Ndu, Banso highlands	06°15'N 10°45'E	22.5.1947[4]	1 male	Serle (1950)
	60 miles N Ngaoundéré			1	Louette (1981)
	Sir	10°33'N 13°41'E	Dec 1970	1	Louette (1981)
Central African Republic	Bozoum[5]		16.5.1914	1	Reichenow (1921)

[1]Gatter (1997) also reports a possible Wahlberg's Honeybird from the Cavalla River east of Zwedru, Liberia, on 12 December 1983.

[2]Serle (1957) states 'Single birds observed on four occasions at Enugu (...)', but gives details for only two observations. A fifth but unconfirmed record from Nigeria concerned a juvenile seen on two consecutive days on the Mabilla Plateau in December 2003 (T. Disley *in Bull. ABC* 11: 177).

[3]Seven records were known from Cameroon by 2005 (R. Demey *in litt.* 2011, based on M. Languy's (2005) unpublished *Birds of Cameroon: Their Status and Distribution*). Only the first three have apparently been published. Cf. map in Borrow & Demey (2008).

[4]Serle (1950) gives no indication in which year of his tour (i.e. from 1947 to 1948) the bird was collected.

[5]Reichenow (1921) and others spell it 'Bosum'.

Behaviour. Bird B was seen close to a mixed-species feeding flock including Senegal Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla*, Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*, Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*, Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*, >15 Scarlet-chested Sunbirds *Chalcomitra senegalensis* and other species, and was perhaps associated with it, although the honeybird left the area shortly after discovery, apparently not with the flock.

Exclusion of similar species. Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis* has olive-green upperparts with contrasting dark-centred tertials and a prominent white eye-ring. Superficially similar species such as Lead-coloured Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus* can be excluded based on the combination of coloration, bill shape and tail pattern (cf. Borrow & Demey 2001).

Habitat

The valley runs from a slightly elevated pass in the north-west *c.*4 km towards Route Nationale 5 in the south-east, where it eventually widens. It is dominated by more or less dense shrub- and woodland, interspersed by more open areas with sandy and rocky soils, and bordered by rocky slopes. A narrow band of dense woodland dominated by rather high broadleaf trees bordered a stream that had already dried out prior to my first visit.

Status of Wahlberg's Honeybird in western Africa

Wahlberg's Honeybird inhabits a variety of wooded habitats and bushland, and occurs over much of eastern and southern Africa (Fry *et al.* 1988, Short & Horne 2002). It is considered sedentary (Short & Horne 2001). Published records from western Africa are scarce, but occur over a remarkably wide range (Table 1). Several observations indicate breeding in this region: a female collected at Enugu, Nigeria, had eggs (Serle 1957), juveniles / immatures were observed on Mount Nimba, Liberia (Colston & Curry-Lindahl 1986), in Mali (this paper) and Nigeria (T. Disley *in Bull. ABC* 11: 177). Overall, however, the species' status in western Africa, especially west of Cameroon, is largely unknown.

Figure 1. Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*, Bird A, *c.*30 km south-west of Bamako, Mali, 6 January 2010 (Marco Thoma)

Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus*, Oiseau A, environ 30 km au sud-ouest de Bamako, Mali, 6 janvier 2010 (Marco Thoma)

Figure 2. Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*, Bird B, *c.*30 km south-west of Bamako, Mali, 29 January 2010 (Marco Thoma)

Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus*, Oiseau B, environ 30 km au sud-ouest de Bamako, Mali, 29 janvier 2010 (Marco Thoma)

Figures 3–4. Wahlberg's Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*, Bird C, *c.*30 km south-west of Bamako, Mali, 29 January 2010 (Marco Thoma)

Indicateur de Wahlberg *Prodotiscus regulus*, Oiseau C, environ 30 km au sud-ouest de Bamako, Mali, 29 janvier 2010 (Marco Thoma)

Discussion

Wahlberg's Honeybird might appear to be a vagrant to western Africa rather than a regular visitor. The few records west of Cameroon do not permit assumptions to be made regarding possible seasonal patterns. It is notable, however, that records are available from both the wet and dry seasons, suggesting year-round presence. My observation of three individuals, including two juveniles, over 23 days, combined with the presence of suitable habitat and host species such as Grey-backed Camaroptera and Scarlet-chested Sunbird in Mali, as well as the widely spread records in western Africa (all in suitable breeding habitat) and high proportion of potential breeding records suggest that the species breeds in the region including in Mali. Reasons for the paucity of records include: (1) the small size and dull colour of Wahlberg's Honeybird, together with its behaviour and habitat choice, (2) small population size and / or very low density, (3) highly fragmented range, and (4) the small number of observers in the region and / or familiar with the species. Proof is needed that West African records of Wahlberg's Honeybird represent residents and not migrants, as Nigeria, Cameroon and Central African Republic may hold a breeding population of unknown size, and possibly are the source of all other West African records.

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First record of Common Coot *Fulica atra* for the Cape Verde Islands

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Première mention de la Foulque macroule *Fulica atra* pour les Îles du Cap Vert. Le 11–12 novembre 2010, une Foulque macroule *Fulica atra* adulte a été observée et photographiée à l'embouchure de Ribeira da Madama, Sal. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour l'archipel. Un deuxième individu a été observé au Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, en février–mars 2011.

Common Coot *Fulica atra* is a widespread European bird also found in North Africa, the Middle East, India, Central and Eastern Asia, Australia, Tasmania, New Guinea and New Zealand, with a total of four subspecies (Taylor 1996, Snow & Perrins 1998). In Macaronesia it has been recorded breeding in the Azores, where it is mainly a winter visitor (Pereira *et al.* 2010). In Madeira, Common Coot was only recently recorded breeding (Fagundes & Romano 2009), whilst in the Canaries it has colonised Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Tenerife and La Gomera since the 1980s, with possible breeding reported on La Palma (Barone & Lorenzo 2007). In the Cape Verde Islands, the only record is of a subfossil coracoid from the Holocene, collected on Sal, in the sediments of a former lagoon (Boessneck & Kinzelbach 1993).

In the late afternoon of 11 November 2010, between 17.00 and 18.00 hrs, we observed an adult Common Coot at a temporary lagoon at the mouth of Ribeira da Madama, Sal. The bird was seen again at the same site during the early morning of 12 November, when it was photographed (Fig. 1). The bird was rather shy, but it fed along the lagoon's borders and in its central part, enabling good views using telescopes and binoculars.

Figure 1. Adult Common Coot *Fulica atra*, Ribeira da Madama lagoon, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, November 2010 (Stefan Cherrug)

Foulque macroule *Fulica atra* adulte, Ribeira da Madama, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, novembre 2010 (Stefan Cherrug)

The lagoon forms during heavy rains in late summer and autumn (Fig. 2), the main wet season in the Cape Verde Islands (Hazevoet 1995). Its borders are covered by halophytic vegetation, including *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and *Suaeda mollis*, which are locally common on Sal and other islands of the archipelago. The distance between the lagoon and the coast is *c.*150 m.

Other aquatic species observed at the lagoon on 11–12 November 2010 were: 12 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, a female Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, a female Common Teal *A. crecca*, three Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, a Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, ten Kentish Plovers *C. alexandrinus*, a male Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, two Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*, a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, a Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (12 November), and three Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*. Additionally, an adult Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was present on 11 November.

This first observation of Common Coot in the Cape Verdes brings to 169 the number of migrant, non-breeding species recorded in the archipelago (*cf.* Hazevoet 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2010, Hazevoet *et al.* 1996). We suppose the species is only a rare visitor to the Cape Verde Islands, which lie outside the African wintering grounds, where Common Coot reaches south to Senegal and nearby countries (Taylor 1996, Snow & Perrins 1998). The current creation of watersheds in the Cape Verde

Figure 2. Partial view of the temporary lagoon of Ribeira da Madama, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, in November 2010. Following the rainy season, this is one of the best sites for waders and other aquatic birds in the archipelago (Rubén Barone)

Vue d'une partie de la lagune temporaire de Ribeira da Madama, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, en novembre 2010. Après la saison des pluies, c'est un des meilleurs sites de l'archipel pour les oiseaux d'eau (Rubén Barone)

Islands could produce more records of this and other Rallidae. Indeed, a breeding population of Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* is now established at the recently constructed Barragem de Poilão on Santiago (Hazevoet 2010), which has become one of the best sites for waterbirds in the archipelago. A second Common Coot was seen there in February–March 2011 (Hazevoet in press).

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First record of Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* for Libya

Jens Hering

Première mention du Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus* pour la Libye. Le 4 janvier 2011, un Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus* adulte a été photographié au sud-est de l'oasis Al Kufra dans le désert libyque. L'oiseau était en train de se nourrir en compagnie de sept Vanneaux huppés *V. vanellus*. Cette observation, la première pour le pays, est à >900 km de la zone où l'espèce niche régulièrement, en Égypte.

On 4 January 2011, during a count of wintering birds in an area of circular agricultural zones south-east of Al Kufra Oasis in the Libyan Desert (24°07'N 23°20'E), an adult Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* was photographed. It was foraging on a dry ploughed stubble field with seven Northern Lapwings *V. vanellus* (Figs. 1–3). The birds were shy and flushed at a distance of at least 200 m.

This is the first record of Spur-winged Lapwing in Libya. The location of this sighting is >900 km from the nearest area where the species breeds regularly, in the Nile Valley in Egypt (Goodman & Meininger 1989, Wiersma 1996). West of the Nile Valley it is also a breeding resident in the eastern Libyan Desert, in Wadi el Natrun, the Faiyum and Wadi el Rayan. Outside the breeding season, there have been sightings at the Dakhla and Kharga oases (Goodman *et al.* 1986, Goodman & Meininger 1989). Further west, to date there have been no records of this species in Tunisia and Algeria (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann *et al.* 2005).

The Northern Lapwings on passage in Kufra are also noteworthy in a Libyan context given that there are no previous records for this region of the country. To date there have been only a few winter records from the Fezzan in the Libyan Sahara (Cowan 1982, 1983, Brehme *et al.* 2002). In addition there have been sightings from the eastern Libyan Desert in Egypt (Goodman *et al.* 1986, Goodman & Meininger 1989).

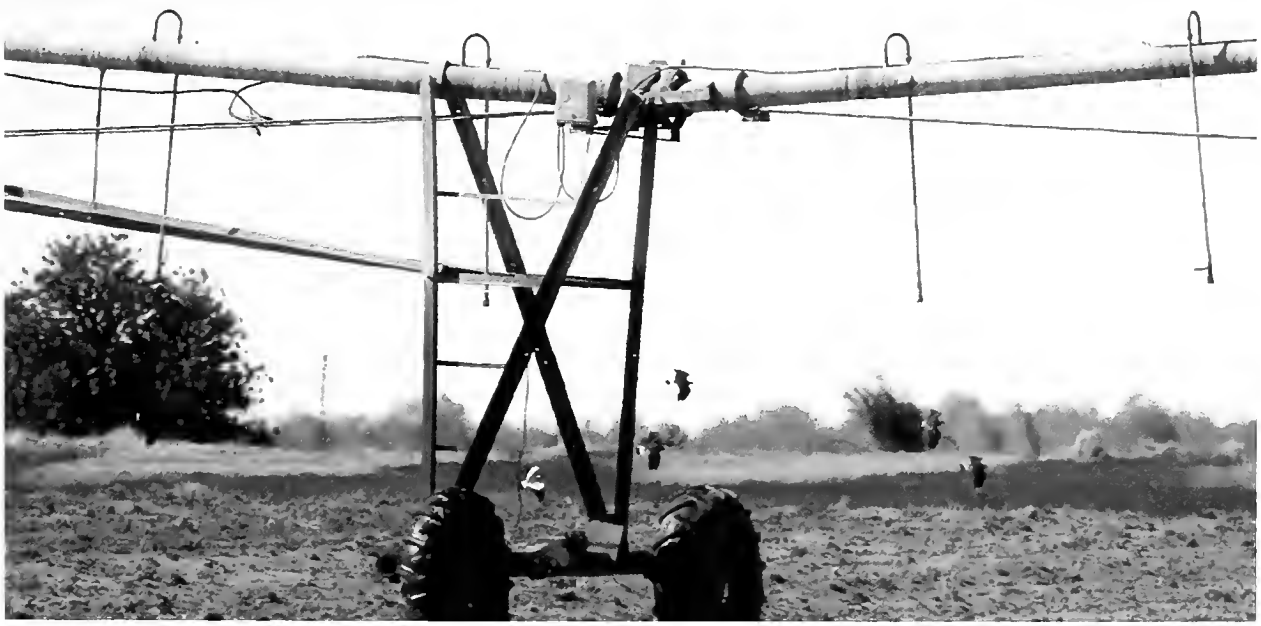

Figure 1. Flock of Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* with Spur-winged Lapwing *V. spinosus*, Al Kufra, Libya, 4 January 2011 (Jens Hering)

Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus* en compagnie de Vanneaux huppés *V. vanellus*, Al Kufra, Libye, 4 janvier 2011 (Jens Hering)

Figures 2–3. Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*, near Al Kufra, Libya, 4 January 2011 (Jens Hering)

Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus*, près d'Al Kufra, Libye, 4 janvier 2011 (Jens Hering)

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First records of Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens* and Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina* for Rwanda

Jason Anderson

Premières mentions pour le Rwanda de l'Érémomèle grisonnante *Eremomela canescens* et du Souimanga améthyste *Chalcomitra amethystina*. En 2010, deux espèces d'oiseaux ont été observées pour la première fois au Rwanda : l'Érémomèle grisonnante *Eremomela canescens* (deux individus au Parc National de l'Akagera, le 8 avril) et le Souimanga améthyste *Chalcomitra amethystina* (un couple près de Kibungo, au sud-est du pays, le 21 août).

Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens*

On 8 April 2010, at *c.*06.30 hrs, in Akagera National Park (01°50'56.90"S 30°43'16.97"E) at 1,650 m, in open, mixed *Acacia–Combretum–Commiphora* woodland on a hillside, I spotted two brightly plumaged birds foraging in a small bush, which I observed for *c.*1 minute from 5 m. Their overall size and shape were typical of an *Eremomela*, the birds being similar in size to Green-capped Eremomela *E. scotops*. Both appeared identical in having a green mantle and wings, contrasting with a grey nape and crown, which graded into a blackish mask through the eye. The throat was all white, and the breast and belly yellow. The legs were orange and the bill appeared dark. The birds soon disappeared into the centre of the bush and must have left unnoticed, as I did not see them again, despite extensive searching. They seemed familiar, but it was only upon consulting my field guide (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2004) that I identified them as Green-backed Eremomela *E. canescens*, a species which I had previously seen in Eritrea.

There are no obvious confusion species for the distinctive Green-backed Eremomela in East Africa. Having regularly visited this part of Akagera National Park during previous months, I was very familiar with both Green-capped Eremomela and Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*, and I had observed both on several occasions during the same trip to the park. Given good views, both of these species are easily separated from *E. canescens*: *E. scotops citriniceps* in Rwanda has a bright yellow face and breast, with only narrow black lores, no grey on the crown or green on the mantle, and a white, not yellow belly, whilst *E. icteropygialis* has grey wings and mantle, a black loral stripe and grey legs. The only other small passerine with similar coloration to Green-backed Eremomela in Akagera is the very common Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*. This species, with which I am also familiar, has yellow restricted to the breast, no black face mask and a longer tail.

Green-backed Eremomela favours mixed *Acacia–Combretum* woodland (Urban *et al.* 1997). The nearest known populations of the species are found in similar habitat in central Uganda, on the Rift Valley escarpment east of Lake Albert, *c.*400 km further north, and in the hills between Fort Portal and Semliki, *c.*300 km north-west of my sighting (Carswell *et al.* 2005). Urban *et al.* (1997) do not mention any seasonal movements for this species, making it possible that an isolated population is resident in eastern Rwanda.

Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*

On 21 August 2010 at *c.*15.20 hrs, within a small eucalypt and pine plantation *c.*4 km east of Kibungo (02°09'19.10"S 30°34'43.30"E) at 1,530 m, I observed a pair of sunbirds moving through open woodland, feeding mainly on *Leonotis* flowers in the undergrowth. The male was instantly recognisable as an Amethyst Sunbird, a species I have also observed in Tanzania, it being relatively large, very dark (at times appearing all black) but in good light showing three areas of iridescent colour, which in combination are diagnostic of the species (a purple-pink throat patch, extending from the chin to the upper breast, a green cap, and a small purple-pink 'shoulder' patch). The female had brown upperparts and brown streaks over the pale underparts, although I did not

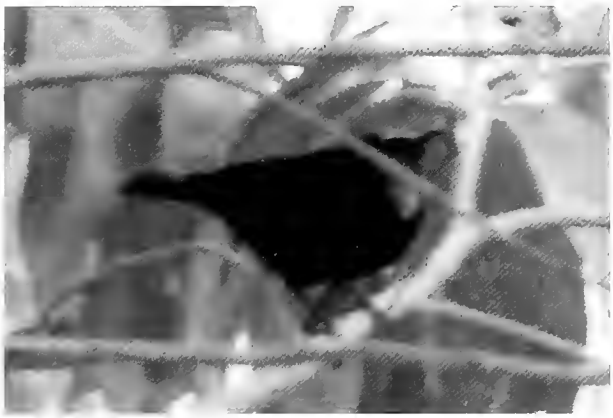

Figure 1. Male Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*, near Kibungo, Rwanda, 21 August 2010 (Jason Anderson)

Souimanga améthyste *Chalcomitra amethystina*, mâle, près de Kibungo, Rwanda, 21 août 2010 (Jason Anderson)

observe it closely, focusing my attention on the male. Both birds were rather flighty and did not permit close approach, although I managed to take several photographs of the male to confirm the identification (Fig. 1). There are no previous records of this species in Rwanda (Schouteden 1966, Dowsett 1993, Cheke *et al.* 2001).

Amethyst Sunbird is common over most of Tanzania, although it is presumed to be absent from the north-west, with the nearest record shown in the Tanzanian Bird Atlas (Baker & Baker in prep.) being from 02°45'S 31°45'E, *c.*150 km south-east of Kibungo. Although its movements are poorly understood, the species is considered to be a partial migrant across much of its East and southern African range (Britton 1980, Cheke *et al.* 2001) which may be 'due to the availability of food plants, notably flowering *Loranthus*' (Baker & Baker in prep.). Thus, the appearance of a pair in Rwanda is perhaps unsurprising, and might reflect either seasonal migration or range expansion.

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First records of Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica* and Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* for Seychelles

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Première mention du Pétrel hérault *Pterodroma heraldica* et du Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii* pour les Seychelles. Un Pétrel hérault *Pterodroma heraldica* était présent à Cousin le 10–11 juin 2009 et un Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii* le 15 juin 2009. Ces mentions ont été acceptées par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois comme les premières pour le pays.

Herald Petrel

On 10 June 2009 at 15.12 hrs DJRA noticed a medium-sized *Pterodroma* petrel amongst Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus* circling the hill at Cousin Island Nature Reserve, Seychelles. Aware of the complexity of identifying members of this genus to species level, he concentrated on obtaining as many and as good photographs of the bird as possible (Fig. 1). The bird made several passes of the hilltop before disappearing at 15.32 hrs. On returning to the research accommodation DJRA discovered that M. Hammers had also noted the *Pterodroma* from the forest below but had been unable to acquire reasonable views. An after-dark search failed to find the bird in question or any other petrels.

