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# Af'RICAN BIRD CLUB



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

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# African Bird Club

Working for birds and conservation in Africa

## The African Bird Club—working for birds and conservation in Africa

We are the charity dedicated to the conservation of birds across Africa. We work with people in Africa providing support for the study of birds and conservation with the aim of improving the status of both migratory and resident species.

We work with individuals and local groups throughout Africa supporting and promoting:

- Conservation projects with a focus on researching, monitoring and protecting African birds
- Conservation education
- Surveys and assessments of lesser-known regions
- The effective communication of information about African birds.

Registered Charity No 1053920

## ABC Membership

Membership is open to all. Annual subscription rates are:

Individual	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Family	Europe & Africa: UK£24	Rest of the World: UK£26
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, Lionel Sineux, [lionel.sineux@gmail.com](mailto:lionel.sineux@gmail.com)

## Referees for Bull. ABC Vol. 23

Jason Anderson, Nik Borrow, Simon Cavallès, Ron Demey, Robert J. Dowsett, Kees Hazevoet, James Hogg, Jan van der Kamp, Guy Kirwan, Mark Mallalieu, Neil McCulloch, Ara Monadjem, Peter Ryan, Dennis Summers-Smith, Alan Tye, Gael Vande weghe, Phil Whittington, Nikki Wolf, Phoebe Young, Leo Zwarts

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**Vice Presidents:** Martin Woodcock, Keith Betton

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## The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

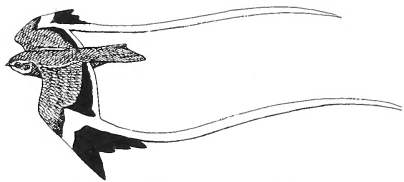
The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results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

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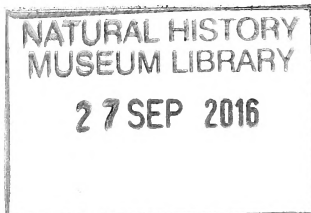
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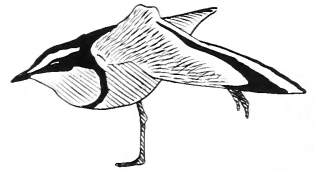
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# Club News

Compiled by Richard Charles



## New ABC Council members

At the AGM we were pleased to welcome a new Council member, Josie Hewitt, representing Next Generation Birders (NGB). She is on the NGB committee and has strong links with 'A Focus on Nature', another group for young conservationists. She has volunteered on Skomer Island, off Wales, and visited Australia to participate in a three-week cannon-netting expedition. In her own words, she's keen to "get involved and learn more about Africa and its birds as well as meeting more like-minded people and helping the club increase their youth demographic". We warmly welcome her to ABC Council. Ros Green, our NGB representative who joined us last year, with regret, had to offer her resignation from Council because she now has a long-term ornithological research post in Australia and will be unable to engage sufficiently with Council. We thank her for her help and advice, and wish her well for her future career.

It is also a great pleasure to welcome Nigel Redman onto Council—again! Nigel, who will be well known to all ABC members, was formerly a Council member and following the 2016 AGM generously made known his willingness to help once more. Nigel is, of course, a recognised authority on the birds of Africa and his extensive knowledge of publishing will also be invaluable.

## News from our Country Representatives

We are pleased to announce the appointment of two new Country Representatives: Momoh B. Sesay for Sierra Leone and John Kinghorn for South Africa. Both are experienced bird guides. Chris

Lotz, formerly our representative for South Africa, has stepped down from that position owing to a business expansion in the USA, where he also hopes to contribute to our ABC representation. We thank Chris for his past and ongoing efforts on the Club's behalf.

Our German representative, Friedemann Veiter, recently (April 2016) organised a Club meeting at the headquarters of NABU, the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (<https://en.nabu.de>) in Berlin. It featured presentations on NABU's work (including projects in Ethiopia), conservation of the Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis*, the African vulture crisis and the development of a bird atlas for Tanzania (see <http://africanbirdclub.de/160430.htm>). In Benin, our representative Fatai Aina attended a meeting organised and hosted by the French Embassy. Participants included the main organisations involved in the field of protection and wildlife conservation in Benin, and the meeting discussed new trends in the international trade of CITES species; status of trafficking in Benin; the policy of CITES permits in Benin; the role of NGOs in the fight against poaching; and the management of Pendjari Biosphere Reserve.

*Nigel Birch*

## Proposal for an electronic version of the Bulletin (eBulletin) for Africa

A strategic priority of the Club is to increase its exposure and membership across Africa. For many local birdwatchers, ornithologists, students and trainees in Africa the cost of traditional membership may be prohibitive. Indeed, the costs of international postage are an ever-increasing burden on the Club's finances. It is therefore the Club's intention during 2017 to offer a

much-reduced, or free, membership within Africa allied to an eBulletin—prospective members would still be required to sign up, with an e-mail address, and will receive an e-mail with a password to access their copy of the Bulletin. It will not be possible to download the eBulletin. Council has been working closely with PageSuite, an online publishing company, to produce a fully functioning e-version of the Bulletin to be made available simultaneously with the print version. A test version of this issue of the Bulletin will be evaluated by a small panel of testers including, importantly, our Country Representatives, to check its functionality over a wide geography. If successful, the project will be launched from January 2017 with the March issue (24, part 1) being the first e-version issued. Needless to say, the hard copy Bulletin will always remain available to full, paying members and institutions. The project is being undertaken with the approval and support of the Bulletin editors. Full information will be posted on the Club's website as we progress.

## March Conservation Fund

The ability of the Club to support research and field projects in Africa through our Conservation Fund is greatly enhanced by the generosity of several individual donors. During 2015 the Club was contacted by the March Conservation Fund, a private foundation based in the USA with a strong focus on bird conservation, ecological research and the empowerment of people to become stewards and advocates for the natural world. ABC was identified as an organisation with consonant aims, resulting in a donation during 2015 of US\$5,000, dependant on the selection of suitable projects, submission of accounts and a report

on how the money had been spent. The Club's compliance with these terms, led by Chris Spooner, has resulted in a doubling of the award for 2016. We are most grateful to Ivan Samuels, Executive Director, and his colleagues at the March Conservation Fund for partnering so generously with us.

### **A new bird atlas for Mauritania**

Peter Browne informed us that the first version of his Bird Atlas of Mauritania is freely accessible online at <http://atlasornmau.org/>. It is a follow-up to Isenmann *et al.* (2010), of which he is a co-author, but which has no distribution maps. The atlas has been prepared using c.65,000 bird records from 78 sources. For each of more than 500 species it indicates the half-degree squares where the species has been observed in the country, as well as denoting evidence of breeding and of wintering by boreal migrants. The atlas represents a valuable addition to the literature of a lesser known country.

### **Report on the Annual Members' Meeting and AGM, Natural History Museum, 16 April 2016**

The day's programme in the newly upgraded Flett Lecture Theatre at the Natural History Museum in London comprised six talks, three before lunch and three after. We were honoured to start the morning with a presentation by our President, A. P. 'Tasso' Leventis, on saving Africa's vultures. This talk, illustrated by superb and often personally taken photographs, reflected the speaker's conviction that a substantial cause of the precipitous decline in African vulture populations is the relatively recent establishment and expansion of market demand for vulture parts in West African fetish markets. Strategies were suggested to counter this decline. This was appropriately followed by a talk on the work of the AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) by its Director, Shiiwua Manu. APLORI, situated near the city of Jos, Nigeria, was

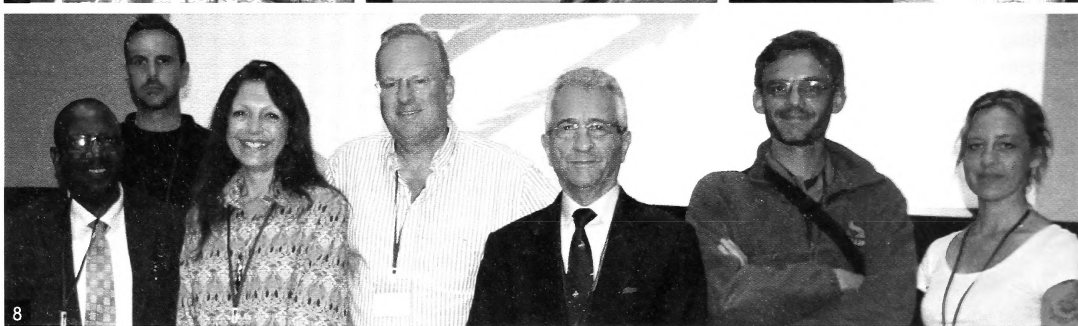
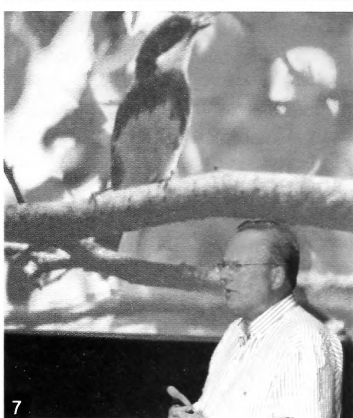
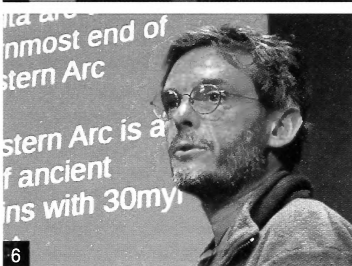
founded in June 2001 following a generous contribution by Tasso Leventis. Manu's talk shared APLORI's experiences over its 14 years of existence and its bid to facilitate ornithological research in Africa via the development of regional manpower and capacity. He highlighted the expanding scope of research at APLORI, and, further, its role in improving the livelihoods of its host community as a classic model of successful community development associated with conservation projects. The morning session concluded with an entertaining joint presentation on European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* research in Senegal by Niki Williamson and Simon Tonkin of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Farmland Conservation unit, and Operation Turtle Dove. They emphasised that we are now in a race against time to prevent the species becoming extinct in the UK. One of the challenges is to understand its wintering ecology in sub-Saharan Africa. Gathering knowledge in this area, set in the context of a global life cycle, is paramount, as is applying that research to work in the farming landscape, incentivising habitat creation across the species' range. Following the ABC AGM, the scientific programme resumed with a fascinating account of the Madagascar Pochard Project by Debbie Pain, Director of Conservation at Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. The Critically Endangered Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* is the rarest duck in the world. Debbie charted the last ten years, from its rediscovery at a remote lake in northern Madagascar in 2006, after the species had twice been declared extinct. Formerly occurring in lakes in the centre and north of the country, it had declined as these became more polluted, silted and degraded by invasive species. A successful conservation breeding programme has been established, now maintaining c.60 birds, permitting the development of a project to benefit people and

enhance the environment in the Lake Sofia catchment so that the pochard can be reintroduced, hopefully by 2018. Luca Borghesio then described his most recent work, updating progress in the conservation of the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*. With a range of less than 500 ha in the Taita Hills of Kenya, and a population of fewer than 200 individuals, Taita Apalis is one of Africa's most threatened birds. Its biology is incompletely known, but recently solid data have been gathered allowing practical conservation, towards which ABC made its largest-ever Conservation Award of UK£20,000 in 2015. The situation is still critical, but there is cautious optimism that the decline can be stopped. The plan to save Taita Apalis would also aid many of the other Taita endemics. The afternoon programme was entertainingly concluded by our Vice President, Keith Betton, describing his experiences finding the endemic birds of São Tomé and Príncipe. These islands are situated 200 miles off the coast of Gabon and are home to almost 30 endemic species—many of which are commonly seen around savannah and agricultural lands. However, at the other extreme, the islands also support lush rainforests, which harbour four Critically Endangered species only rediscovered in recent decades. His presentation, beautifully illustrated by his own and Pete Morris' superb photographs, was a perfect appetiser for the ABC Conservation Tour to the islands, in partnership with BirdQuest, in January 2018 (see below).

Attendance at the meeting was excellent, with many subsequent expressions of praise for the content and quality of the programme.

### **ABC AGM 1 April 2017**

A date for your diary. The Annual Members' Day and AGM will again be held at the Natural History Museum, London, in the Flett Lecture Theatre, a venue that we are



Speakers at the ABC AGM, London, April 2016 / Conférenciers à l'Assemblée générale annuelle de l'ABC, Londres, avril 2016: (1) Tasso Leventis, ABC President / directeur de l'ABC; (2) Shiiwua Manu, Director AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute; (3) Niki Williamson and (4) Simon Tonkin, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Farmland Conservation unit & Operation Turtle Dove; (5) Debbie Pain, Director of Conservation, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust; (6) Luca Borghesio; (7) Keith Betton, Vice President ABC / directeur adjoint ABC; (8) from left to right / de gauche à droite: Shiiwua Manu, Simon Tonkin, Debbie Pain, Keith Betton, Tasso Leventis, Luca Borghesio and Niki Williamson (all photographs Paul Buckley)

extremely fortunate to secure—our thanks again to Prof. Ian Owens, Director of Science, and to the indefatigable Esther Murphy who makes everything work so smoothly. Details of the programme will be circulated in January 2017 and on the ABC website.

**ABC Conservation Tour to São Tomé and Príncipe, 14–21 January 2018**

Thanks to the generosity of Mark Beaman, Managing Director and owner of BirdQuest, ABC has been offered a tailor-made fundraising tour to the islands, to be led by Mark Van

Beirs. A max. of nine guests will form the group, which is already booking. To secure one of the remaining places, visit [www.birdquest-tours.com](http://www.birdquest-tours.com) for full details—participation in this superb trip will also directly augment the Club's Conservation Fund.



## New Awards—February 2016

The Conservation Committee reviewed 27 proposals ahead of the February 2016 ABC Council meeting, and recommended six for funding. Council agreed to fund all six projects totalling UK£9,175, for which ABC found UK£5,720 from sponsors. Brief details of the successful proposals appear below.

### Hooded Vulture outside protected areas in Uganda

Michael Kibuule of the National Biodiversity Data Bank, Makerere University, Uganda, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,000—kindly funded by Tasso Leventis—to survey populations of Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* (which is now listed as Critically Endangered) outside protected areas. Suitable vantage points at historically known feeding and roost sites will be visited and all birds counted directly by visual observation using binoculars. Feeding counts will be conducted in early morning. In the evening, trees and electric pylons near feeding sites will be checked to record roosting birds.

### Abyssinian Owl on Mount Kenya

The Abyssinian or African Long-eared Owl *Asio abyssinicus* is an elusive and very little-known East African endemic. The species is currently not listed on the IUCN Red List, but should perhaps be considered Data Deficient due to the paucity of knowledge about its natural history, ecological requirements and threats. Recent surveys on Mount Kenya suggest that it may

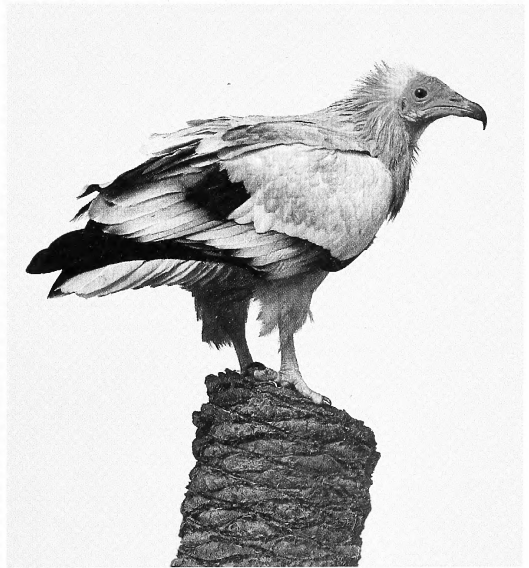
occur only in heath-forest habitat, which over the past five years has been decimated by fires, possibly exacerbated by climate change. Darcy Ogada and Paul Muriithi of The Peregrine Fund, Nairobi, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,991 to investigate the importance of heath-forest habitat to Abyssinian Owls. Individual territories and roost sites will be mapped. Whether the owls preferentially forage in heath habitats will be determined by examining their diet, based on pellets, and comparing this to habitats used by prey species as determined via small-mammal trapping. In addition, data will be collected on the owl's natural history, including vocalisations and behaviour, and if possible their breeding season.

### Egyptian Vulture survey in Morocco

Mohamed Amezian of GREPOM, the BirdLife affiliate organisation in Morocco, will survey the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (Endangered) population of the Middle Atlas Mountains. Data will be gathered on important congregations of the species, namely at communal roosts and feeding sites (e.g. rubbish dumps, abattoirs), and actual and potential threats (e.g. poisoning and persecution). The population size will be estimated, and findings and recommendations will be passed to the High Commission for Water, Forests and Desertification Control (HCEFLCD) and GREPOM, in order to develop and implement appropriate conservation actions. This Conservation Award of UK£2,000 was generously funded by Tasso Leventis.



Abyssinian Owl / Hibou d'Abyssinie *Asio abyssinicus*  
(Nik Borrow)



Egyptian Vulture / Vautour percnoptère  
*Neophron percnopterus* (Werner Suter)



## Free *Birds of Uganda* books for bird guide students

Sherry McKelvie, of the Uganda Safari Guides Association, received a Conservation Award of UK£350—kindly funded by Richard Charles—to provide free copies of the *Birds of Uganda* to promising student bird guides. Training is carried out by top Ugandan bird guides Alfred Twinomujuni and Johnnie Kamugisha, to enable students to identify birds, assist them when guiding tourists from other parts of the world, and to show birds to their local communities to illustrate the importance of conserving bird habitats. This is a relatively small and simple project, and is not specifically affiliated to any particular organisation. However, whenever a training course is planned, other organisations, such as Uganda Wildlife Authority, are invited to send nominees. The *Birds of Uganda* by Sherry McKelvie and Quentin Meunier is a 412-page full-colour photographic book with c.900 images of 280 different species, intended as a companion to one of the East African field guides. It is very good quality and is available online from Amazon and the Natural History Book Service.

## Survey of Bandingilo National Park, South Sudan

Gift Sarafadin Simon Demaya from the Department of Wildlife, College of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, University of Juba, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,870—generously provided by the March Conservation Fund, a fund of the Tides Foundation—for an avifaunal survey of Bandingilo National Park in the Central and Eastern Equatoria provinces of South Sudan. This little-known Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) covers 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> and was established in 1992. The park is centred on a swamp c.40 km east of Mongalla that provides a dry-season refuge for mammal populations. Systematic avian surveys have been poor or even non-existent in South Sudan over the last 25 years due to civil unrest. The park will be surveyed for four weeks in both the dry and wet seasons, using timed species counts, mist-netting and opportunistic observations. Despite being the closest National Park to Juba, South Sudan's capital, Bandingilo is one of the least visited parks in the world. These surveys will update and properly document the park's potentially rich avifaunal diversity. The project will be undertaken by the Tropical Biology Association South Sudan alumni group.

## Sharpe's Longclaw on Mount Kenya

Dominic Kamau Kimani of the University of Eldoret received a Conservation Award of UK£1,964—UK£500 of which was kindly provided by Chris Spooner—to study the ecology and movements of Sharpe's



Sharpe's Longclaw / Pipit de Sharpe *Macronyx sharpei*  
(Nik Borrow)

Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei* (Endangered) in the montane grasslands on the north-west slopes of Mount Kenya. The study—part of a M.Sc. course—will be undertaken on two private farms, Marania and Embori, located at c.2,550 m, and surveys will be extended to the moorland belt of Mount Kenya National Park at elevations of 3,500–4,500 m. The species is threatened by very rapid reductions in the extent and quality of its habitat, such that the longclaw now has a very small and highly fragmented range within agricultural landscapes. The study's specific objectives are: (a) to investigate horizontal and altitudinal movements and dispersal of Sharpe's Longclaw, (b) to compare home range sizes across the altitudinal gradient, (c) to compare population abundances of Sharpe's Longclaw along the altitudinal gradient, and (d) to determine whether the species occurs across different habitats mosaics. The study's results and recommendations will inform the development of effective conservation strategies for Sharpe's Longclaw, a flagship for other threatened montane grassland species, in both protected areas and private lands.

## Emergency Award—March 2016

### Steppe Whimbrel satellite tagging

In their 2014 review, the expert working group on Numenius for the Convention on Migratory Species considered Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris* to be Critically Endangered and suggested that the global population numbered fewer than 100 individuals. The taxon was last recorded in Mozambique in 1906 and two were shot in Durban in 1958, these being the sum total of 'recent' wintering records. Gary Allport, an expatriate resident in Maputo, located two wintering Steppe Whimbrels on a beach near his house in March 2016. At short





notice, he requested and received an emergency grant of UK£2,750, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to fit a satellite tag to one of the birds. Roy Dennis kindly supplied a Microwave Telemetry 5g PTT, which was flown to Mozambique. Gary managed to capture a bird at night using a throw net, and fit the tag. ABC looks forward to hearing the results of the satellite telemetry, which will provide more information about the East Africa–Central Asia flyway and hopefully reveal the breeding grounds of the subspecies, which are believed to be in Central Asia.

### **New Awards—May 2016**

The Conservation Committee reviewed 20 proposals ahead of the ABC Council meeting on 28 May 2016, and recommended six projects for funding. Council agreed to fund all six totalling UK£11,350, for which ABC found UK£7,936 from sponsors. Brief details of the successful proposals are given below.

#### **Taita Thrush survey, Kenya**

Luca Borghesio, a Research Associate at the Department of Zoology, National Museums of Kenya, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,500, kindly sponsored by the Tides Foundation, for a survey of the Critically Endangered Taita Thrush *Turdus belleri*. This species is endemic to a severely fragmented range of just 500 ha within the Taita Hills of south-east Kenya, part of the Eastern Afrotropical Biodiversity hotspot, which has many endemic species and extremely high rates

of deforestation. Information on *T. belleri* is seriously outdated. In the late 1990s, the global population was estimated at 1,400 individuals by BirdLife International, with extreme levels of fluctuating asymmetry and a severely male-skewed sex ratio, suggesting low nesting success, and heavy impacts of inbreeding and habitat disturbance. Luca and his team will reassess the status of *T. belleri* in the four forest fragments (Mbololo, Ngangao, Yale and Chawia) where the species is reported to occur. A combination of techniques including mist-netting, mark-recapture and molecular testing of feather samples will be used to estimate current size and long-term trends of each subpopulation, in order to assess whether conservation measures need to be redoubled to ensure the species' survival.

#### **Madagascar Jacana status survey**

Madagascar Jacana *Actophilornis albinucha* is a Malagasy endemic that was uplisted to Near Threatened status by IUCN in 2012 due to population declines and threats including habitat loss and hunting pressure. Sama Zefania of the Institut Supérieur de Technologie de Menabe Morondava, Faculty of Sciences, University of Toliara, received a UK£1,936 Conservation Award—generously funded by the Tides Foundation—to assess the species' current population size, trends and distribution by surveying wetlands and comparing his results with previous data. The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Peregrine Fund will collaborate and provide survey data from—and logistical support at—their long-term monitoring sites.



Madagascar Jacana / Jacana malgache  
*Actophilornis albinucha* (Werner Suter)



Bannerman's Turaco / Touraco doré *Tauraco bannermani*  
(Ian Fulton)

### Conserving Lake Chivero's waterbirds

Lake Chivero is an Important Bird Area and Ramsar site 30 km west of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. The availability of fish, coupled with the severe economic problems experienced in Zimbabwe over the last decade, have resulted in increased fishing at the lake. The excessive use of gill nets, together with a corresponding decrease in available fish stocks, has caused declines in waterbird populations. Abandoned nets with unsuitable mesh sizes have been left in the waters, ensnaring both fish and birds. Innocent Magunje of BirdLife Zimbabwe was granted a UK£1,914 Conservation Award to curtail further waterbird declines at Lake Chivero via a campaign of stakeholder consultation, community awareness, environmental education and law enforcement activities, which will engage with schools, fishing cooperatives, the Lake Chivero Users Association and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

### Biodiversity assessment of Lake Sonfon

Despite being an Important Bird Area, very little is known concerning the biodiversity of Lake Sonfon—Sierra Leone's largest inland lake—or its national and international importance for birds and people. Sheku Kamara of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) received a UK£2,000 Conservation Award, kindly provided by the Tides Foundation, to undertake a comprehensive survey using standardised transect



Botha's Lark / Alouette de Botha *Spizocorys fringillaris*  
(Per Holmen)

sampling and mapping with GPS. The project will receive logistical support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and will involve the local community Paramount Chief, the Kabala District Council and the local communities. Concurrently, CSSL will facilitate local community engagement and consultation as to the lake's sustainable protection and management, and advocacy for legal protection of the site.

### Addressing threats to Bannerman's Turaco

Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* (Endangered) is mainly restricted to the fragmented forests of the Bamenda Highlands, Cameroon. Its population is estimated to number fewer than 10,000 individuals, and is declining due to forest loss from fires, clearance for agriculture and hunting for feathers, which are used to decorate cultural artefacts and notables in surrounding villages. Didicus Tamabang of the Mfombo Foundation received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to ascertain the socio-cultural pressure of feather decoration on the species. The project will propose sustainable conservation measures for the species via local participation and the establishment of a community-led conservation programme.

### Conserving Botha's Lark and its threatened grassland habitat

Botha's Lark *Spizocorys fringillaris* is an Endangered South African endemic, with a very restricted distribution centred on south Mpumalanga and eastern Free State. The global population has been estimated at just 1,500–5,000 individuals and numbers have



Hinde's Babbler / Cratérope de Hinde *Turdoides hindei* (Nik Borrow)

reportedly declined by at least 30% over the last three generations. Until recently, its plight had largely been overlooked and there has been no concerted effort to conserve the species or what remains of its dwindling habitat. The lark is restricted to moderately or heavily grazed highland sourveld grasslands at altitudes of 1,500–1,900 m, and specifically on threatened Moist Clay Highveld grasslands. Mauritz de Bruin of the Endangered Wildlife Trust received a UK£2,000 Conservation Award, UK£500 of which was kindly provided by Chris Spooner to: (1) undertake surveys to identify the current Area of Occupancy of Botha's Lark and update population estimates, (2) develop an ecological niche model, (3) identify and confirm factors contributing to population declines in order to promote better management, and (4) increase landowner awareness for effective management of Botha's Lark habitat.

### Reports received

#### Hinde's Babbler in Kitui, Kenya

In May 2012 Alex Mutati Syingi of the National Museums of Kenya received a Conservation Award of UK£1,843—generously sponsored by Olle Holst of Avifauna—to survey the little-known population of Hinde's Babbler *Turdoides hindei* (Vulnerable) in Kitui, Kenya. A group-territorial, range-restricted species endemic to the region east of the central Kenya highlands, it occurs in large densities in areas of intensive agriculture at high altitudes and in relatively low densities in lower, drier, sparsely populated areas.

There are five fragmented populations with a total range of c.1,900 km<sup>2</sup>: (i) the Meru population centred around Meru National Park, (ii) the Embu population on the slopes of Mount Kenya, extending west to Mwea National Reserve and to Mukurweini and Muranga in the east, (iii) the Thika population centred around Ol Donyo Sabuk National Park, (iv) the Machakos population to the south, and (v) the Kitui population to the east. All of these, except the Kitui population, had been surveyed since 2000 and their population sizes, densities and, in some cases, even breeding performance estimated.

The Kitui population is known from records dating back to the 1930s. Two recent sightings around Mui Hills and the area north of Mwingi town have extended the species' known range, as it was previously not thought to occur east of Kitui. The survey was conducted in Kitui (with special focus on the Mui Basin) over nine days in September 2012, covering c.2,100 km<sup>2</sup>. Pre-selected river courses were followed and vocalisations played every 250 m for two minutes. The coordinates of each playback site were recorded using a GPS. Six groups of Hinde's Babbler totalling 35 individuals were found at the 28 playback sites. Two groups were found along the Nzamba River, one group each along the Ikoo and Thua Rivers, and two groups at Kwa Ngie. Group composition (number of adults, juveniles and immatures) and habitat characteristics including threats (if any) were noted. One group at Nzambani was also trapped using mist-nets to familiarise the survey team with eye colours for ageing



the species: juveniles have dark brown eyes, becoming pale orange in immatures and bright orange / red in adults. No birds were found at the Nziu River, from which there are historical records. Group sizes were of 4–8 individuals, with a mean of six. Approximately 70% ( $n = 24$ ) of birds observed were adults, 23% ( $n = 8$ ) immatures and 6% ( $n = 2$ ) juveniles.

Several threats to Hinde's Babbler were identified. A marked expansion of agriculture in river valleys was observed, and scrub cover has been cleared in many areas, decreasing the availability of suitable habitat for breeding. Unpredictable climatic conditions with frequent prolonged droughts may also be a major threat, and this is now likely to be exacerbated by the discovery of >400 million tonnes of coal. A large part of Kitui District ( $c.500 \text{ km}^2$ ) is now earmarked for coal mining and possible rapid industrial development, which is likely to diminish the area of scrub suitable for the species. Mining operations had not started at the time of the survey, but many people had been registered for compensation and resettlement.

The other significant threat is that young boys hunt birds and other wildlife. Hinde's Babbler is one of their favourite quarry species, being easily caught due to the species' slow and lazy flight. Some other quarry species that were abundant in the past have now disappeared.

There is considerable concern over a perceived decline in the global range of the species. The area surveyed in Kitui lies at the extreme edge of that range and it was feared that the species might no longer occur there. However, the numbers recorded were similar to those at Machakos, suggesting similar densities in drier areas compared to wetter parts of the species' range. Based on the number of young recorded, it appears the species had a successful breeding season in 2012. Elsewhere, successful breeding seasons have been

positively correlated with the area of scrub present. This was apparent in this survey, where areas with no scrub had no babblers. Another survey, especially after mining activities have started, is recommended. Catching and marking the existing groups would also help track the fate Hinde's Babbler groups, and should be considered.

### Red-shouldered Vanga survey in south-west Madagascar

Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* is a Vulnerable endemic of spiny forest in south-west Madagascar, between Andavadoaka in the north (Mikea Forest) and Ifotaka North Protected Area in the south. In February 2014 Sama Zefania of the University of Toliara received a Conservation Award of UK£1,493, kindly sponsored by Mark Constantine's Lush Fund, to conduct transect surveys at 45 sites in 11 study areas. The species was observed at 13 of the 45 sites. Its presence was confirmed in Tsinjoriake—a new protected area—and Tsimanampetsotsa National Park. The main anthropogenic threats to the species' habitat are slash-and-burn agriculture; hunting of forest birds in general; firewood collection; charcoal production and mining. Red-shouldered Vanga appears to have a more restricted distribution than previously thought, but the recent designation of new protected areas within its spiny forest habitat should ensure its future.

### Aquatic Warbler survey in Senegal

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (Vulnerable) is the only globally threatened passerine breeding in Europe. The global breeding population is currently estimated at 11,500–16,400 singing males. Despite almost all of the known European Aquatic Warbler breeding sites being protected, many are still deteriorating due to drainage combined with changes



Red-shouldered Vanga / Calicalic à épaulettes  
*Calicalicus rufocarpalis* (Werner Suter)



Maccoa Duck / Érismature maccoa *Oxyura maccoa*  
(Per Holmen)



in traditional land use. Similarly, potential Aquatic Warbler wintering habitats, mainly natural wetlands in sub-Saharan West Africa, are also disappearing throughout the Sahel due to land-use changes.

Djoudj National Park in north-west Senegal is the only well-known major wintering site of Aquatic Warbler in Africa. The Ndiaël Basin, 30 km south-east of Djoudj forms part of the same physical region, i.e. the lower Senegal Delta. It comprises 46,550 ha, of which 10,000 ha are wetland habitats. In June 2014 Cosima Tegetmeyer of the Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team (AWCT) received an Expedition Award of UK£2,960, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to survey the Ndiaël Reserve for wintering Aquatic Warblers.

After several postponements, field work was eventually undertaken on 10–20 January 2016 by a group of three German and Swiss members of AWCT in close collaboration with local authorities (Direction des Eaux, Forêts et Chasses) and representatives of relevant organisations. Local ornithologists were trained to reliably identify Aquatic Warbler in the field. Mist-nets were set up at six different sites in the reserve. Unfortunately, no Aquatic Warblers were captured or otherwise detected during the field surveys. However, given the number of potentially suitable habitats identified, the existence of Aquatic Warblers in the Ndiaël Basin appears highly likely. Thirteen inundated or formerly inundated wetlands with moderately tall herbaceous vegetation cover within the Ndiaël Reserve and its periphery were checked. Assuming all potential sites are regularly inundated and develop homogenous herbaceous vegetation 20–150 cm tall—the preferred habitat type of Aquatic Warbler—some 751 ha of the Ndiaël Reserve can be estimated to be potential habitat. The expedition concluded that protection and appropriate management of potential Aquatic Warbler habitat within its wintering range may contribute significantly to the survival of this globally threatened species.

## Maccoa Duck survey

In October 2014, Gladys Kung'u of the Ornithology Section of the National Museums of Kenya received a Conservation Award of UK£1,803 to survey Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* (Near Threatened) in Kenya's Rift Valley and Central Highland wetlands. A desktop survey of 14 wetland sites where Maccoa Duck had been reported in the past was undertaken and their locations identified using Google Earth. Another 65 wetlands within the study area without historical records of Maccoa Duck but thought to potentially harbour the species were also noted. Field surveys of all 79 sites were undertaken between December 2014 and July 2015. A total of 14 Maccoa Ducks was found, all

at just three sites: Manguo Swamp, Lake Ol Bolossat and Lake Sonachi.

Maccoa Duck dives to feed on macro-invertebrate prey (benthic invertebrates). Several studies have shown that eutrophication reduces benthic faunal populations and species abundance, which may in turn affect food availability for species that feed on these taxa. About two-thirds of the wetlands visited were silted and showed high turbidity. Thirty of the 72 small wetlands surveyed contained hardly any open water to support diving waterbirds such as Maccoa Duck, while 18 and 24 of the wetlands exhibited moderate or negligible eutrophication, respectively. Subsistence activities were the greatest threat to wetlands within the species' range. Livestock grazing occurred at 83% of wetlands while 26% were being cultivated. Maccoa Duck showed no preference for small wetlands within agricultural lands and neither was it clear if the species preferred protected areas with large waterbodies.

The small number of birds encountered highlights the need for increased conservation attention on this species, as it is rare, sparsely distributed and confined to fewer wetlands within the highlands of Kenya than previously thought. Protecting suitable habitats within the Maccoa Duck's range and educating local communities as to the threats facing wetlands must be high priorities.

## Fox's Weaver survey

In February 2015 Roger Skeen and *Nature*Uganda received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000 to survey the Near Threatened Fox's Weaver *Ploceus spekeoides* in eastern Uganda. The only bird species endemic to Uganda, its preferred habitat is papyrus-fringed lakes



Northern Brown-throated Weaver / Tisserin à gorge noire  
*Ploceus castanops* (Mark Anderson)



with nearby wooded grassland. The survey covered seasonally flooded wetlands and small lakes around and including Lakes Opeta and Bisina in the Kumi, Soroti, Katakwi and Serere districts. Additional opportunistic searches in Lira and the rice schemes of Doho and Kibimba were also undertaken, as habitat seemed suitable for the species. Surveys on land and water were undertaken in April, July and August with the aid of local guides, who led the team to known colonies.

All weaver species observed were recorded, as were the GPS locations of all colonies. Twelve species of weavers were observed. Yellow-backed *Ploceus melanocephalus* and Northern Brown-throated Weaver *P. castanops* were the commonest species. Unfortunately, no Fox's Weavers were recorded, which might have been due to the survey's timing and rather dry conditions prevailing. Not all weaver species were observed in each of the three months—in fact only three of the 12 species were seen in all of April, July and August. Fox's Weaver may be similar to Weyns's *P. weynsi* and Clarke's Weavers *P. golandi*, which utilise quite different habitats in the non-breeding season and only nest if conditions are ideal. Julian Francis generously provided UK£1,000 towards this Conservation Award, and Paul Bristow and Paul Lascelles kindly donated UK£500 each.

## Zimbabwe vulture survey

In 2015, Roger Parry of the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust received a Conservation Award to conduct a vulture survey in south-west Zimbabwe, using both ground reconnaissance and aerial transects from a two-seater microlight aircraft. The survey zone was bordered by the Zambezi River to the north, the Botswana border to the west, the north-west boundary of Hwange National Park to the south, and the main tarmac road (Victoria Falls–Bulawayo) to the east. This area included several land-use types including national park, safari area, forestry and resettled agricultural land. Surveys were conducted in July–October 2015. Unfortunately, the aerial survey proved impractical and was halted after ten of the 22 planned straight-line transects had been completed, because (1) the survey was slightly late to find nesting birds, (2) visibility of nests was reduced due to early leaves on trees, and (3) turbulent weather and the risk of bird strikes meant that the pilot was unable to assist with observations.

Nevertheless, ten nests were located from the air and a total of 176 nest sites mapped. Of these, 103 were within the study area. An additional 87 nest sites were mapped from 2014 data. Ten hotspot nest sites were identified within the study area. The majority of nests in the study area belonged to White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus*. Only one Hooded Vulture nest

*Necrosyrtes monachus* was confirmed. One Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* nest was within a prime White backed Vulture nesting area and had probably been usurped from the vultures. No nests of either Lappet-faced *Torgos tracheliotos* or White-headed Vultures *Trigonoceps occipitalis* were confirmed. All nests located within the study area were on Parks and Wildlife estate: 59% in national parks and 41% in safari areas. The preferred habitat types for nests were *Acacia* woodland (34%), mixed river-line (20%) and the edges of *vleis* within ecotone areas (14%). Tasso Leventis provided UK£1,500 towards this project and Paul Bristow kindly provided UK£500.

## Grauer's Swamp Warbler survey

Lydia Tushabe of *NatureUganda* received a Conservation Award of UK£1,620 in June 2015 to undertake surveys of the Endangered Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri* at 24 sites in Kisoro and Kabale Districts, south-west Uganda. These included the major sites of Muchuya and Mubwindi, and two new sites recently discovered by *NatureUganda* at Mukinombe and Kinyarushenje. Suspected sites and those identified as potentially suitable from satellite imagery were also surveyed. Ten-minute point counts at the edge of each swamp were conducted and all birds heard and seen recorded. More point counts were conducted at larger swamps, for a total of 190 counts. Presence was also noted if birds were heard or seen during visits to each swamp outside the point counts. Some 104 birds were recorded at the four known sites, and based on a simple extrapolation of the area surveyed relative to the size of each swamp, it is probable that a population of 470 individuals exists at these swamps. No new sites for the species were identified. Mukinombe and Kinyarushenje swamps are threatened because they belong to local communities and are unprotected. Data gathered by the survey will be used to improve the proposed Species Action Plan and to guide further estimates of the species' population in the wider area. The award was generously sponsored by Paul Bristow (UK£500) and Chris Spooner (UK£250).