Next day DJRA returned to the hilltop at 16.30 hrs and within five minutes saw the bird briefly, flying past, but there was no further sign of it until 17.45 hrs, when an unknown call was heard twice overhead which proved to be given by the petrel; a *meh-meh-meh-meh-meh-meh-meh-meh-meh-meh*. Thirty minutes later, the call was heard again but from below the hill. Subsequently, DJRA discovered the bird perched on a rock in a semi-open area with ferns and boulders, and took a couple of photographs and a short video (Fig. 2). An attempt was made to catch the bird but it flew off.

DJRA returned after dark and found the bird in the same location, but below the same rock, and on this occasion it was captured, photographed and ringed, before being released where it had been found (Fig. 3). Presumably the same petrel was seen several days later in flight. The photographs and description were submitted to the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC).

Description

A medium-sized *Pterodroma* petrel. Underparts: pale whitish-grey belly, pale grey neck, white throat, face and lores, dark underwings except for the white skua-like flashes in the primaries and a pale leading edge to the inner wing.

Figure 1. Herald Petrel / Pétrel hérault *Pterodroma heraldica*, Cousin, Seychelles, 10 June 2009 (David J. R. Andrews)

Figure 2. Herald Petrel / Pétrel hérault *Pterodroma heraldica*, Cousin, Seychelles, 11 June 2009 (David J. R. Andrews)

Figure 3. Herald Petrel / Pétrel hérault *Pterodroma heraldica*, Cousin, Seychelles, 11 June 2009 (David J. R. Andrews)

Dark undertail-coverts and rectrices. Upperparts medium grey, the wings slightly darker than the body, neck and head. Bare parts: heavy black bill, legs pale pink with partially black feet, and eyes dark. Measurements: tarsus 34 mm, folded wing 286 mm, uppertail 115 mm, undertail 123 mm, head and bill 70.1 mm. Mass: 300 g.

Analysis by SBRC

All previous records of *Pterodroma* petrels accepted by SBRC referred to Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta* seen on Cousin Island from August 2003 (Eikenaar & Skerrett 2006), including a breeding record in November 2009 (the most recent). Kermadec Petrel is very similar to the present species but can be eliminated using several features, notably: black primary shafts (white in Kermadec); extensive white feathering on the secondaries and coverts of the underwing forms a long, thin triangle from the base of primaries to the rear of the wing (underwing mainly black in Kermadec, white being confined to the basal two-thirds of the inner webs of the primaries); long wedge-shaped tail (rounded in Kermadec); and mass, tarsus and folded wing within range for Herald (low for Kermadec), and tail rather long for Herald, but much too long for Kermadec.

Trindade Petrel *P. arminjoniana* and Herald Petrel *P. heraldica* are very similar and the latter has often been considered as a Pacific race of *P. arminjoniana*, which is otherwise an Atlantic taxon. Imber (1985) and Sibley & Monroe (1990) elevated both to species rank, but subsequent authors did not generally follow this, including notably Sibley & Monroe (1993). Thereafter, Brooke & Rowe (1996) argued for separate treatment on the basis of morphological and genetic differences. BirdLife International (2011) recognise separate species following Brooke (2004), who separated them on the basis of size (Murphy & Pennoyer 1952, Brooke & Rowe 1996) and different intestinal structure (Imber 1985). After examining specimens at the Natural History Museum, Tring, the SBRC accepted the record as a Herald Petrel on the basis of several features, most notably that even the darkest Herald has pale lores, whereas even the palest Trindade has dark lores.

Status and distribution

Herald Petrel breeds in the tropical Pacific from Raine Island, Australia, to Easter Island, in the western Indian Ocean on Round Island, Mauritius, and in the South Atlantic on Trindade and Martim Vaz, Brazil (Carboneras 1992). This is the first accepted record for Seychelles.

Bulwer's Petrel

On 15 June 2009, after dark, DJRA again climbed the hill on Cousin Island in search of the Herald Petrel he had found a few days earlier. He made his way to the hilltop, checking as many of the thousands of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and fewer Audubon's Shearwaters *Puffinus lherminieri* as possible. At the bare granite summit, a smaller petrel was discovered sat in the open, partially wedged into a crease in the rock. It appeared

Figure 4. Bulwer's Petrel / Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii*, Cousin, Seychelles, 15 June 2009 (David J. R. Andrews)

Figure 5–6. Bulwer's Petrel / Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii*, Cousin, Seychelles, 15 June 2009 (David J. R. Andrews)

similar in size to Audubon's Shearwater. Picking the bird up, it appeared to be an all-dark petrel. DJRA then returned to the research house where it was measured, photographed and ringed, before being released at the spot where it was found (Figs. 4–6).

From what little literature was available at the time, the bird was tentatively identified as a Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* based on its wedge-shaped tail, slightly paler secondary-coverts and what appeared to be heavier head and bill than Bulwer's Petrel *B. bulwerii*. The photographs and description were submitted to the SBRC, whose analysis revealed the bird to be a Bulwer's Petrel, a first record for the Seychelles.

Description

A medium-sized long-winged petrel, with a wedge-shaped tail. Underparts: all dark, with a small pale chin patch. Upperparts: all dark, with a slightly paler secondary-covert bar. Bare parts: deep-based black bill, legs dark blackish pink with black webs, and eyes dark. Measurements: tarsus 27.9 mm, wing-chord 216 mm, uppertail 111 mm, head and bill 50.4 mm, gape 13.5 mm. Mass: 124 g.

Analysis by SBRC

Records of all-dark petrels previously accepted by SBRC have referred to Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* (11 Seychelles records prior to 1 January 2011), Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (three records) and Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *O. matsudairae* (one record). Tail shape eliminated Swinhoe's and Matsudaira's Storm-petrels, and the all-dark Wedge-tailed Shearwater. Herald Petrel and Kermadec Petrels are markedly larger. Mascarene Petrel *Pseudobulweria aterrima*, which breeds only on Réunion, is a potential vagrant to Seychelles, but it has a rounded or square-ended tail. Jouanin's Petrel is endemic to the north-west Indian Ocean whilst Bulwer's Petrel breeds in tropical and subtropical Atlantic and Pacific waters, dispersing west into the Indian Ocean as far as the Maldives in December–early March (Carboneras 1992). Fiji Petrel *P. macgillivrayi* is very similar to Bulwer's Petrel, albeit a highly improbable vagrant, it being Critically Endangered, and is found only around Gau, in Fiji (Shirihai *et al.* 2009). It lacks a pale covert bar on the upperwing, unlike Bulwer's Petrel.

Bulwer's Petrel is markedly smaller than Jouanin's Petrel, has a smaller, less stout bill, usually shows a more contrasting pale upperwing-covert bar and has a 'smoothly' wedge-shaped tail (Jouanin's Petrel has projecting central tail feathers, thus possessing a noticeable 'step' in the profile of the wedge-shaped tail). The Cousin bird showed an almost indiscernible covert bar (Fig. 4), but its bill shape was commensurate

with Bulwer's Petrel (Fig. 5), whilst there was no evident 'step' to the wedge-shaped tail (Fig. 6). Measurements suggested that it was too small for Jouanin's Petrel, whereas the tail measurement lies in the middle of the range for Bulwer's Petrel, and tarsus, wing length and mass are all too small for Jouanin's Petrel, but fit Bulwer's Petrel (Cramp 1977, Brooke 2004, Lužardo *et al.* 2008).

Status and distribution

Bulwer's Petrel breeds in the Atlantic from the Azores to the Cape Verdes, and in the Pacific from east China and the Bonin Islands to Hawaii, Phoenix and the Marquesas. It is largely absent from its breeding grounds between October and March, and during this period Pacific breeders probably penetrate the Indian Ocean as far west as the Maldives (Carboneras 1992). This is the first accepted record for Seychelles.

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Photospot:
Juvenile Scaly Ground-roller *Geobiastes squamiger*

Bruno Raveloson[a] *and Roger Safford*[b]

Le juvénile du Brachyptérolle écaillé *Geobiastes squamiger*. Les oiseaux endémiques les plus recherchés par les ornithos visitant Madagascar comprennent les cinq espèces de brachyptérolles. Le plumage des jeunes demeure mal connu. Nous décrivons le juvénile du Brachyptérolle écaillé *Geobiastes squamiger* et en présentons deux photos.

The ground-rollers are among every birding visitor's favourites in Madagascar. The five species comprise the family Brachypteraciidae, recently reaffirmed, on DNA evidence, as a valid endemic family in the order Coraciiformes, which also include their closest relatives, the 'true' rollers Coraciidae (Kirchman *et al.* 2001). Formerly of near-mythical status, as they were thought to be very hard to see, visitors now regularly find all five species in relatively short visits; indeed, the four rainforest ground-rollers can be found in a single day in the Périnet-Mantadia area near Antananarivo.

However, their juvenile plumages remain very poorly known. A few juvenile specimens have been described (Sharpe 1892, Lavauden 1932, Benson *et al.* 1976), but only a single Scaly Ground-roller *Geobiastes squamiger*: a specimen at the 'ORSTOM museum' (now the Académie Malgache) at Tsimbazaza, Antananarivo, Madagascar, examined and briefly described by C. W. Benson (Benson *et al.* 1976). This specimen has not been mentioned in the literature since. A photograph of a chick at its nest entrance, a few days prior to fledging, has been published (Rakotoarisoa & Be 2004), but few plumage details are discernible. (Incidentally, in case the genus name *Geobiastes* is unfamiliar, this monotypic genus was created for it by its original describer, and only later was the bird removed to the same genus as Short-legged Ground-roller *Brachypteracias leptosomus*. Recent genetic analysis has restored *Geobiastes* (Kirchman *et al.* 2001), and the correct spelling of the species name, if the bird is placed in this genus, is *squamiger*: Peterson 2011).

In recent years, the national conservation NGO, Asity Madagascar, has been implementing a programme of surveys, monitoring and conservation at Tsitongambarika Forest, in the far south-east of Madagascar (Pilgrim *et al.* 2011; see p. 18). On 19 October 2010, in lowland rainforest within a valley near Beseva village (24°43'03"S 46°56'05"E, at *c.*525 m above sea level), one of us (BR) encountered a pair of Scaly Ground-rollers with a single young, which he managed to photograph (Figs. 1–2).

Figures 1–2. Juvenile Scaly Ground-roller / Brachyptérolle écaillé *Geobiastes squamiger*, Tsitongambarika Forest, Madagascar, October 2010 (Bruno Raveloson)

Figures 3–4. Adult Scaly Ground-roller / Brachyptérolle écaillé *Geobiastes squamiger*, Masoala, Madagascar, October 2008 (Pete Morris)

It differs from the adult (shown here for comparison, Figs. 3–4) in being dull rufous over the crown, nape, breast and flanks, where the adult is at its scaliest; the chin and centre of abdomen are dingy white. The black stripes on the neck-sides are present as on the adult. The patterns of the flight and tail feathers are similar to those of the adults, but the wing-covert markings are much less distinct, and the bird has evidently fledged well before the tail is fully grown. In most respects, it resembles the short description of the specimen (Benson *et al.* 1976); however, a description hardly does justice to such an intricately patterned bird, and we hope that the photographs presented here are more informative.

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Photospot:
Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus*

David Fisher[a] *and Ron Demey*[b]

Premières photos du Râle à pieds rouges *Himantornis haematopus* à l'état sauvage. Le Râle à pieds rouges *Himantornis haematopus*, espèce endémique à la forêt équatoriale africaine, est si différent des autres râles qu'il a été placé dans sa propre sous-famille monotypique Himantornithinae. Bien qu'il ne soit pas rare dans son habitat préféré et que son chant en duo sonore soit régulièrement entendu pendant la nuit, il est par ailleurs très discret et difficile à observer. Les photos présentées ici sont les premières à être publiées de ce râle à l'état sauvage. Elles montrent que le bec est bleuâtre avec une base jaune-vert et que les lores sont gris-bleu; les colours de ces parties sont souvent mal illustrées.

Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus* is endemic to the African rainforest, ranging from Guinea to western Uganda. This large, monotypic species is so distinct from other rails that it has been placed in its own subfamily, the Himantornithinae, based primarily on skeletal differences: the bird's bone structure is apparently closer to the South American trumpeters Psophiidae (Keith 1986, Taylor & van Perlo 1998). Additionally, the downy chick is not blackish, as in most other rails, but is uniquely patterned blackish brown and creamy buff.

Although Nkulengu Rail is frequent to locally common in its favoured habitat, it is a very skulking and notoriously hard-to-observe species. It would therefore mostly remain unnoticed, were it not for its far-carrying, sonorous and rhythmic antiphonal duet, which is uttered mainly at dusk and during the night. 'Nkulengu' is the name given by the Bulu people from southern Cameroon and is derived from these characteristic vocalisations (Bannerman 1931). The sound reminded Bates (1930) of that of a distant pump. According to the Medje people, in what is now Congo-Kinshasa, the bird is saying '*jú-urúkwandra, jú-urúkwandra ...*',

Figures 1–2. Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus*, Kakum National Park, Ghana, 9 May 2011 (David Fisher). Note the silvery-blue bill with a lime-green base and the greyish-blue lores.

Râle à pieds rouges *Himantornis haematopus*, Parc National de Kakum, Ghana, 9 mai 2011 (David Fisher). Noter le bec bleuâtre à la base jaune-vert et les lores gris-bleu.

meaning literally 'go away from my place' (Chapin 1939). This advice is reportedly addressed to the Leopard *Panthera pardus*, or to other birds, such as guineafowl (Numididae spp.). At Lukolela, on the Congo River, local villagers told Chapin that the bird laments '*nakatele akulu, nakakwela na nsusu*', which means 'my feet became red, I married a chicken'. The story runs that the rail once came out of the forest and mated with a village chicken; the sun turned his feet red and the chicken cast him off. Back in the forest, his feet remained red, hence his repeated complaint (Chapin 1939).

Although probably most active in the morning and the evening, this rail also forages in the daytime, as a camera-trap photograph taken in the Putu range, eastern Liberia, in February 2011, proves (E. Greengrass *in litt.* 2011). The photographs presented here are the first of the species taken in the wild (apart from the aforementioned camera-trap image) and were digiscoped about 30 minutes after dark on 9 May 2011 in Kakum National Park, Ghana (Figs. 1–2). The bird was perched on a large bare branch *c.*7 m up. Its presence was given away by its loud call that was uttered twice *c.*5 minutes before we located the bird.

The photographs reveal that the colour of the soft parts is frequently inaccurately depicted in published illustrations. Although the long, rather stout legs are normally correctly illustrated as being bright red, the bill is often depicted as either uniformly grey or black, whereas it is actually silvery blue with a lime-green base. The lores are also usually painted as being grey or black, whereas they are greyish blue in life. Presumably these discrepancies are due to the illustrations being based on specimens in which the colours of the soft parts have faded.

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A productive birding transect from highland Zimbabwe to coastal Mozambique

Chris Lotz

Un transect productif depuis les montagnes du Zimbabwe jusqu'à la côte du Mozambique. Un voyage ornithologique de deux semaines depuis Harare, au milieu du plateau du Zimbabwe, jusqu'à la ville côtière de Beira, au Mozambique, traverse une grande variété d'habitats et peut générer une liste impressionnante d'espèces à distribution restreinte. Le visiteur avisé a aussi de bonnes chances d'observer des espèces plus répandues mais généralement difficiles à voir. À Harare on peut trouver quelques oiseaux rares des zones humides, et en voyageant vers l'est, en direction du Mozambique, on a accès à une variété d'espèces du miombo. Les montagnes de l'est, à cheval sur la frontière du Zimbabwe avec le Mozambique, sont le meilleur ou le seul site pour plusieurs espèces de la forêt afromontagnarde. Finalement, la vaste plaine côtière mozambicaine, y compris Gorongosa et le delta du Zambèze, héberge nombre d'autres espèces locales. L'article indique où trouver les espèces intéressantes le long de ce transect et fournit des informations concernant la meilleure période de visite et les aspects logistiques.

Summary. A two-week journey from Harare, in the centre of Zimbabwe's high plateau, to the coastal city of Beira in Mozambique traverses a wide range of habitats and generates a respectable list of range-restricted birds, along with above-average chances of more widespread but generally elusive birds. Harare itself attracts some rare wetland birds, and travelling eastwards towards Mozambique then affords easy access to a suite of miombo woodland birds. The Eastern Highlands, straddling the Zimbabwe/Mozambique border, is the best or only site for several Afromontane forest birds. Finally, the vast Mozambican coastal plain, including areas such as Gorongosa and the Zambezi Delta, hosts numerous other localised birds. This article describes where to find the 'specials' of this rich transect, and provides advice on timing and logistics.

Mozambique is poorly known as a birding destination except amongst southern African birders, who have been visiting the country in substantial numbers for the almost two decades since the civil war ended. These visitors are in search of range-restricted birds as well as more widespread species relatively easy to locate in Mozambique such as **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis*. By birding the mountains straddling the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe, even relatively 'old hands' will almost inevitably encounter new birds, such as

Figure 1. From Harare to Beira: birding a diverse transect from the Mashonaland Plateau to the coastal plain.

De Harare à Beira : un transect varié du Plateau du Mashonaland à la plaine côtière.

Figure 2. African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* typically starts breeding in Mozambique in late November–early December (Hugh Chittenden)

Au Mozambique, la Brève de l'Angola *Pitta angolensis* commence normalement à nicher fin novembre–début décembre (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 3. (left) Swynnerton's Robin *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* is quite easy to see in Zimbabwe, and also occurs in small areas of Mozambique (the Gorongosa and Mabu massifs) and Tanzania (Niall Perrins)

Le Rougegorge de Swynnerton *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* est relativement facile à observer au Zimbabwe et se trouve aussi localement au Mozambique (les massifs de Gorongosa et de Mabu) et en Tanzanie (Niall Perrins)

Figure 4. (right) Boulder Chat *Pinarornis plumosus* is a Zimbabwean near-endemic (Hugh Chittenden)

Le Rochassier des éboulis *Pinarornis plumosus* est quasi endémique au Zimbabwe (Hugh Chittenden)

Swynnerton's Robin *Swynnertonia swynnertoni*, **Chirinda Apalis** *Apalis chirindensis* and **Roberts's** (Briar) **Warbler** *Oreophilais robertsi*, all of which are most easily seen in Zimbabwe. **Boulder Chat** *Pinarornis plumosus* is then within easy reach slightly further west towards Harare. Zimbabwe and Mozambique also possess large tracts of *Brachystegia* (miombo) woodland inhabited by a host of south-central African endemics found neither in South nor East Africa.

This article describes a birding journey (Fig. 1) originating in Harare in the middle of the Mashonaland Plateau of central Zimbabwe, through some fine miombo woodland to the forested Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe that continue across the border into Mozambique, and then finally to the steaming coastal plains which occupy the bulk of Mozambique's land surface. The journey across the coastal plain is interrupted by Mount Gorongosa (inhabited by **Green-headed Oriole** *Oriolus chlorocephalus* and many other specialities), before we continue to the Zambezi Delta and eventually to Beira on Mozambique's central coast.

This route, which is easily followed on a 10–14-day trip, provides access to some of Zimbabwe and Mozambique's finest birding. Birders who have already visited Tanzania / Malaŵi and South Africa, but who are looking for birds absent from or tough to locate in those countries (and elsewhere) will find this transect productive. Further south in Mozambique, there are quite a number of birds that are endemic to southern Mozambique and extreme north-eastern South Africa, but since these are fairly easy to find in South Africa, I ignore them here. Further north, many of the species can also be found quite easily in Tanzania and Malaŵi, except **Namuli Apalis** *Apalis lynesi*, which requires what can be described as a small expedition. In this article, I concentrate on a relatively poorly birded but highly productive route that currently only southern African birders know well. I will focus almost solely on 'specials' tough to find elsewhere.

I will discuss the following sites, during the descent from the high-altitude city of Harare to the hot and humid coast: (1) Harare's wetlands—**Streaky-breasted Flufftail** *Sarothrura boehmi*

Figure 5. Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*—Rio Savane is a good place to find this unpredictable and often elusive species (Per Holmen)

L'Anomalospize parasite *Anomalospiza imberbis* – Rio Savane est un bon site pour cette espèce imprévisible et très discrète (Per Holmen)

Figure 6. Gurney's Sugarbird *Promerops gurneyi*—a representative of a family endemic to southern Africa (Hugh Chittenden)

Le Promérops de Gurney *Promerops gurneyi* – un représentant d'une famille endémique à l'Afrique australe (Hugh Chittenden)

and other rare birds within the city's limits; (2) Miombo woodland between Harare and the Eastern Highlands with their associated endemics and **Boulder Chat**; (3) the Eastern Highlands and Lowlands with two endemics and numerous other species that are most easily located here; (4) Mount Gorongosa, a massif rising from the coastal plain; (5) the Zambezi River Delta for forest birds, several of them range-restricted; and (6) the Rio Savane wetlands.

Harare

Monavale Vlei, Marlborough Vlei and some other, lesser known wetlands within the suburbs of Harare are excellent sites for finding several rare birds, including **Streaky-breasted Flufftail** and **Striped Crake** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*. Another elusive bird still sometimes found here is **Blue Quail** *Coturnix adansonii*, although it is more frequently seen in Mozambique, for example at Rio Savane at the opposite end of the transect described here. **Black-rumped Buttonquail** *Turnix nanus* also occurs here but is perhaps more easily encountered on the Mozambican coastal plain. These four species, and other commoner rallids, are usually found in wet years between January and March—see comments at the end of this article on timing your trip. The latter two species also can be seen in Mozambique during the dry season. In addition, these wetlands are excellent areas in which to encounter **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis*, **Rosy-throated Longclaw** *Macronyx ameliae*, **Locust Finch** *Paludipasser locustella*, **Cuckoo Finch** (Parasitic Weaver) *Anomalospiza imberbis* and others—quite a number of these are frequently also seen at the Rio Savane near Beira in Mozambique.

Miombo woodlands

Harare itself has excellent miombo birding but the woodlands en route to the Eastern Highlands, especially around Gosho Park, have more species and one can find the bulk of Zimbabwe's miombo birds by spending a day between Harare and the Eastern Highlands. There are also superb (perhaps even better) miombo sites north of Harare, which can be visited if one has two nights in Harare and

Figure 7. (left) Zimbabwe is one of the prime countries to look for three flufftails: Buff-spotted *Sarothrura elegans* (Hugh Chittenden), Striped *S. affinis* and Streaky-breasted *S. boehmi*.

Le Zimbabwe est un des meilleurs pays pour rechercher trois petits râles du genre *Sarothrura* : le Râle ponctué *Sarothrura elegans* (Hugh Chittenden), le Râle affin *S. affinis* et le Râle de Böhm *S. boehmi*.

Figure 8. (right) Lesser Seedcracker *Pyrenestes minor*, which is largely restricted to Mozambique and Malaŵi, can be tough to find within its limited range (Niall Perrins)

Le Petit Pyréneste *Pyrenestes minor*, qui est principalement confiné au Mozambique et au Malawi, peut être difficile à trouver dans son aire de distribution restreinte (Niall Perrins)

if too little rain has fallen to justify spending time at the seasonal wetlands within the city itself.

Restricted-range species of the Zambezian biome that are quite easy to see midway between Harare and the border with Mozambique (Appendix 5 in Fishpool & Evans 2001) include **Boulder Chat**, **Miombo Rock Thrush** *Monticola angolensis*, **Cinnamon-breasted Tit** *Parus* (*rufiventris*) *pallidiventris*, **Miombo Tit** *P. griseiventris*, **Miombo Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris manoensis* and **Black-eared Seedeater** *Serinus* (*Crithagra*) *mennelli*. **Spotted Creeper** *Salpornis spilonotus* is quite common, often in mixed flocks that contain good numbers of miombo specialists. Many other birds can also be found here, including **Shelley's Francolin** *Francolinus* (=*Scleroptila*) *shelleyi*, **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*, **Woodland Pipit** *Anthus nyassae*, **White-breasted Cuckooshrike** *Coracina pectoralis*, **Green-capped Eremomela** *Eremomela scotops*, **Southern Hyliota** *Hyliota australis*, **Lazy** (Rock-loving) **Cisticola** *Cisticola aberrans*, **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*, **Western Violet-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes longuemarei* and **Cabanis's Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi*.

Eastern Highlands and Lowlands of Zimbabwe (continuing into Mozambique)

It takes half a day to reach the Eastern Highlands from Harare, and a full day to find most of the miombo endemics en route. The Eastern Highlands reach an altitude of 2,593 m (Cohen *et al.* 2006) and contain healthy tracts of Afromontane forest as well as pristine grassland protected within Nyanga National Park. These latter are excellent for the Vulnerable **Blue Swallow** *Hirundo atrocaerulea* and the elusive **Striped Flufftail** *Sarothrura affinis*. The forests of 'The Vumba' and other sites within the Eastern Highlands are arguably the easiest place to find **Swynnerton's Robin**. This and the highly localised Zimbabwe / Mozambique forest endemics, **Chirinda Apalis** and **Roberts's** (Briar) **Warbler**, are usually found here with ease and this is probably the best site in the world for the three last-mentioned species. The highly range-restricted **Stripe-cheeked Greenbul** *Andropadus milanjensis* is very common here. Less localised but nevertheless biome-restricted Afrotropical highlands species easily found in the Eastern Highlands include **Grey Cuckooshrike** *Coracina caesia*, **Orange Ground Thrush** *Zoothera gurneyi* (quite easy to see here), **Barratt's Warbler** *Bradypterus barratti*, **Gurney's Sugarbird** *Promerops gurneyi*, **Olive**

Clockwise from above

Figure 9. Zambezi (Green) Indigobird *Vidua codringtoni* sings conspicuously from atop large dead trees during January to March in the eastern lowlands of Zimbabwe and at a few sites on the Mozambican coastal plain; it often occurs alongside a couple of other indigobird species (Niall Perrins)

Le Combassou vert *Vidua codringtoni* chante au sommet de grands arbres morts de janvier à mars dans les basses terres à l'est du Zimbabwe et sur quelques sites dans la plaine côtière mozambicaine ; il se trouve souvent en compagnie d'autres espèces de combassous (Niall Perrins)

Figure 10. Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti* is usually only seen when performing its display flight during which it calls constantly (Per Holmen)

Le Coucou d'Audebert *Pachycoccyx audeberti* est souvent vu lors de sa parade en vol pendant laquelle il chante constamment (Per Holmen)

Figure 11. Reichenow's Woodpecker *Campethera bennetti scriptoricauda* is a south-central African subspecies that is relatively easy to find in Mozambique (Niall Perrins)

Le Pic de Reichenow *Campethera bennetti scriptoricauda* est une race endémique de l'Afrique australe centrale que l'on peut observer relativement facilement au Mozambique (Niall Perrins)

Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus olivaceus* and **Red-faced Crimsonwing** *Cryptospiza reichenovii*. These forests are extremely rich, being full of more widespread birds—one worthy of special mention is **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura elegans* because this is a relatively easy place (due to the habitat) to actually see, not just hear, this extremely skulking bird.

Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* can be seen anywhere in the area, but it is best located at a breeding colony accessed via the Honde Valley in the nearby Eastern Lowlands. The latter region is also excellent for **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* and **Lesser Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes minor* (one of the toughest 'specials' of this birding route) along with more widespread birds such as **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii*, **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill** *Bycanistes brevis*, **Short-winged Cisticola** *Cisticola brachypterus*, **Black-fronted**

Counterclockwise from left

Figure 12. Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythropterus* is common around the base of Mount Gorongosa (Hugh Chittenden)

La Prinia à ailes rousses *Heliolais erythropterus* est commune à la base du Mont Gorongosa (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 13. Böhm's Bee-eater *Merops boehmi* has been observed just north of the Zambezi River in Mozambique (Hugh Chittenden)

Le Guêpier de Böhm *Merops boehmi* a été vu juste au nord du Zambèze au Mozambique (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 14. East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi* is a common but skulking inhabitant of the Zambezi Delta forests (Hugh Chittenden)

Le Rougegorge de Gunning *Sheppardia gunningi* est une espèce commune mais difficile à observer des forêts du delta du Zambèze (Hugh Chittenden)

Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus nigrifrons*, **Marsh** (Anchieta's) **Tchagra** *Tchagra minutus anchietae*, **Red-throated** (Peter's) **Twinspot** *Hypargos niveoguttatus*, and many others. Because the Eastern Lowlands are contiguous with the coastal plain of central Mozambique, these birds are also often sought there. One of the most special birds now well 'staked-out' in the Eastern Lowlands (but in the Burma Valley below 'The Vumba', not in the Honde Valley) and at a few sites in central Mozambique is **Zambezi** (Green) **Indigobird** *Vidua codringtoni*. Frustratingly, this bird attains full breeding plumage only in the wet season (mainly January to March) when it is reasonably easy to find (especially if their display perches are known) as well as to identify.

Figure 15. (left) White-chested Alethe *Alethe fuelleborni*, a range-restricted 'skulker', is not uncommon in the Zambezi Delta area (Hugh Chittenden)

L'Alèthe à poitrine blanche *Alethe fuelleborni* est une espèce à distribution restreinte assez commune dans la zone du delta du Zambèze (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 16. (right) Livingstone's Flycatcher *Erythrocercus livingstonei* is found in the Zambezi Valley and its tributaries, as well as in coastal forests of Mozambique and Tanzania (Niall Perrins)

L'Erythrocerque de Livingstone *Erythrocercus livingstonei* se trouve dans la vallée du Zambèze et ses affluents ainsi que dans les forêts côtières du Mozambique et de la Tanzanie (Niall Perrins)

Into Mozambique—across the flats to Mount Gorongosa

The Eastern Highlands straddle the international boundary between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. All of the Eastern Highlands 'specials' mentioned above can also be found just across the border in Mozambique, for example at the beautiful Mount Tsetserra, but they are more easily found in Zimbabwe. However, after travelling further east into Mozambique, the isolated massif of Mount Gorongosa rises abruptly above the coastal plain to 1,863 m (www.gorongosa.net). This is an excellent site for **Green-headed Oriole**. There are a few isolated populations of this unusual oriole between here and Tanzania, but this mountain is the only place to find the endemic subspecies *O. c. speculifer*. **Pallid Honeyguide** is usually heard, but not always easily seen, in the same forest that the oriole inhabits. Isolated populations of **Swynnerton's Robin** and **Chirinda Apalis** also occur here. The heathland atop the massif supports an endemic subspecies of **Greater Double-collared Sunbird** *Nectarinia afra amicorum*.

The forests supporting the important birds mentioned above have been severely reduced in size, but the mountain has recently been incorporated into Gorongosa National Park, and its sacred status also affords limited protection—in fact, special permission from the local chief needs to be obtained before birding this site. The ascent of the mountain from one of the accommodation establishments near its base usually produces **Marsh** (Anchieta's) **Tchagra**, and can also be good for **Lesser Seedcracker** and even **Blue Quail**, along with more widespread birds such as **Moustached Grass Warbler** *Melocichla mentalis* and **Magpie Mannikin** *Spermestes fringilloides*.

Finally, the plains around the mountain, incorporating the original Gorongosa National Park and nearby areas, should be searched for **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* (recently discovered in this area and probably more common in Mozambique than current records suggest), **Pennant-winged Nightjar**, **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti*, **Reichenow's Woodpecker** *Campethera bennetti scriptoricauda*, **Black-and-white** (Vanga) **Flycatcher** *Bias musicus* (which is almost guaranteed at Chitengo Camp), **Red-winged Warbler** *Heliolais erythropterus* and **Magpie Mannikin**.

Figure 17. Southern Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus* is generally scarce throughout its small range along the coast from Tanzania to Zululand (Niall Perrins)

Le Circaète barré *Circaetus fasciolatus* est généralement peu commun à travers son aire de distribution principalement la long de la côte de la Tanzanie au Zululand (Niall Perrins)

Zambezi River Delta

The transect now proceeds north to the Zambezi River Delta, where vast tracts of lowland forest and miombo woodland have been protected by hunting concessions. Most birders are now visiting this area, specifically Coutada (Hunting Concession) 12, instead of the 'classic' Chinizuia, which is deteriorating rapidly as the rate of deforestation there has been unprecedented. Chinizuia is described in detail by Cohen *et al.* (2006) but birding there now is not nearly as good as it was when that book was published. When access across the Chinizuia Stream bridge is possible, good forests with excellent birds can still be accessed, and the exciting area between here and the coast might be worth exploring if you are well equipped for a 'real adventure'. However, it is much easier just to visit Coutada 12, which is highly accessible and probably holds much larger populations of all of the 'specials' mentioned below. Please note that Coutada 12 is private property and it is essential to contact the owners and pay a nominal fee. For more information on who to contact, please write to info@birdingecotours.co.za. Only a small part of Coutada 12 has been thoroughly explored to date by birders (usually looking primarily for the almost 'staked-out' **African Pittas**), and other nearby Zambezi Delta coutadas are also fabulous for birding, but very poorly explored—which means that new discoveries can still be made. Coutada 11 was described in an excellent report by Rossouw & Sutherland (1999), but since most birders find what they want in the easily accessible part of Coutada 12, Coutada 11 is often ignored, and in fact the remainder of the vast Zambezi Delta remains amazingly under-birded. There is even the possibility of finding the localised **Böhm's Bee-eater** *Merops boehmi* just south of the Zambezi, and this species would be new for the region dealt with by the southern African field guides. The still-pristine Inhamatinga, Mozambique's largest forest, which had been virtually ignored by birders except for those patches extending into Coutada 12, has recently been found to hold, among others, a large population of **White-chested Alethe** *Alethe fuelleborni* (Davies *et al.* in prep.). Other Mozambican forests contiguous with the famous Haroni–Rusitu River confluence in the foothills of Zimbabwe's Chimanimani Mountains also beg exploration.

Now well known (at least compared to when the Cohen *et al.* 2006 bird-finding guide was published) Coutada 12 is very productive birding territory. Two highly range-restricted skulkers are very common here—**East Coast Akalat** *Sheppardia gunningi* and **White-chested Alethe**. If you know their calls, you will realise how locally common both species are, but acquiring views of them requires considerable patience. Other important birds to look for in this area include **Southern Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus fasciolatus*, **Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx montanus*, **Thick-billed Cuckoo**, **Tiny Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus debilis* (very common), **Black-headed Apalis** *Apalis melanocephala*, **Livingstone's Flycatcher** *Erythrocercus*

Figure 18. (left) Mangrove Kingfisher *Halcyon senegaloides* is common in deep forest of the Zambezi Delta far from any mangroves (Hugh Chittenden)

Le Martin-chasseur des mangroves *Halcyon senegaloides* est commun dans la forêt du delta du Zambèze, loin des mangroves (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 19. (right) Lemon-breasted Canary *Serinus citrinipectus* is almost restricted to Mozambique (Niall Perrins)

Le Serin à poitrine citron *Serinus citrinipectus* est quasi confiné au Mozambique (Niall Perrins)

livingstonei, **Plain-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes reichenowi*, and **Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike** *Prionops scopifrons* (which sometimes occurs in mixed flocks with the other two southern African helmetshrikes). **Mangrove Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegaloides* is also common here but is resident in a non-mangrove habitat.

Although widespread, one of the most sought-after species in the Zambezi Delta is **African Pitta**, since this has become one of only a handful of fairly reliable sites for this bird. African Pitta breeds in fair numbers along the Lower Zambezi River, where it is relatively easy to find. In late November and early December, after the first rains fall, usually around this time of year, the pitta begins displaying. During this period, males spend much of their time on a chosen perch 1–9 m off the ground (Hockey *et al.* 2005) from where they periodically make a hopping display accompanied by a far-carrying call. Birders can find displaying birds with some ease once they understand the ventriloquial nature of the call. The species is very tough to find when not displaying as it skulks on the forest floor.

Rio Savane

This very extensive wetland system is conveniently located just outside Beira, the end-point of the transect and where I suggest flying out of, unless you wish to proceed south or north in search of birds also occurring in South or East Africa. **Olive-headed Weaver** *Ploceus olivaceiceps*, as well as Mozambique / South Africa endemics such as **Rudd's Apalis** *Apalis ruddi*, **Neergaard's Sunbird** *Cinnyris neergaardi*, **Pink-throated Twinspot** *Hypargos margaritatus* and **Lemon-breasted Canary** *Serinus* (=*Crithagra*) *citrinipectus*, are, for example, found in the Panda miombo woodlands, and after birding this area flying from Inhambane would make better sense. If you proceed north, there are many good sites to visit, but the overlap in birds with Malawi and Tanzania is marked.

Since Mozambique opened up to birders after the civil war ended, Rio Savane has become a bigger and better site for some, but not all,

of the water-associated species mentioned for Harare's wetlands at the beginning of this article. Moreover, some of these species remain year-round at Rio Savane, whereas in Harare they may be more seasonal. Birds to look for at Rio Savane include **Blue Quail**, **Short-tailed Pipit** *Anthus brachyurus*, **Locust Finch** and **Cuckoo Finch**. **Rufous-bellied Heron** *Ardeola rufiventris* abounds and interestingly this is one of southern Africa's best sites to find **Eurasian** (Great) **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*.

When to go and what to expect

Streaky-breasted Flufftail, **Striped Crake** and other wetland birds are most easily seen between January and March but only in years of good rainfall. In drier years they may only be present in small numbers and can be extremely difficult to find (not that these elusive rallids are ever *easy* to see). **Zambezi Indigobird** is also most easily seen between January and March when it is in breeding plumage and displaying conspicuously. However, Mozambique is logistically easier to visit in the dry season and at the very beginning of the wet season (which is usually early December) due to many of the roads becoming muddy. This is also the only period that observers have a realistic chance of locating **African Pitta**, which is extremely elusive once it has ceased displaying and has laid eggs. It can still be stumbled across until April or even May before it departs for equatorial Africa where it spends its non-breeding season, but seeing one at this time will require considerable good fortune. In the austral summer the local 'specials' are joined by many Eurasian and intra-African migrants, which can include species rare in southern Africa such as **Collared Flycatcher**. A couple of species such as **Mascarene Martin** *Phedina borbonica* and **Malagasy Pond Heron** *Ardeola idae* migrate from Madagascar to the mainland coast of Mozambique during the austral winter, and some birders visit then with the aim of adding these birds to their regional lists.