*Dr Chris Magin, ABC Conservation Officer on behalf of the ABC Conservation Committee*

The ABC website ([www.africanbirdclub.org/conservation-fund-past-projects](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/conservation-fund-past-projects)) shows the complete list of conservation projects and awards made since the inception of the programme more than one decade ago. **A remarkable total in excess of UK£270,000 has been disbursed during this period.** Many of the final project reports, including full versions of those summarised above, can be viewed by clicking the hyperlinks on the webpage.

# Africa Round-up

Compiled by Ron Demey, Guy M. Kirwan and Peter Lack



## General

### Chemical labels differ between Scopoli's and Cory's Shearwaters

Marianne Gabirot *et al.* (2016) have presented evidence that it is not just the vocalisations that matter for Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* and Cory's Shearwater *C. borealis*, two closely related taxa that breed sympatrically at a few localities, which like other Procellariiformes have a well-developed olfactory system. Diagnostic chemical differences in uropygial gland secretions were found between the two, suggesting that individuals might use their sense of smell to recognise conspecifics, e.g., at night in their breeding colonies. Nevertheless, smaller but significant variation was also uncovered between populations of Cory's Shearwaters in the Atlantic.

Source: *J. Avian Biol.* 47, DOI: 10.1111/jav.00853

### At least some passerines migrate by day across the Sahara

Using geolocation tracks from 27 European Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Ouehand & Both have shown that most individuals made diurnal flights as part of non-stop 40–60-hour flights across the Sahara in spring and autumn. The



Cory's Shearwater / Puffin boréal *Calonectris borealis* (Per Holmen)



European Pied Flycatcher /  
Gobemouche noir *Ficedula hypoleuca*  
(Ian Fulton)

authors reported that 'the frequent occurrence of long non-stop flights ... shows migrants' physiological abilities and poses the question why this would not be the general migration strategy to cross the Sahara'.

Source: *Biol. Lett.* 12, DOI: 10.1098/rsbl.2015.1060

### Intra-African migrants possess different patterns of fat reserves to residents and Afro-Palaearctic migrants

Many species are migrants within Africa but they are likely to exhibit different patterns of mass reserves as they do not have to undergo major crossings of inhospitable areas such as the Sahara Desert or Mediterranean Sea. Chima Nwaogu and Will Cresswell, of St. Andrews University and APLORI, discovered that intra-African migrants have peak seasonal mass gains similar to Afro-Palaearctic migrants, but African residents do not, and that Afro-Palaearctic migrants increase their fat reserves with pectoral muscle reserves, so that they have a much higher fat score for a given level of pectoral muscle compared to intra-African migrants and residents. The conclusion is that barrier crossings are the main trigger for increasing fat reserves, rather than migration *per se*.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* 157, pp. 125–135

### Whinchats are very site faithful on their wintering grounds

Emma Blackburn and Will Cresswell of St. Andrews University and APLORI compared predicted and observed detection rates of Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra* at a study site in Nigeria. Across two years, 54% of birds returned, and to the same territory. Dispersal was low and the study was sufficiently intensive to demonstrate that there was a high probability of detecting local movements. Many previously used territories were empty, which in turn showed that high site fidelity was unlikely to be because of limited availability of good territories. Length of time spent in the area differed with age of the birds and across sites. The authors suggest that strong site fidelity may be quite common among Afro-Palaearctic migrants in their wintering sites. Also, because there is lower dispersal and higher fidelity in winter than on the breeding grounds, they suggest this adds to previous notions that winter conditions do not limit the population of this species at least.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* 157, pp. 93–108

### The ongoing rise of the House Crow

The latest in Colin Ryall's updates on the worldwide spread of the House Crow *Corvus splendens* has been published recently. Within an African context, significant new information concerns this crow reaching more than 160 km inland of the Kenyan coast and it seems that it will soon reach Nairobi, perhaps in part stimulated by the discontinuation of an eradication programme in Malindi. Additionally, there is similar news from Tanzania, where another previously highly successful eradication programme operating in Dar-es-Salaam was suspended in 2013. Further south, there is also



House Crow / Corbeau familier  
*Corvus splendens* (John Caddick)

evidence that the species is spreading in Mozambique, but fortunately still *in situ* control measures appear to be having success in South Africa.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club 136, pp. 39–45

### Rhino poaching reached record high in 2015

Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium* and *Diceros*) poaching figures for Africa reached a record high in 2015. Numbers of animals killed in Zimbabwe rose sharply, from 12 in 2014 to at least 50, as well as in Namibia, from 24 in 2014 to 80 in 2015. Continent-wide, at least 1,305 rhinos were poached (1,299 in 2014), 1,175 of which were in South Africa (where 1,215 were killed in 2015). Of the four major rhino range states, only Kenya is expected to report a significant decrease in poaching in 2015.

At the 66th meeting of the Standing Committee of CITES in January 2016, urgent action was



White Rhinoceros / Rhinocéros blanc  
*Ceratotherium simum* (Mark Anderson)

demanding from all countries affected by rhino poaching, to stem the illegal trade in rhino horn. Vietnam, with China the largest consumer of rhino horn, was instructed to implement their improved penal reforms effectively and to take action to reduce domestic demand for rhino horn. Also in January, the South African government lost its appeal against the lifting of a ban on the domestic trade in rhino horn. The ban, which was imposed in February 2009, was overturned in November 2015 following legal action by two rhino game ranchers. The court's ruling paves the way for South Africa to again become a link in the illegal trade to Asia.

Source: [traffic.org/home/2016/1/21/](http://traffic.org/home/2016/1/21/)

### North Africa

#### The plight of Egyptian Vulture in Morocco

In the Middle Atlas, Morocco, a total of 48 Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* was counted at three different localities in June 2014, including two occupied nesting sites and one communal roost, hosting 40 birds of different ages. This is particularly significant, as the species has declined to near-extinction in Morocco, with the decrease starting in the 1980s. Interviews with local people revealed that predator poisoning and use of vulture parts for traditional medicine are threats to the species here, as they are elsewhere across Africa.

Source: Ostrich 87, pp. 73–76

#### Bonelli's Eagles tracked from Europe to Africa

The first Bonelli's Eagles *Aquila fasciata* to be tracked from Europe to Africa were two young males fitted with GPS transmitters in Spain in September 2014, revealing that at least some individuals undertake extensive dispersal. Following dispersive movements within the Iberian Peninsula, the first bird crossed the Strait of Gibraltar on 8 October 2015 and wintered between Rabat and Casablanca in Morocco, in the process travelling >3,500 km.

The second male arrived in northern Morocco on 23 September, was in Algeria four days later and shortly thereafter in Mauritania. This bird continued to Senegal from where it returned to southern Mauritania, having by then moved >4,400 km.

Source: Quercus (361), pp. 30–33

#### Record number of breeding Eleonora's Falcons on Essaouira archipelago

A census of Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonora* on the Essaouira archipelago, Morocco, on 14–15 September 2015, established that the population had increased to a record 940 breeding pairs, from c.100 pairs in 1959 and 400 in 1996. This increase has led the falcons to more frequently use buildings for nesting—a behaviour that has not previously been described. During the survey, four new cases were found of live storage of captured birds at the bottom of crevices (see Bull. ABC 22: 140), one of which, a Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, eventually managed to escape. The Essaouira archipelago, which comprises two islands and several islets, harbours one of the globally most important colonies of Eleonora's Falcon.

Source: Go-South Bull. 12, pp. 99–106

#### Golden Nightjar in Western Sahara

The discovery of Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* in Morocco in 2015 attracted widespread internet attention from Western Palearctic birdwatchers, it being the first record of the species in this faunal region. The record—a bird that unfortunately collided with a moving car and was killed in the process, between Dakhla and Aousserd, in Western Sahara, in early May—has recently been fully documented in the journal *Dutch Birding*. This spring further records (see Recent Reports) from the same area, which is also popular with observers seeking several poorly known mammals, have suggested that Golden Nightjar might represent a regular and breeding member of the avifauna of



this comparatively remote corner of the Palearctic.

Source: Dutch Birding 38, pp. 80–86

### Rare birds in Morocco: 21st report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee

The report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (MRBC) for 2015 was published in January 2016. During the period, the MRBC examined 124 records, of which 112 were accepted. Three species were added to the Moroccan list: White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* (Tétouan, May 2014), American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinicus* (Kenitra, November 2014) and Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* (Dakhla–Aousserd road, May 2015; see above). Other interesting records include the second Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and the first Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* on the Mediterranean coast (eighth record for Morocco). Also accepted were new records of White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* (tenth record), Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (15th–17th), Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (6th), Greater Scaup *A. marila* (19th), Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* (8th), Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* (5th–6th), Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* (9th–10th), Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (16th), Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (8th–9th), Kelp Gull *Larus*



Allen's Gallinule / Talève d'Allen  
*Porphyrio alleni* (Lionel Sineux)



Dark Chanting Goshawk / Autour sombre *Melierax metabates* (Lionel Sineux)

*dominicanus* (10th–12th), Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* (6th–15th), Pied Crow *Corvus albus* (3rd), Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (3rd–4th), Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (2nd–4th), Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* (10th–12th), Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* (18th–22nd), Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (13th–15th), Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus* (6th–7th) and of the invasive Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (3rd–5th), which has started to colonise two new cities, Tangier and Marrakech. An immature Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* photographed in Parc National du Toubkal, in March 2015, proves that this nationally very threatened species still breeds at its last known nesting site in Morocco. Despite active searches for Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*, the species has not been reported since 2007 and its present status in the country is unknown. The full report can be downloaded for free.

Source: Go-South Bull. 13, pp. 18–35

### Areas drying out is main cause of decline of White-headed Duck in Algeria

In 2013 and 2014, 694 White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* were counted in the Hauts-Plateaux

area and north-eastern Algeria, with Lake Tonga supporting the largest numbers in winter and Boussedra wetland in summer. Vegetation, water surface area and depth were the most important environmental variables determining numbers and the drying out of wetlands, especially in: Hauts-Plateaux, appears to be responsible for the declining numbers there.

Source: Alauda 84, pp. 23–32

### New breeding site of Greater Flamingo discovered in Algeria

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* is known to breed at a few localities on the Algerian Hauts Plateaux. A new nesting site was



Greater Flamingo / Flamant rose  
*Phoenicopterus roseus* (Mark Anderson)

discovered at Lake T elamine, in the north-west, where an estimated 12,000 birds were present in June 2015, of which at least 30 were breeding. During a return visit on 8 July, evidence of poachers was found. In total, 293 nests had been destroyed and just 27 still contained eggs. A dead adult that had been ringed in Spain was found. The 2,400 ha-lake is the first coastal breeding site in the country and only the second in the west.

Source: *Alauda* 83, pp. 235–238

**Oriental Skylark in Egypt**

Although a regular winter visitor in small numbers to neighbouring Israel, there is just one previous record of Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* in Egypt, in southern Sinai in October 1990. A bird photographed at El Gouna, on the Red Sea coast of ‘mainland’ Egypt, in late March 2012, and identified as this species retrospectively from photographs has been accepted as the second national record, as well as the first for the African continent proper.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 38, pp. 86–89

**Very large numbers of birds killed along northern Sinai coast in autumn**

Surveys were conducted in 2008–12 along lines of trammel nets set along the north Sinai coast of Egypt. The mean number of Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* taken—the main target—was c.357 per km per day in 2012 in desert scrub, with a mean of c.192 over the entire study period. In addition, 54 other species



Oriental Skylark / Alouette gulgule *Alauda gulgula* (Werner Suter)



Corncrake / R ale des gen ets *Crex crex* (Ian Fulton)



Isabelline Wheatear / Traquet isabelle *Oenanthe isabellina* (Per Holmen)

of 28 families were also caught in the same trammel nets, including Corncrake *Crex crex*, Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* and Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*. An overall estimate of two million Common Quails and 500,000 other birds are killed annually in northern Sinai over the 45-day peak migration period. In 2012 greater use of mp3 players increased this estimated total to 3.3 million Common Quails, and the hunters have also started using mist-nets.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 26, pp. 39–51

**Saunders’s Terns and Eurasian Spoonbills in Egypt**

Recent surveys of Saunders’s Terns *Sternula saundersi* and Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia archeri* in Egypt have revealed mixed fortunes for these two species. The first-named species was only recently (2012) added to the list of birds breeding in the country; subsequent surveys in southern Sinai, since 2013, suggested that at least 50 young fledged in both 2014 and 2015, with at least 40 pairs counted in the former year. The Egyptian Red Sea population of Eurasian Spoonbills appears to have been always small within the last c.50 years, with a max. of 30–50 pairs in 1980, declining to just ten pairs a decade later. More recent surveys have indicated that the species still persists as a breeder in this region, but numbers are tiny (albeit apparently stable), with



Eurasian Spoonbill / Spatule blanche *Platalea leucorodia* (John Caddick)

evidence of nesting on just four of the country’s Red Sea islands.

Sources: *Dutch Birding* 38, pp. 69–74; 38, pp. 75–79

**Atlantic Ocean islands**

**North-east Atlantic population of Bulwer’s Petrel much larger than previously thought**

The European breeding population of Bulwer’s Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* is currently estimated at 7,000–9,000 pairs, with the largest colonies thought to be on the Selvagens (5,000 pairs) and Desertas Islands (1,500 pairs), in the Madeira archipelago. To produce more precise population estimates, Paulo Catry and co-workers carried out field work on Deserta Grande in 2013–14, during the incubation and chick-rearing months (June–July). Using a capture-mark-recapture method on a patch of 3.3 ha of good-quality



Bulwer's Petrel / Pétrel de Bulwer  
*Bulweria bulwerii* (Werner Suter)

habitat, and after having handled 1,839 individuals, they estimated that 8,389 individuals were present on the island. Correcting for the number of immatures and taking into account habitat availability, they tentatively estimated the breeding population on the Desertas Islands at 45,000 pairs. Despite the fact that this estimate contains major sources of uncertainty, the researchers' field work and experience confirms that Bulwer's Petrels are abundant and widely distributed on the islands. Only an extremely challenging survey over vast areas of precipitous cliffs and platforms would permit a significant improvement of the estimate. It is obvious that the Desertas Islands' population, and perhaps the entire European population, is much larger than previously known.

Source: *Airo 23*, pp. 10–14

### Does Swinhoe's Storm-petrel breed on the Selvagens?

Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Hydrobates monorhis* have been regularly observed in very small numbers in the Atlantic Ocean since the 1980s, but breeding has never been confirmed and the only known colonies are in the north-west Pacific. Mónica Silva and co-workers searched for evidence of breeding by the species on Selvagem Grande, in the north-east Atlantic, between

2007 and 2013. During this period, six individuals were captured and sexed, while molecular analysis confirmed them to be Swinhoe's Storm-petrels, one male and five females. Despite a pair duetting in a burrow, breeding on the island could not be confirmed. Although Swinhoe's Storm-petrels regularly occur on Selvagem Grande, capture / recapture patterns suggest that a possible breeding population is small and probably not self-sustaining.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* DOI 10.1007/s10336-015-1257-7

### Habitat restoration on Praia Islet, Azores: beneficial for seabirds, but new threats have emerged

Ten seabird species currently breed in the Azores. Many of these were extirpated from the main islands following the introduction of mammal species and are now restricted to a few islets and remote coastal strips. Praia islet, situated 1 km off Graciosa, holds six seabird species, among them the Azores breeding endemic and globally Vulnerable Monteiro's Storm-petrel *Hydrobates monteiroi*. Field work on the islet has been conducted annually since 1989 to determine breeding tern numbers, and since 2000 to monitor Monteiro's and Madeiran Storm-petrels *H. castro* breeding in artificial nests. A noticeable increase in vegetation cover and seabird breeding numbers has been recorded following habitat restoration, European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* eradication in 1997, installation of artificial nestboxes for terns in 1996 and for storm-petrels in 2000, and native plant re-introduction in 1998–2003. Whereas tern numbers have been fluctuating since the mid 2000s, storm-petrel numbers in artificial nests have kept increasing. Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* numbers reached a record high in 2011 with 500 breeding pairs and in 2012 with c.400 pairs. Common Tern *S. hirundo* breeding numbers strongly increased following rabbit eradication and the colony became the largest in the Azores, with 350 pairs in 2011 and c.400 in 2012. In 2000–11,

breeding attempts in artificial nests by Monteiro's Storm-petrels increased almost six-fold, whilst those of Madeiran Storm-petrels increased four-fold. The use of artificial nests by Monteiro's Storm-petrel represents an important conservation success and, with 250–300 breeding pairs, Praia islet may currently hold >50% of the world population. The first breeding attempts by Barolo Shearwaters *Puffinus baroli* in artificial nests installed for storm-petrels were noted in 2003; 13 such attempts were recorded in 2011 and at least nine in 2013. Despite these successes and the current absence of mammals from Praia islet, nesting seabirds still face threats, e.g. Ruddy Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* and especially Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* predate tern eggs, and introduced Madeiran Lizards *Lacerta dugesii* may prey on Monteiro's Storm-petrel chicks.

Source: *Airo 23*, pp. 25–35

## West and Central Africa

### Grey Parrot heading towards extinction in Ghana and West Africa

In more than 150 days of dedicated searching for Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* in Ghana, during which areas were visited where the species was likely to occur, as well as roosts that held 700–1,200 individuals two decades ago, only a handful of



Grey Parrot / Perroquet jaco *Psittacus erithacus* (Werner Suter)

sightings were made in 2012–14. Encounter rates averaged 0.15 individuals per hour of targeted search, c.15 times lower than those noted in the early 1990s. No active roosts were found, and just 18 individuals were observed in three roost areas that each formerly harboured hundreds of birds. It appears that Ghana has lost 90–99% of its Grey Parrots since 1992, when the population had presumably already been seriously reduced by two decades of extremely heavy trade. Available data suggest that, except in one or two localities, declines in other West African countries are equally severe. The situation facing Timneh Parrot *P. timneh*, its recently split sister species, is also severe. Both species have been virtually extirpated from wider landscapes. Grey Parrot is now probably extinct in Togo and is very rare in Nigeria, whilst densities of Timneh Parrot appear extremely low, except in a few localities. Factors that have contributed to these catastrophic declines include trade (e.g. the CITES database has Grey Parrot imports from Ghana totalling 67,259 birds for the period 1976–90, with the real number taken from the wild presumably twice this total), forest loss and reduction in habitat quality, especially due to the removal of large trees. The Red List classification of Grey and Timneh Parrot—both now Vulnerable—clearly needs to be re-evaluated.

Source: *Ibis* 158, pp. 82–91

### Catastrophic decline of Addax in Niger

Various organisations including Niger's wildlife service, the Niger Fauna Corridor Project and the Sahara Conservation Fund have recently undertaken an ambitious ground and aerial survey of key Addax (White Antelope) *Addax nasomaculatus* habitats in eastern Niger. More than 3,200 km of transects were surveyed from the air, while the ground team intensively searched >700 km of prime Addax habitat and other areas where Addax tracks had been seen during the previous six months. The plane used was equipped with the latest IRS



Addax *Addax nasomaculatus* (Werner Suter)

(Intelligence, Reconnaissance & Surveillance) technology, permitting it to spot wildlife with great accuracy through an infra-red captor and very high-resolution camera. However, not a single Addax was seen from the air, while on the ground, only one small group of three Addax was spotted. These data provide further evidence for a catastrophic decline in Addax numbers since 2010, when oil exploration and associated illegal hunting carried out by the military started in Tin Toumma and neighbouring desert areas. At that time it was estimated that the Niger Addax population numbered in excess of 200 animals. Today, it is probable that the country no longer supports a viable population of this antelope and that the species may well totally disappear within a year or two.

Source: [www.saharaconservation.org/IMG/pdf/Sandscript\\_19\\_Spring\\_2016\\_Standard.pdf](http://www.saharaconservation.org/IMG/pdf/Sandscript_19_Spring_2016_Standard.pdf)

### Okapi still occurs south-west of the Congo River

Most of the known range of the Endangered Okapi *Okapia johnstoni*, an elusive rainforest giraffid endemic to DR Congo, lies north and east of the Congo River. However, historical records, dating to at least 1926, and anecdotal reports suggest that a disjunct population may have occurred south-west of the river. To determine the validity of these reports, putative Okapi dung samples were collected in 2010–13 throughout the animal's present and historical range. Molecular analysis revealed the presence of

Okapi west of the Lomami River, in Lomami National Park, where six dung samples proved to be of four individuals. These findings show that the species still occurs south-west of the Congo River, albeit localised and at very low densities. Further studies are required to determine if the populations either side of the Congo River differ genetically and if the river acts as a dispersal barrier to the species.

Source: *Oryx* 50, pp. 134–137

## East Africa

### First record of Crested Honey Buzzard in the subregion

There are just three previous records of Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* in Africa, in Egypt, in May 1996, Gabon, in August 2004, and Sudan, June 2011 (the latter still not formally published). The fourth record, second in sub-Saharan Africa and first for East Africa, was photographed in Meru National Park, Kenya, in late September 2014. Clearly, with the species now established to be a regular passage migrant through Israel and winter visitor to eastern Arabia, as well as there being records in southern Europe, observers practically anywhere in Africa should be aware of the possibility of encountering this Asian raptor.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* 136, pp. 145–146

### New bird records for Ethiopia

Although Ethiopia is well visited by ornithologists and birders, there are still numerous knowledge gaps concerning species distributions. In a recent paper in *Scopus*, Ole Tobias Rannestad provides 126 range extensions for 118 species across 14 atlas squares, based on visits made in 2007–14. A total of 15 species was also recorded outside their known altitudinal ranges in Ethiopia. Significant range extensions were noted for, e.g., Wartled Crane *Bugeraanus carunculatus*, Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*, Red-pate Cisticola *Cisticola rupestris*, Rufous Scrub



Bronze-winged Courser / Courvite à ailes bronzées *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* (Mark Anderson)

Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*, Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Sharpe's Starling *Pholia sharpii* and Shelley's Starling *Lamprotornis shelleyi*.

Source: Scopus 36, pp. 1–14

### Large gathering of Levant Sparrowhawks in Kenya documented

An exceptional gathering involving at least 600 Levant Sparrowhawks *Accipiter brevipes* in Mara North Conservancy, western Kenya, on 23 February 2014, has been documented with photographs by Mike Mockler. It appears that until 2009 there had been just c.20 records of Levant Sparrowhawk in East Africa, nearly all of them from Kenya, and most of these involved single birds. In January 2009 a gathering of 7–12 birds was observed in south-west Tanzania, followed by reports of groups of 23 in January 2010 and of 12 in February 2012 in western Kenya.

Source: Scopus 36, pp. 33–34

### Noteworthy bird records from Kenya, 2011–14

David Pearson and Colin Jackson have reviewed noteworthy bird records from Kenya for the period

2011–14. These include records of rare species (=known from fewer than five records and assessed by the East African Rare Birds Committee, EARC) as well as records of scarce birds, range extensions, changes in status, and observations remarkable for the numbers or dates involved. Rarities accepted by the EARC include the second to fourth records of Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini* (Nambale, 27 March 2012 and 22 April 2014; Bunyala rice scheme, 10 April 2013 and 20 March 2014), the third Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Aquila africana* (Imenti forest, Meru, 28 February 2013), the third Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (Sabaki bridge, 21 July 2011), the fourth Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* (Lake Baringo, 18 April 2011), the fifth Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* (Kisite, 24 July 2013), the second record of the Palearctic, nominate, race of Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* (Ngong Hills, 20 April 2013), the first documented records of Western Citril *Criethagra frontalis* (Gwassii Hills, South Nyanza, January 2011, February 2012 and November 2014) and the third Brown-rumped Bunting *Emberiza affinis* (Kongelai Escarpment, 21 March 2012).

Source: Scopus 36, pp. 21–32

### Grey-chested Babbler still present in Kenya

Although the *Checklist of the Birds of Kenya* (EANHS 2009) states that there are no documented records of Grey-chested Babbler *Kakamega poliothorax* in Kenya since 1979, the species still exists over some of its known range, as shown by more recent records. Indeed, in the period 1993–2015, ten individuals were ringed in various parts of Kakamega Forest (three in 1993, four in 2005, two in 2014 and one in 2015) and an additional record was submitted to the Kenya Bird Map database ([kenyabirdmap.adu.org.za](http://kenyabirdmap.adu.org.za)) in January 2015. There have been no records from North Nandi or South Nandi Forests since 1979, but comprehensive surveys will probably find the species, which exhibits a high site fidelity. Kenya is at the

extreme eastern edge of the species' global range.

Source: Scopus 36, pp. 34–36

### Indian Ocean islands

#### Seychelles Black Parrot now has very low genetic diversity

The total population of Seychelles Black Parrot *Coracopsis (nigra) barklyi* is just 520–900 individuals, all on Praslin Island. Phylogenetic analyses by Hazel Jackson and others from University of Kent show that it is a sister taxon to the three extant *C. nigra* subspecies. There was also a higher genetic diversity found in historical specimens, whereas only one mtDNA haplotype was found in contemporary specimens, presumably due to a recent substantial reduction in numbers. *C. (n.) barklyi* should be considered an evolutionarily significant unit.

Source: Ibis 158, pp. 380–394

#### An aerial lek in Mauritius Cuckooshrike

Mauritius Cuckooshrike *Lalage (Coracina) typica* is endemic to the island of Mauritius and is considered Vulnerable based on its small range and population size, last estimated at 300–350 pairs. Recent observations by Myles Lamont, in Black River National Park, between October 2013 and February 2014, revealed the existence of a previously



Mauritius Cuckooshrike / Échenilleur de Maurice *Lalage typica* (Jacques de Speville)

unsuspected aerial contest display (a 'tok' = aerial lek) between presumed males, behaviour not definitely none in any of the Campephagidae. Lamont also reported new data on courtship and breeding behaviour. *Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club 136, pp. 147-149*

## Southern Africa

### Temperatures rise in South Africa's national parks

A comprehensive analysis of climate data for South Africa's national parks forms the basis of an alarming study by Nicola van Wilgen and co-workers. Of the 13 parks with sufficient records over recent decades, nine showed statistically significant increases in temperature. Max. temperatures increased, on average, by 1.2°C over the past 50 years, with the most pronounced increases occurring in the arid north-western parks. For example, an increase of 1.95°C was noted in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (TFP), Northern Cape, mainly caused by an increase in very hot days, the park currently experiencing on average 36 more days per year with max. temperatures above 35°C. Minimum temperatures have increased at approximately the same rate as maxima, with an average increase across all parks of 1.05°C during the period. The authors of the study point out that warming in South Africa's national parks has occurred at rates considerably higher than those predicted by the models that form the basis for most climate-change projections. In many cases, the magnitude of warming that has already occurred approaches that often predicted for the year 2035.

*Sources: Intern. J. Meteorology DOI: 10.1002/joc.4377; African Birdlife 4(3), p. 14*

### Fynbos biome birds unable to adapt to climate change

Six bird species are endemic to the Fynbos biome in the Cape Province of South Africa. SABAP (South African Bird Atlas Project) data analysed by Alan Lee and Phoebe Barnard, of the South African



Cape Rockjumper / Chétopse bridé  
*Chaetops frenatus* (Per Holmen)

Biodiversity Institute, suggest that all six will be affected by climate change. Global population estimates are given in the paper. Cape Rockjumper *Chaetops frenatus* and Protea Canary *Crithagra leucoptera* appear to be limited by mean annual temperature and the temperature of the warmest quarter of the year, and both have exhibited declines >30% during the 20 years between atlas projects. Climate data suggest that the area has warmed since 1960, leading to the conclusion that the species concerned appear unable to adjust physiologically to increased temperatures.

*Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 26, pp. 52-68*

### Large birds in South Africa enjoy mixed fortunes over last 30 years

Road (in 2010-11) and aerial (2012) censuses in the Karoo of Ludwig's Bustard *Neotis ludwigii* and other large terrestrial birds were repeated, using as similar methods and sites as possible to censuses conducted in the 1980s. Compared to the 1980s, Ludwig's Bustards were more associated with modified areas. The current estimate is 114,000 birds in South Africa, with no evidence of a decline. Numbers of Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradiseus* have increased since the 1980s but numbers of three other bustard species have declined, raising concerns about their conservation.

*Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 26, pp. 69-86*



Blue Crane / Grue de paradis  
*Anthropoides paradiseus*  
(Mark Anderson)

### Climatic stability means greater diversity of endemic birds

Using climate models for the last 140,000 years, Brian Huntley and others have calculated measures of variability on 0.5° grid cells, related these to distributions of nine biomes across South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, and hence the responses of 690 bird species regularly breeding in the region. The magnitude of climate variability showed clear spatial patterns, with marked changes in biome distributions over the years. The main conclusion was that low climatic variability, and especially stability, was strongly correlated with species richness of birds endemic to South Africa. There was therefore much less of an extinction risk for those whose biome has persisted longer.

*Source: J. Biogeogr. 43, pp. 874-886*

### Lead poisoning: yet another threat to vultures

Recent alarming declines in Africa's vulture populations are known to be principally caused by poisoning and the traditional medicine trade. A more insidious threat to vultures globally is lead poisoning, usually the result of feeding on carcasses of animals hunted with lead bullets. The severity of this threat to African vultures is almost unknown. To

address this knowledge gap, a team from the Denver Zoological Foundation and Raptors Botswana measured blood lead levels of nearly 500 White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* in 2012–15. They found that the blood lead levels of 136 vultures were significantly elevated above background levels, and those of an additional 11 individuals exceeded the threshold concentration above which California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus* in North America receive chelation therapy, involving the condors being held temporarily in captivity, and injected with chemicals that bind to the circulating lead molecules and remove them from the birds' systems. These findings indicate that lead poisoning merits closer attention as a factor potentially contributing to the population decline of Africa's vultures.

Sources: *Vulture News* 68, pp. 25–31; *African Birdlife* 4(3), p. 15

### Common Tern ringed in Sweden recovered in South Africa

A Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* ringed as an adult at Nabben, in southern Sweden, on 30 July 2013 was found dead at Hermanus, south-east of Cape Town, South Africa, on 5 February 2016. The bird presumably followed the usual migration route along the African coast, covering a distance of >13,500 km. It was found on a beach with c.200 other dead Common Terns. The suspected cause of death was a 'red tide', a type of a harmful algal bloom caused by toxin-producing dinoflagellates. These toxins may accumulate in shellfish and fish,



Common Tern / Sterne pierregarin *Sterna hirundo* (Lilian Sineux)

thereby posing a danger to organisms higher up the food chain.

Source: [www.falsterbofagelstation.se](http://www.falsterbofagelstation.se)

### Longest large-mammal migration in Africa discovered

Data from eight adult Burchell's Zebras *Equus quagga* collared on the border of Namibia and Botswana revealed that in December 2012 and 2013 all individuals crossed the Chobe River and moved south to Nxai Pan National Park in Botswana, where they spent on average ten weeks before returning to their dry-season floodplains. This previously unknown migration involves several thousand zebras covering a straight-line distance of 500 km. The onward journey was highly linear and the c.250 km were covered in approximately two weeks. The return trajectory was less direct and took on average 85 days. The mean distance of actual movements by the collared zebras was 955 km. Nxai Pan appeared to experience similar environmental conditions to several possible alternative wet-season destinations closer to the dry-season habitat on the Chobe River. This suggests that the migration may represent an ancient, conserved phenomenon that has a genetic basis and / or is an outcome of learned behaviour and cultural transmission,



Burchell's Zebra / Zèbre de Burchell *Equus quagga* (Mark Anderson)

rather than a response to current environmental conditions.

Source: *Oryx* 50, pp. 138–148

## Taxonomic proposals

### Evolution and phylogeography of Osprey

Using two mitochondrial genes (cytochrome *b* and ND2), Monti *et al.* (2015) aimed to clarify the phylogeny and taxonomy of ospreys *Pandion* across the globe. They suggested a pattern of colonisation from the Americas to the Old World, and recovered four evolutionary significant units (each with low levels of intra-clade genetic variability): Indo-Australian *cristatus*, European-African *haliaetus*, American *carolinensis* and *ridgwaii* combined, and a fourth new lineage in north-east Asia (Siberia and Japan). There was no evidence of any genetic distinctiveness in the Red Sea population (despite inclusion of several samples), which was found to group with other *haliaetus*, especially those in North Africa, but was reported to differ significantly by Strandberg's recent subspecies identification paper (*Dutch Birding* 35: 69–87, 2013).

Source: *BMC Evol. Biol.* 15, 255

### Generic reorganisation of the Charadriidae

Two recently published multi-locus DNA studies indicate that the genus *Charadrius* is not monophyletic, both of which recovered three major clades that were more closely related to *Vanellus* than to the type species of *Charadrius* (Common Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*): (1) a clade comprising Caspian Plover *C. asiaticus*, Oriental Plover *C. veredus*, Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*, (2) the New Zealand endemic Wirebird *Anarhynchus frontalis*, together with Double-banded Plover *C. bicinctus* and New Zealand Plover *C. obscurus*, and (3) Kittlitz's Plover *C. pecuarius*, Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*, White-fronted Plover *C. marginatus*, Wirebird *C. sanctaehelenae* and many other species. However, the



Above, top to bottom:

Greater Sand Plover / Gravelot de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii* (Per Holmen)

Kittlitz's Plover / Gravelot pâre *Charadrius pecuarius* (Mark Anderson)

latter clade was poorly supported in both studies, making it inadvisable to recognise three genera at this stage. As a result, the British Ornithologists' Union Taxonomic Subcommittee recently elected to place all these three groups into a single genus, for which the name *Anarhynchus* has priority.

Sources: PLoS ONE 8: e78068; Mol. Phyl. & Evol. 89, pp. 151–159; Ibis 158, pp. 206–212

### More on Fiery-necked and Black-shouldered Nightjars

The debate as to whether Fiery-necked *Caprimulgus pectoralis* and Black-shouldered Nightjars *C. nigriscapularis* represent a single very widespread species, or two species, has been ongoing for some decades, with some of the most recent contributions to the debate being the biometric study of Jackson (2013, *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club* 133: 116–124) and the field work by Anderson (2012, *Bull. ABC* 19: 194–199), who



Fiery-necked Nightjar / Engoulevent musicien *Caprimulgus pectoralis* (Per Holmen)

described records of both species in parts of Rwanda, but who was unable to point to definite evidence of sympatry. As a result, many recent authorities have elected to treat them as one species, including the Howard & Moore checklist and *HBW Alive*. Author of several major works on Caprimulgidae, Nigel Cleere has recently drawn our attention to the molecular paper by Kin-Lan Han *et al.* (2010), which found that *pectoralis* and *nigriscapularis* were representatives of different sub-clades within their Old World clade, with the first-named grouping with Montane Nightjar *C. poliocephalus* and the second alone, although the two sub-clades were sisters. Cleere, who is currently working on a revised version of his 1998 *Nightjars* monograph, plans to continue to treat Fiery-necked and Black-shouldered Nightjars as species apart, based on this finding.

Source: Mol. Phyl. & Evol. 55, pp. 443–453

### Taxonomy of Crested Lark

In one of its final acts prior to being disbanded by the British Ornithologists' Union, the organisation's Taxonomic Subcommittee elected to treat Maghreb Lark *Galerida macrorhyncha* (including *G. m. randonii*) as a species apart from the widespread Crested Lark *G. cristata*. Non-overlapping morphological characters, combined with very strong association between mtDNA haplotype and morphology, evidence that reproductive isolation between

the two lineages is very strong in Morocco (where both have been sampled at multiple locations), although populations from Tunisia are intermediate in bill size between Crested Lark from Morocco and Maghreb Lark, but their mtDNA clusters with Crested Lark.

Source: Ibis 158, pp. 206–212

### Developments in reed warbler taxonomy

Jens Hering and co-authors have described a new subspecies of European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* from the Egypt / Libya border region. The new form, named *A. s. ammon*, is clearly diagnosable in biometrics, habitat, breeding biology and behaviour. It is a sedentary taxon confined to the large depressions of the eastern Libyan Desert, in Qattara, Siwa, Sitra and Al Jaghbug. The most important field characters are the short wings and tarsi, which are significantly different from closely related *A. s. scirpaceus*, *A. s. fuscus* and *A. s. avicenniae*, less so from *A. baeticatus cinnamomeus*, which is more clearly separated by behaviour / nest sites and toe length. Molecular genetic analyses determined the new subspecies to be differentiated from *A. s. scirpaceus*, *A. s. avicenniae* and *A. s. fuscus*. The song is similar to that of other Eurasian Reed Warbler taxa as well as that of *A. baeticatus*, but the succession of individual elements appears slower than in *A. s. scirpaceus* and shows more resemblance to *A. s. avicenniae*. Among the new subspecies' unique traits are that its preferred breeding habitat in the Siwa Oasis complex, besides stands of reed, is date palms and olive trees. Nest sites in trees, palms and shrubs are unique in the Eurasian and African Reed Warbler superspecies, with clear parallels in foraging behaviour and ecomorphology to oceanic island reed warblers.

Meanwhile, in a separate paper, Urban Olsson and co-workers have reconstructed a tree based on the mitochondrial cytochrome-*b* gene for 278 samples from throughout the range of the European Reed Warbler / African Reed Warbler complex, which shows well-supported





Eurasian Reed Warbler / Rousserolle effarvatte *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
(John Caddick)

geographically structured divergence for eight distinct lineages. The phylogenetic structuring together with the clarification of priority, provided by sequence data from seven type specimens, suggests that both taxonomy and distribution boundaries require revision. Iberian and Moroccan populations form a well-supported clade, and the authors propose that these are treated as taxonomically distinct, under the name *ambiguus*. They also recommend that the names *scirpaceus*, *fuscus*, *avicenniae*, *ambiguus*, *minor*, *cinnamomeus*, *hallae* and *baeticus* are used for the well-supported clades within the complex, but they are all treated as a single polytypic species, *A. scirpaceus*, pending studies of gene flow and assortative mating in the contact zones.

Sources: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club 136, pp. 101–128; Mol. Phyl. & Evol. 102, pp. 30–44

### New evidence supports the split of Atlas Flycatcher

Molecular genetics were initially used to recommend splitting the so-called Atlas Flycatcher *Ficedula speculigera* from other taxa of Pied Flycatchers *F. hypoleuca*, at the start of the present century. Recent work, by Jaime Potti *et al.*, has found significant biometric differences between Pied Flycatchers from Iberian (*F. b. iberiae*) and North African populations (*speculigera*), which are consistent with proposals to classify the two forms as separate species. Both sexes of Atlas Flycatchers are larger than Iberian Pied Flycatchers in skeletal (tarsus) and wing size, and also differ in bill morphology (wider but shallower in *speculigera*, with females alone having shorter bills than *iberiae* females). Males differ in mantle colour and forehead patch size, with *speculigera* males being darker and displaying larger forehead patches than *iberiae* males. As in populations of *iberiae*, some *speculigera* females also possess a white forehead patch.

Source: Bird Study 63, doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2016.1188879

### The ongoing saga of the East African boubous

Following the rediscovery of a form of *Laniarius* on Manda Island, off north-eastern Kenya, which had been treated as a melanistic morph of Tropical Boubou *L. aethiopicus* for c.70 years, a detailed field study strongly indicated that it was wrongly assigned. Molecular examination has now proven that it is the same species as *L. (aethiopicus) erlangeri*, until

now considered a Somali endemic, and that these populations should therefore take the oldest available name *L. nigerrimus*. The overall classification of coastal boubous also proved to require revision, and Brian Finch *et al.* present a preliminary new classification for taxa in this region using both genetic and morphological data. Genetic evidence revealed that the coastal ally of *L. aethiopicus*, recently considered specifically as *L. sublacteus*, comprises two unrelated forms, requiring a future detailed study. Thus, the saga of these continues.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club 136, pp. 74–85

### Internet resources

#### Atlas of the Birds of Mauritania

The first version of the Bird Atlas of Mauritania is freely accessible online at <http://atlasornmau.org/>. It is a follow-up to Isenmann *et al.* (2010). *Oiseaux de Mauritanie / Birds of Mauritania*, which has no distribution maps. Some 65,000 bird records from 78 sources have been used. For each of >500 species, the half-degree squares where the species has been observed in the country are indicated as well as where there is evidence of breeding. Further news about the development of the atlas will be announced on the website and on the African Birding forum.

Source: Peter Browne in litt. to *African Birding*, April 2016

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# Notes on the birds of Equatorial Guinea, including nine first country records

Jacob C. Cooper<sup>a</sup>, Luke L. Powell<sup>b</sup> and Jared D. Wolfe<sup>c</sup>

**Notes sur les oiseaux de la Guinée équatoriale, dont neuf espèces nouvelles pour le pays.** À l'occasion d'inventaires effectués en Guinée équatoriale continentale et sur l'île de Bioko en novembre 2013 et décembre 2014, 246 espèces d'oiseaux ont été recensées, dont six étaient nouvelles pour le pays (Aigle de Wahlberg *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*, Chouette-pêcheuse de Pel *Scotopelia peli*, Indicateur à queue-en-lyre *Melichneutes robustus*, Bulbul à gorge claire *Atimastillas flavicollis*, Hirondelle d'Éthiopie *Hirundo aethiopica* et Tisserin à lunettes *Ploceus ocularis*). Des nouvelles données concernant l'aire de répartition et l'étendue altitudinale de plusieurs espèces ont été notées. Des observations récentes importantes effectuées par d'autres observateurs sont mentionnées, parmi lesquelles trois additions supplémentaires à l'avifaune du pays (Anserelle naine *Nettapus auritus*, Tourterelle maillée *Streptopelia senegalensis* et Capucin pie *Spermestes fringilloides*).

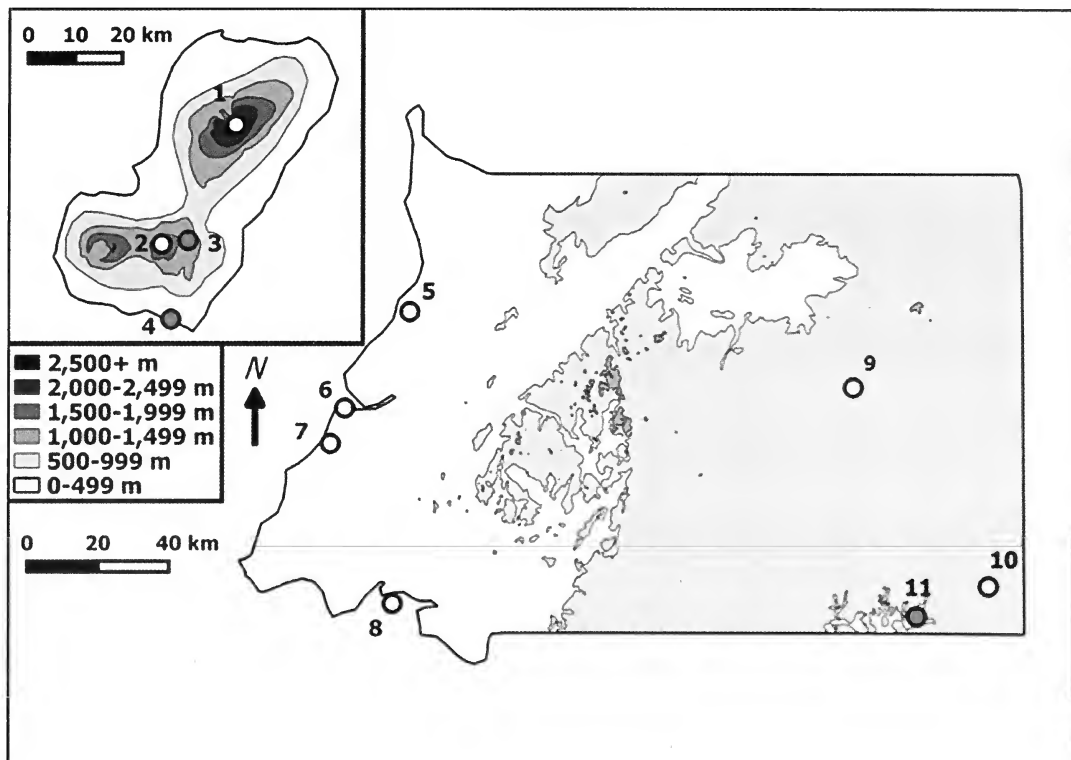
**Summary.** During surveys of mainland Equatorial Guinea and Bioko in November 2013 and December 2014, 246 bird species were recorded, including six that were new for the country (Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*, Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus*, Yellow-throated Leaflove *Atimastillas flavicollis*, Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* and Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*). We also extended the distribution and elevational range of several species within the country. Important recent sightings by other observers are also listed, including three other additions to the country's avifauna (African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*, Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* and Magpie Mannikin *Spermestes fringilloides*).

Equatorial Guinea is among the world's most poorly surveyed countries from an ornithological perspective (Pérez del Val 2001). The country comprises three separate regions: the relatively well-known island of Bioko, the seldom-visited island of Annobón, and the largely unsurveyed mainland, commonly referred to as Río Muni or the Región Continental. Over the past 15 years, the small amount of ornithological work completed within the country has added several species to its avifauna (Pérez del Val *et al.* 1997, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1999, Larison *et al.* 1999). Most of this previous work was conducted on Bioko, where surveys were biased towards the more accessible areas (Pérez del Val 1996, Lenton *et al.* 2000, Zafra-Calvo *et al.* 2010).

In November 2013 and December 2014, we conducted surveys near Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork (PNLAN, Región Continental) and maintained daily lists of audio-visual records for other localities in the Región Continental and Bioko. The results are presented here.

## Study Areas and Methods

Our field work was principally undertaken in the Región Continental, along the southern edge of PNLAN, Wele-Nzas (c.550 m) in the extreme south-east, and on Bioko, in the vicinity of the Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program (BBPP) field station north of Moka, at c.1,400 m, Bioko Sur. In the Región Continental, we were based in Bata before travelling to the southern edge of PNLAN, not far from the only other surveys conducted in the region (Larison *et al.* 1999). During our brief time in PNLAN in 2013, we conducted limited mist-netting operations and audio-visual surveys over three days while scouting locations for future work. When we returned in 2014, we surveyed 16 localities in PNLAN, split equally between primary and secondary forest. At each site we set up six 12 × 3 m mist-nets for five hours, for a total of 30 mist-net hours per site. The avifauna of each site was further assessed with two 20-minute area searches, the results of which were uploaded into eBird at the coordinates of each mist-net-line's centre. These results were supplemented with daily lists of all species seen or heard in the same general area as mist-netting and surveys were



**Figure 1.** Map of localities in Equatorial Guinea visited in November 2013 and December 2014: (1) Parque Nacional del Pico Basilé; (2) Pico Biao; (3) Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program field station, Moka; (4) Moaba; (5) Bata; (6) Mbini; (7) Reserva Natural de Punta Llende; (8) Río Muni Estuary; (9) Oyala (Djibloho); (10) Nsork (town); (11) Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork. White dots represent localities where only audio-visual observations were made; red dots represent those where mist-netting was also undertaken. Map based on Natural Earth and ESRI World Topographic base maps.

Carte des localités en Guinée équatoriale visitées en novembre 2013 et décembre 2014 : (1) Parque Nacional del Pico Basilé ; (2) Pico Biao ; (3) station de terrain du Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program, Moka ; (4) Moaba ; (5) Bata ; (6) Mbini ; (7) Reserva Natural de Punta Llende; (8) estuaire du Río Muni ; (9) Oyala (Djibloho) ; (10) Nsork (ville); (11) Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork. Les points blancs représentent les localités où des observations audio-visuelles ont été effectuées, les points rouges celles où des captures au filet japonais ont également été effectuées. Carte basée sur les cartes de base topographiques Natural Earth et ESRI World.

conducted. Furthermore, we made short visits to the university under construction at Oyala, Wel-Nzas, to the Río Muni estuary upstream from Cogo (an area known as Cuatro Ríos), and to the *praderas* (coastal grasslands) within the Reserva Natural de Punta Llende (hereafter Punta Llende). On Bioko, we conducted audio-visual surveys and small-scale banding operations at the BBPP station (2013: 160 mist-net hours over four days; 2014: 90 mist-net hours over two days; *c.*6 hours covering *c.*2 km of trail), travelled to the montane forests on Pico Biao (one day each in 2013 and 2014; *c.*6 hours covering *c.*4 km of trail), and hiked to the southern coast (where observations

were largely incidental due to heavy rain). We also spent two hours covering *c.*2 km of road at 2,000 m on Pico Basilé. Localities are shown in Fig. 1.

Audio-visual surveys and area searches were primarily conducted by JCC. Informal surveys utilised road cuts and existing forest trails around the banding locations, whereas area searches were confined to a 50-m radius around the centre of the locality's mist-net line. Whenever possible, photographs were taken and audio-recordings made. Mist-netting locations were chosen primarily by forest quality and, secondarily, by their ability to bisect vegetation for understory birds along existing forest trails; mist-nets were

primarily run by LLP & JDW with help from two Equatoguinean field technicians from INDEFOR-AP. Mist-netted birds were photographed and measured.

Daily lists and surveys have been made publicly available via eBird (<http://ebird.org/ebird/country/GQ?yr=all>; eBird 2012). Checklists contain specific GPS coordinates for all sightings, and are linked to photographs and sound-recordings obtained at each location. All recordings are available at Xeno-Canto (with archival numbers 'XC###' listed under the relevant species).

## Results

In total, we recorded 246 species—214 in the Región Continental and 111 on Bioko (see Appendix 1)—and mist-netted 396 birds representing 49 taxa (Appendix 2). Details of the most significant records are given below.

### Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*

One observed near Econg, at the southern edge of PNLAN, on 13 December 2014 (Fig. 2). First record for Equatorial Guinea.

### Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

A *Tringa* sandpiper flushed at the mouth of the Río Eola, east of Ureca, on the night of 21–22 November 2013 was identified by call as this species. Second record for Bioko, the first being in 1943 (Pérez del Val 1996). The species is a locally common migrant on the mainland and is probably regular on Bioko.

### Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

One near a dammed creek along a road under construction at Liana de Agua, Wele Nzas, on 28 November 2013 (Fig. 3). First record for the Región Continental and the first for Equatorial Guinea since 1939 (Pérez del Val 1996).

### Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

One at c.2,000 m on Pico Basilé on 30 November 2013 and a pair at c.1,600 m on Pico Biao on 23 December 2014 (XC209711). Previously known to occur up to c.1,400 m (Pérez del Val 1996).

### Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*

One gave a drawn-out series of low hoots at the edge of a palm swamp within PNLAN on 15–16 December 2014 (XC283909) and another was

heard distantly in mature secondary forest c.2 km to the east-southeast on 17 December 2014. First records for Equatorial Guinea. The species is probably a rare resident in the eastern Región Continental.

### Unidentified swift *Apus* sp.

*Apus* swifts with overall black bodies and darker wings were repeatedly seen in November 2013 and December 2014. A bird observed at close range on 26 November called several times, giving African Black Swift *A. barbatus*-like calls. Poor-quality photographs were obtained that do not permit specific identification but do eliminate Bates's Swift *A. batesi* and other resident swifts. Additional observations confirmed that the birds were not Common Swifts *A. apus*. Based on our field notes, we suspect they were Fernando Po Swifts *A. sladeniae*.

### Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus*

Observed near the BBPP field station at c.1,400 m on 19–20 November 2013. Previously noted up to c.1,000 m (Pérez del Val (1996).

### Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus*

A displaying male was heard in secondary forest near PNLAN on 13 December 2014 and another in primary forest in PNLAN on 15 December. Identified by the distinctive, accelerating series of nasal sounds, which matched published recordings (Chappuis 2000). First records for Equatorial Guinea.

### Kestrel sp. *Falco naumanni* / *tinnunculus*

A falcon *Falco* sp. mobbed by Pied Crows *Corvus albus* was seen at Bata Airport on 25 November 2013. It had a long tail, whitish underwings, blue-grey upperwings and tail, and a rufous body. No photographs could be taken. It was either a Lesser or a Common Kestrel; neither species has been previously recorded in Equatorial Guinea.

### Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*

Still quite common in Bioko Sur, with flocks of 30–50 seen daily at the BBPP field station. Markedly less common in the Región Continental, where observed at Mbolozoc and Liana de Agua in Wele-Nzas. The Región Continental may prove vital by potentially serving as a source population for neighbouring areas with depleted



**Figure 2.** Wahlberg's Eagle / Aigle de Wahlberg *Hieraetus wahlbergi*, Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork, Wele-Nzas, Equatorial Guinea, 13 December 2014 (Jacob C. Cooper)



**Figure 4.** Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica*, Nsork, at south-east border of Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork, Wele-Nzas, Equatorial Guinea, 6 December 2014 (Jacob C. Cooper)



**Figure 3.** Second country record (and first for the Región Continental) of Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork, Wele-Nzas, Equatorial Guinea, 28 November 2013 (Jacob C. Cooper)

Deuxième mention pour le pays (et la première pour la Región Continental) du Chevalier sylvain *Tringa glareola*, Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork, Wele-Nzas, Guinée équatoriale, 28 novembre 2013 (Jacob C. Cooper)

Hirondelle d'Éthiopie *Hirundo aethiopica*, Nsork, à la limite sud-est du Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork, Wele-Nzas, Guinée équatoriale, 6 décembre 2014 (Jacob C. Cooper)

Grey Parrot numbers. The ruggedness of Bioko makes trapping birds impractical, and may ensure the continued survival of this isolated, yet sizeable, population.

#### **Bioko Batis** *Batis poensis*

A male, foraging in the canopy adjacent to a clearing along the Biao Trail above Moka at *c.*1,300 m, was observed for several minutes on 19 November 2013 and again on 23 December 2014, when it was carrying food. The nominate race is a widespread, albeit rarely encountered, resident endemic on Bioko that was previously known to occur up to 1,100 m (Pérez del Val 1996).

#### **Grey Cuckooshrike** *Coracina caesia*

One in a mixed-species flock in montane forest on the upper slopes of Pico Biao at *c.*1,600 m, on 19 November 2013. There are just four previous records: three from the Pico Biao–Moka area and one from Pico Basilé (Pérez del Val 1996). Probably more widespread, and its apparent rarity may be due to the inaccessibility of montane regions.

#### **Slender-billed Greenbul** *Stelgidillas gracilirostris*

An individual that appeared to be ill was trapped at the BBPP field station at *c.*1,400 m on 20 November 2013. Usually encountered below *c.*400 m (Pérez del Val (1996).

**Yellow-throated Leaflove** *Atimastillas flavicollis*

A family group of these large, pale-throated greenbuls was foraging at the edge of a treefall gap in PNLAN on 15 December 2014 and another group was seen two days later in secondary forest immediately south of PNLAN. Calls matched published recordings (Chappuis 2000). First records for Equatorial Guinea.

**Ethiopian Swallow** *Hirundo aethiopica*

Several pairs were observed in the town of Nsork, Wele-Nzas, on 6 December 2014 (Fig. 4). First record for Equatorial Guinea, in keeping with the species' recent range expansion (Turner 2004).

**Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida*

One in the port town of Cogo on 29 November 2013. A discontinuously distributed pan-African species, it is included on the ABC checklist on the basis of a single sight record (Shirley & Harter in prep.).

**Preuss's Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon preussi*

We found a colony of *c.* 100 individuals in Mbini, south of the mouth of the Río Wele, and observed foraging birds in adjacent open areas. The extent of the species' breeding range in Equatorial Guinea is unknown.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

One on Pico Basilé at *c.* 2,000 m on 30 November 2013, foraging in vines adjacent to the road. There are just three previous records for Bioko: two specimens collected in November and December 1902 and one sighting in December–January 1966 / 67 (Pérez del Val 1996).

**Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps*

One at the BBPP field station on 20 November 2013, foraging in low scrub, at the edge of cultivation beside a tract of riparian woodland. An uncommon resident, which was rarely recorded prior to Pérez del Val's (1996) field work, and he found it at just a few localities, the BBPP field station being near one of these.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

One on Pico Biao on 19 November 2013, one mist-netted at the BBPP field station on 22 December 2014, and five observed on Pico Biao on 23 December 2014. There are just two

previous records for Bioko (Pérez del Val 1996). A common Palearctic migrant in neighbouring countries, which probably occurs regularly on Bioko.

**Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis*

One observed at close range in an urban garden in Bata on 9 December 2014. It was identified by its yellow eye, head more orange than body, and distinct black eyestripe (bolder than in Orange Weaver *P. aurantius*) extending from a sharp black bill. Although the species is stated to occur in Equatorial Guinea by Fry & Keith (2004), there are no documented previous records (Dowsett *et al.* 2015). It is widespread in neighbouring Cameroon (Borrow & Demey 2014).

**Magpie Mannikin** *Spermestes fringilloides*

A foraging flock of *c.* 30 birds was photographed near Mbolozoc, Wele-Nzas, on 13 December 2014. Third record for Equatorial Guinea (see below).

**Noteworthy records by other observers**

In the course of research for our visits, we located the following noteworthy records.

**African Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus auritus*

One photographed at Moaba on 7 November 2014 (Guenther 2014). First record for Equatorial Guinea.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

One south-west of Luba on 15 March 2006 and another at Playa Moraka from 20 October 2014 to 9 March 2015 (Langrand 2006, Hart 2014a). First and second records for Bioko.

**African Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer*

A pair south-west of Luba on 15 March 2006 and another pair at Playa Moraka on 19 December 2014 (Langrand 2006, Hart 2014b). Second and third records for Bioko.

**African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris*

One at 'Playa C' west of Ureca on 28 October 2014 (Cronin 2014). First record for Bioko.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*

One at Playa Moraka on 8 March 2015 (Hart 2015). First record for Equatorial Guinea.

### **Magpie Mannikin** *Spermestes fringilloides*

Two on 12 June 2002 and one the next day at the eastern edge of Parque Nacional de Monte Alen, Región Continental (Yale Peabody Museum, New Haven, CT: 100576, 100642, 137903). First records for Equatorial Guinea.

### **Discussion**

In recent years, the massive influx of oil revenue in Equatorial Guinea has led to rapid infrastructural development. Several locations we visited that were once several days' travel from Bata are now merely hours away. Development has led to increased forest clearance and the accessibility of new regions to bushmeat hunting. Road building is occurring at a phenomenal rate, and we witnessed the clearing of old-growth forest for road development. The government is actively countering this development with the preservation of several sizeable areas as national parks and increasing awareness of conservation programmes. Additionally, anti-poaching regulations are being enforced at a heretofore unprecedented level and the government is working towards improved protection for the country's biodiversity (Fernández & McCabe 2013). There was a marked decrease in poached animals available for purchase between our visits in 2013 and 2014, and anti-poaching signs are now a regular sight near protected areas. The government's resolve to protect the country's natural areas became evident when we encountered illegal loggers in Punta Llendi. Our co-worker from the Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Forestal y Manejo del Sistema de Áreas Protegidas (INDEFOR-AP), Cayetano Ebana Ebana Alene, immediately confronted the group and confiscated five chainsaws while we were present. The experience not only revealed difficulties in maintaining protected areas in the region, but illustrated the zeal of local conservationists for preserving Equatorial Guinea's natural capital.

Many national park localities have surprising diversity for being so accessible, and well illustrate their ability to protect the region's diversity thus far. At Akoc Esakira, PNLAN, we found two unoccupied Grey-necked Rockfowl *Picathartes oreas* nests within several hundred metres of the road. Additionally, while banding on a roadside trail, our guides informed us

that Western Lowland Gorillas *Gorilla gorilla* occur and can often be heard. In the area, however, a large amount of bushmeat hunting for personal subsistence occurs, and we observed a hunting blind and a poacher in PNLAN. During our travels, several local people admitted eating hornbills (Bucerotidae) and we found a dead Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata* in a local market. These species, while common in relatively remote regions, are noticeably rarer and shyer in more accessible areas. While the pressure is not nearly as great on local bird populations as it is on mammals, species will undoubtedly be affected by increased hunting pressure as previously remote areas become more accessible (Albrechtsen *et al.* 2007, Whytock *et al.* 2014).

Knowledge regarding shorebirds in Equatorial Guinea is poor and potentially crucial wintering grounds remain insufficiently surveyed (Pérez del Val 2001). Our few observations of waterbirds (e.g. Wood Sandpiper) are some of the only observations of these species in the country. These birds certainly occur more frequently, and their current status in the country is a reflection of poor observer coverage.

It is to be expected that many bird species associated with open country will become more common as development progresses. Forest fragmentation will increase, possibly leading to local extinctions of forest-dependent species. Further work is required to quantify the effects of development on local birdlife and ensure continued protection of the region's biodiversity.

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#### Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in Equatorial Guinea, November 2013 and December 2014.

Sequence and scientific nomenclature generally follow Gill & Donsker (2015). English names are those used in Borrow & Demeý (2014).

Additions to the avifauna of Equatorial Guinea are marked \*.

#### Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées en Guinée équatoriale en novembre 2013 et décembre 2014.

L'ordre et la nomenclature scientifiques suivent en général Gill & Donsker (2015). Les noms anglais sont ceux utilisés dans Borrow & Demeý (2014).

Les additions à l'avifaune de la Guinée équatoriale sont marquées d'un \*.

		Bioko	Río Muni
<b>ARDEIDAE</b>			
Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	X	X
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	X	X
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		X
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>		X
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		X
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		X
Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	X	X
<b>SCOPIIDAE</b>			
Hammerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		X
<b>PELECANIDAE</b>			
Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>		X
<b>PHALACROCORACIDAE</b>			
Long-tailed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>		X
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>			
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>		X
Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	X	X
Congo Serpent Eagle	<i>Dryotriorchis spectabilis</i>		X
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaelatus occipitalis</i>		X
*Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Hieraetus wahlbergi</i>		X
Ayres's Eagle	<i>Hieraetus ayresii</i>		X
Cassin's Hawk Eagle	<i>Aquila africana</i>		X
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>		X
Long-tailed Hawk	<i>Urotriorchus macrourus</i>		X
Red-chested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter toussenellii</i>	X	X
Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>		X
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	X	X
Red-necked Buzzard	<i>Buteo auguralis</i>		X
<b>SAROTHRURIDAE</b>			
White-spotted Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura pulchra</i>		X
<b>RALLIDAE</b>			
Nkulengu Rail	<i>Himantornis haematopus</i>		X
Black Crake	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>		X
<b>SCOLOPACIDAE</b>			
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		X
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		X
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	X	X
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		X
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	X	X
<b>LARIDAE</b>			
Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>		X
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>			
Afep Pigeon	<i>Columba unicincta</i>		X
Cameroon Olive Pigeon	<i>Columba sjostedti</i>	X	
Western Bronze-naped Pigeon	<i>Columba iriditorques</i>		X
Lemon Dove	<i>Aplopelia larvata</i>	X	X
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	X	X
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>		X
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>		X
Blue-headed Wood Dove	<i>Turtur brehmeri</i>		X
<b>ANATIDAE</b>			
Hartaub's Duck	<i>Pteronetta hartlaubii</i>		X
<b>PHASIANIDAE</b>			
Latham's Forest Francolin	<i>Peliperdix lathamii</i>		X
Scaly Francolin	<i>Pternistis squamatus</i>		X
<b>PODICIPIDAE</b>			
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	X	
<b>CICONIIDAE</b>			
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>		X
<b>THRESKIORNITHIDAE</b>			
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	X	X

		Bioko	Rio Muni			Bioko	Rio Muni
African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>	X	X	Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill	<i>Tockus camarus</i>		X
<b>MUSOPHAGIDAE</b>				White-crested Hornbill	<i>Horizocerus albocristatus</i>		X
Great Blue Turaco	<i>Corytheola cristata</i>	X	X	Piping Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>		X
Green Turaco	<i>Tauraco persa</i>		X	White-thighed Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes albotibialis</i>		X
Yellow-billed Turaco	<i>Tauraco macrorhynchus</i>	X	X	Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes subcylindrica</i>		X
<b>CUCULIDAE</b>				Black-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna atrata</i>	X	X
Gabon Coucal	<i>Centropus anselli</i>		X	<b>LYBIIDAE</b>			
Yellowbill	<i>Ceuthmochores aereus</i>	X	X	Speckled Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus scolopaceus</i>	X	X
Yellow-throated Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx flavigularis</i>		X	Red-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus atroflavus</i>		X
Didric Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>		X	Yellow-throated Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus subsulphureus</i>	X	X
Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	X	X	Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>	X	X
African Emerald Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i>	X	X	Yellow-spotted Barbet	<i>Buccanodon duchaillui</i>		X
Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo	<i>Cercococcyx olivinus</i>		X	Hairy-breasted Barbet	<i>Tricholaema hirsuta</i>		X
Red-chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>		X	Yellow-billed Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus purpuratus</i>		X
<b>TYTONIDAE</b>				<b>INDICATORIDAE</b>			
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	X		Zenker's Honeyguide	<i>Melignomon zenkeri</i>		X
<b>STRIGIDAE</b>				Least Honeyguide	<i>Indicator exilis</i>		X
*Pel's Fishing Owl	<i>Scotopelia peli</i>		X	*Lyre-tailed Honeyguide	<i>Melichneutes robustus</i>		X
African Wood Owl	<i>Strix woodfordii</i>	X	X	<b>PICIDAE</b>			
<b>APODIDAE</b>				Green-backed Woodpecker	<i>Campethera cailliauti</i>		X
Mottled Spinetail	<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>		X	Buff-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Campethera nivosa</i>		X
Sabine's Spinetail	<i>Rhaphidura sabini</i>	X	X	Brown-eared Woodpecker	<i>Campethera caroli</i>		X
Cassin's Spinetail	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>		X	<b>FALCONIDAE</b>			
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	X	X	Lesser / Common Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni / tinnunculus</i>		X
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		X	<b>PSITTACIDAE</b>			
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	X	X	Grey Parrot	<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>	X	X
Bates's Swift	<i>Apus batesi</i>		X	<b>EURYLAIMIDAE</b>			
swift sp.	<i>Apus sp.</i>		X	Rufous-sided Broadbill	<i>Smithornis rufolateralis</i>		X
<b>COLIIDAE</b>				<b>PLATYSTEIRIDAE</b>			
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>		X	Black-and-white Flycatcher	<i>Bias musicus</i>		X
<b>TROGONIDAE</b>				Bioko Batis	<i>Batis poensis</i>	X	X
Bare-cheeked Trogon	<i>Apaloderma aequatoriale</i>		X	Chestnut Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya castanea</i>		X
<b>CORACIIDAE</b>				Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya concreta</i>		X
Blue-throated Roller	<i>Eurystomus gularis</i>		X	Black-necked Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya chalybea</i>	X	
Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>		X	<b>MALACONOTIDAE</b>			
<b>ALCEDINIDAE</b>				Many-coloured Bush-shrike	<i>Chlorophoneus multicolor</i>		X
Chocolate-backed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon badia</i>		X	Sabine's Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus sabini</i>		X
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbicus</i>		X	Mountain Sooty Boubou	<i>Laniarius poensis</i>	X	
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>		X	Lühdner's Bush-shrike	<i>Laniarius luehderi</i>		X
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>		X	<b>CAMPEPHAGIDAE</b>			
White-bellied Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis leucogaster</i>	X	X	Grey Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina caesia</i>	X	
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>		X	<b>ORIOIIDAE</b>			
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>		X	Western Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus brachyrhynchus</i>		X
<b>MEROPIIDAE</b>				<b>DICRURIDAE</b>			
Black Bee-eater	<i>Merops gularis</i>		X	Velvet-mantled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus modestus</i>		X
Blue-breasted Bee-eater	<i>Merops variegatus</i>		X	<b>MONARCHIDAE</b>			
Rosy Bee-eater	<i>Merops malimbicus</i>		X	Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher	<i>Trochocercus nitens</i>		X
<b>BUCEROTIDAE</b>				Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufocinerea</i>		X
African Pied Hornbill	<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>		X				

		Bioko	Rio Muni			Bioko	Rio Muni
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	X	X	Grey Longbill	<i>Macrosphenus concolor</i>		X
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>		X	Green Crombec	<i>Sylvietta virens</i>		X
<b>CORVIDAE</b>				Lemon-bellied Crombec	<i>Sylvietta denti</i>		X
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	X	X	<b>INCERTAE SEDIS</b>			
<b>STENOSTIRIDAE</b>				Green Hylia	<i>Hylia prasina</i>	X	X
African Blue Flycatcher	<i>Elminia longicauda</i>		X	Tit-hylia	<i>Pholidornis rushiae</i>		X
Dusky Crested Flycatcher	<i>Elminia nigromitrata</i>		X	<b>PHYLLOSCOPIDAE</b>			
White-bellied Crested Flycatcher	<i>Elminia albiventris</i>	X		Black-capped Woodland Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus herberti</i>	X	
<b>NICATORIDAE</b>				Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	X	
Western Nicator	<i>Nicator chloris</i>		X	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		X
Yellow-throated Nicator	<i>Nicator vireo</i>		X	<b>ACROCEPHALIDAE</b>			
<b>PYCNONOTIDAE</b>				Melodious / Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta / icterina</i>		X
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>		X	<b>LOCUSTELLIDAE</b>			
Western Mountain Greenbul	<i>Arizelocichla tephrolaema</i>	X		Evergreen Forest Warbler	<i>Bradypterus lopezi</i>	X	
Slender-billed Greenbul	<i>Stelgidillas gracilirostris</i>	X	X	<b>CISTICOLIDAE</b>			
Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>	X	X	Chattering Cisticola	<i>Cisticola anonymus</i>		X
Little Grey Greenbul	<i>Eurillas gracilis</i>		X	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		X
Ansorge's Greenbul	<i>Eurillas ansorgei</i>		X	Banded Prinia	<i>Prinia bairdii</i>		X
Cameroon Sombre Greenbul	<i>Eurillas curvirostris</i>		X	Green Longtail	<i>Urolais epichlorus</i>	X	
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	<i>Eurillas latirostris</i>	X	X	Black-capped Apalis	<i>Apalis nigriceps</i>	X	
Golden Greenbul	<i>Calyptocichla serinus</i>		X	Buff-throated Apalis	<i>Apalis rufogularis</i>		X
Honeyguide Greenbul	<i>Baeopogon indicator</i>		X	Grey Apalis	<i>Apalis cinerea</i>	X	
Sjostedt's Honeyguide Greenbul	<i>Baeopogon clamans</i>		X	Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>		X
Spotted Greenbul	<i>Ixonotus guttatus</i>		X	Yellow-browed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera supercilianis</i>		X
Yellow-necked Greenbul	<i>Chlorocichla falkensteini</i>		X	Olive-green Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera chloronota</i>	X	X
Simple Greenbul	<i>Chlorocichla simplex</i>		X	<b>PELLORNEIDAE</b>			
*Yellow-throated Leaflove	<i>Atimastillas flavicollis</i>		X	Blackcap Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis cleaveri</i>		X
Swamp Palm Bulbul	<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>		X	Pale-breasted Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis rufipennis</i>		X
Cameroon Olive Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus poensis</i>	X		Brown Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis fulvescens</i>		X
Icterine Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus icterinus</i>		X	<b>SYLVIIDAE</b>			
White-throated Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus albigularis</i>		X	African Hill Babbler	<i>Sylvia abyssinica</i>	X	
Red-tailed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda syndactylus</i>		X	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	X	
Lesser Bristlebill	<i>Bleda notatus</i>		X	<b>ZOSTEROPIDAE</b>			
Eastern Bearded Greenbul	<i>Criniger chloronotus</i>		X	African Yellow White-eye	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	X	X
Red-tailed Greenbul	<i>Criniger calurus</i>	X	X	<b>HYLIOTIDAE</b>			
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>				Violet-backed Hylia	<i>Hylia violacea</i>		X
Square-tailed Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne nitens</i>		X	<b>STURNIDAE</b>			
Mountain Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne fuliginosa</i>	X		Purple-headed Glossy Starling	<i>Hylopsar purpureiceps</i>		X
Black Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i>		X	Splendid Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis splendidus</i>		X
Grey-rumped Swallow	<i>Pseudhirundo griseopyga</i>		X	Waller's Starling	<i>Onychognathus walleri</i>	X	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	X	<b>TURDIDAE</b>			
Red-chested Swallow	<i>Hirundo lucida</i>		X	Red-tailed Ant Thrush	<i>Neocossyphus rufus</i>		X
*Ethiopian Swallow	<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>		X	White-tailed Ant Thrush	<i>Neocossyphus poensis</i>	X	X
White-throated Blue Swallow	<i>Hirundo nigrita</i>		X	Rufous Flycatcher Thrush	<i>Stizorhina fraseri</i>		X
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>	X	X	African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	X	X
Rufous-chested Swallow	<i>Cecropis semirufa</i>		X	<b>MUSCICAPIDAE</b>			
Preuss's Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon preussi</i>		X	Fire-crested Alethe	<i>Alethe castanea</i>	X	X
Forest Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon fuliginosa</i>		X	Brown-chested Alethe	<i>Chamaetylas poliocephala</i>	X	X
<b>MACROSPHENIDAE</b>				Forest Robin	<i>Stiphrornis erythrothorax</i>	X	X
Yellow Longbill	<i>Macrosphenus flavicans</i>		X	Bocage's Akalat	<i>Sheppardia bocagei</i>	X	

		Bioko	Rio Muni			Bioko	Rio Muni
Lowland Akalat	<i>Sheppardia cyornithopsis</i>		X	Black-billed Weaver	<i>Ploceus melanogaster</i>	X	
White-bellied Robin Chat	<i>Cossyphicula roberti</i>	X		Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	X	X
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	X		Viellot's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>		X
African Forest Flycatcher	<i>Fraseria ocreata</i>		X	Dark-backed Weaver	<i>Ploceus bicolor</i>	X	
Cassin's Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa cassini</i>		X	Brown-capped Weaver	<i>Ploceus insignis</i>	X	
Olivaceous Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa olivascens</i>		X	Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>	X	
African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>	X		<b>ESTRILIDAE</b>			
Little Grey Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa epulata</i>		X	White-breasted Nigrofinch	<i>Nigrita fusconotus</i>	X	
<b>NECTARINIIDAE</b>				Chestnut-breasted Nigrofinch	<i>Nigrita bicolor</i>		X
Fraser's Sunbird	<i>Deleornis fraseri</i>		X	Grey-headed Nigrofinch	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>	X	
Little Green Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes seimundi</i>		X	Shelley's Oliveback	<i>Nesocharis shelleyi</i>	X	
Green Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes rectirostris</i>	X		Green Twinspot	<i>Mandingoa nitidula</i>	X	
Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	X	X	Red-faced Crimsonwing	<i>Cryptospiza reichenovii</i>	X	
Reichenbach's Sunbird	<i>Anabathmis reichenbachii</i>		X	Western Bluebill	<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>		X
Green-headed Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>		X	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>		X
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra cyanolaema</i>		X	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	X	X
Cameroon Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra oritis</i>	X		Black-crowned Waxbill	<i>Estilda nonnula</i>	X	
Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	X	X	Black-headed Waxbill	<i>Estrilda atricapilla</i>		X
Green-throated Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra rubescens</i>	X	X	Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>	X	X
Olive-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chloropygius</i>	X	X	Black-and-white Mannikin	<i>Spermestes bicolor</i>	X	X
Tiny Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris minullus</i>		X	Maggie Mannikin	<i>Spermestes fringilloides</i>		X
Northern Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris reichenowi</i>	X		<b>VIDUIDAE</b>			
Superb Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris superbus</i>		X	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	X	X
<b>PASSERIDAE</b>				<b>MOTACILLIDAE</b>			
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	X	X	Long-legged Pipit	<i>Anthus pallidiventris</i>		X
<b>PLOCEIDAE</b>				<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>			
*Spectacled Weaver	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>		X	Oriole Finch	<i>Linurgus olivaceus</i>	X	

## Appendix 2. Taxa mist-netted in Equatorial Guinea, with year of capture and principal measurements.

### Annexe 2. Taxons capturés au filet japonais en Guinée équatoriale, avec année de capture et mensurations principales.