Mozambique is extremely hot and humid in summer (November–March) but this is the best time to find some of the globally localised species that are the focus of this article. However, quite a number can just as easily be found in winter. Much of Zimbabwe has milder weather since large parts of the country are on the Mashonaland Plateau (Harare, for example, is almost 1,500 m above sea level), and in the Eastern Highlands it can get rather cold even in midsummer. The Eastern Lowlands of Zimbabwe are just as 'steaming' as Mozambique, as is the Zambezi Valley bordering Zambia.

Malaria is a potential risk throughout this transect, especially after the rains have fallen. Africa's large mammals sometimes also pose a threat. Landmines may still be present in some areas but the consensus opinion is that they don't present a risk at the birding sites described, and I am unaware of any problems in the almost two decades since the war ended, but one does need to consider the danger.

Infrastructure

Zimbabwe possesses an excellent network of well-surfaced paved roads, meaning that a normal car is perfectly adequate for visiting most of the birding areas throughout the country. There is also a fantastic network of B&B establishments and hotels. I usually recommend the comfortable but basic ones with en suite bathrooms, but in some areas upmarket options are also available.

Mozambique's infrastructure has been steadily improving since the civil war ended in 1992. However, roads to some of the birding areas, especially in the wet season, certainly require a high-clearance 4×4 vehicle. Accommodation in Mozambique is typically rustic but adequate for most birders, albeit perhaps barely so. Options are improving as the years go by. In some instances, I recommend staying at lodges that are fairly comfortable—the main disadvantage is that these establishments are not always sited at the best birding sites; for example, Mpingwe is approximately an hour from Coutada 12, which adds considerably to the driving each day. I recommend that birders consider some days of camping when in Mozambique, although all of the 'specials' can be seen without doing this.

Recommended accommodation

I usually start with Crake Cottage in Harare (crakecottage@yoafrica.com), which is conveniently situated close to Monavale Vlei. Proceeding to the Eastern Highlands, White Horse Inn (www.whitehorseinn.co.zw) and Seldomseen (www.seldomseen.co.zw) are often-used places in 'The Vumba'. There are numerous establishments slightly further north around

Inyanga National Park, whilst in the nearby Honde Valley below Inyanga, Aberfoye (www.aberfoylelodge.com) is my usual choice. Crossing into Mozambique, Casa Msika (www.sabirding.co.za/birdspot/140103.asp) is a good place to stay if accommodation is needed to break the journey. Otherwise you might continue straight to Gorongosa where the Gorongosa Adventures camp (previously Envirotrade camp; gorongosa-adventures.blogspot.com) is a convenient, but more rustic, option compared to Chitengo Camp (www.gorongosa.net/en/page/accommodations/accommodations) within the national park. Gorongosa Adventures offers excellent trips up Mount Gorongosa in search of the special birds, and they organise permission from the chief and other logistics sometimes tricky to arrange on your own. To access Coutada 12, Mpingwe Camp (www.dalmann.com/index.php?pageID=10) is apparently the closest establishment and is a fairly comfortable place. In Beira, many places are available and while most people prefer to stay near the beach, I sometimes use the rather rustic Bispo Hotel, which is a little closer to Rio Savane on the outskirts of Beira. Alternatively, I stay at the Rio Savane Resort (www.mozambiquetravelservice.com/beira/rio-savane-beira-mozambique.htm) but ferry times across the estuary to the wetlands don't fit a birder's schedule, unless you can persuade the owner to add special departures. Please e-mail info@birdingecotours.co.za for additional contact details for any of these establishments.

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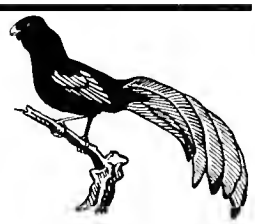

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2011, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations 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 the ABC country checklists (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html) 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 2011 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment les 'checklists' des pays africains du ABC (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Angola

During a visit on 10–30 September 2011 the following were observed. Three **Long-toed Lapwings** *Vanellus crassirostris* were found near Luanda on 27th. Approximately 1,000 **Royal Terns** *Sterna maxima* were at the Cuanza River mouth on 30th and a flock of 86 **Namaqua Sandgrouse** *Pterocles namaqua* near Namibe on 15th. A **Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques* in Kumbira Forest on 20th constitutes the southernmost record in the country. Three **African Grass Owls** *Tyto capensis* were seen at Mount Moco on 18th; this is a rare species in Angola. A **Red-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus atroflavus* was noted at Damengola Forest, south of Uige, on 26th; although not recorded away from Cabinda prior to 2009, this species has since proved common and widespread in the northern scarp forests. Three **Swamp Palm Greenbuls** *Thescelocichla leucopleura* seen en route from Camabatela to Quitexe on 25th is the first claim outside Cabinda. At Mount Moco, five **Black-and-rufous Swallows** *Hirundo nigrorufa* were observed, including a pair apparently nesting in a mud bank. A pair of **White-headed Robin Chats** *Cossypha heinrichi* was found nesting on 24th at the known site of Kinjila, north of Calandula. The identity of three **olivebacks** *Nesocharis* sp. observed during the visit is still a matter of debate; whatever the outcome, they constitute a new species for the country (*DHo*).

Azores

The following records are from May–December 2011. The third **Black-capped Petrel** *Pterodroma hasitata* for the Azores was photographed ten nautical miles west of Faial on 7 September. One or two **Trindade Petrels** *Pterodroma arminjoniana* were reported between Corvo and Flores on 11–12 October. Long-staying **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podylimbus podiceps* remained on São Miguel and Terceira. An adult **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* that roosted at Fajãzinha, Flores, every evening on 14–21 October, may have been present for several weeks; on 25 October, it was also seen at Vila Nova, Corvo. Exhausted **American Bitterns** *Botaurus lentiginosus* were taken into care on Corvo on 30 October and on Terceira on 31 October; a third was observed on Santa Maria on 4 November and a fourth on Pico on 8 December. A second-year **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* on Santa Maria on 28 June might be the same individual as the one on Pico in October 2010; a first-year was on Corvo from 12 October, whilst an adult on Terceira on 8 December was probably a returning individual last seen in April. Three **American Great Egrets** *Egretta alba egretta* were present in October–December, whilst a **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* was found on Terceira on 31 October. A male **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* on Flores, from 5 October until late November at least, was probably a returning individual from autumn 2010 when two males were seen. First-year **Northern Harriers** *Circus cyaneus hudsonicus* were on Corvo from 28 September to 11 October and on Flores from 15 October into November. The first **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* for the archipelago was a first-year photographed on Pico on 30 November; this also constitutes the species' westernmost record ever. A **Taiga Merlin** *F. c. columbarius* was identified on Corvo on 22 October.

A pair of **Killdeers** *Charadrius vociferus* and two juveniles were seen at Santa Maria airport on 23 May;

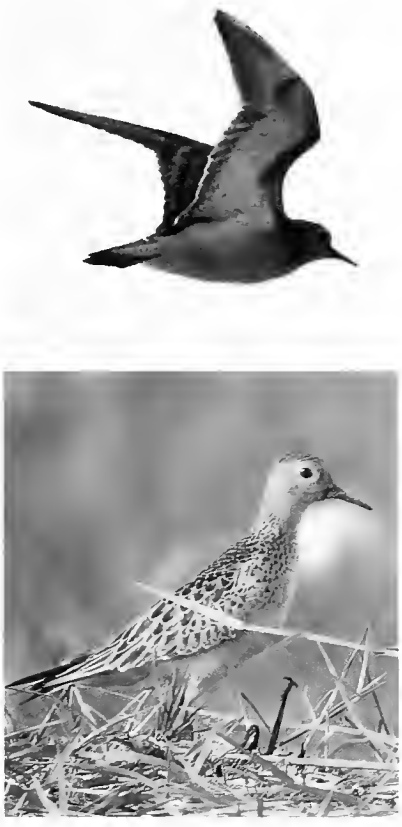
this is the second breeding record for the Azores—the first was at the same site in 2010 (*Bull. ABC* 18: 93). Further **Killdeers** stayed on Terceira from 19 September to 7 October and on São Miguel on 16–24 October. Other noteworthy Nearctic waders included **Least Sandpipers** *Calidris minutilla* on Pico on 1 August (three) and Terceira on 10 September; a **Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri* on Terceira on 15–19 September; single **Short-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus griseus* on São Jorge on 5–8 August and Terceira from 7 September; a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus* on Terceira from 5 May to 13 July at least, and a juvenile in September–October; an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* on Flores on 5–24 October, with a second there on 13 October; a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* on Flores on 22 October; and **Solitary Sandpipers** *T. solitaria* on Terceira on 19–21 September and São Miguel on 25–29 September. Two **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* were still present in December. A **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* was observed on Corvo on 23 October, whilst a **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* was seen again on Ilhéu da Praia, Graciosa, from 3 to 15 June at least. On Corvo, single **Yellow-bellied Cuckoos** *Coccyzus americanus* were found on 20–24 October and 25 October. A **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* was photographed on Flores on 13 October. A **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* was present on Corvo on 21–26 October.

Three Palearctic species were recorded for the first time in the Azores in October: a **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* on Corvo on 3rd, a **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* also there on 13th, and a **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* on Terceira on 5th–7th.

As in previous years, many Nearctic passerines reached the Azores in late September–October, including at least one first for the archipelago: a first-winter male **Blue-winged Warbler** *Vermivora cyanoptera* on Corvo on 2–11 October. A possible first-winter **Blue Grosbeak** *Passerina caerulea* briefly seen on the same island on 14 October would also be a first. Other species reported included three **Philadelphia Vireos** *Vireo philadelphia*, six **Red-eyed Vireos** *V. olivaceus*, the second **Purple Martin** *Progne subis* for the Azores (on Corvo, 13–18 October), an **American Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonata*, an **American Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*, two **Swainson's Thrushes** *Catharus ustulatus*, a **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *C. minimus*, an **American Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus r. rubescens*, the third **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* for the Azores (on Corvo, 23–26 October), the second **Dickcissel** *Spiza americana* (a first-winter male on Corvo, 26–28 September), a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, an **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina cyanea*, at least two **Bobolinks** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, three **Baltimore Orioles** *Icterus galbula*, two **Ovenbirds** *Seiurus aurocapilla*, the third **Tennessee Warbler** *Oreothlypis peregrina* for the Azores (on Corvo, 7–11 October), a **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*, an **American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*, four **Northern Parulas** *Parula americana*, up to two **American Yellow Warblers** *Dendroica petechia*, and two **Myrtle Warblers** *D. coronata* (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 258–263, 330–338, 398–415 & 34: 49–54; *www.surfbirds.com*).

Benin

Records from the period June–December 2011 are as follows. The highlight was the discovery of two **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Cotonou harbour on 16 October, with one still present on 20th (Figs. 1–2); this Nearctic vagrant is new to Benin (there was an influx of American vagrants in Europe in autumn 2011, among them a flock of 23 Buff-breasted Sandpipers in Ireland, *cf.* www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/). Other waders at this site included **Water Thick-knees** *Burhinus vermiculatus*, first discovered in the country in May 2011 and since seen regularly, with up to eight on 26 October and several immatures photographed on 30 August and 26 October. Large groups of **Common Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* were present, with up to 50 on 14 November, and up to 81 **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba* on 25 October. A **Red Knot** *C. canutus* was observed on 29 December; the first record for Benin was in November 2010 (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 229). **Curlew Sandpiper** *C. ferruginea*, a species whose presence in Benin previously required confirmation (*cf. Bull. ABC* 18: 164), was photographed on two occasions, with a juvenile on 17 September and three adults on 17–21 October (Figs. 3–4), together with a **Little Stint** *C. minuta* and a **Redshank** *Tringa totanus*, both of which are seldom recorded in the country. **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres*, first



Figures 1–2. Buff-breasted Sandpiper / Bécasseau roussâtre *Tryngites subruficollis*, Cotonou, Benin, 16 October 2011 (Bruno Portier)

Figures 3–4. Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, Cotonou, Benin, 17 October 2011; top juvenile, bottom non-breeding adult (Bruno Portier)

Bécasseaux cocorlis *Calidris ferruginea*, Cotonou, Bénin, 17 octobre 2011 ; juvénile en haut, adulte internuptial en bas (Bruno Portier)

recorded in Benin in 2010, were observed on three occasions, whilst a first-winter **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* was seen on 8 December. Up to two **Caspian Terns** *S. caspia* were seen in Cotonou and the lagoon west of the city in late October–November. One to two **Damara Terns** *S. balaenarum* were seen migrating east over the sea on 30 August, and 5 and 8 September. Many **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* were present in late August, with a max. of at least 242 in front of Hôtel du Lac.

Away from Cotonou, an immature **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was at Grand-Popo on 31 December; this species is rarely reported in Benin. A female **Swamp Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis*, flushed from wet grassland in the Plaine du Sô, Basse Vallée

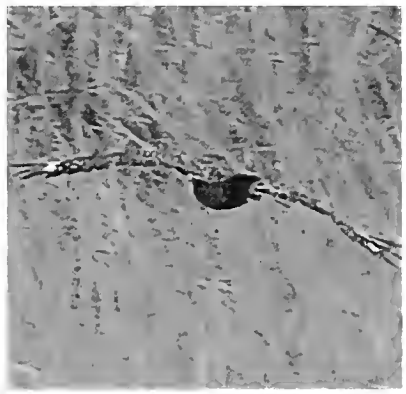


Figure 5. Swamp Nightjar / Engoulevent du Natal *Caprimulgus natalensis*, Plaine du Sô, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Benin, 19 June 2011 (Bruno Portier)

de l'Ouémé, on 19 June (Fig. 5), constitutes another addition to the country list. In the Département des Collines, in central Benin, six **Rock Martins** *Hirundo fuligula* were observed at Kpataba cliff (*c.*08°04'N 01°58'E) and Dassa-Zoumè (*c.*07°47'N 02°11'E) on 7 June with eight there on 28 October. Atop Dassa-Zoumè hill, a pair of **White-crowned Mocking Chats** *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris coronata* was also present on 28 October. A flock of *c.*30 **Zebra Waxbills** *Amandava subflava* was in Sô-Ava on 19 June (06°29'34"N 02°23'31"E) (*BP, WP*).

Botswana

In August–December 2011 the following were reported. Fourteen **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor* were at Bokaa Dam on 29 October (*CB*). Single **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* were observed at Kasane from 28 September to 2 October (*MV, PZ*), on the Okavango River near Shakawe in November (*JC*) and at Gaborone Dam on 18 December (*IW*), whilst a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was seen at Savuti, Chobe National Park, on 17 August (*GB & MB*). An adult male **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* was at Xorodumo Pan on 22 December (*CB*). A nest of a **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* at a farm at Pandamatenga has been documented (*DH, EH*). **Long-crested Eagles** *Lophaetus occipitalis* are not uncommon in the Okavango Delta, but one at Kasane on the Chobe River on 30 September was of note (*MV, PZ*) and so too one well out of range at Francistown on 30 October (*MS*). An early **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was noted at Xorodumo Pan on 1 October (*CB*).

Lake Xau, which has been dry for more than 30 years, is again receiving water from the Boteti River and has attracted many birds, including a **Wattled Crane** *Grus carunculatus* on 30 September, and 600 **White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, 60 **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* and 1,970 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* on 22–23 December (*CB*).

An out-of-range **Chestnut-banded Plover** *Charadrius pallidus* was seen at Bokaa Dam on 21 August (*IW*) and **White-fronted Plovers** *C. marginatus* were reported from the Chobe River on 1 October and at Kasane on 22 October (*MV, PZ*). Uncommon waders included single **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola* at Lake Xau on 30 September, at Bokaa Dam on 29 October and at Mogobane Dam on 6 November (*CB*); four **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba* at Bokaa Dam on 29 October (*CB*); and a **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* at Nata Delta on 9 October (per *TH*). A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was seen in Moremi Game Reserve on 25 September; although this species is now an annual vagrant to the west coast of southern Africa and also is regularly recorded along the south coast, there are very few inland records in the subregion (*BR*). At Kasane, 18 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were seen on 11 November (*MV*). At Boscia Lagoon, Linyanti, a **Ross's Turaco** *Musophaga rossae* was present on 9 August (*DL*). A **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* was photographed preying on a **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* at Savuti in Chobe National Park (*RR*). Other birds of interest included a **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* at Kasane on 16 October (*MV*) and a pair at Ghanzi in mid

December (*AB* per *SABirdnet*); an **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* in Moremi Gorge on 16 October (*BLB*); and a group of **Burnt-necked Eremomelas** *Eremomela usticollis* at Dqae Qare Game Farm, Ghanzi, outside the species' expected range, on 28 December (*CB*).

Burkina Faso

In August 2011, during field work in the region of Lac Higa, a remote area in the north-east, two singing male **Blackstarts** *Cercomela melanura* were photographed; this record constitutes the first for Burkina Faso and will be fully documented in a forthcoming *Bull. ABC* (*MvdB*).

Canary Islands

Records from April–December 2011 include the following. A **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* was photographed 43 nautical miles north-east of Lanzarote on 10 September. A dying immature **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was found on Famara beach, Lanzarote, on 23 April. On Gran Canaria, a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* remained at Maspalomas on 3–23 December, whilst a **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus* (*ruber*) *roseus* was seen at several sites in September–December. A **Eurasian** (Great) **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 7 December, with a first-winter / female **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* also there until 19 December at least. Up to 130 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* and two **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, in December. A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* stayed at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 7–30 December, with an **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* also there on 5–23 December, and another on Tías golf course, Lanzarote, on 22 December into 2012 (Fig. 6).

Vagrant shorebirds included two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla* at El Médano, Tenerife, on 12 September, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* at El Agujero saltpans, Lanzarote, on 6 November, and a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, on 7–16 September. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were observed at El Médano, Tenerife, on 11 May (one), at Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, on 24–25 June (one), at Salinas de Janubio, Lanzarote, on 2 October (three), at Caleta de Fustes, Fuerteventura, on 1 November (one), and at Vecindario, Gran Canaria, on 10 December (one). Single **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* were found on Tías golf course, Lanzarote, on 23 September, and at Vecindario, Gran Canaria, on 10 December. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* was photographed on Tías golf course, Lanzarote, on 19 September. On La Palma, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* remained at Salinas de Fuencaliente from 27 October until 7 November at least. Four **South Polar Skuas** *Stercorarius maccormicki* were present 57–65 nautical miles off Lanzarote on 11 September (Fig. 7). An **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouini* stayed at Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, in December. On Fuerteventura, a first-winter **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* remained at Catalina García on 12–16 September and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* on 17–18 December, with another at Costa Calma on 18–30 December (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 331–338 & 34: 54; *Birding World* 24: 198, 238, 378, 384–385, 437, 459, 501 & 25: 16; *www.surfbirds.com*).