Species		Total caught	2013	2014	Right wing (mm)	Tail (mm)	Mass (g)
Red-chested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter toussenelii</i>	1	0	1			
Chestnut-breasted Sparrowhawk / Red-chested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter castanius / toussenelii</i>	1	1	0	155	132	
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	1	0	1	115	84	68.5
African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>	1	0	1	164	87	
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>	1	0	1	53	24	13.0
White-bellied Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis leucogaster</i>	3	2	1	55–63	24–26	14.6–18.3
African Pied Hornbill	<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>	1	0	1			
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>	2	1	1	59–64	29–32	13.0–14.8
Rufous-sided Broadbill	<i>Smithornis rufolateralis</i>	1	0	1	62	41	21.4
Chestnut Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya castanea</i>	3	0	3	58–61	26–27	13.0–14.1
Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya concreta</i>	4	4	0	58–60	27–28	12.5–14.2
Black-necked Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya chalybea</i>	2	2	0	52	29–36	10.0–11.3
Mountain Sooty Boubou	<i>Laniarius poensis</i>	1	0	1	72	62	38.1
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	5	3	2	76–85	84–108	15.2–17.9
Dusky Crested Flycatcher	<i>Elminia nigromitrata</i>	1	0	1	65	61	10.8
White-bellied Crested Flycatcher	<i>Elminia albiventris</i>	1	1	0	61	61	8.7

Species -		Total caught	2013	2014	Right wing (mm)	Tail (mm)	Mass (g)
Western Mountain Greenbul	<i>Arizelocichla tephrolaema</i>	6	4	1	77–83	72–78	29.7–35.4
Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>	8	7	1	71–80	66–74	18.7–32.3
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	<i>Eurillas latirostris</i>	92	21	71	46–88	62–84	17.0–30.9
<i>Phyllastrephus</i> greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus</i> sp.	4	3	1	69–75	64–72	16.0–18.0
Red-tailed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda syndactylus</i>	8	0	8	101–112	93–101	46.7–50.4
Lesser Bristlebill	<i>Bleda notatus</i>	30	2	28	81–98	72–92	27.3–40.5
Eastern Bearded Greenbul	<i>Criniger chloronotus</i>	1	1	0	86	76	
Red-tailed / White-bearded Greenbul	<i>Criniger calurus / ndussumensis</i>	4	0	4	86–95	84–86	23.8–31.1
Green Hylia	<i>Hylia prasina</i>	8	6	2	57–67	40–48	11.8–15.6
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	1	0	1	49	33	11.1
Olive-green Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera chloronota</i>	6	3	3	54–55	20–33	11.8–13.4
Pale-breasted Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis rufipennis</i>	2	0	2	67–75	52–56	24.1–27.8
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	1	0	1	78	56	19.2
White-tailed Ant Thrush	<i>Neocossyphus poensis</i>	4	1	3	95–105	78–90	47.0–50.5
African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	1	0	1	101	74	63.3
Fire-crested Alethe	<i>Alethe castanea</i>	21	7	14	84–98	67–78	27.9–40.3
Brown-chested Alethe	<i>Chamaetylas poliocephala</i>	7	2	5	70–91	52–73	29.0–45.3
Forest Robin	<i>Stiphrornis erythrothorax</i>	9	6	3	60–71	29–39	16.9–20.2
Bocage's Akalat	<i>Sheppardia bocagei</i>	10	7	3	65–74	45–53	16.9–19.4
Lowland Akalat	<i>Sheppardia cyomithopsis</i>	3	0	3	67–77	47–59	20.8–22.3
White-bellied Robin Chat	<i>Cossyphicula roberti</i>	1	1	0	65	63	16.0
Fraser's Sunbird	<i>Deleornis fraseri</i>	1	0	1	61	45	9.9
Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	1	1	0			
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra cyanolaema</i>	2	2	0			
Cameroon Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra oritis</i>	4	4	0	57–62	36–43	11.1–13.3
Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	105	25	80	53–78	35–55	8.0–14.2
Northern Double-collared Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris reichenowi</i>	13	9	4	48–57	30–45	6.4–8.9
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	2	0	2	79–83	48–50	33.3–34.1
Green Twinspot	<i>Mandingoa nitidula</i>	2	1	1	51–53	30–32	10.2–12.0
Red-faced Crimsonwing	<i>Cryptospiza reichenovii</i>	5	2	3	52–54	36–40	12.0–16.9
Western Bluebill	<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>	3	0	3	70–72	56	25.9–27.1
Oriole Finch	<i>Linurgus olivaceus</i>	1	0	1	73	51	23.6
Unknown bird (juvenile alethe?)	<i>Passeriformes</i> sp.	1	0	1	87	57	35.2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>396</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>266</b>			

# Rare seabird sightings from a pelagic longline vessel off South Africa, July–September 2013

Dominic P. Rollinson

**Observations d'oiseaux de mer rares au large de l'Afrique du Sud à partir d'un palangrier en juillet–septembre 2013.** L'auteur rapporte des observations d'oiseaux de mer rares ou peu communs, effectuées au large de l'Afrique du Sud pendant un voyage de 79 jours à bord d'un palangrier. La plupart des observations concernent des espèces sub-antarctiques qui sont normalement confinées aux eaux plus froides au sud, mais qui s'aventurent occasionnellement plus au nord, surtout pendant l'hiver et le printemps australs. Quelques espèces qui sont supposées fréquenter les eaux sud-africaines uniquement au passage ont également été notées. Ces observations indiquent que certaines espèces d'oiseaux de mer rares pourraient fréquenter les eaux sud-africaines plus souvent qu'on ne le pensait.

**Summary.** This paper reports several rare and scarce seabirds recorded off South Africa during a 79-day trip on board a pelagic longline vessel. Most sightings were of subantarctic species that are normally restricted to colder waters further south, but are known to occasionally venture north, especially during the austral winter and spring. A few species which are thought to enter southern African waters only on passage were also observed. These sightings suggest that several rare seabird species may occur more frequently in South African waters than previously thought.

The productive waters off South Africa provide rich foraging opportunities for a number of seabird species (Ryan & Rose 1987). Approximately 60 species of Procellariiformes have been recorded within the southern African subregion, many of which are considered rare vagrants (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Seabird diversity and numbers increase during winter and spring, when numerous subantarctic breeding species escape the colder conditions of high latitudes and forage in the temperate waters off South Africa (Crawford *et al.* 1991). Here I report on rare seabirds observed off South Africa during winter/spring 2013.

Seabirds were recorded opportunistically for 79 days at sea from a pelagic longline vessel operating off South Africa between 1 July and 20 September 2013. Fishing operations were conducted on 62 days, with six days of no fishing due to bad weather. Most sightings were made during hauling operations, when birds congregated behind the vessel to scavenge for bait discards and offal. Additional sightings were made while steaming between fishing grounds (11 days). Fishing operations occurred in three distinct areas: c.400–650 km south-east of Durban (17 days), close offshore to Port Elizabeth (15 days) and c.300–350 km south of Cape Agulhas (36 days) (Fig. 1).

Many sightings were confirmed after studying photographs taken with a digital SLR camera

and a 300-mm telephoto lens. Records of species observed within South African waters and considered national rarities were submitted to, and have been accepted by, the South African National Rarities Committee. For some of the more frequently encountered species (Wandering *Diomedea exulans*, Northern Royal *D. sanfordi* and Southern Royal Albatrosses *D. epomophora* and Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*) daily counts were conducted which were summed to give a total count for the entire trip. It is probable that the same individuals were seen on different days and the trip totals for these species should therefore be treated with caution.

Locations and dates of sightings of rare and unusual seabird species are summarised in Table 1. Fig. 1 shows the three primary fishing areas as well

**Figure 1.** Map of route taken during the study, with the South African exclusive economic zone (SA EEZ), 200 m and 1,000 m isobars depicted. The three primary fishing areas are marked as **a** (c.400–650 km south-east of Durban), **b** (close offshore to Port Elizabeth) and **c** (c.300–350 km south of Cape Agulhas).

Carte du trajet suivi pendant l'étude ; la zone économique exclusive sud-africaine (SA EEZ) et les isobares de 200 m et 1.000 m sont également marquées. Les trois zones de pêche principales sont indiquées comme **a** (environ 400–650 km au sud-est de Durban), **b** (pas très loin au large de Port Elizabeth) et **c** (environ 300–350 km au sud de Cape Agulhas).

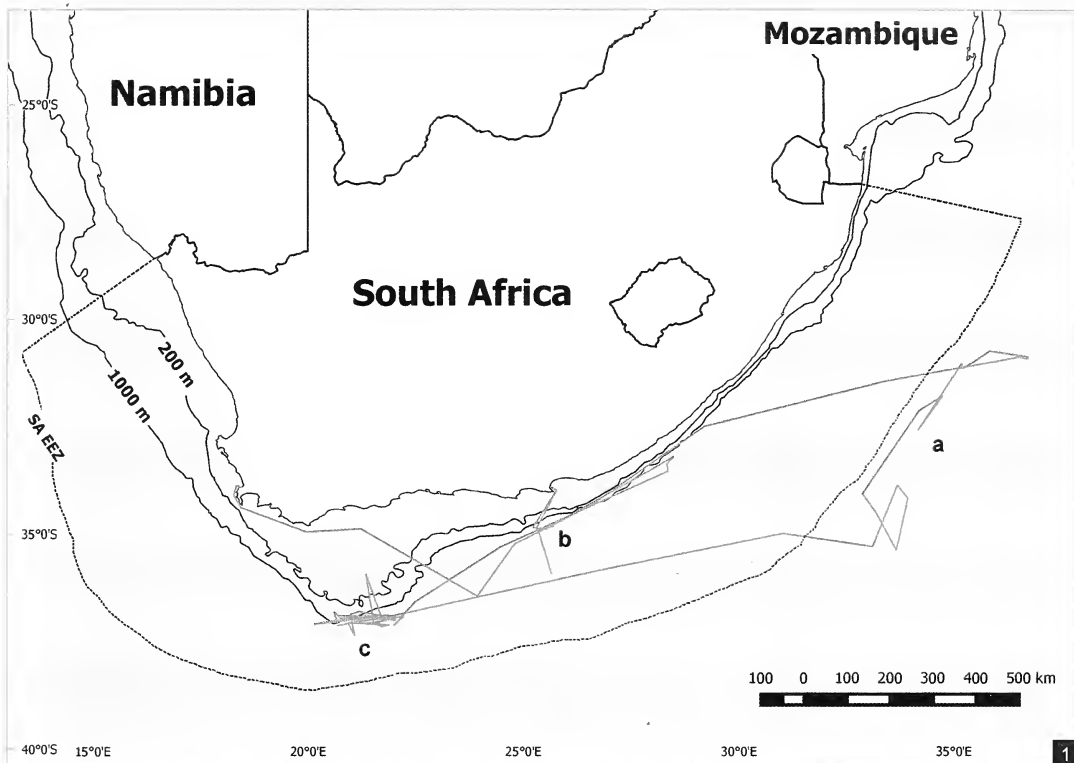


Table 1. Rare seabirds recorded off South Africa, July–September 2013.

Tableau 1. Oiseaux de mer rares observés au large de l'Afrique du Sud en juillet–septembre 2013.

		MONTH			TOTAL	AREA		
		July	August	September		SE of Durban	Agulhas Bank	Port Elizabeth
Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	59	73	10	142	31	98	13
<sup>1</sup> Tristan Albatross	<i>Diomedea dabbenena</i>	2	3	–	5	–	5	–
Northern Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea sanfordi</i>	4	29	9	42	–	39	3
Southern Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>	2	16	5	23	–	19	4
<sup>1</sup> Salvin's Albatross	<i>Thalassarche salvini</i>	–	1	–	1	–	1	–
<sup>2</sup> Grey-headed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>	1	–	–	1	1	–	–
<sup>1</sup> Sooty Albatross	<i>Phoebastria fusca</i>	6	–	–	6	4	–	2
<sup>2</sup> Light-mantled Albatross	<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	2	–	–	2	2	–	–
<sup>1</sup> Grey Petrel	<i>Procellaria cinerea</i>	22	5	–	27	17	8	2
Spectacled Petrel	<i>Procellaria conspicillata</i>	–	3	–	3	–	3	–
<sup>1</sup> Atlantic Petrel	<i>Pterodroma incerta</i>	–	1	–	1	–	1	–
<sup>1</sup> Blue Petrel	<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	–	2	2	4	–	2	2
<sup>1</sup> Slender-billed Prion	<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>	–	1	–	1	–	1	–
<b>Totals</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>28</b>

<sup>1</sup> Record accepted by the South African National Rareities Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Recorded in international waters alone.

**Table 2.** Common seabirds recorded off South Africa, July–September 2013.

**Tableau 2.** Oiseaux de mer communs observés au large de l'Afrique du Sud en juillet–septembre 2013.

		<b>Abundance</b>	<b>Area</b>
Shy Albatross	<i>Thalassarche cauta / steadi</i>	Seen daily in large numbers	All
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	Seen daily in large numbers	All
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	Seen daily in large numbers	All, except east coast
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	Seen daily but fewer than <i>T. carteri</i>	All
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Seen on most fishing days	All
Northern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	Seen on most fishing days	All
Pintado Petrel	<i>Daption capense</i>	Seen daily in large numbers	All
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	Seen daily in large numbers	All
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	Seen on most days in low numbers	All
Flesh-footed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	Seen once	Cape Agulhas
Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	Seen on two occasions only	Cape Agulhas
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	Seen once	Cape Agulhas
Great-winged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	Seen on most days in low numbers	All
Soft-plumaged Petrel	<i>Pterodroma mollis</i>	Seen on most days in low numbers	All
Antarctic Prion	<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	Seen on most days in low numbers	All
Wilson's Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Seen daily in large numbers	All
Black-bellied Storm-petrel	<i>Fregatta tropica</i>	Seen in small numbers from September	All
Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	Seen in small numbers close to the coast	All, except east coast
Subantarctic Skua	<i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	Seen on most days in low numbers	All
Tern sp.	<i>Sterna</i> sp.	Small flocks seen occasionally	All
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	Coastal areas only	All
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Larus hartlaubii</i>	Coastal areas only	All, except east coast

as the route taken by the vessel. Figs. 2–6 show the location of all rare bird records. Table 2 lists other common species seen throughout the trip with an approximate estimation of abundance as well as area recorded.

### **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans*

Recorded on 48 of the 79 days at sea. Most common off the Agulhas Bank (seen on 29 of 36 days; Figs. 2 & 7) and less frequent off Port Elizabeth (eight of 15 days) and south-east of Durban (11 of 17 days; Fig. 2). In total, 142 sightings were made, the majority off the Agulhas Bank (c.70%), with smaller numbers south-east of Durban and off Port Elizabeth (Table 1). As many as ten individuals scavenged behind the vessel while fishing off the Agulhas Bank. Largest numbers were in July–August, with smaller numbers in September (Table 1). All plumage stages were seen, from juveniles to almost all-white old adult males.

Wandering Albatrosses breed on subantarctic islands, the nearest being the Prince Edward and

**Figure 2.** Sightings of Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* and Wandering Albatross *D. exulans* during the study.

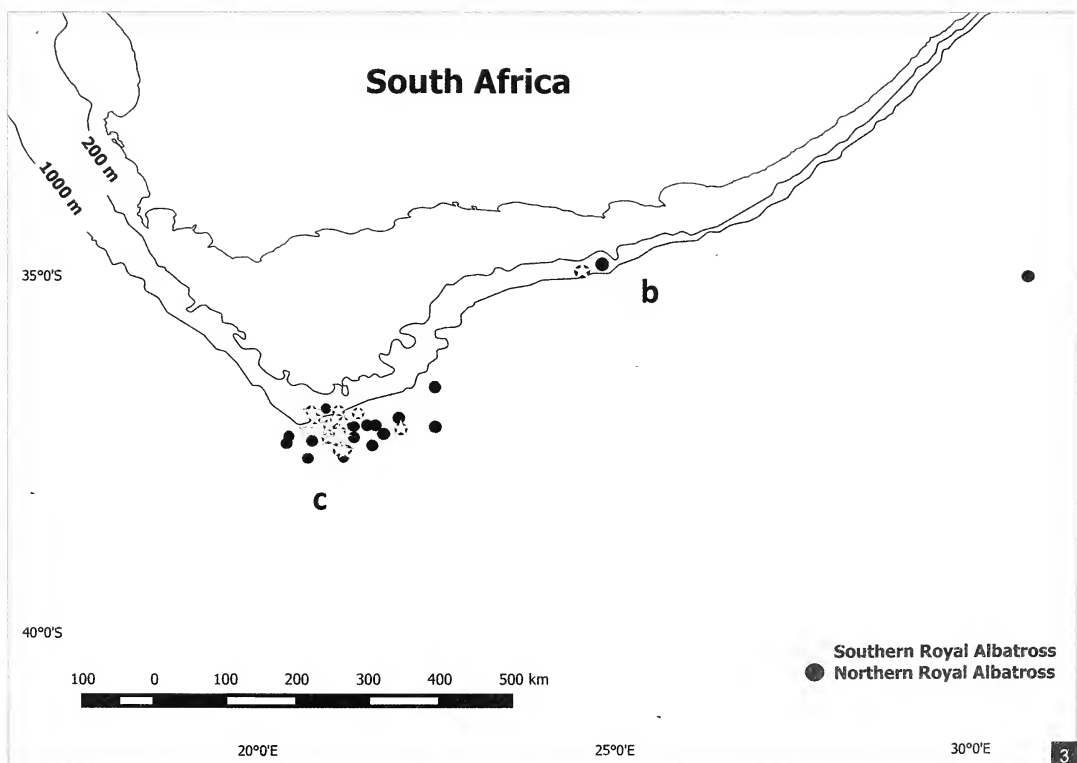
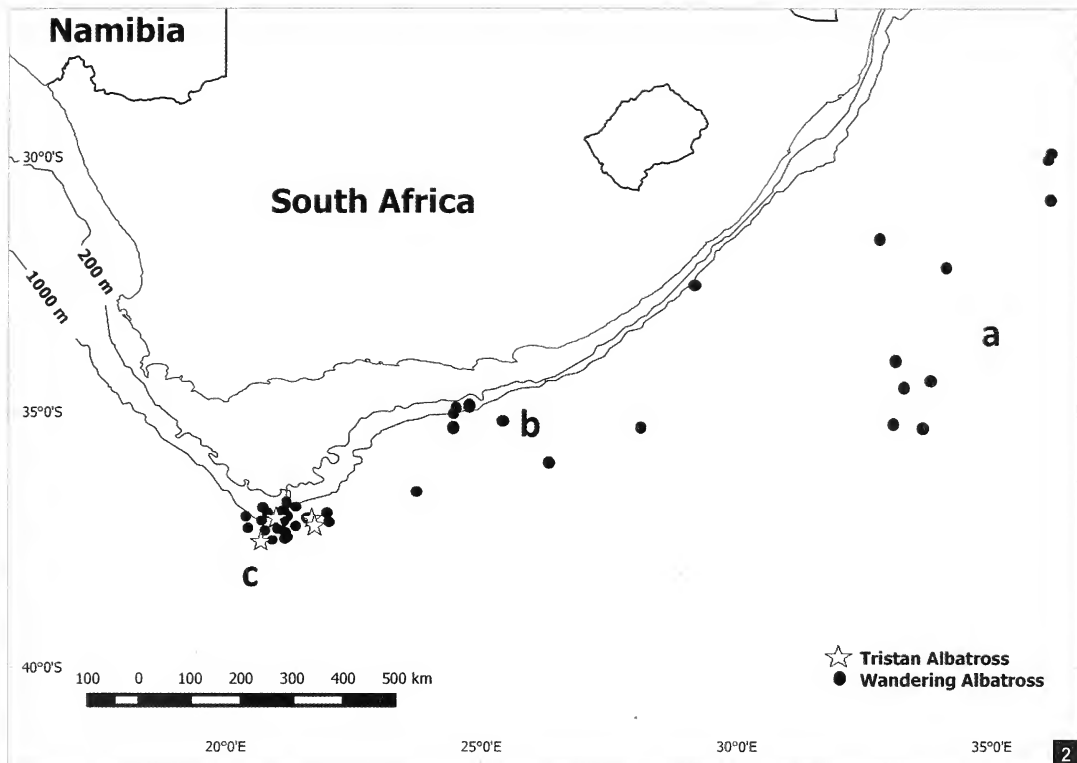
Observations de l'Albatros de Tristan *Diomedea dabbenena* et l'Albatros hurleur *D. exulans* pendant l'étude.

**Figure 3.** Sightings of Southern *Diomedea epomophora* and Northern Royal Albatross *D. sanfordi* during the study.

Observations de l'Albatros royal *Diomedea epomophora* et l'Albatros de Sanford *D. sanfordi* pendant l'étude.

Crozet Islands, the others including Kerguelen, Heard, Macquarie and South Georgia (Shirihai 2007). Post-breeding adults are known to travel from South Georgia to South African waters in 6–10 days (Prince *et al.* 1998). I photographed an immature with a green colour ring c.400 km east of East London, which was probably ringed on Bird Island, South Georgia, as one of the 2011/12 cohort of fledglings (A. Wood pers. comm.). The species is scarce over the continental shelf but is recorded more





regularly in oceanic waters, with most sightings off west and south coasts (Hockey *et al.* 2005). It is observed with some frequency during pelagic birdwatching trips operating from the Cape Peninsula, but numbers have declined in recent years (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Cyrus & Robson (1980) recorded them as frequent visitors to the KwaZulu-Natal coast during the atlas period (1970–80), but there have been very few records in recent years.

#### **Tristan Albatross** *Diomedea dabbenena*

Four confirmed sightings were made, all south of Cape Agulhas in oceanic waters (Fig. 2), although others might have been confused with Wandering Albatrosses. The birds were separated from Wandering Albatrosses by the presence of a yellow alphanumeric ring (Fig. 7; all unringed *D. exulans* / *dabbenena* were presumed to be *D. exulans*). Ring numbers permitted ageing and sexing. All were adult males 19–35 years old, which had previously bred on Gough Island. Two were failed breeders from 2013, one failed in 2012, while the fourth successfully raised a chick on its last breeding attempt in 2009.

Tristan Albatross is Critically Endangered and endemic to the islands of Gough and Inaccessible, where it is thought to number c.9,000 birds (Shirihai 2007). The population has decreased in recent years, mostly due to longline fishing and the introduction of mice to Gough Island (Wanless *et al.* 2009). The species is considered uncommon in oceanic waters off the west coast and rare elsewhere in the subregion (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Prior to this study, there were only eight confirmed records from southern African waters: five from the west coast of South Africa and Namibia (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Goren & Ryan 2010), one south of Cape Agulhas (B. Rose pers. comm.), one dead bird at Port Elizabeth (Ryan *et al.* 2001) and one killed by a longline vessel off Durban (Cooper 2011). Of these, only three previous sight records (of colour-banded individuals) exist, the other records all involved recoveries of dead birds. Two additional sightings have been made in South African waters since; one south of Cape Point (pers. obs.) and another west of Cape Town (P. Ryan pers. comm.). However, as demonstrated by Reid *et al.* (2013),

**Figure 4.** Sightings of Salvin's *Thalassarche salvini*, Grey-headed *T. chrystoma*, Sooty *Phoebastria fusca* and Light-mantled Albatross *P. palpebrata* during the study.

Observations de l'Albatros de Salvin *Thalassarche salvini*, l'Albatros à tête grise *T. chrystoma*, l'Albatros brun *Phoebastria fusca* et l'Albatros fuligineux *P. palpebrata* pendant l'étude.

**Figure 5.** Sightings of Grey *Procellaria cinerea*, Spectacled *P. conspicillata* and Atlantic Petrels *Pterodroma incerta* during the study.

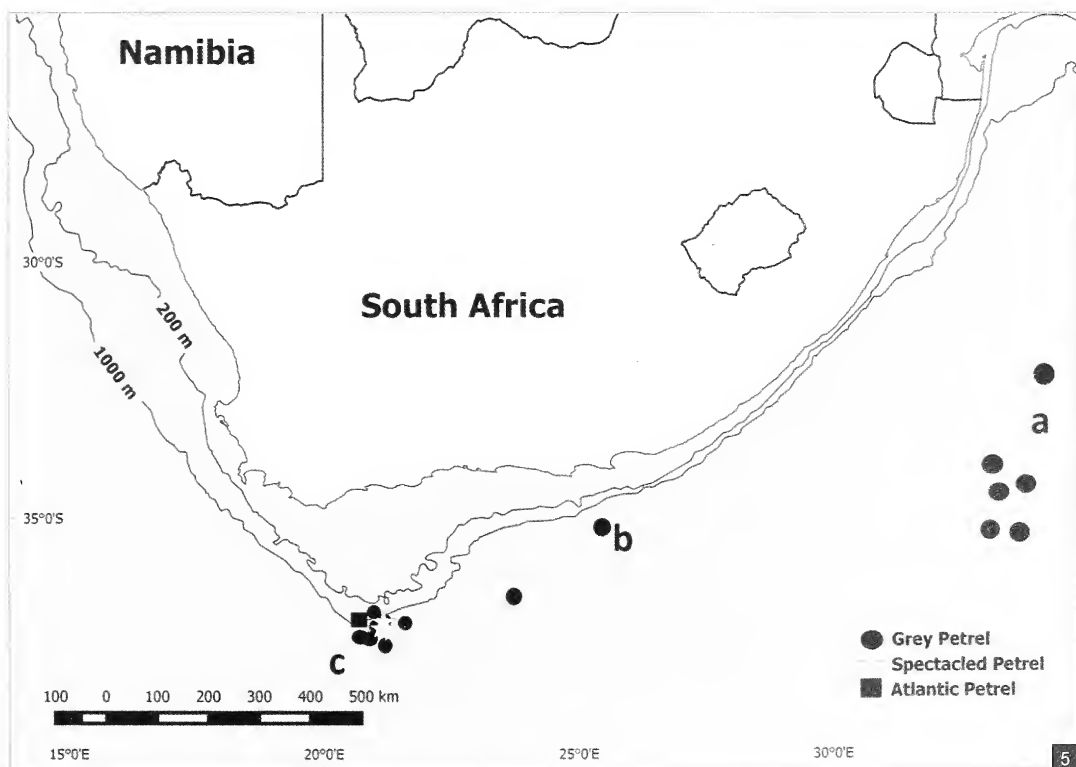
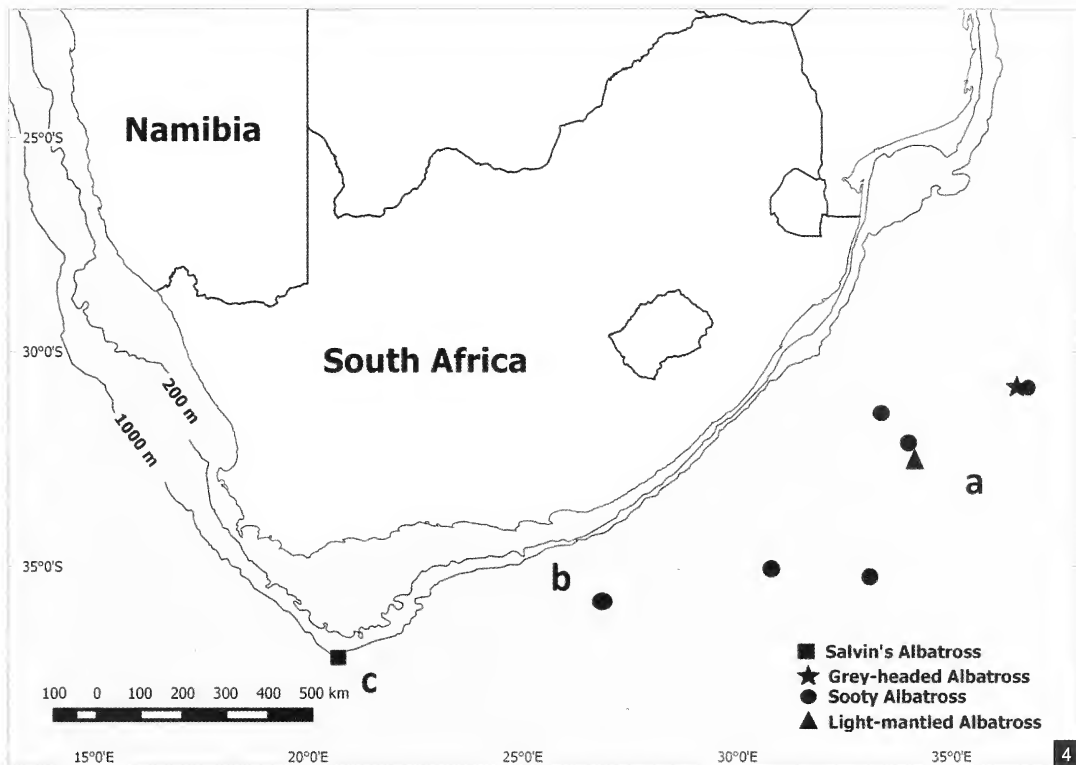
Observations du Puffin gris *Procellaria cinerea*, du Pétrel à lunettes *P. conspicillata* et du Pétrel de Schlegel *Pterodroma incerta* pendant l'étude.

Tristan Albatrosses regularly visit South African waters, particularly non-breeding birds in April–October. Due to the difficulty of separating the species from Wandering Albatross at sea (Ryan 2000), many are presumably overlooked.

#### **Northern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea sanfordi*

Forty-two were recorded on 33 days, mainly off the Agulhas Bank in August, with smaller numbers off Port Elizabeth (Table 1; Fig. 7). None was seen south-east of Durban, which is unsurprising as the species has not been recorded from the KwaZulu-Natal coast (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Most sightings were in water >1,000 m deep, although the species was also regularly seen in shallower water off Port Elizabeth in September (Fig. 3). Many were juveniles / younger immatures, separated from adults by the dark brown blotching on the lower back and rump, as well as dark brown flecks on the crown and dark tail tip.

The species is thought to mostly occur off South Africa during passage from its wintering grounds off South America to its breeding grounds off New Zealand (Shirihai 2007). My sightings suggest that it occurs more regularly in oceanic waters off South Africa than previously thought. Northern Royal Albatrosses are regularly recorded in southern African waters, mostly over the continental shelf edge off western and southern coasts (Hockey *et al.* 2005). In recent years they have been recorded in similar numbers to Wandering Albatross over the continental shelf, less frequently in oceanic waters (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Virtually all southern African records are in May–October, although there are records from April and November as well.



### **Southern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora*

Recorded on far fewer occasions than the previous species (Fig. 3 & 7), with sightings on 20 days, mainly off the Agulhas Bank in August, with smaller numbers off Port Elizabeth in September (Table 1).

An estimated 8,200–8,600 pairs breed on the New Zealand islands of Campbell and Auckland, and range at sea between 36°S and 63°S (Shirihai 2007). They forage mostly in New Zealand waters, although many also visit seas around southern South America (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

The species is recorded less frequently than Northern Royal Albatross within the subregion and prefers waters >1,000 m deep, beyond the continental shelf edge (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Southern Royal Albatross is recorded annually in southern African waters, mostly in June–October. It appears to be restricted to the south coast of South Africa with no known records further north off the west or east coasts (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

### **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche salvini*

A single immature was recorded off the Agulhas Bank in August (Figs. 4 & 8). Most previous southern African records are of adults, but younger birds may have been overlooked due to their similarity to juvenile / immature 'Shy' Albatross *T. cauta / steadi*.

Most Salvin's Albatrosses breed on New Zealand's subantarctic Snares and Bounty archipelagos. Birds either disperse west to the south-west Indian Ocean or east to western South America in winter (Shirihai 2007). Some seen in the Drake Passage and the south-western Atlantic Ocean may be the source of southern African records (Hockey *et al.* 2005). The species is a rare vagrant to the subregion, with confirmed sightings only since 2000, all from coastal Western Cape waters, with most in winter / spring (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Davis 2006).

### **Grey-headed Albatross** *Thalassarche chrysostoma*

A single juvenile was observed on two consecutive days c.400 km south-east of Durban in mid July while scavenging behind the vessel (Fig. 4).

Grey-headed Albatrosses breed throughout the circumpolar subantarctic islands, the nearest colonies being on the Prince Edward and Crozet groups. They are found most frequently over colder waters south of 40°S, although a few birds,

mainly juveniles, wander north to 25°S (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Shirihai 2007). The species is recorded within the southern African subregion in most years, but not annually (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Almost all records are of juveniles and most are from the Western Cape in May–October, with fewer from Eastern Cape and exceptionally from KwaZulu-Natal, Namibia and southern Angola (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

### **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca*

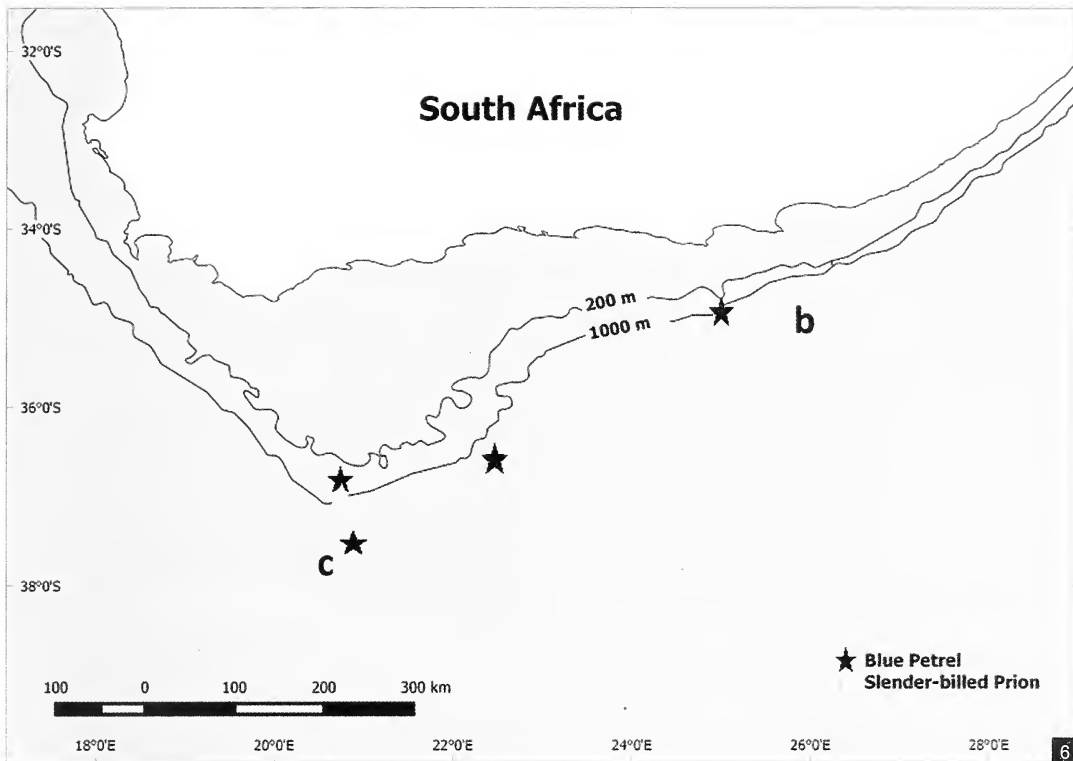
Only recorded in July, with four of the six birds south-east of Durban (Table 1). Three of these were seen in international waters (during hauling operations), one in South African waters c.20 km south-east of Durban (Fig. 9) and two together off Port Elizabeth while steaming to the Agulhas Bank (Fig. 4). All were in oceanic waters >1,000 m deep. One showed patchy grey colouring on the mantle and head, which is typical of immatures (Shirihai 2007), whereas all of the others were thought to be adults, based on plumage coloration.

Most Sooty Albatrosses breed on Gough, Tristan da Cunha and the Prince Edward Islands, ranging throughout the Southern Ocean, preferring deeper waters north of the Antarctic Convergence Zone and south of 30°S (Shirihai 2007). It is from these principal breeding grounds that most southern African records are thought to originate. The species is suspected to occur year-round in South African waters off south and south-west coasts (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Occasionally birds have been sighted further north off the east coast, off KwaZulu-Natal, exceptionally as far north as southern Mozambique. Most records closer inshore have been in winter, most probably vagrants to the shelf-break and slope (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

### **Light-mantled Albatross** *Phoebastria palpebrata*

Two sightings were made one week apart (thought to be the same individual) in international waters south-east of Durban (Fig. 4), during hauling operations. Once the bird followed the vessel, presumably waiting for offal discards (Fig. 10).

Light-mantled Albatrosses have a circumpolar breeding distribution on subantarctic islands, the nearest being the Prince Edwards and Crozets. They generally disperse south of 35°S, but wander further north off the west coast of South America (Onley & Schofield 2007). The species is a rare



**Figure 6.** Sightings of Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea* and Slender-billed Prion *Pachytila belcheri* during the study. Observations du Prion bleu *Halobaena caerulea* et du Prion de Belcher *Pachytila belcheri* pendant l'étude.

vagrant to southern African waters, with fewer than ten records to date (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Most are from the Western Cape in winter, with some stranded birds. Three are from the east coast: two stranded birds from southern Mozambique and the other from north-eastern KwaZulu-Natal (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Davis 2010).

#### **Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea***

Of the 27 sightings, 22 were made in July; the majority were south-east of Durban (17 on six days; Figs. 5 & 11). As many as six were seen behind the vessel during hauling operations and the species was frequently observed diving for bait discards and offal. Seven sightings of eight birds were made during the 36 days spent fishing off the Agulhas Bank (Fig. 5).

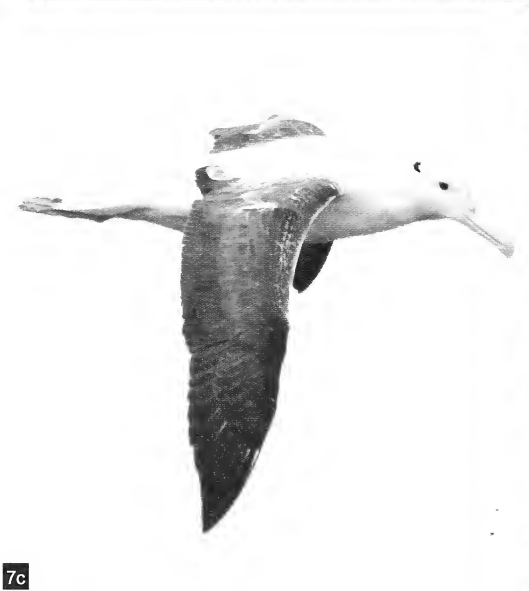
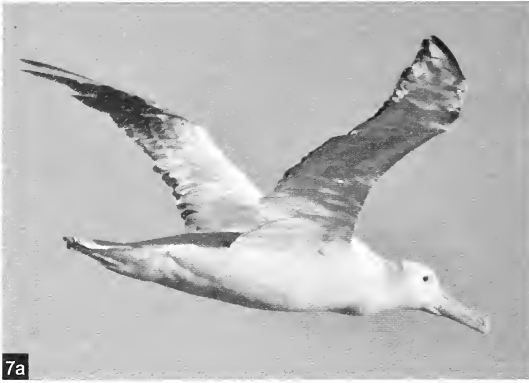
Grey Petrels are winter breeders, with the nearest substantial breeding populations on Gough and the Prince Edward Islands; although they forage as far north as 25°S, they mainly remain south of 35°S (Onley & Schofield 2007). The species is considered rare in southern African

waters, with most records from the south and west coasts in winter (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Records from the east coast are even rarer, although there have been a few records off KwaZulu-Natal in recent years (Davis 2011, 2015).

#### **Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata***

Three singles were encountered off the Agulhas Bank in August (Fig. 5), where they scavenged for bait discards and offal behind the vessel during hauling operations.

Spectacled Petrel is endemic as a breeder to Inaccessible Island in the Tristan da Cunha group, and is listed as Vulnerable with only 14,400 breeding pairs (Ryan *et al.* 2001). It ranges throughout the South Atlantic, mostly at 25–41°S (Hockey *et al.* 2005). It is an uncommon visitor to South African waters, mainly preferring oceanic waters up to the shelf edge, mostly off the west coast, with one record from KwaZulu-Natal (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Encountered year-round on pelagic trips from the Cape Peninsula (<http://www.zestforbirds.co.za>).



**Figure 7.** *Diomedea* albatrosses observed off South Africa, July–September 2013: (a) Wandering Albatross *D. exulans*, (b) Tristan Albatross *D. dabbenena*, (c) Southern Royal Albatross *D. epomophora* and (d) Northern Royal Albatross *D. sanfordi* (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Albatros du genre *Diomedea* observés au large de l’Afrique du Sud en juillet–septembre 2013 : (a) Albatros hurleur *D. exulans*, (b) Albatros de Tristan *D. dabbenena*, (c) Albatros royal *D. epomophora* et (d) Albatros de Sanford *D. sanfordi* (Dominic P. Rollinson)

**Atlantic Petrel** *Pterodroma incerta*

One was briefly observed during rough weather in August when fishing operations had been suspended, c.230 km south of Cape Agulhas in oceanic water (Fig. 5).

Atlantic Petrel is endemic to the Tristan da Cunha group and Gough Island, chiefly dispersing west to the central and south-western Atlantic (Shirihai 2007). Records from the Indian Ocean are rare, but individuals have been recorded as far as 104°E (Enticott 1991). The species is a rare visitor to South African waters, mostly south-west

of Cape Town, in July–November, with just two records off the east coast, in August 1973 and September 1974 (Sinclair 1974, Cyrus & Robson 1980, Hockey *et al.* 2005).

**Blue Petrel** *Halobaena caerulea*

Four were observed in southern African waters (Figs. 6 & 12), three off the Agulhas Bank in August (two in water >1,000 m deep) and one off Port Elizabeth in September (also in water >1,000 m deep). Three of the four briefly followed the vessel during hauling operations.



**Figure 8.** Immature Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini*, south of Cape Agulhas, 16 August 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Albatros de Salvin *Thalassarche salvini* immature, au sud de Cape Agulhas, 16 août 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

**Figures 9–10.** Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*, 11 July 2013 and Light-mantled Albatross *P. palpebrata*, south-east of Durban, 20 July 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Albatros brun *Phoebastria fusca*, 11 juillet 2013 et Albatros fuligineux *P. palpebrata*, au sud-est de Durban, 20 juillet 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)



Blue Petrels have a circumpolar breeding distribution on Southern Ocean islands with the nearest populations nesting on the Prince Edwards and Crozets (Shirihai 2007). Young birds are thought to wander prior to breeding (Shirihai 2007), perhaps accounting for some of the vagrants to the subregion. Blue Petrels are rare winter visitors to southern African waters, but are prone to major irruptions, during which they can occur in large numbers (Ryan *et al.* 1989). The last major irruption was July–August 1984 when 76 were ‘wrecked’ on beaches across South Africa, coinciding with wrecks in Brazil and Australasia (Ryan *et al.* 1989). Observations at sea off the Northern and Western Cape prior to this wreck indicated that the irruption preceded the wreck by some weeks (Ryan *et al.* 1989). Since 1984 there have been very few sightings in South

African waters, with only one bird seen on Cape Point pelagic trips (B. Rose pers. comm.); the few other sightings have been in deeper waters further offshore.



**Figure 11.** Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*, south-east of Durban, 20 July 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Puffin gris *Procellaria cinerea*, au sud-est de Durban, 20 juillet 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

**Figure 12.** Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*, south of Port Elizabeth, 2 September 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Prion bleu *Halobaena caerulea*, au sud de Port Elizabeth, 2 septembre 2013 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

### Slender-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*

A single was observed behind the vessel amongst Antarctic Prions *P. desolata* during hauling operations south of Cape Agulhas in water >1,000 m deep (Fig. 6).

Slender-billed Prions breed on subantarctic islands including the Falklands, Crozets and Kerguelen (Shirihai 2007). The origin of southern African birds is unknown, but is thought to be Kerguelen (Hockey *et al.* 2005). The species is a rare visitor to continental shelf waters, with small numbers seen in most years off the Cape Peninsula (Hockey *et al.* 2005). During the 1984 seabird irruption large numbers of 'wrecked' Slender-billed Prions were washed up on South African beaches, from the Northern Cape to KwaZulu-Natal (Ryan *et al.* 1989). Due to its similarity with other prion species, it is probable that many are overlooked.



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# Kungwe Apalis *Apalis [rufogularis] argentea*: a summary

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**L'Apalis de Moreau *Apalis [rufogularis] argentea* : une synthèse.** L'Apalis de Moreau *Apalis [rufogularis] argentea* est confiné aux forêts submontagnardes du sud du Rift Albertin et des monts Mahale à l'ouest de la Tanzanie. Il est considéré soit comme une espèce à part entière (*A. argentea*, comprenant *A. a. eidos*), soit comme une (ou deux) sous-espèce(s) de l'Apalis à gorge rousse *A. rufogularis*. En plus de la confusion taxinomique, l'identification sur le terrain est gênée par le traitement inexact figurant dans les guides de terrain. En nous basant sur des observations directes, des photos, des spécimens et la littérature, nous examinons certaines de ces questions et présentons une synthèse des connaissances actuelles sur ce taxon. L'apparente absence de différences en ce qui concerne l'écologie, les mensurations et les vocalisations entre l'Apalis de Moreau et l'Apalis à gorge rousse, et les différences minimales de plumage, indiquent qu'il s'agit d'une seule espèce. Les différences entre *argentea* et *eidos* sont minimales, même pour la reconnaissance de sous-espèces. La meilleure façon d'identifier l'Apalis de Moreau sur le terrain et de le distinguer des sympatriques Apalis cendrée *A. cinerea* et Apalis à tête brune *A. alticola*, est de se baser sur les vocalisations car la couleur de la calotte (gris chez l'Apalis de Moreau) et du manteau (lavé de vert chez l'Apalis de Moreau) sont difficiles à observer chez une espèce qui occupe la canopée. Contrairement aux illustrations de la plupart des guides de terrain, la couleur de l'œil est brun rougeâtre tandis que le front et les lores ont la même couleur que le reste de la tête.

**Summary.** Kungwe Apalis *Apalis [rufogularis] argentea* is confined to lower montane forest in the southern Albertine Rift and the Mahale Mountains of western Tanzania. It is variously treated as a separate species (*A. argentea*, including *A. a. eidos*), or both these taxa are considered subspecies of Buff-throated Apalis *A. rufogularis*. To add to the taxonomic confusion, correct field identification is hampered by inaccurate treatment in field guides. Here we draw on field observations, photographs, specimen details and published literature to address some of these issues and summarise what is known of the taxon. The apparent lack of differences in ecology, biometrics and vocalisations between Kungwe Apalis and Buff-throated Apalis, and only very minor differences in plumage, suggest that they are conspecific. Differences between *argentea* and *eidos* are minimal, even for the recognition of subspecies. Field identification and differentiation from sympatric Grey Apalis *A. cinerea* and Brown-headed Apalis *A. alticola* is best based on vocalisations, as crown (grey in Kungwe Apalis) and mantle colour (washed green in Kungwe Apalis) are hard to observe in a canopy-dwelling species. Eye colour is reddish brown and the forecrown and lores are concolorous with the rest of the head, contrary to depictions in most field guides.

**K**ungwe Apalis *Apalis [rufogularis] argentea* is a locally distributed warbler of the family Cisticolidae, which occurs in the canopy of lower montane forest (1,200–2,350 m; Moreau 1943, Urban *et al.* 1997, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002). It is confined to two small areas: the southern part of the Albertine Rift in the Democratic Republic of Congo, south-western Rwanda and Burundi, and the Mahale Mountains of far western Tanzania. As these areas are both relatively remote and little-visited by ornithologists and birdwatchers, Kungwe Apalis is poorly known in life and several controversies about it remain unresolved.

Its taxonomic status is contentious: *argentea* (including *eidos*) is sometimes treated as a full species (e.g. Hall & Moreau 1970, Collar & Stuart 1985, Clements *et al.* 2015, Ryan 2016, Gill &

Donsker 2016), although it is usually regarded as a subspecies of Buff-throated Apalis *A. rufogularis* (e.g. Short *et al.* 1990, Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993, Urban *et al.* 1997, BirdLife International 2014, Dickinson & Christidis 2014). Differences between Kungwe Apalis and Buff-throated Apalis *sensu stricto* are minor, especially considering the degree of variation between males of the different subspecies of Buff-throated Apalis (Hall & Moreau 1962). This is confounded by the fact that much of the literature regarding Kungwe Apalis, and differences between it and Buff-throated Apalis, is incorrect.

In addition to the species-level controversy, one (*argentea*) or alternatively two subspecies (*argentea* and *eidos*) of Kungwe Apalis are

recognised. In the second case, *argentea* is confined to western Tanzania, with *eidos* in the Albertine Rift. However, no proper comparison has been made between the two taxa.

Finally, the correct field identification of Kungwe Apalis is hampered by inaccurate treatment in the literature.

During August 2013, MSLM spent ten days in Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, on two separate visits. He searched for Kungwe Apalis widely and located just a single pair in lower-altitude forest in the Gisakura sector of the park. Recording and playback of its song enabled him to draw one bird closer to the ground in a forest clearing, to be photographed (Figs. 1a–c). Less than 300 m from this site, at the forest edge, he managed to attract Grey Apalis *Apalis c. cinerea* to be photographed (Figs. 2a–b). Based on these photographs and recordings, examination of specimens (especially by AM, AR & ML of the largest series, at the Royal Museum for Central Africa [RMCA], Tervuren, Belgium) and a review of available literature, we seek to address some of the aforementioned inconsistencies, outline what is known about Kungwe Apalis, and describe the juvenile plumage of *eidos* and age-related changes in morphology.

AR measured the tail length (from point of insertion of central tail feathers to max. length of longest rectrix), wing length (chord of unflattened wing), bill length (from end of central forehead feathering to tip of maxilla) and bill width (width of maxilla at base) of all specimens at RMCA (one *argentea*, 20 *eidos*) to the nearest 0.5 mm, to examine differences between the sexes of *eidos* and between male *argentea* and *eidos*. The *eidos* series includes two juveniles and three unsexed birds, leaving eight adult females and seven adult males. The bills and tails of some specimens are damaged, further reducing sample size. Appropriate T-tests, after testing for equal variances using F-tests, were applied to examine differences between sexes. Although it was impossible to test for differences between subspecies, we examine the likelihood of the single *argentea* specimen being from the same population as *eidos* males. All analyses were made using Excel.

### History of collecting

The first specimens of Kungwe Apalis were collected in February 1939 on the upper Mulinga

River on Idjwi Island, in Lake Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (c.02°06'S 29°03'E) by Arthur Loveridge, who took four males and four females. These are now at RMCA (Louette *et al.* 2010) and the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA (MCZ, including the type of *eidos*) (Table 1).

The first description of Kungwe Apalis, however, was based on a male collected on 3 August 1940 in forest on Mount Kungwe, above Ujamba in the Mahale Mountains of western Tanzania (c.06°11'S 29°53'E) by Salimu Asmani for Reginald Moreau. Based on this specimen, now at the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK) and another male now at RMCA, Moreau (1941) described a new species *Apalis argentea*, supported by comments from Victor van Someren and James Chapin, who also examined the specimens.

The following year, Peters & Loveridge (1942) described another new species, *Apalis eidos*, based on the 1939 series from Idjwi Island. These were examined and compared with the Tanzanian specimens by Chapin, who considered them to be 'allied to *A. argentea*' but 'specifically distinct'. However, Mayr (1957) was not convinced of the differences and called for a revision of the genus before a final decision be made.

While most specimens collected since then have also come from Idjwi Island and the Mahale Mountains, other localities include the Lukolansala River (c.06°S 31°E) and near Mpanda (c.06°29'S 31°04'E) in western Tanzania, and Rugege Forest (= Nyungwe Forest, c.02°29'S 29°11'E) and Cyuraga (presumably Curaga, in Nyungwe Forest) in Rwanda (see Table 1 for details). The 39 specimens traced in various collections presumably constitute the bulk of collected material, with RMCA holding the largest series. Ten were collected on Idjwi Island in 1965, although only seven (three males, four females) were listed by Prigogine (1973), yet 12 (eight males, four females) by Prigogine (1976). It seems likely that the latter figure is correct ('3' may be a typo for '8' in Prigogine 1973), and that we have failed to trace two specimens from this series. The first description of the juvenile (*argentea*) was based on a specimen obtained in August 1958 near the type locality (Ulfstrand 1960).

**Table 1.** Specimens of Kungwe *Apalis argentea* traced in museum collections, listed in chronological order.**Tableau 1.** Spécimens de l'*Apalis* de Moreau *Apalis argentea* identifiés dans des collections de musées, présentés en ordre chronologique.

Museum abbreviations are as follows / les abréviations des musées sont comme suit :

MCZ = Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; RMCA = Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium; NHMUK = Natural History Museum, Tring, UK; NHMD = Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen; AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; ZMUL = Lund Museum of Zoology; RBINS = Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels.

Other specimens may exist, and there are records from Bururi Forest in Burundi (Urban *et al.* 1997). Rugege Forest lies within Nyungwe National Park.

D'autres spécimens peuvent exister ; il y a également des mentions de la forêt de Bururi au Burundi (Urban *et al.* 1997). La forêt de Rugege se trouve dans le Parc National de Nyungwe.

Date	Museum reg. no.	Collector	Country: locality	Altitude
1939-02-17	MCZ 270939	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-02-23	RMCA 43074	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-02-27	MCZ 270940	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-02-27	MCZ 270941	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-02-28	MCZ 270942	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-03-01	MCZ 270943	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-03-01	RMCA 43075	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1939-03-02	MCZ 270944	A. Loveridge	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,800 m
1940-08-03	NHMUK 1945.34.289	S. Asmani	TZ: Mahale Mountains	2,100 m
1940-08-03	RMCA 115125	R. Moreau	TZ: Mahale Mountains	2,100 m
1943-10-15	NHMUK 1945.34.294	R. Moreau	TZ: Mpanda	1,220 m
1943-11-29	NHMUK 1945.34.292	R. Moreau	TZ: Lukolansala River	1,310 m
1943-11-29	NHMUK 1945.34.291	R. Moreau	TZ: Lukolansala River	1,310 m
1943-11-29	NHMUK 1945.34.293	R. Moreau	TZ: Lukolansala River	1,310 m
1949-10-14	NHMD AVES-092656	T. Andersen	TZ: Mahale Mountains	–
1949-10-18	AMNH Skin-388035	T. Andersen	TZ: Mahale Mountains	–
1953-03-08	RMCA 74.44.A.1036	F. Hendricks	RW: Rugege Forest	–
1956-08-26	RMCA 82866	A. Fain	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,450 m
1956-08-26	RMCA 82881	A. Fain	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,450 m
1958-08-23	ZMUL L958/3104	S. Ulfstrand	TZ: Mahale Mountains	–
1958-08-24	ZMUL L958/3105	S. Ulfstrand	TZ: Mahale Mountains	–
1965-06-22	RMCA 112762	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,820 m
1965-06-24	RBINS 597045	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1965-06-27	RMCA 112763	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,610 m
1965-06-27	RMCA 112769	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,620 m
1965-07-19	RMCA 112766	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,860 m
1965-07-20	RMCA 112761	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,860 m
1965-07-25	RMCA 112765	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,540 m
1965-07-27	RMCA 112768	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	2,000 m
1965-07-29	RBINS 597046	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,540 m
1965-07-29	RMCA 112764	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	1,540 m
1969-08-08	RMCA 119855	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1969-08-08	RMCA 119859	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1969-08-09	RMCA 119857	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1969-08-09	RMCA 119858	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1969-08-12	RMCA 119853	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1969-08-18	RMCA 119856	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1969-08-20	RMCA 119854	A. Prigogine	DRC: Idjwi Island	–
1978-03-05	RBINS 709400	A. Prigogine	RW – Cyuraga	–

### Field identification of Kungwe Apalis

MSLM first noted the presence of Kungwe Apalis by its song, which, to his ear, cannot be distinguished from that of Buff-throated Apalis, as also noted by Dowsett-Lemaire (1990) and Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1990). It is, however, distinctly different from that of the sympatric Grey Apalis and Brown-headed Apalis *A. alticola*, with which it is most likely to be confused in the Albertine Rift and western Tanzania, respectively. As all three frequent the forest canopy, where the colour of their upperparts is difficult to see, song is the best means of distinguishing them. However, it is important to note that the only recording of Kungwe Apalis commercially available (Stevenson *et al.* 2014) is actually of a Grey Apalis, as agreed by B. W. Finch (*in litt.* 2016).

Kungwe Apalis is very similar in morphology to the slightly larger Grey Apalis (Figs. 1–2) and Brown-headed Apalis. Importantly, the eye colour of all three is reddish brown. The only plumage feature that clearly differentiates them is crown colour: grey in Kungwe Apalis and brownish grey in Grey and Brown-headed Apalis. Female Kungwe Apalis can also be differentiated from either sex of Grey and Brown-headed Apalis by its green wash to the wings and upperparts. However, both of these differences will be hard to see under normal circumstances, with the bird above eye level, so their usefulness as field characters is limited. Urban *et al.* (1997) and Sinclair & Ryan (2010) state that Kungwe Apalis has more white in the tail than Grey Apalis. However, in-hand examination of multiple specimens, side-by-side,



**Figures 1a–c.** Female Kungwe Apalis *Apalis argentea eidos*, Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, 13 August 2013 (Tasso Leventis); note the red eye, whitish underparts and grey head characteristic of this taxon. The greenish wings and back indicate that it is a female. We believe that these are the first photographs of this taxon in the wild.

*Apalis* de Moreau *Apalis argentea eidos*, femelle, Parc National de Nyungwe, Rwanda, 13 août 2013 (Tasso Leventis) ; noter l'œil rouge, les parties inférieures blanchâtres et la tête grise caractéristiques de ce taxon. Les ailes et le dos verdâtres indiquent qu'il s'agit d'une femelle. Ces photos sont probablement les premières de ce taxon dans la nature.



**Figures 2a–b.** Grey Apalis *Apalis c. cinerea*, Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, 9 August 2013 (Denzil Morgan); note the red eye, brownish-grey head and grey back.  
*Apalis cendrée* *Apalis c. cinerea*, Parc National de Nyungwe, Rwanda, 9 août 2013 (Denzil Morgan) ; noter l’œil rouge, la tête gris-brun et le dos gris.

indicates that both species have the two outermost pairs of tail feathers all white, and that the only difference lies in the outer web of the third pair of feathers, which is entirely white in Kungwe Apalis versus white with a darker base in Grey Apalis (AR pers. obs.). We have not observed this slight difference in the field. Finally, the tail of Kungwe Apalis (male 45–52 mm, mean 49.5 mm; female 42–51 mm, mean 44.2 mm; this study) is shorter than that of Grey Apalis (male 52–65 mm, mean 60.3 mm; female 48–56 mm, mean 51.6 mm; Urban *et al.* 1997). However, there is at least some overlap in tail length and MSLM has failed to see any clear difference in the field (Figs. 1–2). This may be partly due to Grey Apalis being larger bodied than Kungwe Apalis, and tail length would be judged relative to body size.

### Characters of Kungwe Apalis

Several erroneous statements have been made (and perpetuated) in the literature concerning the characters of Kungwe Apalis, which we now list here.

1. Eye colour: Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002), the leading field guide to the region, incorrectly

illustrate the eyes as being yellowish. This was followed by Sinclair & Ryan (2010). The eye is reddish brown (Fig. 1).

2. Forecrown and lores: Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) write that the ‘whitish forecrown and lores give a pale-faced appearance’, and the illustration matches this. This again was followed by Sinclair & Ryan (2010). The forecrown and lores are concolorous with the rest of the head (Fig. 1).
3. Tail: according to Moreau (1941), Kungwe Apalis differs from all other *Apalis* ‘in the relatively more abrupt gradation of its outer tail-feathers’. However, the outer tail is no more abruptly graded than Buff-throated Apalis (BirdLife International 2014) and the feature has not been mentioned since the type description, not even in the type description of *idos* (Peters & Loveridge 1942).

Some features are not well known.

4. Juvenile *argentea*: Ulfstrand (1960) stated that this plumage differs from adults primarily in having a pronounced greenish tinge to the grey upperparts, especially on the wing-coverts and

top of head. The underparts are pale yellowish grey, and the iris brown compared to the reddish-brown iris of the adult.

5. Male plumage changes with age in *eidos*. The juvenile plumage of *eidos* has not previously been described. AM & ML examined all specimens in RMCA, using the extent of skull ossification to age birds. Colours follow Smithe (1983). Head: grey (closest to colour 84: medium neutral grey) in all except what appears to be the youngest bird (RMCA 112766; softest skull) in which the grey head is washed olive-green. Back: the extent of green varies greatly between specimens, ranging from a slight hint of green on the lower back and rump in older birds (RMCA 112761, 119854, MCZ 270942), through green on the upper and lower back (RMCA 43075 paratype), to green extending right up to the edge of the grey nape (RMCA 112762) and green on the entire back grading into the crown of the youngest bird (RMCA 112766). Throat: generally pale grey in younger birds, becoming white in the centre and grey only on the sides in older birds. Underparts: in older birds (RMCA 112761, 119854) the chest is white in the centre and grey on the sides and flanks. The younger birds all have dirty white bellies washed yellow (closest to 56 straw yellow) on the flanks, while older birds (RMCA 112761, 119854, MCZ 270940—age not determined) lack any yellow on belly or flanks. The colour of the belly of the latter two birds seems to correspond to that of three adults examined—all three lack any yellow on belly or flanks, with grey on the throat- and breast-sides and flanks. Tail: the pattern on the upperside varies individually between males. In some specimens the entire surface of the middle pair of rectrices is brown, while in others (e.g. MCZ 270942) the central pair have dusky tips and T5 (the adjacent pair) has a dusky outer half to the web.
6. Variation in females. Head: the amount of olive-green (colour 47, olive-green auxiliary) on the head and back varies individually, from most obvious and intense in youngest birds to much less olive-green in older individuals, especially on the crown. In what seems to be the youngest female in the collection (RMCA 119858, skull completely unossified), the forehead, crown and back are generously washed olive-green. In paratype RMCA 43074 (with a partially ossified skull), the forehead, crown and nape are brownish grey and the back olive-green. In three subadults, the head is much more grey than brown in two (RMCA 119856, 112769) and brownish grey in the other (RMCA 119858). In the two specimens with grey heads, the upperparts are washed green from the shoulders to the rump, while in the bird with a brownish-grey head the back is mainly grey with some olive-green on the rump area alone. Throat and breast: dirty white in young birds, cleaner white in older birds, subsequently becoming ever whiter on the throat and central breast, with grey confined to the breast-sides. Belly and flanks: in the youngest bird the belly is white lightly washed yellow (slightly less bright than 157: sulfur yellow) all the way to the vent. Paratype RMCA 43074 has a darker, dirty yellow, belly (closest to 56: straw yellow). Of the three older birds, only one has a hint of yellow on the flanks, the other two having creamy-white bellies. The yellow tinge on the flanks and lower belly of females is apparently not age-related, as one adult female (RMCA 112768) has a yellowish tint to the flanks and lower belly, while another (RMCA 119857) has no yellow at all on the underparts. Paratype MCZ 270944 also has a white belly, apparently with no yellow. Tail: as in male specimens, females have a dusky tip to the central pair of rectrices and T5 variably has dusky on the outer web. In addition, the upperside of the tail exhibits faint brownish barring, as in MCZ270939.
7. Size differences between sexes of *eidos*: in general, males are larger than females. Male wing length (mean = 50.00 mm,  $n = 7$ ) is greater than in females (mean = 47.94 mm,  $n = 8$ ) (two tailed T-test for unequal variances,  $t = -2.330$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Male tails are also longer (mean = 49.50 mm,  $n = 7$ ) than females (mean = 44.21 mm,  $n = 7$ ) (two-tailed T-test for unequal variances,  $t = -3.141$ ,  $p < 0.02$ ). No differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) were found in bill length (male mean = 13.60 mm, female mean = 13.44 mm) and width (male mean = 4.58 mm, female mean = 4.75 mm).

## Differences between subspecies of Kungwe Apalis

The described differences between *argentea* and *idos* are minor (Mayr 1957), would appear to be based on the comparison of one male *argentea* with four male and four female specimens of *idos* by Chapin (Peters & Loveridge 1942), and have not been re-examined using larger sample sizes since the type descriptions. What has been published can be summarised as follows.

1. Upperparts: *idos* is more strongly washed green on the back, rump and flanks than *argentea* (Peters & Loveridge 1942, Hall & Moreau 1970).
2. Tail: Hall & Moreau (1970) stated that *argentea* has a shorter tail than *idos*, but presented no evidence of this, and it is not mentioned in the type description of *idos* (Peters & Loveridge 1942).
3. Primaries: Peters & Loveridge (1942) described *idos* as differing from *argentea* by 'lacking the narrow silver edges on the inner primaries' described by Moreau (1941). This has not been repeated in the literature, and contrarily Hall & Moreau (1962) reported traces of silver fringes to the primary feathers in both *idos* and the *angolensis* subspecies of Buff-throated Apalis.
4. Peters & Loveridge (1942) described *idos* as differing from *argentea* by 'having the underparts white, shading to pale gray on sides of the breast'. Those of *argentea* are described as 'pale silvery-grey, nearly white on the throat and centre of the belly, darkening to blue-grey on the flanks and sides of the breast' (Moreau 1941). Thus they appear to be the same.
5. Peters & Loveridge (1942) described *idos* as differing from *argentea* in the underwing-coverts being 'pale yellowish' instead of 'pale silvery-grey' in *argentea* (Moreau 1941).

We compare biometrics for the first time.

6. Male biometrics: wing (50.0 mm) and tail length (49.0 mm) of the single specimen of *argentea* fall well within the range of wing (mean = 50.0 mm) and tail (mean = 49.5) lengths of *idos*. However, bill length (12.5 mm) and bill width (3.5 mm) of the single *argentea* fall outside the 95% confidence limits for bill length (mean  $\pm$  1.96 S.D., 12.8–14.4 mm,  $n = 5$ ) and bill width (mean  $\pm$  1.96

S.D., 3.62–5.58 mm,  $n = 6$ ) of *argentea*. This potential difference merits investigating via larger samples.

## Kungwe Apalis versus Buff-throated Apalis

Differences between Kungwe Apalis and Buff-throated Apalis *sensu stricto* can be summarised as follows.

1. Female throat colour: whitish in Kungwe, whereas in Buff-throated Apalis it is variously washed buff and chestnut on the throat and breast ('chestnut-buff', 'reddish-buff' or 'light rufous'; Urban *et al.* 1997). This variation is minor compared to that shown between males of different subspecies of Buff-throated Apalis (white to black).
2. Tail gradation: see above, point 3 under Characters of Kungwe Apalis.
3. Upperparts colour: Kungwe Apalis has slightly paler grey upperparts than Buff-throated Apalis (BirdLife International 2014), although Ryan (2016) makes no comparison to Buff-throated Apalis.
4. Sexual dimorphism: according to Hall & Moreau (1970), Buff-throated Apalis is sexually dimorphic, whereas Kungwe Apalis is not. However, in Kungwe Apalis males are grey above, and females washed green on the back and wings.
5. Altitude: while Kungwe Apalis is generally found at slightly higher altitudes (1,200–2,350 m) than Buff-throated Apalis *sensu stricto* (down to sea level), the latter occurs up to 1,400 m in Kibale National Park, Uganda (MSLM pers. obs.) and even 2,400 m in western Kenya (Short *et al.* 1990). So Kungwe Apalis occurs no higher than Buff-throated Apalis, even if there is a 'mean' difference. Specimens of Kungwe Apalis were taken within the range 1,220–2,100 m (see Table 1).
6. Habitat differences: Hall & Moreau (1970) state that Kungwe Apalis 'occupies a rather different habitat' to Buff-throated Apalis. This is based on the false assumption that they occupy different altitudes, and no actual differences in preferred habitat structure or composition have been demonstrated.
7. Vocalisations: the songs are identical to the ear (pers. obs.) and no differences could be found



when investigating sonograms (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1990).

## Conclusions

Kungwe *Apalis* differs only slightly from Buff-throated *Apalis* in female throat colour, and there are no other known differences in morphology, ecology or vocalisations. Recognising Kungwe *Apalis* as a distinct species thus assumes that variation in female throat colour is more important than variation in male throat colour. They also show the same progression of plumage development with age, generally changing from olive to grey on the upperparts (Urban *et al.* 1997). Given the variation in male plumages displayed within Buff-throated *Apalis* in contrast to the minor variation in female plumages, it would be inappropriate to afford Kungwe *Apalis* specific status unless other differences between it and Buff-throated *Apalis* can be demonstrated, or it can be argued why female throat colour is more important than male throat colour. The differences between the two subspecies of Kungwe *Apalis* are so small and unconvincing that they can be synonymised; this is especially surprising as they were originally described as separate species.

We failed to trace the original source for inaccurate descriptions and depictions of eye, forecrown and loreal colours. These inaccuracies have probably hampered correct field identification and may have led to inaccurate population estimates, in one case where identification was based on Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) (Manikuzwe 2011). Kungwe *Apalis* *A. r. argentea*, unless seen below eye level, can be safely separated by call alone from co-occurring Grey *Apalis* in the Albertine Rift and Brown-headed *Apalis* in montane western Tanzania.

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# Use of sewage ponds by birds in Khartoum State, Sudan, and their influence on bird distribution in the region

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**L'utilisation de bassins d'eaux usées par les oiseaux à Khartoum, Soudan, et les effets sur la distribution des oiseaux dans la région.** Nous avons recensé 139 espèces d'oiseaux dans quatre bassins d'eaux usées à Khartoum, au Soudan. La Foulque caronculée *Fulica cristata* a été observée pour la première fois dans ce pays où elle compte une population nicheuse. La Sarcelle hottentote *Spatula hottentota* et la Talève sultane *Porphyrio porphyrio*, connues auparavant d'une seule mention pour chacune d'elles, sont également représentées par des populations nicheuses résidentes. La reproduction de la Gallinule poule-d'eau *Gallinula chloropus* et du Gravelot à triple collier *Charadrius tricollaris* a été notée pour la première fois dans le pays. La Rousserolle stentor *Acrocephalus stentoreus* a été trouvée au sud et le Tisserin gendarme *Ploceus cucullatus* au nord de leur aires de répartition connues. L'Ibis sacré *Threskiornis aethiopicus* hiverne en grand nombre, ce qui n'avait pas encore été rapporté. Une liste annotée des espèces recensées est présentée ainsi que des notes supplémentaires pour celles dont le statut a changé. Certaines de ces dernières possèdent des populations viables dans des petites parcelles d'habitat d'eaux usées. La manière dont les bassins d'eaux usées fournissent un nouvel habitat pour les oiseaux est examinée, ainsi que les implications potentielles pour la conservation des espèces afrotropicales et paléarctiques qui utilisent ces habitats et étendent ainsi leurs aires de distribution le long du Nil.

**Summary.** We recorded 139 bird species at four sewage sites in Khartoum State, Sudan. Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* was observed for the first time in Sudan, with a resident breeding population. Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota* and Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*, both previously known only from single records, were also revealed to have resident breeding populations. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* were recorded breeding for the first time in the country. A southerly range extension was noted for Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* and a northerly range extension for Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*. Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* was found to have a large, hitherto unrecorded, wintering population. An annotated checklist is presented of all species recorded, with additional notes for those showing a change in status. Some of these have viable populations in very small patches of sewage habitat. We discuss how sewage ponds have provided new habitats for birds, and the potential conservation implications for Afrotropical and Palearctic species using such areas, thereby extending their ranges along the Nile.

**K**hartoum State lies at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles, from where the main River Nile flows north to Egypt. These three rivers separate the three largest cities in Sudan: Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman, which together comprise an urban centre of *c.*7 million people (Alsalman & Ali 2011). Away from the immediate vicinity of the Nile, the habitat of Khartoum State is *Acacia* desert scrub (Cave & MacDonald 1955). The region has distinct wet (May–September) and dry seasons (Nikolaus 1987). Shortly after the wet season ends, most pools have dried up, leaving very little standing water. During the dry season, sewage ponds provide the only extensive still-water wetlands in the area. South of Khartoum, the Gezira Scheme provides a network of irrigation ditches between the Blue and White

Niles (Plusquellec 1990), but north of Khartoum there is little irrigation far from the banks of the Nile.

There have been relatively few publications on the birds of Sudan. The only field guide to cover the whole country was published in 1955 (Cave & Macdonald 1955), and since then the only major publication was a distribution atlas of Sudan's birds (Nikolaus 1987). Robertson (2001) discussed the inland wetlands of Sudan as 'enormously important for huge numbers of many species of waterbird', but we are aware of no recently published studies of wetland birds in Sudan, and none that specifically discusses the use of sewage ponds. These works include South Sudan, which became independent from Sudan in 2011 (Christopher 2011). All references to

'Sudan' hereafter refer to the current borders of the Republic of Sudan.

Much of the wastewater in Khartoum State is disposed of in pit latrines and septic tanks, but two large sewage treatment plants using stabilisation ponds exist at El Hag Yousif in Bahri, constructed in 1982 and expanded in 1990, and at Soba, south of Khartoum, implanted in 1971 (Maki 2010). Waste stabilisation ponds are shallow basins enclosed by earth embankments in which sewage is treated by natural methods using algae and bacteria. They are a common system of sewage treatment in many developing countries, and are particularly suitable in warm climates if sufficient land is available (Mara 2003), making them ideal for use in Sudan. Sewage treatment sites are recognised as important areas for birds (e.g. Glue & Bodenham 1974, BirdLife International 2014). This study aims to provide information on birds using sewage ponds in Khartoum State, with particular reference to those species that appear to have changed their status since the publication of Nikolaus (1987).

### Study sites and Methods

Observations were made at four sewage treatment plants that use stabilisation ponds. Khartoum sewage treatment works (15°30'07"N 32°32'49"E) has eight ponds covering a total of c.40 ha, the two largest each c.15 ha, with approximately 4.3 km of perimeter edged by *Phragmites* reeds c.2–3 m wide. The sewage treatment works at Bahri (15°40'04"N 32°36'28"E) comprise 15 ponds covering c.120 ha, the largest c.30 ha, with approximately 9.1 km of perimeter edged by reeds, in places 10–15 m wide. In both Khartoum and Bahri, some of the smaller ponds were empty throughout the study. The small sewage site serving Soba Hospital (15°30'40"N 32°37'55"E), just south of Khartoum, has 11 small ponds with a total area of c.2 ha, the ponds being employed on a rotational basis such that some are empty, some have open water and some are filled with reeds at any given time. A small sewage treatment pond serving Omdurman Islamic University (15°34'19"N 32°27'25"E) has c.1–2 ha of permanent open water, which floods to form a larger area during the wet season. About half of the site at Omdurman is reed-covered. At all four sites, reeds are cut for use in roofing. Omdurman does not have any large

sewage treatment works equivalent to those in Khartoum and Bahri, although there are plans for one (Maki 2010).

We visited Soba Hospital 23 times in April 2012–February 2015, Khartoum seven times in November 2013–December 2014, Bahri 28 times in November 2013–May 2015, and Omdurman twice in May 2014 and January 2015, with the majority of visits between mid August and early June. Mist-nets were employed at Bahri (24 times), Khartoum (once) and Soba (twice) as part of a separate study of Northern Masked Weavers *Ploceus taeniopterus* and Cinnamon Weavers *P. badius* (Jenner in prep.). Observations were not standardised and effort was not consistent on each visit, especially during mist-netting activities. High reeds surrounding many of the ponds limited visibility and some areas at Bahri and Khartoum could not be accessed at all. All counts are therefore conservative, especially of those species inhabiting reedbeds. Most open-water species, such as ducks, grebes and coots, tended to occupy particular ponds, so effort was concentrated on these areas, where visibility was usually better. Observations from open scrub surrounding the ponds are included, but less effort was made in this habitat, so many landbird species using sewage sites will have been under-recorded.

### Results

We recorded 139 bird species at the four study sites (see Appendix 1). Of these, 71 were residents in the area, with 41 either confirmed to breed or assumed to be breeding within the grounds of the sewage sites, and the remaining 30 being probably local residents recorded flying over or passing through the site, but unlikely to use the areas regularly. Fifty-one were considered solely winter visitors from the Palearctic, with several resident populations supplemented by winter migrants. Another ten were Palearctic migrants on passage. Seven were intra-African migrants breeding locally, although none was confirmed to breed at the sewage sites. In many cases, we have had to assume status, except for those species for which breeding was confirmed. Our assessment of the status of many species is based on our experience from hundreds of days in the field at other locations in the region (most published on [birdingsudan.blogspot.com](http://birdingsudan.blogspot.com)).

## Notes on selected species

The following notes provide details on species whose status appears to have changed considerably since the publication of Nikolaus (1987).

### Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Abundant winter visitor, with breeding pairs present at Bahri, Khartoum and Soba Hospital. Described by Nikolaus (1987) as a seasonal migrant in October–April, breeding only in the west of the country.

### Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Observed breeding in the wet season at Bahri (Fig. 1). Also present throughout the dry season, including on every visit to Bahri (peaking at *c.*300 in early February 2014), with one sighting at Khartoum and two at Soba Hospital. Observed on many occasions at other locations near the rivers and occasionally over urban areas. Nikolaus (1987) stated that the species is ‘only a breeding visitor to the north from May to October’. It is unlikely that this conspicuous species would have gone unnoticed previously, which suggests that our dry-season records represent a change in its status.

### Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota*

Recorded in all months at all four sewage sites on most visits; first recorded at Soba Hospital on 6 April 2012. The max. count was 48 at Khartoum (September 2014), with high counts at all four sites, including the small areas at Soba Hospital (max. 42, October 2012) and Omdurman (max. 30, January 2015). On 31 January 2015, we recorded 15 small ducklings from three broods at Omdurman (Fig. 2) and on 11 February 2014, we photographed a pair at Khartoum with a single young that was about half the size of the adults. All our records are from sewage sites, but Dewilde (2012) photographed three birds on the White Nile at Al Dabbaseen Bridge near Omdurman on 11 May 2012, indicating that the species also uses the river at least occasionally. Nikolaus (1987) mentioned just one record within the current borders of Sudan, at Khartoum in spring 1981, with another from what is now South Sudan. There has clearly been a significant northerly range expansion in recent years.

### Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

Recorded regularly at Bahri and Khartoum in November 2013–March 2015 (all records between August and early March), with max. 11



**Figure 1.** Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* (right) and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Bahri Sewage Ponds, Sudan, 17 October 2014 (Tom Jenner)  
Ibis sacré *Threskiornis aethiopicus* (à droite) et Ibis falcinelle *Plegadis falcinellus*, bassins d’eaux usées de Bahri, Soudan, 17 octobre 2014 (Tom Jenner)



**Figure 2.** Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota* with chicks, Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan, 31 January 2015 (Tom Jenner)  
*Sarcelle hottentote* *Spatula hottentota* avec poussins, Université islamique de Omdurman, Soudan, 31 janvier 2015 (Tom Jenner)

individuals. Described by Nikolaus (1987) as a rare vagrant, but our records suggest it is a regular winter visitor in small numbers.