Figure 6. Allen's Gallinule / Talève d'Allen *Porphyrio alleni*, Tías golf course, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, 4 January 2012 (Juan Sagardia)

Figure 7. South Polar Skua / Labbe de McCormick *Stercorarius maccormicki*, 60 nautical miles off Lanzarote, Canary Islands, 11 September 2011 (Daniel López-Velasco)

Cape Verde Islands

On Santiago, a **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii*, five **Intermediate Egrets** *Egretta intermedia*, one **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* and 18 adult and juvenile **Bourne's** (Cape Verde Purple) **Herons** *A.* (*purpurea*) *bournei* were present at Barragem de Poilão on 12 June 2011; at least one **Black Heron** *E. ardesiaca*, first recorded at the same site in March, was still there on 30 December. At least six **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* were also seen on the same island (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 258–267 & 35: 50).

On Boavista, in October, a white-morph **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* was reported from Rabil lagoon on 6th–7th, with a dark morph at Praia de Ervatão on 10th. Other claims from the same island involved an **Intermediate Egret** and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* also at Praia de Ervatão on 10th, a **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* and three **Little Terns** *S. albifrons* at Rabil lagoon on 12th–13th, a **Sandwich Tern** *S. sandvicensis* south of Sal Rei on 8th, a **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* at Curral de Velho on 10th, and a female **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* at Rabil lagoon on 12th (per *Birding World* 24: 437). Also at Rabil lagoon, a **Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* was observed on 25 November (per *Birding World* 24: 501).

Figure 8. Terek Sandpiper / Chevalier bargette *Xenus cinereus*, Dzanga Baï, Central African Republic, 13 September 2011 (Werner Suter)

Central African Republic

Records from September 2011 include the following. What is apparently the first **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* for the country was photographed at Dzanga Baï on 13th (Fig. 8). Two groups of **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus*, of three and ten individuals respectively, were seen west of Mbaiki on 14th. A **Wahlberg's Eagle** *Aquila wahlbergi* was observed near Ngotto Forest on 2nd with a white individual near Loppo on 3rd. A **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura elegans* was calling at Sangha Lodge on 11th and 12th. At Dzanga Baï, an adult **Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* was seen on 13th, a pair of **Forbes's Plovers** *C. forbesi* and five **Wood Sandpipers** *Tringa glareola* on 5th and 13th, and *c.*10 **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apivorus* on 13th. A pair of **White-fronted Black Chats** *Myrmecocichla albifrons* was seen in savanna just outside Ngotto Forest (Buffle Rouge Lodge) on 2nd.

Breeding evidence included a juvenile **Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** *Andropadus latirostris* near Sangha Lodge on 5th, an adult **Rufous Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina fraseri* with a dependent juvenile in Ngotto Forest on 4th, pairs of **Banded Prinias** *Prinia bairdii* with dependent juveniles at Sangha Lodge on 10th and at Baï Hoku Camp on 12h, an adult **Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* with a dependent juvenile at Sangha Lodge on 4th, and a **Red-headed Picathartes** *Picathartes oreas* colony near Sangha Lodge with an adult nest-building and another at a nest containing two eggs on 7th (*RC*, *WS*).

Djibouti

A **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was photographed (see http://cjoint.com/?AJpwxj8JrHR) at the 'plage du héron', Djibouti town, on 27 September 2011; this species would be new for the country (*JD*).

DR Congo

During a visit to southernmost Bandundu Province on 12–18 November 2011, several species were found outside or at the very edge of their known range, amongst them several new to the province. The following were observed within 20 km of Dungu Mayala, Domaine de Chasse de Swa Kibula (07°24'S 17°28'E): **Anchieta's Barbet** *Stactolaema anchietae*, **Miombo Pied Barbet** *Tricholaema frontata*, **White-breasted Cuckooshrike** *Coracina pectoralis*, **Groundscraper Thrush** *Psophocichla litsitsirupa*, **Black-necked Eremomela** *Eremomela atricollis*, **Chirping Cisticola** *Cisticola pipiens* (common), **Böhm's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa boehmi* (fairly common) and **Retz's Helmetshrike** *Prionops retzii*. **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica* was observed in gallery forest and **Brazza's Martin** *Phedina brazzae* was common in savanna. **Streaky-headed Seedeater** *Serinus gularis* of the race *benguellensis* was recorded west of Mayala; this is a new taxon for the country. Along the Kwango River, a **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubi* was seen. Further north, at 07°08'S 18°55'E, **Pale-billed Hornbills** *Tockus pallidirostris* were recorded (*ML*).

A visit to Katanga in November 2011 produced several noteworthy records. In Upemba National Park (=NP), the following were recorded: **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* (at least four near Lusinga), **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis*, **Angola Lark** *Mirafra angolensis* (a few), **Blue Swallow** *Hirundo atrocaerulea* (seen on three days west of Lusinga), **Fülleborn's Longclaw** *Macronyx fuellebornii* (common), **Dambo Cisticola** *Cisticola dambo* (one of the commonest cisticolas in the Lusinga area), and **Brown-headed Apalis** *Apalis alticola* (common around Lusinga).

The little-known Kundelungu NP held, among others, **African Grass Owl**, **Anchieta's Barbet** (a pair), **Black-backed Barbet** *Lybius minor* (a pair), **Angola Lark** (a few), **Fülleborn's Longclaw** (common), **Rosy-breasted Longclaw** *Macronyx ameliae* (two pairs), **Tabora Cisticola** *Cisticola angusticauda* (a few), **Brown-headed Apalis**, **Anchieta's Sunbird** *Anthreptes anchietae* (several in bird flocks in miombo), **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Weaver** *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus* (nest building), and **Bar-winged Weaver** *Ploceus angolensis* (a pair with a juvenile in a mixed-species flock) (*KD*).

Egypt

Records from the period May–December 2011 include the following. In May, six **Three-banded Plovers** *Charadrius tricollaris* (including at least two juveniles) were reported from at Tut Amon, Aswan (Fig. 9), with an adult and a juvenile at Abu Simbel; *c.*70 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were also present there (per *Birding World* 24: 198).

Species recorded during a birding trip on 16–29 September included six **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* at Bir Shalatayn, ten **Sooty Falcons** *Falco concolor* on

Figure 9. Three-banded Plover / Pluvier à triple collier *Charadrius tricollaris*, Aswan, Egypt, 22 December 2011 (Lee Gregory)

Figure 10. African Mourning Dove / Tourterelle pleureuse *Streptopelia decipiens*, Abu Simbel, Egypt, 23 December 2011 (Lee Gregory)

the Hamata archipelago, **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* at Abassa and on Crocodile Island, Luxor, 63 **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* at Hamata, ten **Kittlitz's Plovers** *Charadrius pecuarius* and a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* at Wadi Natrun, a juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Hurghada Sewage Farm, 21 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* and 11 **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* at Abu Simbel and in the Lake Nasser area, five male and two female **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* at the Camel Market in Daraw (with 41 there on 27 November), two **African Mourning Doves** *Streptopelia decipiens* near Abu Simbel (still present at the year-end; Fig. 10), and a flock of 25 **African Collard Doves** *S. roseogrisea* at Sheikh Shazli (*AA, V&SA*; per *Dutch Birding* 34: 58).

On 3 November, two **Namaqua Doves** were seen at Luxor golf course, whilst up to eight **African Skimmers** were reported just south of Kom Ombo on 28 December (per *Birding World* 24: 459, 501).

Ethiopia

The first **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* for Ethiopia was photographed at Lake Awassa on 10 June 2011, not 10 May, as erroneously stated in the previous Recent Reports (*DF*); a note documenting this record will appear in the next *Bull. ABC*.

The Gambia

During a visit in November 2011, the following records were made. A juvenile **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* flew south past the Bijol Islands on 17th. At Kaur wetlands, Central River Division, >9,000 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* were counted on 8th. A colour-ringed adult **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus vetula* observed on 12th in Tanji Bird Reserve, Western Division, had been ringed as a nestling on Île aux oiseaux, Parc National du Delta du Saloum, Senegal, on 7 June 2004. A **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* was seen repeatedly in the Sheraton Hotel garden at Brufut (*JdV*).

Ghana

A **Wahlberg's Honeyguide** *Prodotiscus regulus* was photographed 1 km south of Tono Dam, near Bolgatanga, on 20 January 2011 (*WA, DC & RF*).

Records from November–December 2011 include the following. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* flew over the Mole River at Mognori on 15 December. Six **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* were seen at Sakumono Lagoon on 24 December (*DHo*). More than 4,000 **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata* were at Tono Dam on 22 November (*WS*). At Ankasa, a pair of **Hartlaub's Ducks** *Pteronetta hartlaubi* with eight chicks was seen on 10 December (*DHo*). At Sakumono Lagoon, a **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* was observed on 24 December—this would be the first record for the coast; a **Garganey** *A. querquedula* was also at this site on 2 December, with two on there 24th. Three **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were noted at Tono Dam on 17 December (*DHo*). Noteworthy raptors included a **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* at Atewa on 24 November (*WS*) and another over Nsuta Forest on 7 December, a grey-morph **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis marcrourus* in Bonkro Forest on 23rd, and two **Booted Eagles** *Hieraaetus pennatus* over the Tongo Hills on 16th. A flock of five **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* was encountered in Ankasa on 10 December; this species is known from this site but is rarely seen there (*DHo*). At Winneba Lagoon, three **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* and six **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* were seen on 10 November (*WS*). Two **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were found at Sakumono Lagoon on 9 November (*WS*), with one still present on 24 December (*DHo*). Two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were photographed at the lagoon on 2 November (*JL*). Also there was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* on 2–24 December (photographed on 11th; *CV*) and a **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* on 24th (*DHo*).

At Nsuta Forest, a **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was recorded on 8 December and an **African Piculet** *Sasia africana* the previous day; the latter species appears to be rather easy to see in Ghana. **Eurasian Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were seen in Mole National Park on 15 December (one) and in the Tongo Hills next day (two). A **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* at the White Volta, en route to Bawku, on 17 December would be the second for Ghana if accepted; the first was recorded in February 1997 (see *Bull. ABC* 15: 194). Other December records include a **Western Wattled Cuckooshrike** *Lobotos lobatus* in Bonkro Forest on 23rd; a male **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* in the Tongo Hills on 16th; a **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* at Tono Dam on 17th; daily sightings of **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* in farmbush at Atewa on 19th–21st; several **Narrow-tailed Starlings** *Poeoptera lugubris* at nest holes in Bonkro Forest on 23rd; and a pair of **Red-fronted Antpeckers** *Parmoptila rubrifrons* nesting near the Kakum canopy entrance on 12th. A pair of **Yellow-winged Pytilias** *Pylia hypogrammica* on Brenu beach road on 11th is a large range extension. A

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris* was observed en route to Bawku on 17 December; this species was discovered in the area in April 2010 and seen again there in September (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 97), making the latest record the third for the country (*DHo*).

Guinea

During survey work on Mount Nimba in September 2011, 15 territories of **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica* were found, all at the edge of submontane forest patches on slopes between *c.*1,065 m and 1,550 m. Species not previously recorded from the massif include **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* (one calling while flying over camp at night at *c.*780 m), **Senegal Eremomela** *Eremomela pusilla* (in savanna at the base of the massif), **Red-winged Warbler** *Heliolais erythropterus* (one nest building at 1,262 m on 15 September), **African Blue Flycatcher** *Elminia longicauda* (fairly common in gallery forest and forest patches on the slopes at *c.*1,200–1,600 m), **Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* (in savanna at the base of the massif), **Tropical Boubou** *Laniarius (aethiopicus) major* (at least two pairs duetting in gallery forest and the edge of forest patches on the slopes, at *c.*1,500–1,600 m) and **Splendid Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis splendidus* (a group of 17 at the base of the massif). **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus*, observed twice, had not previously been recorded on the Guinean part of the massif; it was only found on the Liberian side in 2010: see below (*RD*).

At Kabak Island, about halfway between Conakry and the Sierra Leone border, field work on 12–15 October 2011 found a flock of six **Northern Shovelers** *Anas clypeata*; this is only the second record for the country. Three adults and a recently fledged juvenile **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* were amongst a large concentration of terns on the mudflats, giving rise to the question as to whether the birds had bred locally. **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* was encountered on three occasions in mangroves; this species was previously known only from the north of the country along the Senegalese border (*NB*).

Records of the following species, made during a survey of Pinselli Forest Reserve, *c.*45 km west-southwest of Mamou, on 18–22 October 2011, represent a small extension of their previously known ranges: **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii*, **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*, **Black-shouldered Nightjar** *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis*, **Sabine's Spinetail** *Rhaphidura sabini*, **Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata*, **Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina finschi*, **Yellow-browed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera superciliaris*, **Ashy Flycatcher** *Muscicapa caerulescens* (an adult with a juvenile), **Little Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes seimundi* (up to four seen and nest building observed), **Velvet-mantled Drongo** *Dicrurus modestus* (up to five seen daily in farmbush, shrub and wooded savanna, and carefully distinguished from Fork-tailed Drongo *D. adsimilis*), **Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps*, **Grey-headed Negrofinch** *Nigrita canicapillus* and **Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch** *N. bicolor* (*NB*).

A search for **Sierra Leone Prinia** on Mont Béro, in the south-east, in November 2011, was successful: four territories were found at 682–964 m at this site, where the species was previously unknown (*MBC, KS* et al.).

Kenya

The following reports are from June–December 2011, with a few from March–May. An immature **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*, found exhausted on Watamu beach in early May, was taken into care and released in late August; an exhausted adult was also found there on 10 November but did not survive. An exhausted subadult female **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* found on Diani beach, on 24 March, was also taken into care; there are fewer than ten records for Kenya. A **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius*

Figure 11. Eurasian Sparrowhawk / Epervier d'Europe *Accipiter nisus*, Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, 20 November 2011 (Colin Jackson)

leuconotus, an uncommon species in Kenya, remained in Nairobi National Park (=NP) throughout July. A **Madagascar Pond Heron** *Ardeola idae* flew over the Nzoia River, Busia, on 22 July—an unusual inland record.

An immature **Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* was photographed over Oloidien, Naivasha, on 1 September; this species is rare at Naivasha and has decreased dramatically in recent years. Twelve **Levant Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter brevipes* were observed between Kakamega and Kisumu on 14 November and another 12 in the Kerio Valley around the same date. This extremely rare migrant has now been reported in Kenya 4–5 times in the past two years, always in quite large flocks, whereas there were only 4–5 previous records including one of *c.*20 individuals at the same location between Kakamega and Kisumu. A pair of the rarely recorded **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *A. ovampensis* was in the Sabaringo Valley, Masai Mara, on 26 June, and an immature at Melepo, Kajiado, on 5 July. Two **Eurasian Sparrowhawks** *A. nisus* were photographed at Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West NP, on 20 and 27 November (Fig. 11)—this

rarely reported species is possibly increasing this far south. An out-of-range **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* was observed at Mpala Ranch, Laikipia, on 19 October. A flock of 800 **Steppe Buzzards** *Buteo buteo vulpinus* with ten European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus*, 15 Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* and five Lesser Spotted Eagles *A. pomarina*, flying over the Ikyuwa River, Kakamega, on 12 October, and another of 500 birds moving south near Ewso Ngiro, Narok, on 14 October, represent two of the largest flocks reported for many years. Over 25,500 **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were counted in two hours over Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West NP, on 27 November (the largest number ever recorded in Kenya), whilst a flock of *c.*500 flew over western Nairobi, where it is not common, on 30 November. An immature **African Hobby** *F. cuvierii* was terrorising guineafowl at Kampi ya Moto on 27 August. A **Barbary Falcon** *F. pelegrinoides* at Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West NP, on 18 November is an excellent record.

A record of a female / immature **Coqui Francolin** *Francolinus coqui* in Nairobi NP on 18 August is a first for the Nairobi region and well outside the species' usual range. A female **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* was found dead in Kijabe on 30 August. An **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was video-taped in Nairobi NP on 14 August (the first for Nairobi in more than 15 years) and a **Corncrake** *C. crex* was seen at Kikuyu on 21 April. A male **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* was observed on the Solio Plains, Laikipia, on 24 November; this formerly common species is now rarely encountered. Four **Hartlaub's Bustards** *Lissotis hartlaubii* were carefully identified at Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, on 22 August; confusingly, field guides only show Black-bellied Bustard *L. melanogaster* as occurring at Laikipia. Two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were reported from the Sabaki River mouth. A **Water Thick-knee** *Burhinus vermiculatus* in Nairobi NP on 30 July was only the third for Nairobi district. Two **Madagascar Pratincoles** *Glareola ocularis* at Olbainita Swamp, Kampi ya Moto, on 28 August constitute an extremely rare inland record; possibly the only other such record in the country is from Lake Victoria in 1920. Also rare inland was a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* on Lake Nakuru on 6 November. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* photographed near Sabaki Bridge on 21 July (an unusual date) constitutes the third record for Kenya, the last being in September 1981. A **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* 'overwintered' in Nairobi NP in June–July, which is a rare event for this species. Five **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* were on Lake Nakuru on 6 November, with four there on 26 November; an adult was in Amboseli NP on 20 November—this gull is only reported every few years in Kenya. A **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* over a marsh on Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, on 7 September is an unusual record away from the coast or the Rift Valley. A **Caspian Tern** *S. caspia* on Lake Nakuru on 6 November is also a rare inland record. Off Whale Island, Watamu, a flock of >3,000 **Brown Noddies** *Anous stolidus* was seen on 4 December; there were large numbers in May as well.

Hartlaub's Turaco *Tauraco hartlaubi* was common in South Nandi Forest on 19 July; according to the literature the species is not present at this site, whilst Black-billed Turaco *T. schuetti* is; however, none of the latter species was recorded. A lone **White-bellied Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides leucogaster* on the beach front at Watamu on 18 November is a first for the area and a strange record for this arid-country species. A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* in Nakuru NP on 25–26 November represents only the second record further inland than the Taita Hills. A **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus* in Nairobi on 28 August is a significant record for the area. A non-breeding **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* in Nairobi NP on 3 July was probably the same individual as that seen nearby in November 2010; the species is uncommon in the Nairobi area. In August, a female **Freckled Nightjar** *Caprimulgus tristigma* was on eggs at Sosian Ranch, Laikipia—the species was not previously known from this part of the country. A female **Square-tailed** (Gabon) **Nightjar** *C. fossii* was photographed on its nest on Manda Island on 22 May; this is a northward range extension of *c.*150 km for a species considered to be a non-breeding visitor to the coast. A **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* on Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, on 20 August, is uncommon this far east and on this date.

Figure 12. Roller / rollier *Coracias* sp., Masai Mara, Kenya, 14 August 2011 (Eyal Bar-tov)

In the Masai Mara, a **White-fronted Bee-eater** *Merops bullockoides* was seen near Musiara on 26 June. Two **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* overwintered in Nairobi NP in June–July. An unusual roller, possibly a **Racket-tailed Roller** *C. spatulatus* or a hybrid, was photographed in the Masai Mara on 14 August (Fig. 12) and is currently being assessed by the rarities committee; Racket-tailed Roller would be a new species for Kenya. A **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* in Nairobi NP on 22 July represents an early date. A pair of **Hemprich's**

Hornbills *Tockus hemprichii* flying over the main Nairobi road just south of Nakuru town on 28 August is one the southernmost records for the species. A pair of **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbills** *Bycanistes subcylindricus*, an uncommon visitor to the Masai Mara, was present there on 28 July. The coastal race *fischeri* of **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus bilineatus* was common around Witu Forest, Tana River Delta, on 20 May; this is 100 km north of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, which is usually stated to represent the species' northern limit. **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*, only recorded every few years, was seen in Nairobi on 21 November.

On Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, two singing **White-tailed Larks** *Mirafra albicauda* and a flock of 15 **Somali Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella somalica* were reported on 22 August; this is outside the distribution given in the literature. **Collared Larks** *M. collaris* were singing in *Commiphora*-dominated bush *c.*100 km from Garissa on the Mado Gashi road on 16 October; this species was only recently rediscovered in Kenya. On 3 July, a **Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* was observed in Nairobi NP, where it is very uncommon. A pair of **Bush Pipits** *Anthus caffer* was on Sosian Ranch, Laikipia, on 22 August, and a single on Shaitani lava flow, Tsavo West NP, on 19 November; according to the literature this uncommon species is restricted to the south-west.

A female **Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga phoenicea* was observed at Matayos, Busia, on 22 July; this species was previously common at Busia, but is now much harder to find there. **Little Grey Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilis* (common) and **Red-tailed Bristlebill** *Bleda syndactylus* (one) were observed in South Nandi Forest on 19–20 July, where they had not previously been reported. In the Masai Mara, a **Brown-backed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas hartlaubi* singing briefly at Naibor Camp on 16 August is a new species for this well-watched reserve. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* ringed at Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West NP, on 23 November is only the seventh ringed there among the *c.*500,000 birds trapped since 1969. Five **Chapin's Flycatchers** *Muscicapa lendu*, including an immature following an adult, were seen in South Nandi Forest on 19–20 July; this is the first record for the site. A male **Orange-tufted Sunbird** *Cinnyris bouvieri* was photographed at Nambale, Busia, on 22 July; the last substantiated record dates from >20 years ago. A pair of **Pringle's Puffbacks** *Dryoscopus pringlii* reported from Karisia, western Laikipia, on 26 October constitutes a westerly range extension. An early **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was encountered in Nairobi on 15 September. A singing male **Sharpe's Starling** *Pholia sharpii* in Nairobi NP on 31 October is a new species for the park. A **Red-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis niger* at a bird feeder at Lake Baringo on 25 November was quite some way out of range. A **Black-cheeked Waxbill** *Estrilda charmosyna* photographed in Nairobi NP on 22 July was not of the geographically proximate Magadi form *kiwanukae* but of the 'normal' northern and Tsavo form—the first record for Nairobi district. A male **Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah** *Vidua obtusa* was at Sabuk Conservancy, Laikipia, on 10 September; there are very few recent records of this rare species. An **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*, a rare Palearctic migrant in Kenya, was found in the Kerio Valley on 4 November (*CJ*).

Liberia

Exploration of East Nimba Nature Reserve in April–May 2010 (*BPh, AL*) and October–November 2011 (*FD-L, BPh*) produced the following records of interest. A **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* on 6 April 2010 is a first record for the Nimba region, as is a **Blue Quail** *Coturnix adansonii* flushed at 1,190 m on 2 May. A **Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus* was heard at 860 m on 17 November—the first Nimba record since it was collected at Grassfield in 1971. Flocks of **African Black Swifts** *Apus barbatus* migrated south over the mountain on 17 November (up to 50 together), as well as over Yekepa (*c.*50 on 5 November). A few **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbills** *Bycanistes subcylindricus* were seen in 2010–11, representing a new species for the area (first noted in 2008–9 by *RD*). A **Lyre-tailed Honeyguide** *Melichneutes robustus* displayed near Grassfield on 28 October; this is the first record in decades. An **African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis* was heard in forest at 1,330 m, well above the altitude occupied by Rufous-sided Broadbill *S. rufolaterialis*. The first breeding record for Liberia of **Fanti Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne obscura* was obtained on 6 May (one bringing lichen to a hole in a bank, at 1,330 m). Several **Rock-loving Cisticolas** *Cisticola aberrans* were discovered in rocky grassland in the old mine area (October 2011), this being the first record for the Liberian side of Nimba. An immature **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* at Yekepa on 27–28 October is a new species for Liberia. **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica* was found to be rather local (five locations only), at 1,170–1,350 m, and does not seem to have colonised all forest-edge habitats created by the former mining operations. **Nimba Flycatcher** *Melaenornis annamarulae* was encountered at four locations, all along the altitudinal gradient to 1,170 m, with one observation (by *RD*) at 1,330 m in 2009—thus well above the previous upper limit of 600 m. At least three territories of **African Blue Flycatcher** *Elminia longicauda* were located at forest edge above 1,170 m, a new species for Liberia. **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* was very common above 780 m, replacing **Shining Drongo** *D. atripennis* altitudinally. A male indigobird at Grassfield in October 2011 could only be **Cameroon Indigobird** *Vidua camerunensis*, given the only firefinch host present is Blue-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*; this confirms the species for the Liberian list.

Preliminary surveys of the Gba Community Forest in West Nimba in November 2011 revealed the presence of a population of **Gola**

Malimbes *Malimbus ballmanni*, a new record for Nimba County. Also of interest there were **Brown-cheeked** *Bycanistes cylindricus* and **Yellow-casqued Hornbills** *Ceratogymna elata* (singles), **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti* (one singing at 800 m, on Mount Beeton), **Yellow-bearded Greenbul** *Criniger olivaceus*, **Green-tailed Bristlebill** *Bleda eximius*, **Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufescens* and **Copper-tailed Starling** *Lamprotornis cupreocauda*, all of which were widespread (*FD-L*).

A **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* was photographed between Tweh Town and Popoph Mission, *c.*5 km from the coast and 20 km east-southeast of Greenville, on 30 June 2011; the species is considered an uncommon and irregular visitor to Liberia, and this seems to be the first record for Sinoe County. A colony of **Preuss's Cliff Swallows** *Petrochelidon preussi* was found under a bridge near Greenville Port in June, representing a further range extension for this species (*AMa*). **Ethiopian Swallow** *Hirundo aethiopica* was found in small numbers at Buchanan, on the coast, on 20 November and probably at the international airport on 21 October; the species was first discovered in eastern Liberia in February 2011 (*cf. Bull. ABC* 18: 235), but could have been overlooked in the past—the presence of the commensal **Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida* in Liberia is very doubtful, as the male supposedly collected by Büttikofer (*cf.* Gatter 1997. *Birds of Liberia*) was later corrected by him to Barn Swallow *H. rustica*, and his nest with three chicks was not preserved (S. van der Mije, Leiden Museum, *in litt.* 2012) (*FD-L*). A **Grey Ground Thrush** *Zoothera princei* was observed in Sapo National Park, near Chimp Camp, on 3 July (*AMa*). **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* were seen in Monrovia: one male in town on 22 October and one at West Point on 21 November, with four or five near the National Port Authority office on 22 November (*cf. Bull. ABC* 18: 235); Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *P. griseus* remains the common sparrow in Monrovia (*FD-L*).

Madeira

Noteworthy records from May–October 2011 include the following. A singing **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* was sound-recorded on Bugio, Deserta Grande, in the second week of July whilst a **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* was photographed 15 nautical miles north-east of Madeira on 8 August. The immature **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* discovered at Funchal in early February 2011 (see photo *Bull. ABC* 18: 237) was still present in late October. On 27 August, a **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* was at Ribeira da Janela and a **Peregrine Falcon** *F. peregrinus* at Paul da Serra. A first-year **American Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinicus* was found at Ribeiro Machico on 25 October. Vagrant waders included an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Chão das Feiteiras on 23 September, a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Praia de Machico on 17 September, a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Tanque, Porto Santo, on 11 September, and a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* at Praia de Machico on 25–28 September. A **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* was claimed off Madeira on 30 May (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 258–263, 331 & 398–403; *Birding World* 24: 325–326, 378). The first **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* for Madeira was a first-year photographed at Lugar de Baixo on 10 September (*JS* per *Dutch Birding* 34: 45).

Mali

A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was photographed at Kangaba, south-west of Bamako (11°55'30"N 08°23'52"W) on 2 July 2011; this is a new locality for the species. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was also present on the same date (*LS* per *MC*).

Mauritania

An **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was reported from Iwik, Banc d'Arguin, on 29 November (per *Dutch Birding* 34: 54); there is one previous record from the area, of an exhausted individual found in late January 2007 (Isenmann *et al.* 2010. *Birds of Mauritania*).

Morocco

Records from the period April–December 2011 are as follows. A **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* and a **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* were observed off Cap Rhir on 16 June. The long-staying **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* at Essaouira, first reported on 18 April 2010, was still present in October (*PG-S*), whilst another dark morph was found 21.6 km south of Sidi Abed, Oualidia, on 21 June (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 258–259). A male **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* remained near Mijk, Dakhla, from April until mid May; one (the same individual?) was photographed in the same area on 15 December (*FC* per *www.go-south.org*). Three **Rüppell's Vultures** *Gyps rueppellii* were photographed on the ground 5 km west of Aousserd, Oued Ed-Dahab, Western Sahara, on 1 August (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 398). A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* was discovered in the Lower Loukkos Marshes, Larache, on 18 September (see photograph at http://moroccanbirds.blogspot.com/2011/09/long-billed-dowitcher-in-lower-loukkos.html; *AM & BM* per *MA*). At Aghroud beach, north of Agadir, an adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* and an adult **Great Black-backed Gull** *L. marinus* were seen on 16 June (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 261–263). Two juvenile **Great Spotted Cuckoos** *Clamator glandarius* were being fed by Magpies *Pica pica mauretanica* 79 km south of Safi on 19 June; there are perhaps fewer than ten proven breeding records from Morocco. The first **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* for the Moroccan coast was a male photographed 152 km north-east of Dakhla, Western Sahara, on 11 April (per *Dutch Birding* 33: 267–268).

Mozambique

Reports from September–October 2011 include a **European Honey**

Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* in the Pomene area on 31 October, a **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* at Beira on 1–3 September, and a probable **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* at Maputo Bay on 8 October. Several sightings of **African Quailfinches** *Ortygospiza atricollis* reported from the Rio Savanne area, north of Beira, indicate that the species is resident there and the distribution maps should be updated (per *TH*).

Namibia

A belated report from May 2011 mentions that, due to abundant rainfall, several **Dusky Larks** *Pinarocorys nigricans* were present in the north of the country (including in Etosha National Park), as well as hundreds of singing **Monotonous Larks** *Mirafra passerina* (*TO*).

Records from July–December 2011 include the following. A **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* was at Gammams Sewage Works, Windhoek, in mid October. In central Namibia, a **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* was discovered at Otjivero Dam, *c.*90 km east of Windhoek, on 31 July; this is perhaps only the second record for this part of the country. A **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* was reported *c.*20 km south of Sesriem on 1 August; there are only a handful of records from central Namibia. In Olympia, a suburb of Windhoek, single **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were observed on 30 November and 3 December. A **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* was seen flying over irrigation plots below Hardap Dam around 25 December.

Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* were located at Sandwich Harbour on 16–17 July (two) and Walvis Bay on 22 December (one); there was also a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* at the latter site. Two to five **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were present at Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund, from late August until the end of the year; a partially leucistic individual was there from mid October (per *TH*).

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* was found at Rundu Sewage Works, in the north, on 21 August (*SWo*); this appears to be the first for Namibia and only the seventh record for southern Africa. At least three **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were in the vicinity of Namutoni, Etosha National Park (=NP), on 9 November. At Walvis Bay Salt Works, **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were present from August until the end of the year, with numbers increasing from five to 13 (in late September), 24 (in early November) and 40 (in mid November), to 60–70 (on 19 December). Elsewhere, two were seen near Namutoni, Etosha NP, on 9 November, and one at Mile 4 Salt Works on 27 November. A **Wilson's Phalarope** *P. tricolor* stayed in Walvis Bay from 16 December until 31 December at least, with a **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* also there on 31 December.

Also in Walvis Bay, single **Common Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ridibundus* were recorded on 26 September and on 7 and 14 November, and at Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund, on 23 November. A **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* was observed at Walvis Bay on 14 November and a **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* at Kalkheuwel, Etosha NP, on 20 or 21 November. **Gull-billed Terns** *Sterna nilotica* were reported from the vicinity of Namutoni, Etosha NP, on 9 November (two) and 24 December (one), Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund, on 23 November (one), and Walvis Bay on 26 November–31 December (1–2). A **Royal Tern** *S. maxima* was claimed at Cape Cross on 19 July; this is a very rare species in southern Africa.

Also of interest were three **Woodland Kingfishers** *Halcyon senegalensis* and a single **Yellow-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus africanus* at Monte Christo Guest Farm, *c.*30 km north of Windhoek, on 27 November; this is at least the third consecutive year that the kingfishers have returned to this location well south of their usual range, but it is the first time that more than two have been reported. A **Livingstone's Flycatcher** *Erythrocercus livingstonei* seen at Ngepi Camp, in the Caprivi, on 6 July was much further west than this species' usual distribution. Also far out of range (and in very atypical habitat) was an **Eastern Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus* at Swakopmund on 21 July. A male **Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata* was observed in a garden in Klein Windhoek on 9 December; this area was also occupied by the species in 2010 (per *TH*).

Niger

The following records (all per *JB*) are based on new entries in the Niger Bird DataBase (NibDaB, www.bromus.net/nibdab). The first confirmed record of **African Black Swift** *Apus barbatus* for Niger was supported by a photograph taken at cliffs near Gouré, in the south-east, on 25 June 2011. There are eight previous claims, since 1989, all but one in May–September (rainy season) and all near cliffs with potential breeding cavities. In the same area on the same day several **White-rumped Swifts** *A. caffer* were observed, the first outside the south-west, and possibly breeding. Just north of Gouré and Kéllé, a **Desert Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* with two just-fledged young and a **White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* were seen on 1 May 2011; these are the southernmost records for both species in Niger (*DK*).

An ornithological visit to the future reserve of the Termit Massif (16°N 11°E) during the first half of September 2011, organised by the Projet Antilopes Sahélo-Sahariennes and the Sahara Conservation Fund, produced 78 species, amongst them 42 Palearctic migrants, in six days, including **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* (drinking after crossing the Sahara), **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* (nesting within a natural cavity in a sandstone cliff), **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba*, a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* (seeking shade under one of the cars), a **Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*, a **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*, **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppellii* and **Sardinian Warbler** *S. melanocephala*. A visit

to W International Park on 21–23 September produced several pale **Wahlberg's Eagles** *Aquila wahlbergi*, an **African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* and a juvenile **African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* (*JB, AH, TR*).

During an ornithological training course for tourist guides at W International Park, from 28 November to 4 December 2011, the following species were observed in the Niger part: **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* (nine), **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens*, a calling **Blue-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur afer* (the first substantiated record since Giraudoux *et al.* 1988; the call was compared on the spot with the Chappuis recording), a pair of **Verreaux's Eagle Owls** *Bubo lacteus*, **Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*, **Yellow Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus parvulus*, **Black-faced Firefinch** *Lagonosticta larvata* (clearly established in the park), and **Exclamatory Paradise Whydah** *Vidua interjecta* and its host **Red-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia phoenocoptera*. One of the guides also provided a convincing description of a **Brown-chested Lapwing** *Vanellus superciliosus* he saw in the park in December 2010 while guiding a visiting birder, who apparently photographed the bird (*SW*).

A gift of bird photographs taken mostly in eastern Niger revealed the first record in the country since 1936 of **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*, of which several were seen at Galmi in October 2011 (*DK*). Also among the photos was the first record for Niger of **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea*—a group of five or more with at least two males in breeding plumage (Fig. 13; *DK, TK, BK*).

Figure 13. Wattled Starling / Étourneau caronculé *Creatophora cinerea*, Mainé-Soroa, Niger, 29 July 2007 (David Kusserow)

Nigeria

During a visit to Anwase, Kwande, in Benue State, near the border with Cameroon, on 6–8 January 2012, a flufftail observed at dusk at the Kwande River with a telescope was identified as a female **Chestnut-headed Flufftail** *Sarothrura lugens*; this would be the first record for Nigeria. A **Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* with heavily streaked underparts suggests it belonged to the subspecies *sharpii*, known to occur from Cameroon eastwards. A **paradise flycatcher** *Terpsiphone* sp. was seen with dark grey underparts, similar to Bates's *T. batesi* and Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatchers *T. rufocinerea*, but with the upperparts dark grey as well (not rufous); the vent was dark rufous and the eye-ring was the usual bright blue. A male **Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minullus* was found at the edge of regenerating forest (*MH*).

Senegal

The following observations were made during field work in Djoudj National Park (including areas near Tiguet, close to the park's border) between 17 December 2010 and 25 February 2011. A **Eurasian** (Great) **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was observed on 20 January. **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were seen on 38 days with numbers varying from 1–11; the largest group was observed on 28 December. The max. number of **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* was 300 individuals near Tiguet on 5 February. Approximately 350 **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* flying over marshland apparently used for roosting on 25 January, was the largest group observed. A second-calendar year **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides*

Figure 14. Barbary Falcon / Faucon de Barbarie *Falco pelegrinoides*, near Djoudj National Park, Senegal, 12 February 2011 (Marco Thoma)

was photographed near Tiguet on 12 February (Fig. 14).

A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was observed on 23 February. About 40 **Baillon's Crakes** *P. pusilla* were captured and 34 seen, all in flooded grassy habitats. **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* were encountered almost daily, with a max. *c.*1,100 hunting over marshland near Tiguet on 17 January. Single **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* were seen on 26 December and 7 February, and single **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocryptes minimus* on 7 and 30 January, and 1, 7 and 18 February. **Red-chested Swallows** *Hirundo lucida* were observed regularly and 20 were ringed; several old nests were discovered under a bridge.

Birds ringed between 18 February 2010 and 24 February 2011 in the same area included 53 **Grasshopper Warblers** *Locustella naevia*, 40 **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* and 1,135 **Sedge Warblers** *A. schoenobaenus*. In St. Louis harbour, two **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* were observed on 27 January 2011 (*MT*).

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period June–November 2011 include the first **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*, on Aride Island on

21 November; SBRC has accepted one previous record as a *Ficedula* sp. (see *Bull. ABC* 18: 223–225).

A **White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa* on Alphonse on 27 September was the third report for Seychelles, whilst a **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* on Aldabra on 5 October and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* on Alphonse on 12–13 October were fourth reports for the archipelago. Fifth reports for Seychelles include a first-winter **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* on Aldabra on 26 October, a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* on North Island on 19 November and a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* on Alphonse on 20 November. A **Greater Crested Tern** *Sterna bergii* of the race *velox* on Alphonse was the second report (race *thalassinus* breeds in Seychelles).