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio*

The Afrotropical subspecies *P. p. madagascariensis* was observed at all sites in all months, with our first record at Soba Hospital on 6 April 2012 (Fig. 3). Our only record away from sewage habitat was a conservative count of 125 feeding in open flooded fields between the White Nile and Sunt Forest, near central Khartoum, in May 2015, although none had been observed there on seven previous visits. We observed immatures at Khartoum sewage ponds on 12 September

and at Sunt Forest on 22 May. Nikolaus (1987) reported just one record from Sudan, at Kosti, c.260 km south of Khartoum, with none from South Sudan. This subspecies breeds in Egypt and has done so since antiquity (Goodman & Meininger 1989). It was not recorded in the Nile Valley south of Cairo until the late 1970s, but has since spread throughout the complete length of the Egyptian Nile Valley as a result of the spread of reedbeds following the construction of Aswan Dam (Goodman & Meininger 1989). It is unclear whether the population in Khartoum State is recent or was previously overlooked. However, it is difficult to believe this species could persist in the region without man-made wetlands.

**Figure 3.** Purple Swamphen / Talève sultane *Porphyrio porphyrio*, Soba Hospital, Sudan, 6 April 2012 (Tom Jenner)



### **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Nikolaus (1987) described it as a passage migrant and winter visitor between September and February. We found the species to be a common year-round resident at all four sites. It was especially common at Khartoum, where hundreds were usually present. We photographed small chicks in September 2014 and regularly saw immatures between September and February at all four sites. It is a common breeder in neighbouring Egypt (Goodman & Meininger 1989).

### **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata*

First recorded at Khartoum sewage treatment works in November 2013 and present during all visits to this site, with max. 44 on 24 January 2014. On the same day, a pair was photographed with two medium-sized chicks that were probably 2–3 weeks old (Fig. 4). On 10 February 2014, at the same site, we observed three family groups, two with two juveniles and one with a single juvenile. An adult in breeding plumage was observed at Bahri on 4 April 2014. We are aware of no previous reports of this species in Sudan. Nikolaus (1987) made no mention of it and only refers to Common Coot *Fulica atra*, which he described as an uncommon winter visitor. It is unclear whether Red-knobbed Coot has expanded its range into the country or if it was previously overlooked, as the two coot species

**Figure 4 (below).** Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* with chicks, Khartoum Sewage Ponds, Sudan, 11 February 2014 (Tom Jenner)

Foulque à crête *Fulica cristata* avec jeunes, bassins d'eaux usées de Khartoum, Soudan, 11 février 2014 (Tom Jenner)

**Figure 5 (right).** Three-banded Plover / Gravelot à triple collier *Charadrius tricollaris*, Soba Hospital, Sudan, 25 October 2012 (Tom Jenner)

can be confused in non-breeding plumage. We recorded up to six Common Coots throughout our study at Bahri, between mid November and early March, and a single on the White Nile in Khartoum on 2 December 2011, but never saw the two species together.

### **Three-banded Plover** *Charadrius tricollaris*

Observed at Soba Hospital on seven occasions in three consecutive years, in February, April–June and October, with two present on three occasions (Fig. 5). On 14 April 2012, a bird in *Acacia* scrub c.20 m from the nearest water behaved as if it had a nest nearby, although none was found. It kept landing nearby and walking away as if trying to distract the observer. Such behaviour is usually considered proof of breeding (BTO 2014). The species was first recorded in Egypt in 1993, and it was confirmed breeding there in 2009 (Jiguet *et al.* 2011).

### **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei*

Two photographed on 4 April 2014 at Bahri. We have other records away from sewage sites, including a group of six photographed migrating



north along the White Nile past Tuti Island on 24 February 2012 (Fig. 6), a single moving north over the Blue Nile south of Khartoum on 25 March 2012, and four groups totalling c.40 individuals heading north over the White Nile at Jebel Aulia on 21 February 2015. We also have two additional sightings of distant groups of birds migrating along the White Nile that were almost certainly this species, and there is a record of two seen at Um Shugeira, Khartoum, March 2012 (Woods & Faki 2012). Nikolaus (1987) reported only one inland record, from Khartoum in spring 1980. It is probably regular in Khartoum State on passage. In Egypt the species is generally confined to saline habitats. However, changes in agriculture during much of the 20th century have led to increased salinity at Lake Qarun (70 km south-west of Cairo near the Nile), leading to

increasing numbers of Slender-billed Gulls at this inland site (Goodman & Meininger 1989), and this is possibly a factor in our observations further south in Sudan.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus*  
A single mist-netted at Bahri on 4 April 2014 (Fig. 7). Seven days later two birds responded by singing to a recording of Clamorous Reed Warbler song in the same area. In much of its local range this is a resident species (Kennerley & Pearson 2010), making it likely that these birds were also resident, although the trapped individual showed no signs of breeding condition. Breeds on the Red Sea coast of Sudan, and Nikolaus (1987) mentioned a record from beside the Nile just south of the Egyptian border, but there are no records on the Nile from further south. The Red

**Figure 6 (below).** Slender-billed Gulls / Goélands railleurs *Larus genei*, Tuti Island, Sudan, 24 February 2012 (Tom Jenner)

**Figure 7 (right).** Clamorous Reed Warbler / Rousserolle stentor *Acrocephalus stentoreus*, Bahri Sewage Ponds, Sudan, 4 April 2014 (Tom Jenner)







**Figure 8.** Wattled Starlings / Étourneaux caronculés *Creatophora cinerea*, Bahri Sewage Ponds, Sudan, 12 April 2014 (Tom Jenner)

Sea population is *A. s. brunescens*, while that in Egypt is *A. s. stentoreus* (Kennerley & Pearson 2010). Biometrics of the captured bird were insufficient to establish subspecies, and therefore the origin. Recordings were played at other sites without response. The construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt led to an increase in reedbeds, with Clamorous Reed Warblers extending their range along the length of the Nile in Egypt below the dam (Goodman & Meininger 1989).

#### **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea*

Flocks regularly observed at Bahri between mid February and late May throughout the study, with max. c.200 in April 2014 (Fig. 8). Flocks included males in full breeding plumage and recently fledged juveniles. We also have records from Soba Hospital (April 2012) and an area beside the Blue Nile c.5 km from there (August

2010 and April 2011). Nikolaus (1987) described the species as rare in the north (i.e. within the current boundaries of Sudan) and knew of no breeding records. Our records suggest that it is a locally common resident in Khartoum State and probably breeds at sewage sites or nearby.

#### **Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus*

Recorded regularly at Soba Hospital and Bahri sewage ponds throughout the study, where many were mist-netted (Fig. 9). We noted hundreds of nests at Bahri and several breeding colonies around Khartoum State, especially close to the Nile rivers, and we have recorded the species 330 km further north at Karima (18°33'36"N 31°50'28"E), where it was common beside the River Nile on 20 March 2014. The first record for Egypt was reported in May 2006 (Jiguet 2012). Nikolaus (1987) reported no records north of 14°N, which is



**Figure 9.** Village Weaver / Tisserin gendarme *Ploceus cucullatus*, Bahri Sewage Ponds, Sudan, 28 February 2014 (Tom Jenner)

south of Khartoum. This is now a common and conspicuous species in Khartoum State and it is unlikely that Nikolaus and others would have missed it, suggesting a recent range expansion.

### Conclusion

Many species appear to have undergone significant range expansions, or changed their status, since the publication of Nikolaus (1987), although some of these might have been previously overlooked. Three species that were unknown in Sudan, or known from just a single record, namely Hottentot Teal, Purple Swamphen and Red-knobbed Coot, now have significant resident populations in Khartoum State, while others have increased their ranges or become established as breeding or winter residents. It is worth emphasising that Khartoum State is c.400 km from the nearest national border, so in many cases these records involve significant range extensions. It is reasonable to assume that many of these populations would not exist if these man-made sewage habitats were unavailable, as equivalent habitats do not occur naturally in the area.

It is estimated that the current sewage treatment ponds in Khartoum State are insufficient for the region's growing population (Maki 2010); it is therefore probable that more will be constructed. We are currently unaware of any major sewage treatment sites serving the cities further north, but this may change with future development. In addition, other wetland sites could be important;

in 2009 a major new dam was built at Merowe, 350 km north of Khartoum, and the Kajbar Dam is planned for further north (Bossard 2008). A man-made wetland also exists beside Khartoum oil refinery, 70 km north of Khartoum; we have been unable to visit it, but apparently it is an oxidant pond dealing with industrial wastewater (KRCSD 2015).

A number of species have recently been recorded for the first time in Egypt (Jiguet *et al.* 2011, 2012, 2014), including two of those discussed here (Three-banded Plover and Village Weaver). Two recent additions to the Egyptian list were recorded at sewage sites, although neither would have come from Sudan. Jiguet *et al.* (2012) described 'an emerging pattern of vagrancy for Afrotropical species along the southern Nile valley'. Goodman & Meininger (1989) discussed responses of birds to changing environments in Egypt, including how the construction of the Aswan High Dam resulted in the spread of *Phragmites* and *Typha* marshes, leading to the spread of reed-dwelling species such as Purple Swamphen and Clamorous Reed Warbler, right along the Nile below the dam. Our records suggest that many species could be extending their ranges along the River Nile in both directions, utilising man-made habitats, such as sewage ponds. That the relatively small sewage sites at Soba Hospital and Omdurman Islamic University support significant populations of many of these species suggests that small ecosystems could be sufficient to promote such

range extensions. This opens the potential for some non-migratory Afrotropical species to reach the Palearctic region and vice versa.

The number of noteworthy records made by us in relatively few visits highlights the degree to which the region has been under-watched by ornithologists in recent years. There is a need for a systematic study of birds at the wetlands of Sudan, to form a baseline from which any future population changes can be assessed. In particular, there is a need to monitor new man-made habitats such as sewage ponds and reservoirs at other locations along the Nile Valley.

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**Appendix 1.** Species observed at sewage sites in Khartoum State, Sudan, April 2012–May 2015.

Sequence and taxonomy generally follow Dowsett *et al.* (2015), with amendments.

**Sites:** S = Soba Hospital; B = Bahri; K = Khartoum; O = Omdurman.

**Status:** R = Resident at sewage sites; L = Local resident, visiting sewage sites; P = Palearctic winter visitor; A = Afrotropical wet-season visitor; M = Passage migrant.

**Encounter rate:** c = Common (encountered on most visits in season); f = Fairly common (encountered on fewer than 50% of visits in season); u = Uncommon (encountered three times or fewer).

**Annexe 1.** Espèces d'oiseaux observées sur quatre bassins d'eaux usées à Khartoum, Soudan, avril 2012–mai 2015.

L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent principalement Dowsett *et al.* (2015) avec des amendements.

**Sites :** S = Hôpital de Soba ; B = Bahri ; K = Khartoum ; O = Omdurman.

**Statut :** R = Résident sur les bassins d'eaux usées ; L = Résident local, visitant les bassins d'eaux usées ; P = Hivernant d'origine paléarctique ; A = Migrateur afrotropical présent en saison des pluies ; M = Migrateur de passage.

**Fréquence d'observation :** c = commune (observée pendant de la majorité des visites en saison appropriée) ; f = fréquente (observée pendant moins de la moitié des visites en saison appropriée) ; u = peu commune (observée trois fois ou moins).

		Sites	Status	Encounter rate	Comments
<b>PODICIPEDIDAE</b>					
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	SBK	RP	c	Breeding in small numbers. Numbers increase in winter. Max. c.500, April.
<b>PHALACROCORACIDAE</b>					
Reed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	SB	L	f	Small numbers, fewer in winter. Max. 5, March.
<b>ARDEIDAE</b>					
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	S	M	u	Single August record; common on passage along both Niles.
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	SBKO	RP	c	Present all year. Breeding not confirmed, though immatures common. Max. c.60, January.
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	SBKO	R	c	Present all year. Colony at Bahri with c.300 nests in wet season.
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	B	L	u	Two single May records. Common on the Nile.
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	SBK	R	c	Present all year. Breeding not confirmed. Max. c.20.
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>	B	A	u	Small numbers present in wet season. Max. 2.
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	B	P	u	Single November record. Common locally.
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	SB	P	f	Scattered records August–April. Max 2.
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	SBK	P	c	September–May. Max. 42, April.
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	BK	L	f	Small numbers all year; commoner in wet season. Max. 4.
<b>CICONIIDAE</b>					
African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	B	A	u	Single April record: 22 flying over. Common locally in wet season.
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	B	M	u	Singles flying over. January and May.
Abdim's Stork	<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>	B	A	f	Wet-season visitor. Max. 5, September.
<b>THRESKIORNITHIDAE</b>					
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	SB	P	f	Small numbers winter August–April, major passage along White Nile. Max. 15, December.
Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	SBK	R	c	Small breeding colony at Bahri in wet season; common winter visitor. Max. c.300, February.
<b>PHOENICOPTERIDAE</b>					
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	B	P	u	Single individual present January–May.
<b>ANATIDAE</b>					
Fulvous Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	SBK	RA	f	All year; commoner in wet season. Max. 40, May.
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	SBK	R	c	Common all year; confirmed breeder. Max. c.500, December.
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	B	P	u	Single record of five, December. Commoner on Nile.

		Sites	Status	Encounter rate	Comments
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	B	P	f	Max. 5, October and November.
Hottentot Teal	<i>Spatula hottentota</i>	SBKO	R	c	Breeding confirmed (31 January, Omdurman; 11 February, Khartoum). Max. 48, September.
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>	SBKO	P	c	August–May, but mainly October–April. Max. c.800, January.
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	SBK	P	c	August–March, but mainly October–March. Max. c.500 January.
Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>	BK	A	f	August–March. Max. 11, February.
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	BK	P	u	Single, September; two, December.
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	BK	P	u	Max. 3, November and December.
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>					
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	SB	R	f	Locally common; breeding confirmed.
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>	SBKO	R	c	Confirmed breeder in small numbers.
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	SBK	P	f	October–March. Max. 4, February.
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	S	L	f	Single, November.
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	BK	L	u	Singles, December and January.
<b>FALCONIDAE</b>					
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	B	P	u	Single, March.
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	B	L	u	Single, December.
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	O	M	u	Single, May.
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	SBK	L	f	Singles, year-round.
<b>RALLIDAE</b>					
Little Crake	<i>Zapornia parva</i>	S	P	u	Two, February. Probably under-recorded.
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	SBKO	R	c	All year; confirmed breeder. Especially common at Khartoum. Max. c.300, February.
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	SBKO	R	c	All year. Immature, September. Max. 8, September. Also 125 near Sunt Forest on White Nile.
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	B	P	f	November–March. Max. 6, January.
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	BK	R	c	Mostly at Khartoum. Confirmed breeder; juveniles January and February. Max. 44, January.
<b>ROSTRATULIDAE</b>					
Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	SB	R	f	Singles, February and May.
<b>RECURVIROSTRIDAE</b>					
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	SBKO	R	c	All months; possibly breeding. Max. c.130, February.
<b>BURHINIDAE</b>					
Senegal Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	BK	R	f	Max. c.30, March.
<b>PLUVIANIDAE</b>					
Egyptian Plover	<i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i>	S	L	u	One record of two, September. Common on Nile.
<b>CHARADRIIDAE</b>					
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	SB	P	f	Max. 5, February.
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	SBKO	R	c	Max. 15, October.
Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>	BKO	L	f	Occasional records all months. Max. 8, September.
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	S	R	f	Scattered records all year. Max. 2.
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	B	P	u	Single, February.
Black-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus tectus</i>	B	L	u	Single record, July. Commoner further south.
Spur-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	SBKO	R	c	Common breeder; sometimes in larger groups. max. c.100.
White-tailed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	B	P	f	October–February; small numbers. Max. 4, December.

		Sites	Status	Encounter rate	Comments
<b>SCOLOPACIDAE</b>					
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	SBK	P	c	August–April. Max. c.50, April.
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	SBK	P	c	September–April. Max. c.10, March and October.
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	SBK	P	c	September–February. Max. c.10, February.
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	SBKO	P	c	August–April. Max. c.2,000, February.
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	SBKO	P	f	September–April. Max. 8, February
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	SBK	P	f	Occasional in small numbers. Max. 4, March. Commoner on Nile.
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	SB	P	f	February–April. Max. 5, February.
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	O	P	u	Single January record.
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	SBKO	P	c	September–April. Max. c.100, September.
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	SK	P	f	August–February. Max. 3, August.
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	SBO	P	f	August–April. Max. c.10, September/October.
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	SBKO	P	c	August–April. Max. c.100 September and December.
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	SBK	P	c	August–May. Max. c.10, January and September.
<b>LARIDAE</b>					
Common Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	B	M	u	Group of 16, April. Common on passage along White Nile.
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	B	M	u	One record of two, April. Fairly common on migration on Blue and White Nile.
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	SB	P	f	October–May. Max. c.5, May.
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	SBK	P	c	September–May. Max. c.300, April.
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	SBK	P	c	September–May. Max. c.1,000, April.
<b>PTEROCLIDAE</b>					
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	S	L	u	Single record of two flying over, February.
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>					
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	SBK	R	c	Confirmed breeder in small numbers.
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	BK	L	f	October–December.
Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	SBO	L	f	Small numbers at study sites.
African Mourning Dove	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>	SBKO	R	c	Confirmed breeding at study sites. often in Acacia over water.
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	SBKO	R	c	Confirmed breeding at study sites.
<b>PSITTACIDAE</b>					
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	S	L	u	Single record of two flying over, April.
<b>CUCULIDAE</b>					
White-browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>	SBO	R	f	Probably breeding at study sites.
<b>CAPRIMULGIDAE</b>					
Long-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>	SBKO	R	f	Probably breeding at study sites.
<b>APODIDAE</b>					
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	SBKO	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites or locally.
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	BO	M	u	February–March. Max. c.15, February.
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	B	L	u	Single, December. Local status unclear. Seen at several places in all months, in groups of up to 50. Not reported near Khartoum State by Nikolaus (1987).
<b>COLIIDAE</b>					
Blue-naped Mousebird	<i>Urocolius macrourus</i>	SBK	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites.
<b>ALCEDINIDAE</b>					
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	SB	L	f	Occasional sightings; common locally.

		Sites	Status	Encounter rate	Comments
<b>MEROPIDAE</b>					
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	SB	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites in small numbers.
White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>	S	A	f	Several sightings, August–October. Wet-season visitor from south.
Little Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	B	R	f	Confirmed breeding at study sites.
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	SBO	M	f	April, May and September. Max. c.15, September.
<b>UPUPIDAE</b>					
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	SB	P	f	Occasional, September–March. Max. 2.
<b>BUCEROTIDAE</b>					
Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>	S	L	u	Single record of two flying over, August.
<b>PICIDAE</b>					
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	B	M	u	Single September record.
<b>ALAUDIDAE</b>					
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	SBKO	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites.
Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>	SBKO	R	c	Confirmed breeding at study sites in small numbers.
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>					
Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	SK	L	f	Common local resident; occasional visitor to sites. Max. c.20, September.
Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	SBK	M	c	Common passage migrant, September and March–May. Max. c.400, April.
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	SB	M	u	Single record of two, April.
Ethiopian Swallow	<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>	SBKO	R	c	Probably breeding on study sites. Max. c.50, October.
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	SBKO	P	c	September–April. Max. c.10, April.
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	SB	P	u	Single, April.
<b>MOTACILIDAE</b>					
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	SBKO	P	c	August–April. c.2,000 roosting at Khartoum, February. At sewage sites nearly all are <i>M. f. feldegg</i> , whereas the commonest subspecies observed elsewhere is <i>M. f. beema</i> .
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	SBKO	P	c	September–May. Max. c.10, November and December.
<b>PYCNONOTIDAE</b>					
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	SBKO	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites.
<b>TURDIDAE</b>					
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	S	L	u	Single record of two, April.
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	B	P	f	Single record (several unidentified wheatears probably this species).
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	S	P	u	Single January record.
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	S	P	u	Single November record.
<b>CISTICOLIDAE</b>					
Graceful Prinia	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>	SBKO	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites.
<b>ACROCEPHALIDAE</b>					
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	SBK	P	c	Dry-season visitor, September–April.
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	SBKO	P	c	Dry-season visitor, September–April.
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	S	P	u	Two records, April and September.
Clamorous Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	B	R	u	Single mist-netted, April. Two singing the following week. Status uncertain.
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>	S	L	u	Common local resident, seen twice at Soba.
<b>PHYLLOSCOPIIDAE</b>					
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	SB	P	f	September, October and April. Max. 3, October.

		Sites	Status	Encounter rate	Comments
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	SB	P	f	November. Max. 5.
<b>SYLVIIDAE</b>					
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	S	P	u	Common local winter visitor, three records at study sites
<b>NECTARINIDAE</b>					
Beautiful Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>	S	L	f	Common local resident; occasional visitor to study sites.
<b>LANIIDAE</b>					
Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>	S	P	u	Single, April. Common locally.
Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	B	A	u	Single, August.
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	S	P	u	Single, February.
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	S	P	u	Single, October.
<b>STURNIDAE</b>					
Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>	S	A	f	August–November.
Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>	SB	R	f	February–May. Probably breeding at study sites or locally. Max. c.200, April.
<b>PASSERIDAE</b>					
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	SBKO	R	c	Several thousand; confirmed breeding.
Sudan Golden Sparrow	<i>Passer luteus</i>	SB	L	c	March–May. Max. 80, March.
<b>PLOCEIDAE</b>					
Little Weaver	<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>	S	L	u	Single October mist-netting record.
Northern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus taeniopterus</i>	SBKO	R	c	Abundant breeding resident. Several thousand nests, mainly February–November.
Vitelline Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus vitellinus</i>	B	L	u	Single May mist-netting record.
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	SB	R	c	Several hundred nests at Bahri.
Cinnamon Weaver	<i>Ploceus badius</i>	B	L	u	Single sighting. Breeds locally. Three hybrids <i>P. badius</i> × <i>P. taeniopterus</i> netted. Hybrid building nest, April.
Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	SB	L	f	February–May. Occasional visitor. Max. 2.
Northern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>	SB	R	c	Confirmed breeding at study sites.
<b>ESTRILDIDAE</b>					
Crimson-rumped Waxbill	<i>Estrilda rhodopyga</i>	S	L	f	Common locally; occasional visitor to study sites.
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	SB	R	c	Probably breeding at study sites in small numbers.
African Silverbill	<i>Lonchura cantans</i>	SBK	R	c	Confirmed breeding at study sites in small numbers.
<b>VIDUIDAE</b>					
Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	S	L	u	Fairly common locally; occasional visitor to study sites.
Village Indigobird	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>	S	L	f	Fairly common locally; occasional visitor to study sites.
<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>					
White-rumped Seedeater	<i>Crithagra leucopygia</i>	S	L	f	Fairly common locally; occasional visitor to study sites.



# Bird observations around Huye (Butare), southern Rwanda

Bruno Boedts

**Observations des oiseaux aux environs d'Huye (Butare), sud du Rwanda.** L'avifaune de la région centre-sud du Rwanda présente à la fois certaines espèces caractéristiques des forêts de montagne de l'ouest et d'autres plus nombreuses des régions de marais et savanes situées à l'est. Un séjour de longue durée à Huye au début des années 1990, complété par des séjours plus courts entre 1994 et 2015, m'ont permis d'observer 194 espèces dans la zone concernée. La diversité des espèces dans la zone, qui ne comprend pas d'aires protégées, est restée élevée au cours de la période et en comparaison avec des données plus anciennes datant des années 1957–58. Cependant, quelques changements ont été notés, par exemple pour les espèces des vallées, suite aux aménagements rizicoles entrepris ces dernières années.

**Summary.** The avifauna of the south-central region of Rwanda possesses certain species characteristic of both western montane forests and others more numerous in swamps and savanna regions to the east. A long stay in Huye in the early 1990s, complemented by shorter periods between 1994 and 2015, permitted me to observe 194 species in the region. The diversity of species in the area, which does not include any protected areas, has remained high during the study and in comparison to earlier periods dating back to 1957–58. However, some changes have been noted, for example for species found in valleys, following rice scheme developments in recent years.

The avifauna of Huye, previously called Butare (and Astrida prior to independence), was studied by Brother Aurélien, who published his observations in 1957–58 (Aurélien 1957a,b, 1958). Country-wide information on birds in Rwanda is provided by Vande weghe & Vande weghe (2011), based principally on observations made during the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, massive changes in terms of human population and resulting habitat alteration that

are likely to have had a major impact on some species have occurred in recent years, and there is a general lack of recent data on avifaunal distributions and populations in Rwanda. I was resident at Huye, situated south of the central plateau at 1,700 m (02°33'S 29°46'E; Fig. 1) and made ornithological observations, mainly around the town, in December 1989–July 1991 and, additionally, during short stays in March 1994, July 2006 and July 2015.



**Figure 1.** Location of sites visited around Huye (study area framed in red), Rwanda.

Situation des principaux sites visités dans les environs d'Huye (zone d'étude encadrée en rouge), Rwanda.



**Figure 2.** View of the Arboretum of Ruhande and, in the foreground, Rwasave fish ponds (right) and rice fields (left), Huye, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

Vue sur l'arboretum de Ruhande et, en avant-plan, les étangs piscicoles de Rwasave (à droite) et les rizières (à gauche), Huye, Rwanda, juillet 2015 (B. Boedts)



**Figure 3.** View of savanna woodlands, Rubona, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

Vue sur la savane arborée, Rubona, Rwanda, juillet 2015 (B. Boedts)

### Study area

Two sites close to Huye city centre, the fish farm of Rwasave and the Arboretum of Ruhande near the National University of Rwanda (Fig. 2), were visited regularly each week between 1989 and 1991 (*c.*60 visits over 20 months) and occasionally between 1994 and 2015 (*c.*10 visits). The fish farm, in existence since 1983, covers a total area of 18 ha and includes 60 production and research ponds, mainly of *Tilapia nilotica*. The Arboretum of *c.*200 ha was established in 1934. It includes >207 species of local and exotic trees, including 67 species of *Eucalyptus* (Nsabimana 2013). In the valley bottoms near Huye, many formerly cultivated fields of maize, sorghum, sweet potatoes and beans have been converted into rice fields.

I also made observations in savanna woodlands at Rubona and Songa, north of Huye on the road to Kigali, owned by the Rwanda Agricultural Board (two visits in 1989–91 and three in 2015) (Fig. 3). In addition, wetlands at the southern

border of Rwanda were visited occasionally between 1989 and 1991, mainly the Gakoma wetlands in the east (once in May 1990), and Kigembe fish farm in the south (two visits, in February and August 1990).

The climate of Rwanda includes two dry seasons (a short one in January–February and a long one in July–September) and two wet seasons (a short one in October–December and a long one in March–June) (Kanyamibwa 2001).

### Results

Of the 194 species I observed (see Appendix 1), one is classified as Endangered (Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*) and two as Near Threatened (Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* and Great Snipe *Gallinago media*). The majority (91.8%) are widespread Afrotropical species, including at least 16 intra-African migrants, ten Afromontane, two Zambesian and one Guineo-Congolian. The remaining 8.2% comprises 16 Palearctic migrants.



**Figure 4.** Pink-backed Pelicans *Pelecanus rufescens* and Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* (right), fish ponds near Kigabiro, Eastern Province, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

Pélican gris *Pelecanus rufescens* et Tantale ibis *Mycteria ibis*, étangs piscicoles aux environs de Kigabiro, Province de l'Est, Rwanda, juillet 2015 (B. Boedts)

**Figure 5.** African Goshawk / Autour tachiro *Accipiter tachiro*, Gisakura, Nyungwe forest, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

**Figure 6.** Black-morph Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*, between Huye and Kigali, near Rusatira, Rwanda, July 2015. Identified by white patches on secondaries and rufous uppertail (B. Boedts)

Buse augure *Buteo augur* forme noire, entre Huye et Kigali aux environs de Rusatira, Rwanda, juillet 2015. Identifié par les taches blanches sur les rémiges secondaires et le dessus de la queue roux (B. Boedts)

**Figure 7.** Immature Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*, between Huye and Kigali, around Nyanza, Rwanda, July 2015. Identified by barred tail, white feathered legs and upright posture (B. Boedts)

Aigle huppard *Lophaetus occipitalis*, immature, entre Huye et Kigali, près de Nyanza, Rwanda, juillet 2015. Identifié par la queue barrée, les plumes blanches des pattes et la posture droite (B. Boedts)

**Figure 8.** Spot-flanked Barbet / Barbican funèbre *Tricholaema lacrymosa*, Rubona, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

## Notes on selected species

The following notes provide details on species that were irregularly observed in the study area and are noteworthy for southern Rwanda or are globally Endangered (EN) or Near Threatened (NT) (BirdLife International 2015).

### Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Just two observations of singles: at Rwasave ponds on 14 and 17 October 1990. Fairly common visitor to Rwanda (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011) but not previously recorded at Huye.

### Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Fifteen occupied nests, with those of Sacred Ibises *Threskiornis aethiopicus* (ten pairs) and Black-headed Herons *Ardea melanocephala* (two pairs) in *Eucalyptus* trees along the road from Huye to Kigali, near Nyanza, on 23 July 2015. Not recorded in 1989–91.

### Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

In non-breeding plumage at Rwasave ponds on 8–9 December 1990 and 3 January 1991. Although the plumage of some birds was rather dark, they were not identified with certainty as Madagascar Pond Heron *A. idae* as this species is usually found outside Madagascar only in April–September. However, Madagascar Pond Heron has been collected in February at Huye (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

One at Huye rice fields on 21 April 1991 and 15 at Rwasave ponds in July 2015. Has perhaps benefited from the development of rice schemes.

### African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

One at Rwasave ponds on 2 February 1990 and one at Huye rice fields on 21 April 1991. A scarce resident visiting rice schemes (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011) but recently reported as common at paddies in the east (J. Anderson *in litt.* 2015).

### White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Just one near Gakoma on 29 April 1990. Breeding visitor arriving in Huye from January but not seen in some years (Aurélien 1957a).

### Black-chested Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*

One flying over Rwasave ponds on 1 November 1990. Considered an uncommon resident, becoming rare in Rwanda since 1994 (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* NT

One at Songa on 24 March and 10 April 1991. In the 1950s, a pair resided at Mont Huye, c.10 km west of Huye, from where they flew every day to their hunting grounds near Bugesera (Aurélien 1957a). Notwithstanding a substantial decline during the last 30 years, it is described as a common breeding resident in Rwanda (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011), although the species may now be extinct as a breeder outside Akagera National Park (J. Anderson *in litt.* 2015).

### Ayres's Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*

Singles over the Arboretum of Ruhande on 17 June 1990 and 14 July 2006. A scarce visitor already reported from the Huye area (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum* EN

Often in pairs, passing through the valleys of Huye all year, except in the short dry season. In the late 1950s, there was a roost of 100 in the centre of Huye (Aurélien 1957a). Still considered a common resident throughout the country, but the Rwandan population has declined dramatically in recent years due to the capture of chicks for the bird trade (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

Just one record at Huye of a single on 21 April 1991. By 2015, had become common at Huye paddyfields. A common breeding resident in Rwanda and the most adaptable of the larger plovers (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### Long-toed Lapwing *Vanellus crasirostris*

Two seen during most visits to Rwasave ponds in 1989–91, but none in 2006 and 2015. Described as a common breeding resident in Rwanda, which has also become well established in paddyfields (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011), but this is apparently not the case at Huye today, where it formerly bred (Aurélien 1957a).



**Figure 9.** Red-capped Robin Chat *Cossypha natalensis*, near the Arboretum of Ruhande, Huye, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

Cossyphé à calotte rousse *Cossypha natalensis*, près de l'arboretum de Ruhande, Huye, Rwanda, juillet 2015 (B. Boedts)

**Figure 10.** Miombo Rock Thrush / Monticole angolais *Monticola angolensis*; Rubona, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

**Figure 11.** Male Ruaha Chat *Myrmecocichla collaris*, between Huye and Kigali, near Nyanza, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

Traquet du Ruaha *Myrmecocichla collaris*, mâle, entre Huye et Kigali, près de Nyanza, Rwanda, juillet 2015 (B. Boedts)

### **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis*

One at Rwasave ponds on 8 December 1990. Uncommon visitor throughout the country (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* NT

One at Rwasave ponds on 7–9 December 1990. Formerly numerous in all of the valleys (Aurélien 1957a) but has declined considerably since 1970 (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax*

Singles at Rwasave ponds on 19 November 1990 and 7 December 1990. A common visitor to Rwanda on both passages (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011), but Rwasave ponds are perhaps not attractive to the species.

### **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus*

One near rice fields at Huye on 21 April 1991. An uncommon breeding resident that occasionally occurs on the central plateau (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus*

Five at Rwasave ponds in July 2015. Not recorded in the study area in 1989–91. Common breeding resident in eastern Rwanda where there

are palms, but does not occur much above 1,300 m and is curiously absent from the Bugesera region (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina*

One in early-growth *Eucalyptus* forest near Rwasave ponds on 3 July 1991 and another near rice fields at Rubona on 26 July 2015. The species was previously known to occur annually in *Eucalyptus* forest at Huye during the dry season (Aurélien 1957a).

### **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus*

In small groups. Max. 5, at Songa on 24 March 1991. Occurs until the end of April, occasionally on the central plateau (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **African Grey Hornbill** *Tockus nasutus*

An unusual record of one at Songa on 10 April 1991, in the wet season. Considered to be an austral visitor, which normally occurs during the dry season (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis*

Four records of singles: at the Arboretum of Ruhande on 26 June 1990; near Rwasave ponds on 24 May 1990 and 3 January 1991; and at



**Figure 12.** Singing Cisticola / Cisticole chanteuse *Cisticola cantans*, Rubona, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

**Figure 13.** Grosbeak Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*, near the Arboretum of Ruhande, Huye, Rwanda, July 2015 (B. Boedts)

Amblyospize à front blanc *Amblyospiza albifrons*, près de l'arboretum de Ruhande, Huye, Rwanda, juillet 2015 (B. Boedts)

Rubona on 7 July 2015. Uncommon resident, most frequently recorded on the central plateau (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

**Bearded Woodpecker** *Dendropicos namaquus*

One at Rwasave ponds on 24 May 1990. Uncommon breeding resident in central Bugesera region (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

**Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

A late record of ten at Songa on 10 April 1991. Common visitor, mostly noted on passage in October–November and February–April, throughout the country but more abundantly in low-lying savannas and areas bordering Lake Kivu (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

**Mountain Wagtail** *Motacilla clara*

One at Rwasave ponds on 20 April 1991. Uncommon resident that formerly visited Huye annually during the rains (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011), but rarely seen today.

**Cape Robin Chat** *Cossypha caffra*

One at the Arboretum of Ruhande on 27 October 1990. Common resident in western montane forests (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011), but no previous mention for Huye.

**Red-capped Robin Chat** *Cossypha natalensis*

A few singles at the Arboretum of Ruhande, in June 1990 and 1991, near valley bottoms. Many singles also there in July 2015 (Fig. 9) and in early-growth *Eucalyptus* forest at Rubona. Common visitor in May–October in Rwanda (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

**Miombo Rock Thrush** *Monticola angolensis*

One singing at Rubona on 26 July 2015 (Fig. 10). Scarce resident occurring sporadically on the central plateau (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

**Ruaha Chat** *Myrmecocichla collaris*

One male singing from an electricity pole along the Huye–Kigali road near Nyanza on 23 July 2015 (Fig. 11). Common resident in eastern Rwanda and until at least the late 1970s in southern Bugesera region (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

**Abyssinian Thrush** *Turdus abyssinicus*

Singles near Rwasave ponds, on 14 May and 1 November 1990. Also one near Gakoma, on 29 April 1990. Occurs locally on the central plateau and has been observed in the Arboretum of Ruhande (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **African Yellow Warbler** *Iduna natalensis*

Year-round in the valley bottoms bordering the Arboretum of Ruhande. Considered an uncommon breeding resident (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **Singing Cisticola** *Cisticola cantans*

Two together at Rubona on 26 July 2015 (Fig. 12). Uncommon breeding resident, sporadically recorded on the central plateau (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011); overlooked in the past but now found at many sites in Rwanda (G. Vande weghe *in litt.* 2016).

### **Eastern Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus*

Singles at the Arboretum of Ruhande on 26 June 1990 and 3 July 1991. Occasionally recorded on the central plateau (e.g. at Huye) where considered a seasonal wanderer (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

### **Grosbeak Weaver** *Amblyospiza albifrons*

In small groups, max. 10, most of the year in the valleys of the Arboretum of Ruhande (Fig. 13). Fairly common resident and wanderer on the central plateau, but largely restricted to the major river valleys (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

## **Discussion**

Some species that are uncommon in southern Rwanda were observed around Huye, e.g. African Spoonbill, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Ayres's Eagle, Greater Painted-snipe, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Red-throated Wryneck and African Yellow Warbler. Around Rubona in 2015, some species that are rarely seen around Huye were recorded, e.g. Singing Cisticola, Miombo Rock Thrush and Ruaha Chat, the latter two Zambesian elements.

The important wetlands in the Bugesera region and the Ruzizi Delta north of Lake Tanganyika in neighbouring Burundi, explain the presence of at least eight Palearctic shorebirds on passage or wintering at Huye, including Great Snipe, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Ruff, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta* and Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*.

In recent years, certain species found in the valleys have been recorded in newly developed rice

schemes, including previously less common species such as Black-crowned Night Heron (which nested near Huye in 2015), African Openbill and Wattled Lapwing. Even some species not typically associated with wetlands appear to have benefited, such as Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*, Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* and African Palm Swift.

The majority of birds observed around Huye (85.1%) were widespread Afrotropical species. Some species that principally inhabit montane forests and associated habitats in western Rwanda, but are also widespread in riparian forest or moist woodlands (5.2%), are common around Huye, such as Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater *Merops oreobates*, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis fisheri*, Chubb's Cisticola *Cisticola chubbi*, Bronzy Sunbird *Nectarinia kilimensis*, Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht*, Western Citril *Crithagra frontalis* and Thick-billed Seed-eater *C. burtoni*. Other species less common outside montane forests were also seen in the study area, such as Mountain Wagtail, Cape Robin Chat and Abyssinian Thrush. Palearctic and Zambesian species represent 8.2% and 1.0% respectively of birds recorded around Huye. Just one Guineo-Congolian species (0.5%), Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus*, was recorded in the study area.

Comparison of personal observations with data from the years 1957–58 shows a decrease in abundance for certain species such as Black-chested Snake Eagle, Bateleur, Grey Crowned Crane and Great Snipe. In general, however, bird diversity at Huye remains high, which is partly due to the fact that birds are generally not hunted by Rwandans (Vande weghe & Vande weghe 2011).

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#### Appendix 1. Bird species recorded around Huye, Rwanda, 1989–2015.