Also of interest were a **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* on Aldabra on 14 November (16 accepted records); single **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* on Alphonse on 25 May–27 June, Mahé on 27 June–18 July and Denis on 4–6 October; a **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* on Alphonse on 19 November; an **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonorae* on Aldabra on 24 November; a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on Alphonse on 14 October (five accepted records); single **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* on Desroches on 29 September, Aldabra on 6–7 October and Denis on 8 October (20 accepted records); a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on Desroches on 13 October and another on Alphonse on 19 November (16 accepted records east of the Aldabra group, where it is annual); single **White Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* on Alphonse on 15–20 November and Aldabra on 16 November; two reports of **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* on Aldabra believed to refer to different individuals, one on Picard on 5 November and one on Grande Terre 10–11 November; and a female or immature **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* on Aldabra on 18–19 October (*AS*).

South Africa

Records from June–December 2011 include the following. Noteworthy species seen in the waters south of Cape Point include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (singles throughout the period; two on 1 October), **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora* (1–2 in June–early November; Fig. 15), **Northern Royal Albatross** *D.* (*epomophora*) *sanfordi* (singles on 30 July, in late September and early December; two on 15 October), **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche* (*cauta*) *salvini* (sightings of an adult from 26 June until late September probably refer to the same individual; Fig. 16), **Grey-headed Albatross** *T. chrysostoma* (one on 6–7 August), **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria fusca* (singles on 5 June and 3 July), **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* (a white morph in late September), **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialoides* (singles on five occasions between 25 June and 15 October; Fig. 17), **Kerguelen Petrel** *Aphrodroma brevirostris* (one on 12 November), **Spectacled Petrel**

Figure 15. Southern Royal Albatross / Albatros royal *Diomedea epomophora*, near Cape Point, South Africa, 9 September 2011 (Per Holmen)

Figure 16. Salvin's Albatross / Albatros de Salvin *Thalassarche* (*cauta*) *salvini*, near Cape Point, South Africa, 30 July 2011 (Per Holmen)

Figure 17. Southern Fulmar / Fulmar argenté *Fulmarus glacialoides*, near Cape Point, South Africa, 15 October 2011 (Per Holmen)

Procellaria (*aequinoctialis*) *conspicillata* (singles on seven occasions between 30 July and 17 December), and **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* (two on 1 October).

In the Eastern Cape, a **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *P. pacificus* was again present on Bird Island, Algoa Bay, in late September. A pelagic trip from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 9 July produced a **Great Shearwater** *P. gravis*—apparently the second record for the province (the first being on 31 March 1990).

The long-staying **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* (a pair with a juvenile) were still present on a dam south of Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, on 26 June. A **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* flew towards Paarl, Western Cape, on 15 October. An unringed **Australasian Gannet** *Morus serrator* was located on Malgas Island in Saldanha Bay, Western Cape, on 29 November and again on 7 December; on 14 December, two were there, as well as a hybrid Australasian × Cape Gannet *M. capensis*. Another Australasian Gannet was on Bird Island in Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, on 7 December. In Northern Cape, a **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* was at Spitskop Dam, north of Kimberley, in late December, whilst an unexpected juvenile **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was in Augrabies Falls National Park (=NP) on 16 July. In Eastern Cape, a **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* was found near Addo on 12 July, with another at the Bulungula estuary, on the Wild Coast, on 6 September. A **Slaty Egret** *E. vinaceigula* was

at Muzi Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14 October. An **African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus* was reported at Oyster Bay, Eastern Cape, on 12 September. A **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*, which stayed in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park from 5 to 20 December at least, may be a new record for Northern Cape. A **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* just outside Klaarstroom near Meiringspoort, Western Cape, on 22 November would be the first for the province. A **Knob-billed Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, a rare species in Eastern Cape, was located near Barkley Bridge, on 21 July.

In Western Cape, a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* stayed briefly at Wetton in late September; several others were observed in the east of the country, where the species is more regular. A surprising record was received of a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain on 16 December. A **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* was observed near Orkney, North West Province, on 22 June; in Western Cape, two were reported for several months from the George and Somerset West areas, respectively.

An **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was observed at Cape Vidal, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 June. In Free State, 1–2 **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were at Soutpan, near Bloemfontein, on 16–17 July, with one still present on 30 July. In Mpumalanga, a **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was seen near Ermelo in late September—probably the same bird that was found there in February. A **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* was in the Southern Sanctuary area of Richard's Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 6 November; from 15 November until the end of the year it was accompanied by a second individual. A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was reported from West Coast NP, Western Cape, from late August until December (Fig. 18). A few **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were at Spitskop Dam, north of Kimberley, Northern Cape, in late December.

Figure 18. Eurasian Oystercatcher / Huîtrier pie *Haematopus ostralegus*, West Coast National Park, South Africa, 27 August 2011 (Per Holmen)

Figure 19. Pacific Golden Plover / Pluvier fauve *Pluvialis fulva*, Den Staat wetlands, Limpopo, South Africa, 19 November 2011 (Per Holmen)

A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* stayed at Den Staat wetlands, Limpopo, on 9–19 November (Fig. 19); possibly the same individual has been present at this site for at least the last three summers. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were unusually frequent, with records from KwaZulu-Natal (two at Cape Vidal on 19 August; one at Sappi wetlands, Stanger, on 13 November), Mpumalanga (one at Mkhombo Dam on 17–19 November, joined by a second from 20 November until 12 December at least), Eastern Cape (one at East London on 29–30 November), Western Cape (two near Cape Point on 8–10 December; one at Strandfontein Sewage Works on 29 December), and North West Province (two in Barberspan Nature Reserve on 13 December). In Northern Cape, 1–6 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* stayed at Spitskop Dam from 23 October until late December; one was also at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 11 December. An overwintering **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was found in West Coast NP on 9 July; whilst this species regularly overwinters in Namibia, it rarely does so in Western Cape. One (the same?) remained at the same site from 17 August until late November, whilst another was seen at Woodbourne Pan in Knysna on 2 November. **Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus* records include singles near Twee Rivieren, Northern Cape, on 25–26 September, and in Ndumo Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 10 November. **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* were reported from Limpopo (one at Flag Boshielo Dam in late September; one at Kanniedood Dam, Kruger NP, on 18 October), Gauteng (one at Leeupan on 10 October), Northern Cape (one at Spitskop Dam on 23 October–18 December, with a second on 11–18 December), Mpumalanga (one at Mkhombo Dam on 17–27 November) and Free State (two at Krugersdrift Dam, north-west of Bloemfontein, on 19 November). A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* stayed at the Fish River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 9–23 July; two were at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 11 December.

A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* in full breeding plumage was photographed at the mouth of the Illovo River, KwaZulu-Natal, on 22 June. Another was seen at Wildevoelvlei Sewage Works near Kommetjie, Western Cape, on 30 June–1 July; this may refer to the same individual that was at Strandfontein Sewage Works on 18 June. At least one **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* was still at East London, Eastern Cape, on 17 July. In Western Cape, a **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* flew past Robben Island on 19 August, whilst a **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis* was at Cerebos Salt Works on 16 October. The **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* at Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, was seen again 30 July. A **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata*, present at

the St. Lucia estuary, KwaZulu-Natal, from 26 July until late September, was regularly observed at the Umfolozi River mouth from 7 October until the end of December; another was in the tern roost on Dassen Island, Western Cape, in early November.

In KwaZulu-Natal, an **African Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium capense* was reported from Mkhuze Game Reserve on 22–23 October. A **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis*, a rare vagrant in southern Africa, was seen in Kruger NP on 17 November. A **Racket-tailed Roller** *Coracias spatulatus*, first reported at Thornybush Game Reserve, Limpopo, on 3 July, was still present in mid August; this is a very southerly record for this species. In Northern Cape, a **Wahlberg's** (=Brown-backed) **Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* was observed near Hartswater on 10 June.

A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* photographed in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, on 16 November, was still present in December; a few were also at Spitskop Dam near Kimberley in December. In KwaZulu-Natal, a male **White-headed Black Chat** *Myrmecocichla arnoti* was at Zinkwazi from 8 August until 9 October at least; it subsequently appeared to move south and was reported at Blythedale on 23 October and (presumably the same individual) in a Durban garden at the end of October. This is the first record for the province, with the closest-known populations in north-eastern South Africa. Also worthy of note were a **Groundscraper Thrush** *Psophocichla litsitsirupa* in Bredasdorp, Western Cape, on 7–25 November, and two **Red-billed Queleas** *Quelea quelea* at Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape, on 9 July (*sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com*, *per* TH).

Sudan

In the Red Sea hills north of Port Sudan, a honey buzzard was photographed on 1 June 2011 (see http://www.birdingsudan.blogspot.com/) and subsequently identified as the first **Oriental** (Crested) **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* for the country. Other species recorded in the same area included **Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciata*, a species only recently observed for the first time in Sudan, **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* and the rarely recorded **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* (*TJ*).

In Sennar State, two small flocks of **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* consisting of 60–80 birds each at 13°19'24"N 34°14'26"E were noted on 18 October; according to Nikolaus (1987. *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds*), the species has not been recorded previously in that one-degree square, although it is apparently common on passage in the squares north and west of it (*CW*).

Tristan da Cunha

A vagrant **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* in breeding plumage was observed on 14 April 2011 (*SC* per *Sea Swallow*).

Uganda

Records from June–December 2011 include the following. Three new species for the country were recorded: **Grey Pratincole** *Glareola cinerea* (3–5 on the Kasinga Channel on 10 November; *RS*), **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* (an adult photographed in Murchison Falls National Park on 8 June; *JR*; Fig. 20) and **Blue-capped Cordon-bleu** *Uraeginthus cyanocephalus* (a pair in the Moroto / Karamoja region, north-eastern Uganda, in early September; *RS*).

A **Madagascar Squacco Heron** *Ardeola idae* was observed in the Nabugabo grasslands on 28 June and a **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* at Port Bell on 2 June. At least four **Shoebills** *Balaeniceps rex* were seen in a swamp at Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary on 7 October. In Queen Elizabeth National Park (=NP), an adult **Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus* (*ruber*) *roseus* was on Lake Nyamunuka on 7–9 December and 1,800 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* on 15 July (a good count by recent standards), with 33 there on 7 December (an unusual date). At least three

Figure 20. Franklin's Gull / Mouette de Franklin *Larus pipixcan*, Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda, 8 June 2011 (Jonathan Rossouw)

European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* moved south over Ziwa with >30 Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* on 6 October. An immature **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis* picked up dead at Mbende in November had been ringed and satellite-tagged in Romania; its cause of death is unknown, but poisoning is suspected. A **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* flew south over Ggaba on 2 December; there are only five previous Kampala records.

In Nakiwogo Bay, 190 **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata* were counted on 22 September. Ten **Denham's Bustards** *Neotis denhami* observed along the Channel track in Murchison Falls NP, on 26 July, is a noteworthy number. A pair of **Greater Painted-snipes** *Rostratula benghalensis* was displaying at Lake Munyanyange on 15 July; there are few breeding records for Uganda. In the Nabugabo grasslands, a juvenile **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was observed on 23 September and a **Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* on 29 June; the latter is the third record for Uganda. A **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* was discovered on a sandy beach south of Entebbe on 22 September, with a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* there on 27 November; although previously not uncommon, the latter has recently become quite rare.

A pair of **Fischer's Lovebirds** *Agapornis fischeri* remained at Ggaba waterworks in October; this species has only recently been confirmed for Uganda (*RS*). A **Thick-billed**

Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was claimed from Buhoma on 20 August (*DH*). Also in August, **Greyish Eagle Owls** *Bubo cinerascens* seen in Murchison Falls NP and between Mgahinga and Kabale were perhaps further south than usually stated (*NB*). A **Plain Nightjar** *Caprimulgus inornatus* at Ggaba on 29 October was the first for Kampala since 1983. Twenty male and 18 female **Pennant-winged Nightjars** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* counted at dusk at Murchison Falls NP airstrip on 24 July, with a further six unidentified nightjars, is an excellent count (*RS*). An **Abyssinian Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus minor* photographed at Lake Bisina on 7 August constitutes a slight range extension (*cf.* Carswell *et al.* 2005. *The Bird Atlas of Uganda*). Two **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* of the race *waibeli* were identified in Queen Elizabeth NP on 19 and 21 August; apparently this form is usually recorded in October–April (*NB*). A male **Brown-backed Woodpecker** *Picoides obsoletus* was seen at Ziwa on 8 October.

A pair of **Mocking Cliff Chats** *Thamnolaea cinnnamomeiventris* was on the Rift escarpment overlooking Lake Albert on 9 October. Three **Rufous-crowned Eremomelas** *Eremomela badiceps* were foraging in the canopy of Budongo Forest on 9 October. A **Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* at Irriri in Karamoja on 24 October is the first record in Uganda for 50 years. A **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* was seen at Entebbe Zoo on 27 November; this is an uncommon migrant to Uganda. Two **Buff-bellied Warblers** *Phyllolais pulchella* feeding in *Acacia* scrub at Ggaba on 3 July are the first for Kampala. At least ten **Karamoja Apalises** *Apalis karamojae* were recorded in Karamoja, including the first breeding pair for the country, during a *Nature*Uganda survey on 24–26 October (see p. 8). A **Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* was noted in Budongo Forest on 9 October; this species is seldom recorded. Four **Brown Babblers** *Turdoides plebejus* at Kajjansi on 30 July is an unusual record for the Kampala area (*RS*). In August, a group of up to four **Dusky Babblers** *T. tenebrosus* was seen twice in Murchison Falls NP (*NB, DH*). Three **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio*, including two adult males, were at Ggaba on 4 November, with another three, all immatures, there on 26 November; an immature was also found at Port Bell on 5 December. A flock of >300 **Weyns's Weavers** *Ploceus weynsi* observed in Mpanga Forest on 9–10 December included many males in breeding plumage. A female **African Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza atricollis* was incubating three eggs in the Nabugabo grasslands on 21–29 June; the *Atlas* mentions only one previous breeding record (*RS*).

Noteworthy species recorded in the little-visited Moroto / Karamoja region in north-eastern Uganda on 1–8 September include **Pygmy Falcon** *Polihierax semitorquatus* (at least seven), **Buff-crested Bustard** *Eupodotis gindiana* (two), **Temminck's Courser** *Cursorius temminckii* (two pairs), **Heuglin's Courser** *Rhinoptilus cinctus* (one pair), **Black-throated Barbet** *Tricholaema melanocephala* (two pairs and three singles—the second-commonest barbet), **White-tailed Lark** *Mirafra albicauda* (two near Kobere Dam), **Red-winged Lark** *M. hypermetra* (at least six), **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* (three sightings of birds resembling this species), **Boran Cisticola** *Cisticola bodessa* (two heard and seen in the foothills of Mount Moroto; this species has recently been found at a few sites on Mount Moroto and in the surrounding hills), **Red-fronted Warbler** *Spiloptila rufifrons* (>12, including a group of seven), **Grey Wren Warbler** *Calamonastes simplex* (common in most habitats, even degraded, with two birds carrying nesting material—there are no previous breeding records for Uganda), **Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus musculus* (two), **Shining Sunbird** *Cinnyris habessinica* (one), **Three-streaked Tchagra** *Tchagra jamesi* (one near Kobere Dam), **Magpie Starling** *Speculipastor bicolor* (one), and **Purple Grenadier** *U. ianthinogaster* (at least six) (*RS*).

Zambia

A visit to northernmost Mwinilunga District, and notably Jimbe Drainage Important Bird Area, in August–September 2011, yielded the third Zambian record of **Shrike Flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulatus* (Fig. 21), as well as the rarely recorded **Brown-eared Woodpecker** *Campethera caroli* and **Chestnut Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophyia castanea* (*BS & DW* per *PL*).

Records from elsewhere, in September–November 2011, include the following. A group of 12 **Pink-backed Pelicans** *Pelecanus rufescens* were circling over Nchila Wildlife Reserve on 17 September; this appears to be a new square vs. *The Birds of Zambia: An Atlas and Handbook* (Dowsett *et al.* 2008) but adjacent to previous records. An **Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* over the Zambezi Rapids on 19 September is an early sighting of this intra-African migrant—the earliest arrival date given in the *Atlas* is 10 October. **African Cuckoo Hawks** *Aviceda cuculoides* were observed on the Chitunta Plain on 18 November. A **Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera* seen over Luakera Forest on 16 September represents a new square and a significant in-country range extension. A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was at a small pool on the Chitunta Plain on 18 November. **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* were seen on the Chitunta

Figure 21. Shrike Flycatcher / Bias écorcheur *Megabyas flammulatus*, Jimbe Drainage Important Bird Area, Zambia, 17 September 2011 (Derrick Wilby)

Plain on 18 November. A small flock of **Sharp-tailed Starlings** *Lamprotornis acuticaudus* flew through Nchila Wildlife Reserve on 17 November (*NB*).

Zimbabwe

A **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* found at Aberfoyle, in the Honde Valley, on 13 November 2011, was still present one week later; there are few records of this species in southern Africa. A pair of **Swee Waxbills** *Estrilda melanotis* was reported in the grounds of the Pine Tree Inn near Juliusdale, in the Eastern Highlands, in mid October (per *TH*).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Abdulla Aly / Thebes Tours International (AA), Mohamed Amezian (MA), William Apraku (WA), Vaughan & Svetlana Ashby / Birdfinders Birdwatching Holidays (V&SA), Michiel van den Bergh (MvdB), Andre Bernon (AB), BirdLife Botswana (BLB), Gavin Blair (GB), Marjorie Blair (MB), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Chris Brewster (CB), Joost Brouwer (JB), Rod Cassidy (RC), F. Chevalier (FC), Jaapie Claussen (JC), David Clugston (DC), Mohamed Balla Condé (MBC), Simon Cook (SC), Mary Cricknore (MC), Jean Delannoy (JD), Ron Demey (RD), Klaas-Douwe Dijkstra (KD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), David Fisher / Sunbird (DF), Ron Forrester (RF), Peter Greig-Smith (PG-S), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Abdoulaye Harouna / Projet Antilopes Sahélo-Sahariennes (AH), Dean Hatty (DH), Ellen Hatty (EH), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DHo), Mark Hopkins (MH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Tom Jenner (TJ), Barbie Kusserow (BK), David Kusserow (DK), Tim Kusserow (TK), Marc Languy (ML), Pete Leonard (PL), A. Lewis (AL), James Lidster (JL), David Luck (DL), Benoît Maire (BM), Adam Manvell (AMa), Alain Mathurin (AM), Tim Osborne (TO), Ben Phalan (BPh), Wouter Plomp (WP), Bruno Portier (BP), Thomas Rabeil / Sahara Conservation Fund (TR), Richard Randall (RR), Brent Reed (BR), Jonathan Rossouw (JR), Joost Simons (JS), Lionel Sineux (LS), Roger Skeen / NatureUganda (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Kadiatou Soumah (KS), Bob Stjernstedt (BS), Werner Suter (WS), Marco Thoma (MT), Mark Vandewalle (MV), Charlotte Vermeulen (CV), Jacob Jan de Vries (JdV), Soumaila Wali (SW), Ian White (IW), Derrick Wilby (DW), Chris Wood (CW), Simon Woolley (SWo), Phil Zappala (PZ), and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, Sea Swallow, *sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com, www.go-south.org, and www.surfbirds.com.*

Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Walter Thijsstraat 9, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium and (preferably) by e-mail: rondemey1@gmail.com or recent_reports@africanbirdclub.org

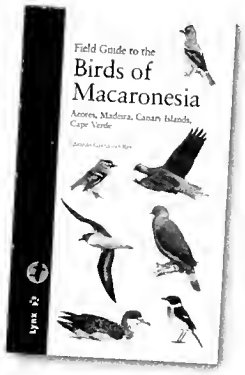
Reviews

Field Guide to the Birds of Macaronesia

Eduardo Garcia-del-Rey, 2011. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. 341 pp, 150 colour plates, 230 colour distribution maps. Hardback. ISBN 9-788496-553712. UK£24.39.