**Encounter rate:** C = common or quite common (species observed on every visit or >50% of visits in appropriate habitat and season); I = infrequently observed (<50% of visits in appropriate habitat); R = rare (1–3 records).

**Sites visited around Huye:** ● = in 1989–91, ○ = in 2006 and 2015. Sequence and taxonomy follow Dowsett *et al.* (2015) with some amendments.

**Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées aux environs d'Huye, Rwanda, 1989–2015.**

**Fréquence d'observation :** C = commun ou assez commun (espèce observée à chaque visite ou à >50% des visites dans le bon milieu et la période de l'année appropriée), I = irrégulièrement observé (<50% des visites dans le bon milieu), R = rare (1–3 observations).

**Lieux visités :** ● = environs d'Huye (en 1989–91), ○ = environs d'Huye (en 2006 et 2015)

L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent Dowsett *et al.* (2015) avec certains amendements.

		Encounter rate	Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)
<b>PODICIPEDIDAE</b>						
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	I	-	●	●	●
<b>PHALACROCORACIDAE</b>						
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	R	-	-	-	●
Reed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	R	-	-	●	●
<b>PELECANIDAE</b>						
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	R	●	-	-	●
Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	I	●	-	●	●
<b>ARDEIDAE</b>						
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	I	-	-	●	-
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	I	●	-	●	●
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	I	-	●	●	●
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	C	●	●	-	●
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	I	●	●	-	-
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	R	●	-	-	-
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	I	●	-	-	●
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
<b>SCOPIIDAE</b>						
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
<b>CICONIDAE</b>						
Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	I	-	●	●	-
<b>THRESKIORNITHIDAE</b>						
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>	I	●	●	-	-
<b>ANATIDAE</b>						
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	R	-	●	-	-
Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>						
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Black-chested Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>	R	-	-	-	●
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	I	-	●	●	-
African Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus ranivorus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
African Goshawk	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>	R	-	●	-	-
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	R	●	●	-	-
Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>	I	-	●	●●	●
Augur Buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	R	-	●	-	-
Ayres's Eagle	<i>Hieraetus ayresii</i>	R	-	●	●	-
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaelagus occipitalis</i>	C	-	●	●●	●



		Encounter rate	Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)
<b>FALCONIDAE</b>						
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>	I	●	-	●	-
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	R	-	-	-	●
African Hobby	<i>Falco cuvierii</i>	R	-	-	●	-
<b>PHASIANIDAE</b>						
Red-winged Francolin	<i>Scleroptila levaillantii</i>	I	-	●	-	●
<b>GRUIDAE</b>						
Grey Crowned Crane	<i>Balearica regulorum</i>	I	-	●	●	●
<b>JACANIDAE</b>						
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	I	●	-	●	-
<b>ROSTRATULIDAE</b>						
Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	R	-	-	-	●
<b>RECURVIROSTRIDAE</b>						
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	C	●	-	-	●
<b>CHARADRIIDAE</b>						
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	R	-	-	-	●
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Long-toed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus crassirostris</i>	C	●	●	●	●
<b>SCOLOPACIDAE</b>						
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	I	●	-	-	●
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	R	-	-	-	●
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	I	-	●	-	●
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	R	-	-	-	●
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	C	●	●	-	●
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	I	●	-	-	●
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	C	●	●	-	●
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	C	●	●	●	●
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>						
African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>	I	-	-	●	-
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	C	-	-	●	-
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>	C	-	●	●	●
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	I	-	-	●	-
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	C	-	●	●●	-
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	C	●	●	●	-
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	C	-	●	●	-
<b>PSITTACIDAE</b>						
Meyer's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	I	-	●	●	●

		Encounter rate	Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)
<b>MUSOPHAGIDAE</b>						
Ross's Turaco	<i>Musophaga rossae</i>	R	-	●	●●	-
<b>CUCULIDAE</b>						
Levaillant's Cuckoo	<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>	R	-	●	-	-
Red-chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	I	-	●	-	-
White-browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>	I	-	●	-	●
<b>STRIGIDAE</b>						
Verreaux's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
<b>APODIDAE</b>						
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	I	-	-	●	-
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>	I	-	●	-	-
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	I	-	●	-	-
<b>COLIIDAE</b>						
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
<b>TROGONIDAE</b>						
Narina's Trogon	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>	R	-	-	●●	-
<b>ALCEDINIDAE</b>						
Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	R	-	●	-	-
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	I	-	●	-	-
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
<b>MEROPIIDAE</b>						
Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater	<i>Merops oreobates</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
<b>CORACIIDAE</b>						
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
<b>PHOENICULIDAE</b>						
Green Wood-hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
<b>BUCEROTIDAE</b>						
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	R	-	●	-	-
<b>CAPITONIDAE</b>						
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>	I	-	●	-	-
Spot-flanked Barbet	<i>Tricholaema lacrymosa</i>	I	-	●	●	-
<b>INDICATORIDAE</b>						
Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>	I	-	●	-	●

		Encounter rate	Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)			Encounter rate	Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)
<b>PICIDAE</b>							<b>ACROCEPHALIDAE</b>						
Red-throated Wryneck	<i>Jynx ruficollis</i>	I	●	●	●	-	African Yellow Warbler	<i>Iduna natalensis</i>	I	●	●	●	-
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>	I	-	●	●	●	<b>CISTICOLIDAE</b>						
Bearded Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos namaquus</i>	R	-	●	-	-	Green-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	I	-	●	-	-
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>							Singing Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cantans</i>	R	-	-	●	-
White-headed Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne albiceps</i>	I	●	●	●●	-	Chubb's Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chubbi</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	R	-	●	-	-	Winding Cisticola	<i>Cisticola galactotes</i>	I	●	●	-	-
Mosque Swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>	R	-	●	-	-	Stout Cisticola	<i>Cisticola robustus</i>	I	●	●	-	●
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>	I	-	●	●	-	Grey-capped Warbler	<i>Eminia lepida</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	R	-	●	-	-	<b>MUSCICAPIDAE</b>						
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	I	●	●	-	-	White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis fisheri</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	I	●	-	●	●	Southern Black Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>	I	●	●	●●	-
Angola Swallow	<i>Hirundo angolensis</i>	C	-	●	●	●	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	R	-	-	●	●
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	I	-	●	-	-	Dusky-brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>	C	-	●	●	-
<b>MOTACILLIDAE</b>							<b>STENOSTIRIDAE</b>						
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	I	-	-	-	●	White-tailed Blue Flycatcher	<i>Elminia albicauda</i>	I	-	●	●	●
Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>	I	-	●	-	-	<b>MONARCHIDAE</b>						
Mountain Wagtail	<i>Motacilla clara</i>	R	-	●	-	-	African Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	C	●	●	●	●
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	R	-	-	-	●	<b>PLATYSTEIRIDAE</b>						
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	I	●	●	-	-	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	I	●	●	●	●
Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	I	-	●	-	-	Chin-spot Batis	<i>Batis molitor</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Yellow-throated Longclaw	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>	I	-	●	●	●	<b>LEIOTHORICIDAE</b>						
<b>CAMPEPHAGIDAE</b>							Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>	I	-	●	●	-
Black Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga flava</i>	I	-	●	-	-	Black-lored Babbler	<i>Turdoides sharpei</i>	C	-	●	●	●
<b>PYCNONOTIDAE</b>							<b>NECTARINIIDAE</b>						
Yellow-throated Leaflove	<i>Chlorocichla flavicollis</i>	I	-	-	●	-	Green-headed Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	C	●	●	●●	●	Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	R	-	-	●	-
<b>TURDIDAE</b>							Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	C	●	●	●	●
Cape Robin Chat	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>	R	-	-	-	●	Bronzy Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia kilimensis</i>	C	●	●	●	●
White-browed Robin Chat	<i>Cossypha heuglini</i>	C	●	●	●●	●	Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	C	●	●	●	●
Red-capped Robin Chat	<i>Cossypha natalensis</i>	I	-	-	●	-	Variable Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>	I	-	●	●	-
White-browed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>	I	●	●	●	●	Olive-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chloropygius</i>	I	●	-	●	●
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	C	●	●	●	●	<b>ZOSTEROPIDAE</b>						
Miombo Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola angolensis</i>	R	-	-	●	-	African Yellow White-eye	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	C	-	●	●	-
Sooty Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla nigra</i>	I	-	●	●	-	<b>LANIIDAE</b>						
Ruaha Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla collaris</i>	R	-	-	●	-	Grey-backed Fiscal	<i>Lanius excubitorius</i>	I	-	●	●	-
African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	I	-	-	●●	-	Mackinnon's Shrike	<i>Lanius mackinnoni</i>	C	●	●	●●	●
Abyssinian Thrush	<i>Turdus abyssinicus</i>	R	-	●	-	●	Common Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>	C	●	●	●●	●

		Encounter rate						Encounter rate					
		Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)			Short dry season (Jan–Feb)	Long rainy season (Mar–June)	Long dry season (Jul–Sep)	Short rainy season (Oct–Dec)		
<b>MALACONOTIDAE</b>													
Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>	I	-	•	-	-	Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	I	-	-	•	-
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	I	-	•	-	-	Black-headed Weaver	<i>Ploceus melanocephalus</i>	I	-	•	-	-
Northern Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	I	-	-	•	-	Grosbeak Weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>	I	•	•	•	-
Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius (aethiopicus) major</i>	I	-	•	•	-	Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>	R	-	•	-	-
Black-headed Gonolek	<i>Laniarius erythrogaster</i>	I	-	•	-	-	Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>	I	•	-	•	-
<b>ORIOLIDAE</b>													
Eastern Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>	R	-	•	•	-	Red-collared Widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>	R	-	-	•	-
African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>	I	-	•	-	-	Fan-tailed Widowbird	<i>Euplectes axillaris</i>	C	•	•	•	•
<b>DICRURIDAE</b>													
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicurus adsimilis</i>	I	•	•	•	-	<b>ESTRILDIDAE</b>						
<b>CORVIDAE</b>													
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	C	•	•	••	•	Grey-headed Negrofinch	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>	R	-	•	-	-
<b>STURNIDAE</b>													
Rüppell's Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis purpuroptera</i>	I	-	•	•	-	Yellow-bellied Waxbill	<i>Coccyzygia quartinia</i>	I	-	•	-	•
Violet-backed Starling	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	I	-	•	••	-	Fawn-breasted Waxbill	<i>Estrilda paludicola</i>	I	•	•	-	-
<b>PASSERIDAE</b>													
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	C	•	•	••	•	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	C	-	•	•	•
<b>PLOCEIDAE</b>													
Red-headed Weaver	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>	R	-	•	-	-	Black-crowned Waxbill	<i>Estrilda nonnula</i>	I	-	-	•	•
Baglafaecht Weaver	<i>Ploceus baglafaecht</i>	I	-	•	•	•	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	C	-	•	•	-
Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	R	-	-	•	-	Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>	I	-	•	•	-
Spectacled Weaver	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	I	-	•	•	•	Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	C	•	•	•	•
Holub's Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>	I	•	•	••	•	African Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta rubricata</i>	I	-	•	-	•
Lesser Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>	I	-	•	•	-	Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>	C	-	•	••	•
Veillot's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>	I	•	•	-	•	Black-and-white Mannikin	<i>Spermestes bicolor</i>	C	•	•	•	-
<b>VIDUIDAE</b>													
<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>													
<b>EMBERIZIDAE</b>													
<b>VIDUIDAE</b>													
<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>													
<b>EMBERIZIDAE</b>													

# African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus* breeding in Benin—the only colony known at present in West Africa?

Robert J. Dowsett and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

**Une colonie nicheuse de Bec-ouvert africain *Anastomus lamelligerus* au Bénin—la seule connue actuellement en Afrique de l'Ouest?** Une colonie nicheuse de Bec-ouvert africain *Anastomus lamelligerus* a été découverte sur la côte du Bénin en 2015. Il s'agit apparemment de la seule colonie connue actuellement en Afrique occidentale, d'une espèce considérée comme vulnérable dans la région.

On 7 October 2015 we visited a site in south-western Benin where local people informed us there were breeding and roosting waterbirds. This is a small island of mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*) in the Mono River, just a few km west of the estuary at Bouche du Roy; it is at 06°17'N 01°53'E, near Avlo primary school. The island is c.280 × 90 m and supports, in addition to nests of African Openbills *Anastomus lamelligerus*, substantial numbers of breeding Long-tailed Cormorants *Microcarbo africanus* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, as well as smaller numbers of Intermediate Egrets *Ardea intermedia*, Black Egrets *Egretta ardesiaca* and Western Reef Egrets *E. gularis*. Our guide told us that the colony had been established a few years earlier, but that this was the first time he had seen the storks there.

We visited the colony again on 31 October, when the accompanying photographs were taken (Figs. 1–2). Of five nests directly visible from the Avlo shore, one still contained eggs (brooded continuously), three had small to medium-sized chicks and one had four nearly-fledged young. Chicks were continuously sheltered by one standing adult, and it was impossible to count them except in one nest (where there was only one chick). In the two hours of observation, just two of the five adults present at those nests were relieved by their mate; during the same period at least 12 adults came to relieve their mates at nests hidden in the centre of the island. This suggests that the total number of nests could be at least 25–30. In addition to food regurgitated by the adults, one was seen carrying a mollusc and another a large red crab.



**Figures 1–2.** Adult African Openbills *Anastomus lamelligerus* with nestlings of different ages at a mixed-species colony near Avlo, Benin, 31 October 2015 (Robert J. Dowsett)

Bec-ouverts africains *Anastomus lamelligerus* adultes avec jeunes d'âges différents dans une colonie mixte près de Avlo, Bénin, 31 octobre 2015 (Robert J. Dowsett)

The conservation status of this species is considered to be Least Concern globally (BirdLife International 2015), but in West Africa there is considerable cause for concern. Breeding colonies have not been recorded in the Inner Niger delta, previously the only regular area, since the 1980s (Wymenga *et al.* 2002, Zwarts *et al.* 2009; J. van der Kamp & L. Zwarts *in litt.* to R. Demey 2016). The last nests reported there were 36 in February 1987 at Dentaka, Mali (c.15°12'N 04°11'W), where they were susceptible to disturbance by goat herders collecting wood (Skinner *et al.* 1987). There has only ever been one record in northern Nigeria, reported by Elgood *et al.* (1994) as 'well grown young in nest' in January in the Potiskum area; more accurately, there were nearly-fledged young on several nests within a mixed-species heronry near Maburtata (11°47'N 10°43'E), on 1 January 1960 (Elgood *et al.* 1973). Further east there were just two small colonies of a dozen pairs at the mare d'Agan, Chad (13°32'N 22°12'E), on 7 September 1964 (Salvan 1967). Recent instability in the Lake Chad basin as a result of Boko Haram terrorists augers ill for any surviving population there. There has apparently been no previous evidence of breeding in coastal West Africa: the only claim seems to have been that of Field (1978) who considered that it nested in Sierra Leone, but admitted he did not know where.

Birds are now found in West Africa, other than as vagrants, in just a very few areas (e.g. Ghana: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014: 222). In recent years there have been sightings during most months in coastal Togo and southern Benin, occasionally as many as 100+ together: c.100 were seen on 25 October 2009 and c.200 on 14 March 2010 in the Plaine du Sô in south-eastern Bénin (*Bull. ABC* 17: 240), while at least 245 passed in groups along the Zio River north of Lomé, Togo, on 18 October 2009 (*Bull. ABC* 17: 251). It is to be hoped that if there are any other extant colonies in West Africa that they will be documented and protection measures implemented. The Avlo Island features in a package offered to eco-tourists visiting the estuary of the Mono River, as the roost in particular, with thousands of birds converging

on the island in the evening, is a spectacular sight. Encouraged by this potential, local people decided to give protection status to the island in 2011, assisted by the NGO Eco-Bénin, and a deity (voodoo) was placed on the island. Since then, protection has been effective and nesting attempts successful; previously, roosting and nesting birds were disturbed and hunted at various sites in the area.

## Acknowledgements

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# Status of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* in Lesotho

Grzegorz Kopij

**Le statut de la Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* au Lesotho.** En 1996–2002, 25 sites de nidification de la Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* ont été recensés au Lesotho, la plupart ( $n=18$ ) dans des zones montagneuses. La population nicheuse du pays est estimée à 35–50 couples. Tous les couples observés nichaient sur des falaises rocheuses, typiquement dans les gorges de rivières les plus importantes.

**Summary.** In 1996–2002, 25 breeding sites of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* were found in Lesotho, most of them ( $n=18$ ) in the highlands. The breeding population in the country is estimated at 35–50 pairs. All pairs nested on rocky cliffs, typically in larger river canyons.

The Black Stork's *Ciconia nigra* core breeding range extends across the temperate zone of the Palearctic from Spain to Japan (Elliott 1992). Small, isolated populations occur in south-east Africa, from Zambia in the north to the Western Cape, South Africa, in the south (Elliott 1992, Newton 2009). Only approximate estimates are available for the Afrotropical breeding population.

Siegfried (1967) listed *c.*42 Black Stork nest records for the whole of southern Africa and estimated the entire population at 34 breeding pairs, with just three in Lesotho, all of them in the highlands, at Mount aux Sources, Mokhotlong and in Sehlabathebe National Park. Osborne & Tigar (1991) recorded the presence of the species in Lesotho in 13 atlas squares, without providing any information on status. They estimated the Lesotho population at 10–50 birds, *i.e.* 5–25 pairs. Anderson (2005) estimated the southern African population at *c.*1,000 breeding pairs, with 100–500 pairs in Zimbabwe, at least 200 in South Africa, *c.*10 in Swaziland and 10–50 in Lesotho. These estimates, however, were not based on any systematic surveys. Here, I present a list of all breeding sites of the species in Lesotho, recorded during a first country-wide survey.

## Study area and Methods

Lesotho has a surface area of 30,300 km<sup>2</sup> and is divided into four physical regions (Fig. 1): the mountains, called Maloti or Drakensberg (>1,800 m, covering 13,665 km<sup>2</sup> or 45.1% of the total area), the foothills (3,575 km<sup>2</sup> or 11.8%), the Senque Valley (6,605 km<sup>2</sup> or 21.8%) and the lowlands (6,454 km<sup>2</sup> or 21.3%). The natural vegetation of the lowlands and the lower Senque Valley is Highveld Grassland (also termed Moist Cold Highveld Grassland or *Cymbopogon*–

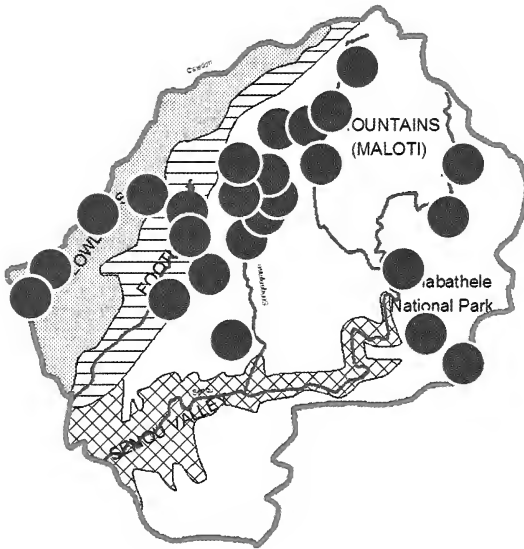
*Themeda* Veld), most of which has been converted into cultivated fields. The Afro-alpine Grasslands (*Themeda*–*Festuca* Alpine Veld) correspond to the summit plateau above 2,500 m, while the Afromontane Grasslands (Alti Mountain Grassland) consists of the rest of the Maloti (Low & Rebelo 1996, Ambrose *et al.* 2000).

In 1996–2002, extensive field surveys, during which special attention was paid to Black Storks, were conducted in various parts of Lesotho, especially in Maseru district, Mafeteng area, Semonkong, Thaba Tseka, Marakabei, Sehlabathebe, Mokhotlong, Sanni Pass, Katse Dam catchment area, Mohales Dam catchment area, Malibamatsu, Senquenyane, Khubelu and the upper Senque. If the species was not observed directly at nesting sites on rock cliffs, it was usually followed until the nest was located.

## Results and Discussion

In total, 25 breeding sites were discovered (Fig. 1). Most were in the highlands, with just three in the foothills and four in the lowlands. Five breeding pairs were recorded in the Mohale Dam (upper Senquenyane) catchment area (*c.*460 km<sup>2</sup>), *i.e.* 1.1 pairs per 100 km<sup>2</sup>. A similar density was recorded in the Matopo Hills, in Zimbabwe (Lorber 1982). However, in the other similar habitat in Lesotho, Katse Dam (Malibamatso) catchment area (608 km<sup>2</sup>), just two pairs were found, *i.e.* 0.5 pairs per 100 km<sup>2</sup> (Table 1). These figures are probably higher than for most other parts of Maloti, as these drainage systems create more suitable nesting and feeding habitats. In Semonkong (*c.*300 km<sup>2</sup>) and Thaba Tseka (*c.*300 km<sup>2</sup>) there was only one pair and none, respectively (*pers. data*).

All pairs nested on rocky cliffs, typically in larger river canyons. In the highlands, the



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* nesting sites in Lesotho, 1996–2002. Ecozones are indicated as follows: dotted—lowlands; lined—foothills; hatched—Senque Valley; blank—highlands.

Distribution des sites de nidification de la Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* au Lesotho, 1996–2002. Les écozones sont indiquées comme suit : pointillé—plaines; lignes horizontales—piedmonts; hachuré—vallée de la Senque; en blanc—zones montagneuses.

**Table 1.** Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* breeding sites in Lesotho, 1996–2002.

**Tableau 1.** Sites de nidification de la Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* au Lesotho, 1996–2002.

Location	Coordinates	Records	Source
<b>Lowlands</b>			
Confluence of Mohlaka-oa-tuka with Phuthiatsana	29°25'S 27°46'E	adult, 17 July 2001	Kopij (2001)
Queme Plateau			
Masite Plateau	29°37'S 27°27'E	nest, 23 Oct 1999	Kopij (2001)
Van Rooyen	29°45'S 27°07'E	adult, 1 Jan 1997	G. Kopij
<b>Foothills</b>			
St. Benedict on Makhaleng	29°55'S 27°52'E	adult, 2 Jan 1999	G. Kopij
Maleholoane	29°28'S 27°50'E	pair?	Kopij (2001)
Upper Dikolobeng	29°32'S 27°57'E	nest, 10 Apr 1999	G. Kopij
<b>Highlands</b>			
Mokhotlong town, gorge near hospital	29°18'S 29°03'E	nest, 21 Dec 2001; 3 chicks	G. Kopij
Mashai confluence with Senque, near St. Theresa	29°37'S 28°47'E	2 adults, 18 Jan 2002	G. Kopij
Mohales Dam catchment area, upper Jordane	29°18'S 28°02'E	pair	Allan <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Mohales Dam catchment area, middle Bekong	29°22'S 28°08'E	pair	Allan <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Mohales Dam catchment area, upper Senqunyane	29°13'S 28°15'E	pair	Allan <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Mohales Dam catchment area, upper Senqunyane	29°17'S 28°14'E	pair	Allan <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Mohales Dam catchment area, upper Senqunyane	29°22'S 28°12'E	pair	Allan <i>et al.</i> (1996)
Katse Dam, Malibamatso, 5.5 km above the dam	29°16'S 28°28'E	nest, 1996–97	Allan (1999)
Katse Dam catchment area	29°08'S 28°30'E	nest, 1991–97	Allan (1999)
Katse Dam catchment area	29°08'S 28°20'E	nest, 1991–97	Allan (1999)
Lower Senqunyane, below Mohale Dam	29°27'S 28°08'E	nest, 1996	Allan (1999)
Semonkong, La Bihan waterfall	29°52'S 28°03'E	nest, 2 Dec 2000; 1 chick	G. Kopij
Thaba Putsoa Mt.	29°46'S 27°55'E	adult, 27 Feb 1999	G. Kopij
Upper Senque Valley	29°08'S 29°02'E	pair? in Cape Vulture colony	Barnes (2001)
Liqobong, Butha-Butha district	28°40'S 28°40'E	pair? in Cape Vulture colony	Barnes (2001)
Mafika-Lisiu, Leribe district	29°06'S 28°19'E	pair in Cape Vulture colony	Barnes (2001)
Sehonghong on Senque	29°48'S 28°59'E	pair? in Cape Vulture colony	Barnes (2001)
Sehlabathebe National Park	29°08'S 29°07'E	pair	G. Kopij

**Table 2.** Recorded and estimated number of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* breeding sites in Lesotho, 1991–2002.

**Tableau 2.** Nombre recensé et estimé de sites de nidification de la Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* au Lesotho, 1991–2002.

Ecozone	No. of breeding sites	
	recorded	estimated
Lowlands	4	4–5
Foothills	3	4–7
Senque Valley	–	1–3
Highlands	18	26–35
Total	25	35–50

rocky cliffs are of basaltic origin; elsewhere of Clarens sandstone formation. In the lowlands, Black Storks nested on Clarens formation sandy rock cliffs around some plateaux. Four of the sites in the highlands were in Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* colonies, and three in Southern Bald Ibis *Geronticus calvus* colonies.

Several breeding sites in the highlands and foothills presumably remain undiscovered. Approximately 5–10 sites are expected to occur along the upper Senque (not in the Senque Valley zone) and its tributaries, e.g. at Linakaleng, Mashai, Sehonghong, Tsoelike, Qhoali and Quthing. Another 3–7 sites are expected in other parts of Maloti. Additionally, a few pairs may have been overlooked in the foothills and Senque Valley (Table 2). The total number of Black Stork pairs nesting in Lesotho can, therefore, be estimated at 35–50 pairs. This result corrects previous estimates, which were inevitably imprecise, as they were not based on systematic field surveys.

Since Black Storks display a high level of philopatry, population trends can be determined by monitoring its nesting sites. It is, therefore, recommended that, at least in some parts of Lesotho, the breeding population is monitored on a 10–20-year basis.

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# First record of Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* for Senegal and sub-Saharan Africa

Rafael Benjumea<sup>a</sup> and Blanca Pérez<sup>a</sup>

**Première mention du Merle obscur *Turdus obscurus* pour le Sénégal et l'Afrique subsaharienne.** Le 10 décembre 2015, un Merle obscur *Turdus obscurus* de 1<sup>er</sup> hiver a été photographié dans le Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie, au nord-ouest du Sénégal (15°52'N 16°30'W). Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays et l'Afrique subsaharienne. Le Merle obscur niche en Sibérie centrale et orientale et hiverne en Asie du sud-est, du nord-est de l'Inde à Taiwan et aux grandes îles de la Sonde. L'espèce est accidentelle mais presque annuelle en Europe en automne. Il n'y a qu'une seule observation précédente en Afrique, d'un oiseau de 1<sup>er</sup> hiver photographié le 17 décembre 2008 à Merzouga, au Maroc, à environ 2.100 km de l'observation rapportée ici.

On 10 December 2015 at 12.55 hrs, we observed an unfamiliar thrush in coastal forest near the Hotel Teranga in Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie, north-west Senegal (15°52'N 16°30'W). It was perched in a tree next to feeders visited by various bird species, including doves (Columbidae), weavers (Ploceidae) and Greater Blue-eared Starlings *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*. The thrush was similar in size to African Thrush *Turdus pelios*—the only widespread Afrotropical thrush occurring in Senegal—but had a prominent white supercilium, dark lores underlined by a white stripe merging with a white crescent below the eye, dark brown ear-coverts, a white submoustachial stripe, and a white throat bordered by a dark brown malar stripe. Breast and flanks were pale orange-brown, with the rest of the underparts off-white. Upperparts and tail were olive-brown with white tips to the greater coverts (Fig. 1). After c.2 minutes the bird flew off and was not seen again.

After consulting relevant literature (e.g. Clement & Hathway 2000, Svensson *et al.* 2009) and comparing photographs on the internet, we identified the bird as an Eyebrowed Thrush *T. obscurus*. The white tips to the greater coverts and the white throat indicated it was a first-winter.

Eyebrowed Thrush breeds in central and east Siberia, and winters in south and south-east Asia, from north-east India to Taiwan and the Greater Sundas (Clement & Hathway 2000, Collar 2005). It is a rare but nearly annual vagrant to Europe in autumn (Clement & Hathway 2000, Svensson *et al.* 2009). In Africa there is just one previous record, of a first-winter photographed at Merzouga, Morocco, on 17 December 2008 (Messemaker 2009), c.2,100 km north-east of

our record. The sighting reported here is thus the first documented record of Eyebrowed Thrush for Senegal and sub-Saharan Africa, and also the south-westernmost ever (Morel & Morel 1990, Urban *et al.* 1997, Borrow & Demey 2011, 2014).



**Figure 1.** First-winter Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie, Senegal, 10 December 2015 (Rafael Benjumea)

Merle obscur *Turdus obscurus*, 1<sup>er</sup> hiver, Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie, Sénégal, 10 décembre 2015 (Rafael Benjumea)

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# First records of Chestnut Sparrow *Passer eminibey* for Chad

Tim Wacher<sup>a</sup> and John Newby<sup>b</sup>

**Premières observations du Moineau d'Emin *Passer eminibey* au Tchad.** Le 19 septembre 2015, une petite colonie de Moineaux d'Emin *Passer eminibey*, comprenant au moins 4–5 mâles adultes et deux femelles, a été découverte à Éredib, au centre du Tchad. En mars 2016 les oiseaux, comprenant des juvéniles, se trouvaient toujours au même endroit, tandis qu'un deuxième groupe fut trouvé à Abéché, 220 km à l'est. Ceci constitue les premières données pour le pays. La population la plus proche se trouve au Darfur, Soudan, à environ 500 km à l'est d'Éredib. L'acacia *Faidherbia albida* dans lequel les mâles paraient, abritait également 3–4 mâles et 2–3 femelles du Moineau domestique *P. domesticus*.

In the course of a field survey of the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve in central Chad, a small colony comprising at least 4–5 adult male and two female Chestnut Sparrows *Passer eminibey* was discovered at the small settlement of Éredib (13°33'37.9"N 18°55'33.6"E) on 19 September 2015. On returning to the site in March 2016 at least 10–15 birds were again present at the same location, while a second group of 5–10 was discovered at a work contractor's compound on the outskirts of Abéché (13°49'50.2"N 20°51'48.5"E), c.220 km east of Éredib. The Éredib site is in central Chad, 450 km east-northeast of the capital N'Djamena and 350 km west of the border with Sudan. The sparrows there were frequenting a small, inhabited, fenced compound enclosing a borehole with tower

reservoir at the edge of the village. They were evidently conditioned to human presence and were observed at close range.

In September the males stood out immediately by their uniform, rich chestnut plumage (Fig. 1) and characteristic display with raised quivering wings, showing pale undersides (Fig. 2). The displays were directed towards a single female and took place at a complex of dome-shaped nest structures constructed of grass stems in a tight mesh of thorny twigs within a spindly 5 m-tall winterthorn acacia *Faidherbia albida* sapling (Fig. 3). Also present at these nests were 3–4 adult male and 2–3 female House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. Several bouts of chasing and aggressive interaction between males of the two species were noted, as well as chasing between male Chestnut Sparrows.



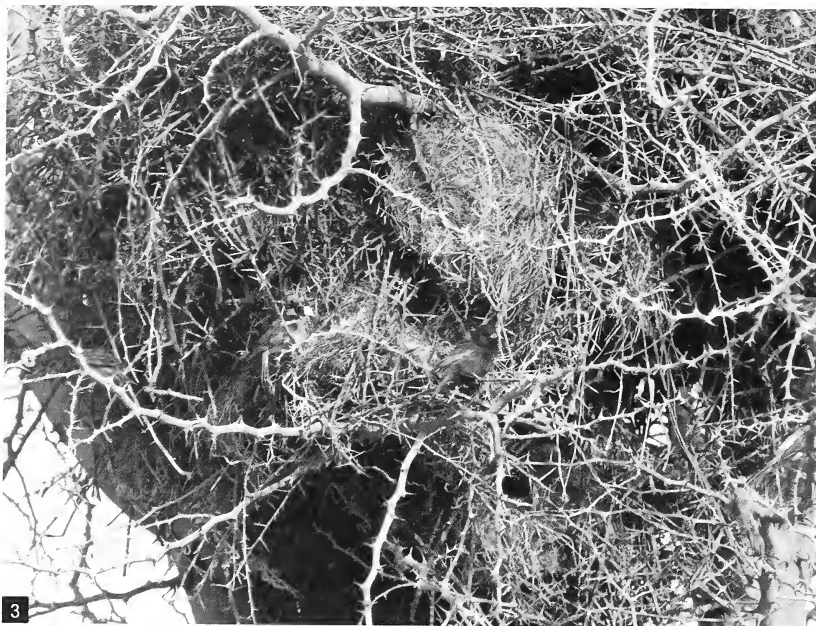
**Figure 1.** Male Chestnut Sparrow *Passer eminibey* in breeding plumage, Éredib, Chad, 19 September 2015 (Tim Wacher)

Moineau d'Emin *Passer eminibey* mâle en plumage nuptial, Éredib, Tchad, 19 septembre 2015 (Tim Wacher)



**Figure 2.** Male Chestnut Sparrow *Passer eminibey* displaying to female, Éredib, Chad, 19 September 2015 (Tim Wacher)

Moineau d'Emin *Passer eminibey* mâle paradant en face d'une femelle, Éredib, Tchad, 19 septembre 2015 (Tim Wacher)



**Figure 3.** Nests in *Faidherbia albida* where Chestnut Sparrows *Passer eminibey* were observed, Éredib, Chad, 19 September 2015 (Tim Wacher)

Nids dans un *Faidherbia albida* où les Moineaux d'Emin *Passer eminibey* ont été observés, Éredib, Tchad, 19 septembre 2015 (Tim Wacher)

Occasionally, the Chestnut Sparrows descended to an adjacent young desert date *Balanites aegyptiaca* tree to drop to the ground and drink at a pool created by a dripping tap within the compound.

Other species simultaneously present in the nest tree and adjacent *Balanites* included Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*, Speckle-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes frontalis*, African Silverbill *Euodice cantans*, Cutthroat Finch *Amadina fasciata* and Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica*. Chestnut Sparrows are known to take over nests of weaver species, but also construct their own nests (Payne 1969, Urban 2004). It was unclear which of the species present was responsible for building the nests. Nevertheless, circumstantial evidence that Chestnut Sparrows were breeding at the site was strong. In March 2016 all birds were in non-breeding plumage, with some at Éredib showing signs of yellowish gape flanges. At Abéché the site was again shared with Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, House Sparrow, Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* and House Bunting *E. sahari*.

Chestnut Sparrow is not currently included on the ABC checklist for Chad (Dowsett *et al.* 2015) or treated in the main field guide to western Africa (Borrow & Demey 2014). The nearest known population is in Darfur, Sudan, c.500 km east of Éredib (Birdlife International 2015). Although the species is mainly sedentary, some individuals

wander extensively in the non-breeding season (Urban 2004).

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# Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* in Cape Town, South Africa—second record for continental Africa

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**Une Aigrette neigeuse *Egretta thula* au Cap, Afrique du Sud—deuxième donnée pour l'Afrique continentale.** Une Aigrette neigeuse *Egretta thula* a été observée au Cap, Afrique du Sud, du 8 juin au 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 2015. Il s'agit de la deuxième observation sur le continent africain, la première ayant également été réalisée dans cette ville, en 2002. Il y a très peu d'observations à l'est de l'océan Atlantique, la majorité provenant de l'ouest Paléarctique. À cause de la ressemblance de l'Aigrette neigeuse avec l'Aigrette garzette *E. garzetta*, l'espèce pourrait passer inaperçue ; les différences entre les deux espèces sont soulignées.

In the afternoon of 8 June 2015, we located a white egret *Egretta* sp. along the Black River, in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. It appeared different from the many Little Egrets *E. garzetta* that were also present, due to the yellow on the rear of its legs and the bright yellow lores. Although we suspected it to be a Snowy Egret *E. thula*, our views and photographs were insufficient to clinch the identification. The next morning excellent views were obtained and the bird was positively identified as mainland Africa's second Snowy Egret.

The following features were used to identify it and eliminate Little Egret (Massiah 1996):

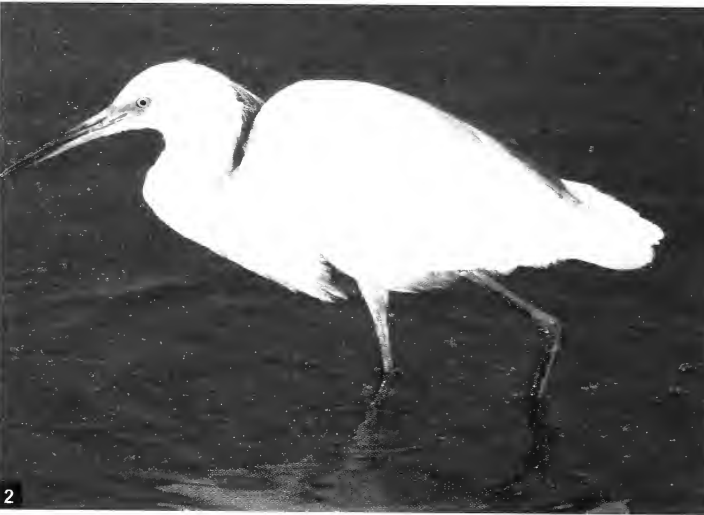
- Marginally smaller and appearing more delicate than Little Egret, with a slightly shorter neck.
- Forehead appeared more rounded than in Little Egret, whose forehead is flatter, due to the feathering extending further towards the bill (Fig. 1).
- The bill was slightly shorter, with a more pronounced droop at the tip (Fig. 1).
- The head plumes were distinctly shorter and bushier, forming a loose tuft (Figs. 1–3). Little Egret has 2–3 long and wiry plumes on the hindcrown.
- There were no neck and back plumes, suggesting the bird was either an immature or a non-breeding adult. However, the lores were considered to be too bright for an immature and thus it was probably a non-breeding adult. Breeding-plumage Snowy Egret has obvious plumes on the neck and back.
- Lores bright yellow creating a band above the bill from eye to eye (Figs. 1–5), typical of

adult Snowy Egret. This was one of the most obvious features, clearly differentiating the bird from the Little Egrets present. Breeding-plumage Little Egrets can have yellow-orange lores, but they are never bright yellow. Lores of non-breeding Little Egret are dull greenish yellow.

- Iris golden-yellow compared to the duller yellow of Little Egret (Figs. 1–5).
- The rear of the legs, from the feet to the top of the tibia, were yellow (Figs. 2–5)—perhaps the most conspicuous feature. The yellow wrapped around to cover more of the front of the legs higher up, becoming almost all yellow towards the top of the tibia. Feet slightly brighter yellow than the rear of the legs. Some juvenile Little Egrets can have yellow-green on the legs, but this is generally not restricted to the rear and is never as bright yellow.