Interest in the birds of the north-east Atlantic Islands—Macaronesia—has 'mushroomed' in recent years, with the Azores attracting as many birders eager to find North American vagrants in autumn as for its endemic (and Endangered) Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula murina*, and the other archipelagos of Madeira, the Canaries and the Cape Verdes well visited in spring and summer, especially, for their landbird endemics and breeding seabirds. This region already boasts its own dedicated field guide (Clarke 2006; see review in *Bull. ABC* 14: 233–234) and is also covered by one of the most successful and well regarded of such books ever to be published (Svensson *et al.* 1999), although curiously despite the work under review boasting an unusually extensive bibliography neither of these alternative guides is mentioned herein. Such omissions, at least in the case of the first-named, can hardly reflect an oversight and one is left to speculate on the potential reasons for this.

Given the availability of the Clarke field guide, it seems safe to presume that most people contemplating the purchase of the present work will want to know the differences and relative merits of these two 'rival' works. It is assumed here that most visitors to the region requiring reasonably detailed status and distribution for the birds they see will want to carry one of the two. For those vagrant hunters intent on making a name for themselves on the Azores, the Svensson *et al.* work, and a North American field guide or two (!), will possibly suffice.



Whereas the new work under consideration here is a 'classic' field guide, with maps, text and plates appearing together on facing pages, Clarke's book has the main text and plates (with their minimalist facing-page captions) well separated, and it lacks distribution maps entirely. However, it must be stated that the maps in the Garcia-del-Rey book are usually nothing more than spots of colour covering each relevant island. For many users, the Lynx guide will also score well for its smaller dimensions, so despite being a hardback this book is easier to carry in the field.

Most of the artwork in Garcia-del-Rey's guide is, unsurprisingly, 'borrowed' from Lynx's *Handbook of the Birds of the World* series, and is therefore the product of some 25 artists, rather than the two different illustrators responsible for Clarke's birds and whose styles were rather complementary. The result is that the Spanish work obviously suffers from some lack of uniformity in the style of the depictions—the Blue Tits *Cyanistes caeruleus* on p. 275 represent a particularly good example—although many are undoubtedly very good. Overall, in terms of the scope of their illustrations—different ages / sexes, racial variation, birds in flight—the two guides are rather closely matched, although birds in flight receive on average a poorer 'shake' in the Lynx book, despite that Clarke's has many fewer plates in total. It's certainly the case that Garcia-del-Rey's guide could have been even more compact, if the images therein were smaller, and so much 'white space' hadn't gone 'begging' on some plates and their facing-page texts.

Turning to the texts, the overall amount of information in each species account in the Clarke and Garcia-del-Rey guides appears to be broadly comparable. Coming later, the latter author has had the advantage of being able to update some of his sections, for example on taxonomy. In contrast, Clarke gives many more details concerning status and individual records of vagrants, and although obviously outdated to some extent already, the information therein will be useful to some users at least. I also mark Clarke's introductory sections more highly than those in the Lynx guide; minimalist in the latter, but reasonably expansive in the former, covering habitats, ornithological history, and even good birdwatching areas, among others, in the Helm book. In contrast to this, Garcia-del-Rey's bibliography is markedly more extensive at eight pages, although many of his citations are to works, including a great number of his own, that have little or absolutely no bearing on the text for this field guide. Clarke's more focused four-page bibliography, with the exception of some subsequently published works, should prove more than adequate for most visitors.

Both works feature handy tabulated lists showing occurrence on different islands, but again there are good and bad features to the different approaches. Clarke analysed species status island-by-island, archipelago-by-archipelago, and included Spanish and Portuguese names (as well as English and scientific ones), resulting

in a massive 24-page appendix (B). In contrast, Garcia-del-Rey omits names other than the English and scientific, and analyses status only across archipelagos (the result is a more concise 13-page checklist). Most positively, his status codes and information are somewhat more detailed than in the Helm guide. Unlike the latter though, there are no separate tabulations of endemic taxa by archipelago (Clarke's Appendix C), which some might consider to be a strange omission.

Undoubtedly both of these guides to the birds of Macaronesia will serve their users well and the relative differences (merits and downsides) between them are such that deciding which to carry with you on a trip to the region will probably revolve entirely around personal preference. Garcia-del-Rey's has the obvious advantages of smaller size and more up-to-date text, but I personally prefer (with some exceptions) the illustrations, as well as the more detailed status information, of the earlier work in the Helm field guides series.

Guy M. Kirwan

References

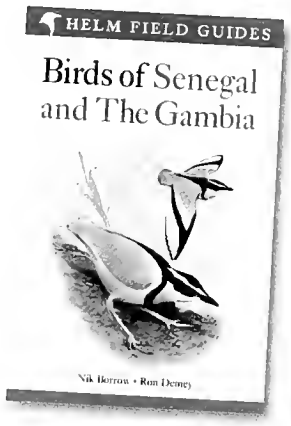
Clarke, T. 2006. *Field Guide to the Birds of the Atlantic Islands.* London, UK: Christopher Helm.

Svensson, L., Mullarney, K., Zetterström, D. & Grant, P. J. 1999. *Collins Birds Guide.* London, UK: HarperCollins.

Birds of Senegal and The Gambia

Nik Borrow and Ron Demey, 2011. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 352 pp, 140 colour plates, colour distribution and other maps. Softback. ISBN 978-1-4081-3469-6. UK£29.99.

This new field guide in the seemingly ever-expanding Helm series contains clear depictions of over 680 species known to occur in Senegambia. In many ways the *Birds of Senegal and the Gambia* is a cut-down version of the *Birds of Western Africa* by the same authors (and publisher), and it follows a similar layout and format.



The new guide, however, benefits from larger, clearer illustrations, which in some cases have been re-drawn, with considerable gains for the reader in not having to sift through almost countless species that do not occur in this, still one of the most popular regions of West Africa among visiting birdwatchers. Species accounts include recent splits, such as Greyish Eagle Owl *Bubo cinerascens* and, by having a regional focus, the species distribution maps have been drawn with greater precision for Senegal and The Gambia. The maps cover not only breeding and non-breeding ranges, but also areas in which passage migrants both from Europe and from within Africa might be expected to occur.

The extra space in this guide permits the maps to accompany the descriptive text on the page facing the relevant species illustration. Illustrations of weaver nests appear on the same pages as the birds themselves, serving as a further identification aid. The text accommodates a summary sentence describing the species' relative abundance or the likelihood of encountering it. Together, these attributes combine for a more accessible and user-friendly guide, with less of the tedious page-flicking necessary with its parent guide to the entire West African region. This is important for a book that covers a region visited by considerable numbers of more casual birdwatchers, drawn principally to the coastal resorts of the region, as well as many dedicated birders.

Like its predecessor, considerable effort has been devoted to setting the context of the guide, with respect to climate, topography and large-scale introductory maps to both countries, all of which information is designed to properly orient the reader. Descriptions and mapped locations of key birdwatching sites and nature reserves further contribute towards this informative and helpful introduction. A glossary of technical terms and jargon (e.g. 'jizz'), references and contacts are also included.

Taxonomic sequence follows that of 'older' works (i.e., grebes and cormorants appear first, not ducks), but this will probably please as many people as it annoys; ultimately it detracts little from the book's functionality. The artwork arguably does not match the 'immaculate' precision of the latest field guides for Europe or North America. Some species possess exaggerated proportions, to my eyes at least, for instance in tail width (Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and the robin chats *Cossypha*) or head size (Little Grey Woodpecker *Dendrocopus elachus* being one the worst examples), but generally most depictions are perfectly adequate for the book's scope and ambition. It is not entirely comprehensive in the sense that not all plumages are covered (witnessed personally by my own minor 'battle' to identify an immature Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus*—a plumage not illustrated here, but neither is it illustrated in the only other guide to Senegambia; see below). But, on the whole this work copes admirably with the daunting task of marrying detail with uncluttered presentation. I unhesitatingly recommend it to anyone planning a trip to either country that it covers.

This new guide obviously invites comparisons with the similarly titled guide by Barlow *et al.* (1997). Borrow & Demey's work is purely a guide to identification and provides fewer of the details on habits or behavioural traits that are a major strength of the older one. Nor does the newer book provide as much detail on identification features or voice as the latter, and instead frequently defaults to the irritating

use of 'usually silent within the region'. This is a personal bugbear of mine that I view as both lazy and unhelpful. The observer needs to know what the bird sounds like when it vocalises (as they all do at least occasionally) as this can be critical to support identification. For me, in consequence, the Barlow *et al.* guide is a superior, more handbook-like work, although somewhat less user friendly in the field. In comparison, the Borrow & Demey guide is a more concise and accessible presentation, with the considerable advantage for the field that all of the relevant information (i.e. text, illustration and map) appears on the same double-page spread. There are no maps in the Barlow *et al.* work, as well as fewer illustrations overall.

Ian Henderson

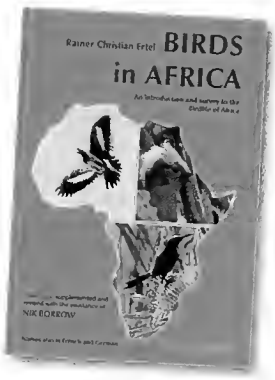
Reference

Barlow, C., Wacher, T. & Disley, T. 1997. *A Field Guide to the Birds of The Gambia and Senegal.* London, UK: Christopher Helm.

Birds in Africa. An Introduction and Survey to the Birdlife of Africa

Rainer Christian Ertel (translated, supplemented and revised with the assistance of Nik Borrow), 2011. Nottuln: Fauna Verlag. 415 pp, 170 colour plates of photographs. Hardback. ISBN 978-3-935980-16-6. Available from NHBS www.nhbs.com. UK£39.99.

When *Vögel in Afrika* by the same author became available in 2009 (reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 17: 254–255) it was a landmark on the German market as there was no book available covering the entire birdlife of Africa. Now it has been translated into English and is therefore more readily accessible to a much wider audience, but must also face stiff competition from several other excellent photographic (field) guides. Ertel's book covers more than 1,300 species using a single photograph for each. Most photographs are of good quality and compared to the German version some images have been improved immensely, for



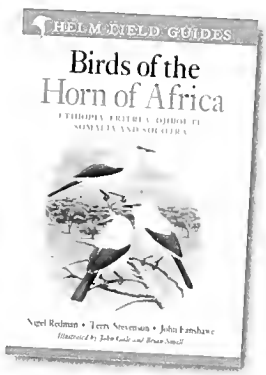
example African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta*, Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* and Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*. Some species are shown on the nest (African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*, Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*). It is obvious that some rare species (Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*) or those with cryptic behaviour (flufftails *Sarothrura* and the two *Picathartes*) are difficult to photograph, but unfortunately some common species also lack high-quality depictions, e.g. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*. Furthermore, images of several species depict birds in unusual postures (e.g., Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica*, Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe*) or were taken in unfavourable light (e.g., Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*, Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*), thereby making identification without previous knowledge difficult. A great advantage is the distribution maps for each species. Some errors in the maps of the German version have been corrected (e.g., for Crested *Galerida cristata* and Thekla Larks *G. theklae*) but for migrants the text must also be checked and care taken when a species breeds in parts of Africa and migrates to others (e.g., Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*). However, the book's preface reveals that it was not the author's intention to make every female weaver identifiable, but to provide an overview of all of the important representatives of African bird families, and in this respect the book definitely succeeds. A keen birder visiting a certain region or country in Africa will undoubtedly prefer one of the now very good regional guides that is available. But, for the regular traveller to Africa with a broad interest in wildlife, the book has the advantage of covering a large number of species from throughout the continent within a single, pocket-sized volume.

Volker Salewski

Birds of the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Socotra)

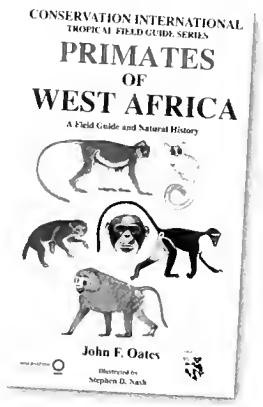
Nigel Redman, Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe, illustrated by John Gale and Brian Small, 2011. Second edn. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 512 pp, 213 colour plates, colour distribution and other maps. Softback. ISBN 978-1-4081-5735-0. UK£35.00.

This is the second edition of the already standard field guide first published in 2009 and reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 16: 243–244. It is broadly the same work, but some significant modifications have been made. Strangely, the book itself gives almost no indication of what these are, but by searching the internet (notably www.nhbs.co.uk) I found that: six plates of estrildids and that of the 'large white-headed gulls' have been replaced, there are more than 20 other new or replaced images,



as well as many minor amendments to others; many maps have been modified slightly, especially to show range in Somalia, and all have been improved to make them clearer; many text corrections have been incorporated; three vagrants have been added, and there is now an annotated distribution checklist. In all, an additional 16 pages compared to the first edition!

Peter Lack



Primates of West Africa, A Field Guide and Natural History

John F. Oates, 2011. Arlington, VA: Conservation International. 556 pp, 141 colour photographs, 79 colour illustrations and 55 colour distribution maps. Softback ISBN 978-1-934151-48-8. UK£34.99.

Although entitled a field guide, this book is much more than that, it providing a complete overview of the natural history of all primates that are found west of the Sanaga River in Cameroon. Introductory chapters cover a range of subjects including, of particular interest to me, classification and evolutionary history, and a review of primate conservation and field research projects in the region. The meat of the book is, however, the species accounts. These cover 42 species and a number of subspecies across a range of groups including angwantibo, pottos, galagos, mangabeys, drills, baboons, guenons, colobus and apes. Each account provides a comprehensive overview of the species in question including 'Identification', 'Taxonomic Notes', 'Geographic Range', 'Natural History' (their vocalisations, activity patterns and diets and feeding), 'Conservation Status' and 'Where To See It'. The accounts are supplemented by excellent range maps (for each species and subspecies), colour plates and photographs.

Completing the work is an appendix covering 22 key sites (in 14 countries) for primate watching and conservation. Nigeria emerges as the 'top' country with no fewer than six sites being listed.

This is a great book and a must for those birders with more than a passing interest in primates. However, people only interested in identifying those species encountered while birding would probably be advised to wait for the forthcoming field guide by Mark Andrews.

Richard Webb

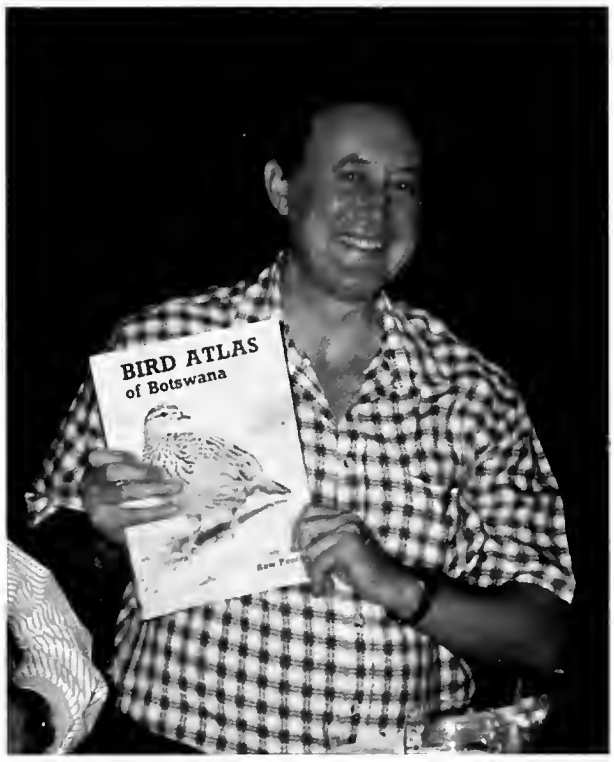
Obituary

Edward Huw Penry: 1943–2011

Huw Penry, who died of cancer on 23 April 2011, made his mark in Afrotropical ornithology with the publication of his meticulous *Bird Atlas of Botswana*, published in 1994 by the University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Huw was born 19 July 1943 in Wales, and following prep school he continued his education at Harrow School, where he became Deputy Head of school, captain of rugby and a music scholar. Like most true Welshmen, rugby and music remained important throughout his life, with the addition in time of ornithology. After medical school and a period in British hospitals, he decided not to follow his father into general practice, but instead migrated to Zambia in 1971. He spent nine years on the Copperbelt, rising to become chief medical officer at one of the principal copper mines, while simultaneously finding time for much birding field work. He travelled throughout the country and contributed substantially to data collection for what was to become the Zambian Atlas (Dowsett *et al.* 2008, *The Birds of Zambia: An Atlas and Handbook*). The articles that appeared over his name in the *Bulletin of the Zambian Ornithological Society* testify to his interest in migration in particular, of intra-African as well as Palearctic taxa.

In 1980 he moved to Botswana to run the health service of a newly established diamond mine at Jwaneng, and his commitment to the ornithology of that country began. After two years he was transferred to the Rand in South Africa, from where he found time to continue exploring Botswana and encourage others to do the same. The result was his *Bird Atlas of Botswana*, which brought up to date Reay Smithers' 1964 *A Check List of the Birds of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Caprivi Strip*. The maps, a model of clarity, were supported by an authoritative text.



Huw retired from the mining industry in 2000, by which time he was a medical director of AngloGold's health service. He returned to Britain in 2003, but retained a pied-à-terre in South Africa until his death. Huw was an enthusiastic and careful observer in the field who expected others to maintain the same standards. Our sympathy goes to Huw's wife Susan and their two daughters.

Robert J. Dowsett

Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area coveted by Collat, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bitd Pteservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha gtoup, the Azores and the Canaties.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refeteeing by independent reviewers, where apptopriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authots on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

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

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

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

When sending yout contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (i.e. with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that fotm (e.g. 'USA'). Do not use the carriage teturn key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When fotmatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

Preferred names

Given the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authots are tequested to follow those used in *The Birds of Africa* Vols. 1–7. The African Bird Club has recently published (www.africanbirdclub.otg/tesoutces/checklist.html) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on *Birds of Africa* but incorporates more recent tevisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names, as well as races and altetnatives used by publications widely used in Aftica. Fot bitd names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-*Birds of Africa* species (e.g. from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviation from such works should be noted and the teasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

Style

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

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The ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact 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: Azores, Benin, Burundi, Cametoon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Sierra Leone, 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 sttategy 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 theit 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@yahoogroups.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of membets' 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.