Dimorphic Egret *E. dimorpha*, which is sometimes considered conspecific with Western Reef Heron *E. gularis* and Little Egret (Hancock & Kushlan 1984), is perhaps even more similar to Snowy Egret than Little Egret. It breeds in Madagascar, with some wintering in East Africa (Safford & Hawkins 2013), but has never been recorded in South Africa (Hockey *et al.* 2005). White-morph Dimorphic Egret also has bright yellow lores, but head-plume shape, bill shape and overall structure is similar to Little Egret (Safford & Hawkins 2013). Dimorphic Egret can have some yellow on the rear of the legs, but this is generally restricted to the lower tarsi.

White-morph Western Reef Heron, an extremely rare vagrant to South Africa (Hockey *et al.* 2005), is also superficially similar to Snowy Egret, but was eliminated based on the colour



**Figure 1.** Snowy *Egretta thula* (left; Black River, near Cape Town, South Africa, June 2015; Dominic P. Rollinson) and Little Egret *E. garzetta* (Michael Buckham); note differences in head and bill shape, lores and iris colours, and head-plume shape.

Aigrette neigeuse *Egretta thula* (à gauche ; Black River, près du Cap, Afrique du Sud, juin 2015 ; Dominic P. Rollinson) et l'Aigrette garzette *E. garzetta* (Michael Buckham) ; noter les différences entre les formes de la tête et du bec, la couleur des lores et de l'iris, et la forme de plumes nucales.

**Figure 2.** Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, Black River, near Cape Town, South Africa, June 2015 (Dominic P. Rollinson); the shorter, bushy head plumes distinguishing it from Little Egret *E. garzetta* are evident.

Aigrette neigeuse *Egretta thula*, Black River, près du Cap, Afrique du Sud, juin 2015 (Dominic P. Rollinson) ; noter les plumes nucales plus ébouriffées et plus courtes que chez l'Aigrette garzette *E. garzetta*.

**Figure 3.** The Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* was regularly seen fishing, using its bright yellow feet to stir and flush fish. Black River, near Cape Town, South Africa, June 2015 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

L'Aigrette neigeuse *Egretta thula* a régulièrement été observée en train de pêcher, utilisant ses pieds jaune vif pour faire bouger et débusquer les poissons : Black River, près du Cap, Afrique du Sud, juin 2015 (Dominic P. Rollinson)



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**Figures 4–5.** Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, Black River, near Cape Town, South Africa, June 2015 (Dominic P. Rollinson); the yellow feet and rear of the legs are clearly visible.

Aigrette neigeuse *Egretta thula*, Black River, près du Cap, Afrique du Sud, juin 2015 (Dominic P. Rollinson) ; les pieds jaunes et l'arrière des pattes jaunâtre sont bien visibles.

of the lores (although Western Reef Heron can have yellowish-green lores, they are never bright yellow), bill length (Western Reef Heron has a longer, thicker bill than either Little or Snowy Egret), leg colour (Western Reef Heron generally

has dull brown legs with yellow extending from the feet to the lower legs) and head plumes (long and thin in Western Reef Heron; shorter and bushier in Snowy Egret) (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

The breeding range of Snowy Egret extends from North America, as far north as Maine, to southern Argentina. The North American population migrates to Middle America during the boreal winter, while South and Middle American populations are thought to be more sedentary (Martínez-Vilalta & Motis 1992). The Black River Snowy Egret is therefore thought to have originated from North America, presumably becoming lost while migrating to its wintering grounds.

There have been very few transatlantic records of Snowy Egret, although it is recorded intermittently on Tristan da Cunha in the South Atlantic (37°20'S 12°25'W), mostly in late summer or early winter (Kushlan & Hancock 2005). The only previous record from continental Africa was a bird near Cape Town on 23 April–4 May 2002 (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Other transatlantic records include: Iceland (three records; Snow & Perrins 1998), Scotland (one record; Jackson 2004), Germany (one record, prior to 1950; Barthel & Helbig 2005), the Azores (*c.* 15 records; Clarke 2006, African Bird Club 2016) and Cape Verdes (one record; Hazevoet 2010).

The Snowy Egret near Cape Town remained in the area until 1 July, a total of 24 days. It was extremely confiding, permitting many observers to approach to within a few metres, especially whilst feeding, using its bright yellow feet to stir and flush prey. The local Little Egrets would not tolerate it encroaching on their immediate feeding area and showed antagonistic behaviour towards the vagrant.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to John Graham and Trevor Hardaker for initial comments on the egret's identification. Cliff Dorse, the finder of Africa's first Snowy Egret, is thanked for 'putting Snowy Egret on our radar'. Ron Demey's comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript greatly improved its contents.

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# Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, a probable new breeding bird on Sal, Cape Verde Islands

Juan José Ramos

**Fauvette à lunettes *Sylvia conspicillata*, une nouvelle espèce nicheuse probable à Sal, Îles du Cap Vert.** Les 21–22 novembre 2015, 11 Fauvettes à lunettes *Sylvia conspicillata*, sept mâles et quatre femelles, ont été observées à Sal, Îles du Cap Vert. Leur comportement et la période laissent penser, avec une forte probabilité, que l'espèce niche sur l'île sur laquelle elle n'avait jamais été signalée.

**S**pectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* is a species of semi-arid environments of north-west Africa, south-west Europe, the Middle East and parts of Egypt (Baker 1997, Snow & Perrins 1998). In the Cape Verde Islands it is known to breed on all islands except Sal and Santa Luzia (Hazevoet 1995, Barone *et al.* 2000, Barone 2005) and to be locally common except on São Vicente, where it is scarce (Hazevoet 1995). Barone & Delgado (1999) relate its absence on Sal to the scarce vegetation and shrub cover, notwithstanding some apparently suitable areas.

On 21 November 2015, between 08.00 and 11.00 hrs, I observed a pair of Spectacled Warblers among the acacias *Prosopis juliflora* south-east of Ribeira de Madama lagoon (16°41'22.09"N

22°55'52.79"W). At least two other males were calling north of the site (16°41'44.37"N 16°56'14.53"W). During the afternoon of 22 November, I located at least seven additional individuals along the road linking Amílcar Cabral Airport with the nearby windfarm (16°43'28.89"N 22°55'53.34"W), four males showing territorial behaviour (singing) and three females that remained close to their respective males (Figs. 1–2).

These appear to be the first records of Spectacled Warbler for Sal, suggesting the species was previously overlooked or is starting to colonise the island, perhaps from Boavista, where it is abundant (Barone & Delgado 1999). Colonisation may have been facilitated by a year of atypically



**Figure 1.** Pair of Spectacled Warblers *Sylvia conspicillata* showing territorial behaviour in the endemic plant *Pulicaria diffusa*, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, 22 November 2015 (Juan José Ramos / Birding Canarias)

Couple de Fauvettes à lunettes *Sylvia conspicillata* affichant un comportement territorial sur un spécimen de la plante endémique *Pulicaria diffusa*, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, 22 novembre 2015 (Juan José Ramos / Birding Canarias)



**Figure 2.** Adult female Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* in an acacia *Prosopis juliflora*, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, 22 November 2015 (Juan José Ramos / Birding Canarias)  
Fauvette à lunettes *Sylvia conspicillata*, femelle adulte, sur un acacia *Prosopis juliflora*, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, 22 novembre 2015 (Juan José Ramos / Birding Canarias)

heavy rains, especially on Sal, mainly due to the effect of a tropical storm that hit the islands during August 2015. Behaviour and dates suggest the species breeds on the island, as reproduction occurs year-round except in June–July, being more frequent in September–November and February–April (de Naurois & Bergier 1986, Hazevoet 1995). Bourne (1955) indicates that the breeding period starts in August, less than six weeks after the first rains of the summer / autumn season. Further field work should confirm the establishment of Spectacled Warbler on the island.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Germán Pinelo for joining me during field work. Rubén Barone has facilitated literature and information on the Cape Verde archipelago for years; he also commented on a draft of this note. Pedro González del Campo critically read a first draft and made the English translation. C. Hazevoet and Ron Demey critically read this note.

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# First record of Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* for the Cape Verde Islands

Rubén Barone<sup>a</sup> and Juan José Bacallado<sup>b</sup>

**Première mention de la Touterelle maillée *Spilopelia senegalensis* pour les Îles du Cap Vert.** Le 3 mai 2015, une Touterelle maillée *Spilopelia senegalensis* adulte a été photographiée à Murdeira, Sal. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour l'archipel.

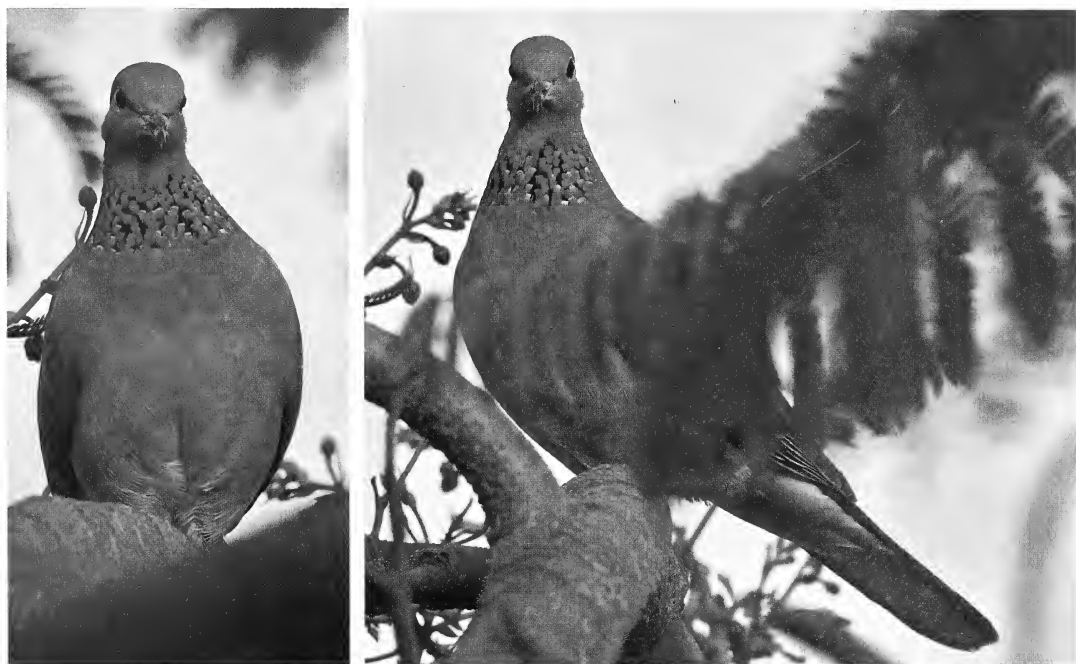
Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* occurs widely on the African continent, the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra, as well as western Asia (Baptista *et al.* 1997, del Hoyo & Collar 2014). In Macaronesia, there are records on Madeira and Deserta Grande (Correia-Fagundes *et al.* 2013, Rocha 2013) and established populations in the Canaries, where it has spread from east to west and colonised many islands in the last two decades (Lorenzo *et al.* 2007, Barone 2010, Trujillo 2013, Ramírez & Ramos 2015).

On 3 May 2015, JJB photographed an adult Laughing Dove in the gardens of a small tourist complex in the southern half of Murdeira, Sal, Cape Verde Islands (Figs. 1–2). The bird was

observed for several minutes before it flew off. There were no further observations on the island during the week JJB was there. This is the first record for the Cape Verde Islands (*cf.* Hazevoet 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2010, 2012, 2014, Hazevoet *et al.* 1996).

We are unsure as to the subspecific identity of the bird observed on Sal, but it probably involved *S. s. senegalensis* due to the geographical position of the Cape Verde Islands with respect to the African continent, as the archipelago lies close to Senegal and extreme southern Mauritania, where this subspecies occurs (Baptista *et al.* 1997).

The species has expanded its range in north-west Africa in recent decades, especially



**Figures 1–2.** Adult Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*, Murdeira, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, 3 May 2015 (Juan José Bacallado)

Touterelle maillée *Spilopelia senegalensis*, adulte, Murdeira, Sal, Îles du Cap Vert, 3 mai 2015 (Juan José Bacallado)

in Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003), and has even occurred in Italy (Brichetti & Fracasso 2015), where a population is now established on Pantelleria Island (Gildi & Ruggieri 2002).

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Gustavo Pérez-Dionis discovered the bird and communicated its presence to JJB. Joaquín Vizcaíno facilitated access to some references, and Guillermo García assisted in other ways. Dr Kees Hazevoet and Ron Demey commented on an early version of this note.

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# First record of Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* for St. Helena, South Atlantic

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**Première mention du Canard à bosse *Sarkidiornis melanotos* pour l'île de Sainte-Hélène, Atlantique Sud.** Le 4 janvier 2013, un Canard à bosse *Sarkidiornis melanotos* a été photographié à Bottom Woods, Sainte-Hélène. L'oiseau est resté près des bassins de décantation où, le 21 janvier, il a été rejoint par un deuxième individu. Les deux oiseaux ont ensuite été observés régulièrement sur le même site pendant environ cinq semaines ; ils n'ont plus été vus après février 2013. Il s'agit de la première donnée confirmée d'un Anatidé sauvage pour l'île. Le Canard à bosse habite l'Afrique, l'Asie et l'Amérique du Sud. Bien qu'il soit considéré comme principalement sédentaire, des données de baguage en Afrique indiquent que certains oiseaux peuvent effectuer des déplacements de >3.500 km. Les canards observés à Sainte-Hélène sont probablement arrivés à l'île grâce au vents soufflant du sud-est.

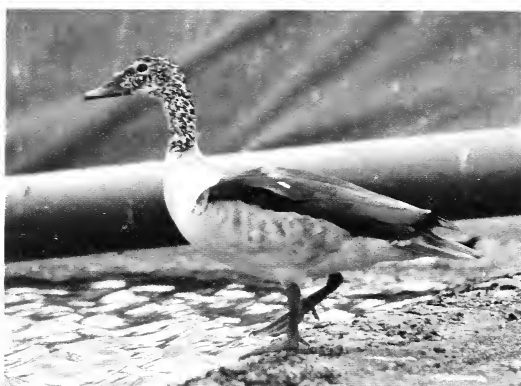
St. Helena lies well west of the inter-hemisphere migration routes that follow the continental shelf and coastline, but is sufficiently close to them to account for accidental visitors blown off course, of which some are perhaps ship-assisted (Rowlands *et al.* 1998). These are predominately shorebirds, with the occasional exception (Rowlands *et al.* 1998, Beard 2012, 2015, Hillman & Clingham 2012). Here we report the first Knob-billed (Comb) Ducks *Sarkidiornis melanotos* for the island, which also constitute the first confirmed record of wild Anatidae on St. Helena.

On 4 January 2013 we were informed as to the presence of an unusual duck near the settlement ponds at Bottom Woods (15°56'816"S 05°40'432"W) and thereafter we were able to take several photographs (Figs. 1–2). The black speckles on the white head and neck, the pure white breast and centre of belly, and the absence of a knob on the bill identify the bird as an adult female Knob-billed Duck (Madge & Burn 1988). B. Rowlands confirmed that the species had not previously been recorded on St. Helena.

The bird remained around the settlement ponds where it was joined by a second individual on 21 January. This bird had less speckling on the head and neck, while its white parts were washed pale brownish buff (Fig. 3), suggesting it was an immature (Madge & Burn 1988). The two Knob-billed Ducks were subsequently observed regularly at the same location for *c.*5 weeks, but were not seen after February 2013.

There are no indigenous or regularly occurring wild ducks, nor any wildfowl collections on the island, but there are a number of historical

references, the most recent dating from 1894, when Governor W. Grey Wilson noted 'five wild ducks' that were present for seven or eight days, although they were not identified to species (Rowlands *et al.* 1998). *S. melanotos* occurs in Africa, Asia and South America. The South American population has recently been split as *S. sylvicola* (American Comb Duck) mainly on the basis of the adult male's plumage (del Hoyo & Collar 2014). It is considered primarily sedentary, with poorly understood seasonal movements, mostly dictated by water availability (BirdLife International 2013). However, in Africa *c.*10% of the population are trans-equatorial migrants and ringing recoveries indicate that some undertake extensive journeys, occasionally surpassing 3,500 km (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Carboneras & Kirwan 2014). Although it appears unlikely that the birds on St. Helena were ship-assisted, their arrival coincided with that of several yachts participating in the Governor's Cup, a race between Simon's Town, South Africa, and Jamestown, St. Helena, with several of the participating yachts following the African coast north to Namibia before crossing the South Atlantic Ocean. Adult female African Comb Ducks have pale grey flanks, while those of South American birds are stated to be dark grey (Madge & Burn 1988). This would point to the St. Helena birds being African, but it may be difficult or impossible to determine this on the basis of the available photographs. The origin of the birds thus cannot be traced with certainty, although they probably reached St. Helena on the south-east trade winds.



**Figures 1–3.** Knob-billed Duck / Canard à bosse *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, Bottom Woods, St. Helena, 4 January (Robert Kleinjan), 9 January (Nick Stevens) and 22 January 2013 (Robert Kleinjan)

### Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to Andrew Yon and Marge Fowler, who first noticed the bird and brought it to our attention. Thanks also to Dr Chris Hillman who assisted with the identification, which was subsequently confirmed by Beau Rowlands and Isabel Peters (Acting Head of the Environment Management Division of St. Helena Government at the time). Annalea Beard commented on the first draft, Neil McCulloch on the submitted manuscript, and Phoebe Young and Nik Borrow on the birds' plumage.

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# First record of Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* for São Tomé Island, São Tomé and Príncipe

Mark van Boekel

## Première mention du Loriot d'Europe *Oriolus oriolus* pour l'île de São Tomé, São Tomé et Príncipe.

Le 28 décembre 2015, un Loriot d'Europe *Oriolus oriolus* a été photographié à Ponta Figo, São Tomé. Il s'agit de la première donnée pour l'île et la deuxième pour São Tomé et Príncipe, la première, un juvénile collecté à Príncipe, datant de novembre 1954.

**O**n 28 December 2015, shortly after midday, my companion K. Beulink pointed out a mainly yellowish-olive and yellow thrush-sized bird perched in a tree c.8–10 m from the terrace of Mucumbli Ecotourism Lodge (00°21'01.46"N 06°32'27.88"E), Ponta Figo, São Tomé. Having spent only a few days on the island, I was focusing on its endemics and I initially supposed that the bird was probably a São Tomé Oriole *Oriolus crassirostris*. Our guide, however, informed me that São Tomé Oriole at this site would be very unusual.

The bird had yellowish-olive upperparts and blackish wings. Primary-coverts had some narrow, pale yellow fringes. The underparts were whitish

streaked blackish, with yellow flanks and bright yellow undertail-coverts. The bill was dark.

I managed to take a few 'record shots', of which two are reproduced here (Figs. 1–2). After consulting Christie & Clarke (1998), it became obvious that the bird was an immature of either Eurasian *O. oriolus* or African Golden Oriole *O. auratus*, neither of which had previously been recorded on São Tomé. African Golden Oriole, however, would have broad yellow fringes to all wing-coverts and flight feathers (Fry & Keith 2000, Borrow & Demey 2014), which the bird did not possess.

Eurasian Golden Oriole is a non-breeding visitor to sub-Saharan Africa from its Palearctic



**Figures 1–2.** Immature Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, Mucumbli Ecotourism Lodge, Ponta Figo, São Tomé, 28 December 2015 (Mark van Boekel)

Loriot d'Europe *Oriolus oriolus*, immature, Mucumbli Ecotourism Lodge, Ponta Figo, São Tomé, 28 décembre 2015 (Mark van Boekel)

breeding grounds. Its main wintering areas are north of the rainforest zone in Cameroon and Central African Republic, and south of 5°S, south to South Africa, in most deciduous woodlands (Walther & Jones 2008). West of Cameroon the species is scarce to rare and mostly recorded on passage (Fry & Keith 2000, Borrow & Demey 2014). This is the first record for the island of São Tomé, but the second for the country, the first dating from November 1954, when a juvenile was collected on the island of Príncipe (Jones & Tye 2006, Dowsett *et al.* 2015).

### Acknowledgements

I thank Bruno Portier, Nik Borrow and Ron Demey for confirming the identification from the photographs, Steffi Rohrbach for sharing a list of the birds recorded at Mucumbli Ecotourism Lodge, and Karin Beulink for her companionship in the field. Alan Tye critically read the submitted note.

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# Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from late 2015 and early 2016, 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](http://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 fin 2015 et début 2016 ; 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](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

## Angola

A male **Black Bishop** *Euplectes gierowii* was observed near two nests c. 10 km east of Conda, Cuanza Sul, in March; Dean (2000). *The Birds of Angola* mentions no breeding records for this rare resident (MM).

## Azores

The following records are from January–early June 2016. The first **Cape Gannet** *Morus capensis* for the archipelago (and the Western Palearctic) was a subadult photographed between Corvo and Flores on 14 April. The first **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*, an adult found on São Miguel on 26 November 2015, was still present on 5 March. A **Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* was reported on São Miguel on 14 February and a **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis* on Corvo on 17 April. Up to two **Common Shelducks** *Tadorna tadorna* were on Terceira on 16 January–11 March, with one on São Miguel from January until 12 April. An **American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* was still present on Terceira in late January. A male **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* was on Terceira on 10–27 January. Other vagrant ducks

included **Green-winged Teals** *Anas (crecca) carolinensis* on Terceira in January–February (one) and Faial on 24 January–29 March (one); **Northern Pintails** *A. acuta* on Terceira from January to 5 April (up to five), Pico on 1 January (one) and Flores on 20 February (two); **Garganey** *Spatula querquedula* on Santa Maria on 1 March (one) and São Miguel on 9–12 May (one); **Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* on Terceira (one) and São Miguel (one) in January–March; and **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* on Terceira from January to 11 March (3–4). A first-winter male **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* was claimed from Pico on 14 January. A **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* was on Terceira on 3–17 January, whilst two **Hooded Mergansers** *Lophodytes cucullatus*, first reported on São Jorge on 23 November, were subsequently observed on Faial on 4–6 January, on Terceira on 17–18 January, on Pico on 24 January, and again on Terceira on 2 February–mid April.

A **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* reported from Terceira on 9 and 12 April was perhaps the third for the Azores (previous ones were pre-1903 and in

2008; there were also unidentified frigatebirds in 2007 and 2011). An adult **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* remained on São Miguel in late November–May; one was seen on São Jorge on 1 February. **American Coots** *Fulica americana* were observed on São Miguel in November–April and on Flores in February–March. A first-winter **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* remained at Mosteiros, São Miguel, from 23 December until late April. An **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was on Santa Maria on 9 March. A **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was noted on São Miguel on 13 January, whilst single **Great Blue Herons** *Ardea herodias* were on Flores on 28 January and Faial on 14 May.

Vagrant waders included a **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* on Terceira on 22–29 March; a **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* on São Miguel on 19 April; up to five **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* on Terceira throughout the period, with one on Santa Maria on 1 March; four **Eurasian Dotterels** *Eudromias morinellus* on Santa Maria on 1 February; single

**American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* on Terceira on 3 January and on Santa Maria on 1 February and 1 March; a **Pacific Golden**

**Plover** *P. fulva* also on Santa Maria on 1 March; single **Hudsonian**

**Whimbrels** *Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus* on São Miguel on 6 and 23 March, with one on Terceira

on 14 March and 13 April; single **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago delicata*

on Terceira on 5 and 14 February, on Santa Maria on 1 March and on São Miguel on 5 and 21 March; and a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa*

*ochropus* on Terceira on 31 March–5 April. A first-winter **Mediterranean**

**Gull** *Icthyaetus melanocephalus* was observed on Terceira on 3 January.

Noteworthy raptors reported from Santa Maria included a **Red Kite**

*Milvus milvus* on 1 February (with another on São Miguel on 19

April–9 May), **Western Marsh**

**Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* on 1 February and 18 April, a **Lesser**

**Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* on 9 March and a **Peregrine Falcon** *F. peregrinus*

on 18 April. A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* was on Terceira on 24 January.

A **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens* was on Santa Maria on 1 March and up to nine **Eurasian**

**Skylarks** *Alauda arvensis* were on Terceira on 16–24 January. An **American Robin**

*Turdus migratorius* at Sete Cidades, São Miguel, on 24 April was the fourth (and the first

in spring) for the Azores (previous records were in 2012, 2013 and 2015). On São Miguel, **Eurasian**

**Siskins** *Spinus (Carduelis) spinus* were reported from Lagoa Azul on 25–29 January (one) and Lagoa das Furnas on 8 February (13)

and 20 March (seven). The second **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis*

for the archipelago, following one in 2009, was discovered at Ribeirinha, Pico, on 11 May (per [www.azoresbird sightings.blogspot.com](http://www.azoresbird sightings.blogspot.com)

and *Dutch Birding* 38: 102–108, 183–186, 240–253).

**Benin**  
An immature **Kitlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* was photographed at a dam at Tanguiéta,



**Figure 1.** White Wagtail / Bergeronnette grise *Motacilla alba*, Tanguiéta, Benin, 5 December 2015 (Johannes & Sharon Merz)

in the north-west, on 5 December 2015; there are few records of this species in Benin. Also there on the same day were two **White Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* (Fig. 1)—possibly only the second record for the country (the first being at Cotonou in November 2010: *Bull. ABC* 18: 94)—and a **Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys*, a scarce species in the north-west. Four **Little Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius dubius* were at the same site on 20 February 2016; although expected to occur in small numbers in the area, there are few records, with this being the first for this recently built dam (*JM & SM*).

### Botswana

The following were reported in November 2015–June 2016. An influx of **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* occurred in southern Botswana, with ten at Sojwe on 24 March, 20 at Shadi Shadi on 24 April and three at Jwaneng on 3 May (*CB*). **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were recorded at Phakalane Sewage Ponds in Gaborone on 24 January, at Maun on 31 January, 9 February and 2–3 April, and near Sojwe on 24 March (per *CB & TH*). In Tuli Block, in the east, an **African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro* was observed at the Majale River on 31 January and a **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* at the Motloutse River on 14 November (per *CB*).

### A Saddle-billed Stork

*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was at Thagale Dam in Gaborone on 18 June (per *TH*). In January–February, up to four **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana*

*porzana* were seen regularly at Phakalane Sewage Ponds and up to two at Gaborone Game Reserve (per *CB*). A slightly out-of-range **Black Crake** *Zapornia flavirostris* was located in Khutse Game Reserve on 30 May and an immature **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* in Gaborone Game Reserve on 2 February—an unusual species for the area. In the north-west, a **Corn Crake** *Crex crex* was found near Belmond Kwai River Lodge, close to Kwai village and Moremi North Gate, on 13 December (per *TH*). A pair of **Grey Crowned Cranes** *Balearica regulorum* was near Pandamatenga, in the north, on several dates in February and March. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* was noted at Phakalane Sewage Ponds on 5 February (per *CB*).

An **African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* visited a garden in Maun on 8 January (per *TH*), whilst a **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was heard at Kwapa Camp, north of Maun, on 3 May. A pair of **Senegal Coucals** *Centropus senegalensis* was near Francistown on 1 March. Several **African Black Swifts** *Apus barbatus* were observed along the Motloutse River, Tuli Block, on 29 November. On 24 April, a **Southern Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* was heard calling near Sojwe. At Nata, in the north-east, **Grey-headed Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti*, **Yellow-bellied Greenbul** *Chlorocichla flaviventris*, **White-browed Robin Chat** *Cossypha heuglini* and **Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata* were seen on 20 February (per *CB*).

### Cameroon

A survey undertaken from 19 February to 21 March 2016 in the previously ornithologically unexplored Ngoyla–Mintom forest block, in south-east Cameroon, yielded the following. Breeding of **Red-headed Picathartes** *Picathartes oraeas* was confirmed, with three rocky outcrops holding nests, although no nesting was taking place at the time. **Dja River Warbler** *Bradypterus grandis* was found



**Figure 2.** Dja River Warbler / Bouscarle géante *Bradypterus grandis*, Ngoyla–Mintom forest block, Cameroon, 14 March 2016 (Nik Borrow)



**Figure 3.** Grey-throated Rail / Râle à gorge grise *Canirallus oculus*, Ngoyla–Mintom forest block, Cameroon, 2 March 2016 (Nik Borrow)



**Figure 4.** Vermiculated Fishing Owl / Chouette-pêcheuse de Bouvier *Scotopelia bouvieri*, Ngoyla–Mintom forest block, Cameroon, 23 February 2016 (Nik Borrow)

at a salt lick along the Dja River (Fig. 2) and the scarce **Rachel's Malimbe** *Malimbus racheliae* was recorded on several occasions. Range extensions were noted for several species. Up to ten **Ethiopian Swallows** *Hirundo aethiopica* were breeding at Mintom—a noteworthy southward range extension of this species, which has been extending its range both west and south in recent years. A male **Southern Hyliota** *Hyliota australis slatini* with a large white wingpatch was photographed along the road to Djadom on 1 March; the subspecies *slatini* may actually represent a separate species. Several **Brown Sunbirds** *Anthreptes gabonicus* were observed along the Dja River on 14–18 March. Two **Long-legged Pipits** *Anthus pallidiventris* were noted at Mintom

on 10 March. Other species of interest included a **Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* at Zoebefam on 22 February—a rather unusual record, as the species was recorded in the area only at Dja, c.20 years ago; a pair of **Grey-throated Rails** *Canirallus oculus* photographed along a small forest stream (Fig. 3); and **Vermiculated Fishing Owls** *Scotopelia bouvieri* (Fig. 4), which appeared to be not uncommon (*RD & NB*).

#### Canary Islands

Records from the period November 2015–May 2016 include the following. A female **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* with 13 large pulli was at a dam near El Médano, Tenerife, on 2 April (*RB & ES*), with another female at Tejina ponds on

30 January (*RB et al.*); the species is slowly expanding west. Three **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris*, two males and a female, remained at Tejina ponds, Tenerife, throughout January (*RB et al.*). Two **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podilymbus podiceps* were present at Estanques de Aldea Blanca, Gran Canaria, from November until late April (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 105, 186, 240).

An immature **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* flew over Tejina ponds, Tenerife, on 21 May (*RB, SE & RH*). An **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was found at Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, on 17 December, whilst a first-year was killed by a cat on Lanzarote on 27 January, and another there was picked up exhausted on 18 February (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 105, 186).

Male **Ruffs** *Calidris pugnax* were seen on Tenerife near Las Galletas on 2 April and at San Isidro the next day (RB et al.), and on Fuerteventura at Tesejerague ponds on 16 May (RB, SE & RH).

A **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* was observed at Rosa del Taro, Fuerteventura, on 17 May (RB, SE & RH). An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* was reported from the same island on 7 February (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 193). On Lanzarote, an adult male **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was observed at Órzola on 14 April (RB & FS).

### Cape Verde Islands

Records from December 2015–April 2016 include the following. Two species were reported for the first time in the archipelago, both from Santa Maria, Sal: **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* (two second calendar-year males on 25 April) and **Sudan Golden Sparrow** *Passer luteus* (a male on 23 March). A **Desert Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis elegans* at Lecação, Boa Vista, on 18 December was the second for the islands.

A female **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was observed at Pedra Badejo, Santiago, on 20 March. Up to two **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* and up to four **Intermediate Egrets** *Ardea intermedia* remained on Santiago from 19 December through March. A **Black-headed Heron** *A. melanoccephala* was noted on Boa Vista on 2 April. A **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* was reported north of the archipelago in late April. In spring 2016, just two female **Magnificent Frigatebirds** *Fregata magnificens* were seen on Boa Vista, constituting a further decline from 10–12 pairs in 1965, five pairs in 1992 and two pairs in 2006. **Red-footed Boobies** *Sula sula* were photographed on Ilhéu de Curral Velho, Boa Vista, on 26 February (a subadult) and on Raso on 19 April (an adult) and 29 April (two adults). Noteworthy waders included a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius (phaeopus) hudsonicus* at Praia,

Santiago, on 24 April; six **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Santa Maria, Sal, on 10 February; and a **Solitary Sandpiper** *T. solitaria*, a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* and an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, on 23 March (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 105–115, 186, 245–253).

In February, a **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* and three **Sandwich Terns** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* were observed off Boa Vista, and at least two **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* over Povoação, Boa Vista (RS). A male **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was photographed at Santa Maria, Sal, on 12–13 March (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 193).

### Chad

Records from March 2016 include the following. **Golden Nightjars** *Caprimulgus eximius* were heard singing for about an hour after sunset and for a similar period before dawn on the main road west of Ati on 4–5th and again on 19–20th, but not further north. Also there on 19th were a single **Little Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos elachus*, only the second observation in many months of field work in Chad, and a male **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* incubating two eggs. A **Standard-winged Nightjar** *Caprimulgus longipennis* on the laterite road north of Abéché on 14th was relatively far north. **Pale Crag Martins** *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta* at Biltine on 12th were among the most southerly recorded so far. Among migrants, **European Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* were noted in much larger numbers than in previous dry-season visits to the Sahel, which were mainly made earlier or later in the season. A **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* was seen in hotel gardens along the Chari River at N'Djamena on 3rd. At the same site on 22nd, prinias were giving calls matching the recordings of **River Prinia** *Prinia fluviatilis* on Chappuis (2000. *African Bird Sounds*), played at the same time for comparison, although the birds were not strikingly pale (TW).

### Congo-Brazzaville

In February–May 2016 the following were reported. The first certain record of **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* for the country was made in Lac Télé Community Reserve, where one was photographed between Edzama and Botongo on 10 February, with another slightly further south on 13 February; the species is marked as 'uncertain' on the ABC checklist of the birds of Congo (Dowsett et al. 2016), based on an old mention from 'côte de Loango' in Malbrant & Maclatchy (1949. *Faune de l'Équateur Africain Français*). A **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* was also seen in the reserve on 9 February (JMI & RM).

### Two African Marsh Harriers

*Circus ranivorus* were observed above Stanley Pool on the Congo River and two **Marsh Owls** *Asio capensis* on the lowest slopes of the Batéké Plateau at Lifoula, c.20 km north-west of Brazzaville, on 7 February. The same day a **Southern Black Flycatcher** *Melaenornis pammelaina* was found higher up on the plateau (BPo & ML).

In Lesio-Louna Reserve, also on the Batéké Plateau, 4–5 individuals of both **Grey-throated Barbet** *Gymnobucco bonapartei* and **Sladen's Barbet** *G. sladenii* were feeding on fruiting trees around Iboubikro campground (03°16'12"S 15°28'16"E) on 28 May; Iboubikro is the only known site outside of DR Congo where Sladen's Barbet can be seen. Other noteworthy records from Lesio-Louna Reserve on 28–29 May include an adult and an immature **Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus*, a late **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* with several **Rock Martins** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* near a cliff above Lac Bleu, and at least 14 **Congo Moor Chats** *Myrmecocichla tholloni* counted along the track from Mpoumako to Abio campground. While the establishment of **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* in Brazzaville over the last three years has been reported before, a pair found at Mpoumako village on the RN2 road to Ouessou (03°07'27"S 15°37'10"E) on 29 May represents

a significant northward extension (*BPo*).

### Côte d'Ivoire

Records from the period November 2015–May 2016 include the following. In Dahlia Fleur Natural Reserve, near Abidjan, a group of five **Latham's Forest Francolins** *Peliperdix lathamii* was flushed on 5 March. Also there were a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* on 6 February, a **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* on 5 March (Fig. 5) and an **African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii*—rare in the south—on 11 February and 5 March.

An adult **White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* flew over Yamoussoukro golf course on 31 December and a **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* over Assinie Lagoon on 25 January. Unusually large



**Figure 5.** Congo Serpent Eagle / Serpentaire du Congo *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*, Dahlia Fleur Natural Reserve, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 5 March 2016 (Bruno Boedts)

**Figure 6.** Rufous-crowned Roller / Rollier varié *Coracias naevius*, Assinie, Côte d'Ivoire, 26 February 2016 (Bruno Boedts)

numbers of herons foraged at Ebrié lagoon, near Abidjan city centre, in February–March, including >60 **Intermediate Egrets** *Ardea intermedia* and 40 **Grey Herons** *A. cinerea*, with a large group of up to 120 **Common Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* also present during the same period. Approximately 20 **Forbes's Plovers** *C. forbesi* at Assouinde on 21 February also represent a remarkable large number. A **White-tailed Ant Thrush** *Neocossyphus poensis* was observed in Banco National Park on 7 November; curiously, the species is not listed for the park by Lachenaud (2006, *Malimbus* 28: 107–133). Unusual coastal records involved a **Rufous-crowned Roller** *Coracias naevius* near the main road at Assinie on 26–27 February (Fig. 6) and a **Northern Puffback** *Dryoscopus gambensis* near Assinie golf course on 25 January (*BB*).

**House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* continue to spread: having been noted on the Plateau, in the centre of Abidjan, and in a village north of Bingerville at Anghien lagoon at the end of 2015, 3–4 were photographed near the beach at Grand-Bereby in May (*B*).

### DR Congo

At least 15 **Bob-tailed Weavers** *Brachycope anomala* were observed just north of Kinkole, at the N'sele River mouth near Kinshasa, on 28–29 May 2016; behaviour suggests local breeding (recording on [www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org)). Small numbers of **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* were noted in Kinshasa in February and May, including a female with a juvenile on 10 February; apparently the first record involved one photographed on 21 March 2014 ([www.inaturalist.org/observations/587697](http://www.inaturalist.org/observations/587697)) (*BP*).

### Egypt

The first **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* for Egypt was a male observed at Marsa Alam on 7 May (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 253). During a survey of the Lake Nasser area between 24 April and 7 May, >500 **Yellow-billed Storks**

*Mycteria ibis* were counted and two new breeding species for the country, **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* and **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*, were found in mixed heronries with Black-crowned Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, Squacco Herons *Ardeola ralloides*, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea*. A large population of tree-breeding **Clamorous Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* was also discovered (*JH, HE, EF, MMe & MH*). The third **Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* for Egypt was photographed at Wadi Lahami on 5 May; previous records were in 2010 and 2015 (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 250).

### Ethiopia

The first **Sennar Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus flavifrons* for Ethiopia were recorded in Kafta-Sheraro National Park, in the extreme north-west, when two birds were observed on 30–31 December 2015 and again on 27 February 2016; the birds were in the western part of the park, across the Tacazze River, c.1 km from the Eritrean border (*HP*).

### The Gambia

Records from January–May 2016 include the following. A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* was photographed at a nest near Tendaba, Lower River Division, on 25 January (Fig. 7); it seems that these birds have been frequenting the area for several years, but breeding had not been previously observed (*BvH*). A **Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadibrachys* was seen between Janjanbureh and Kunkilling Forest Park, Central River Division, on 23 January (Fig. 8; *OF & LG*).

The following were reported from Kartong Bird Observatory, at the coast (for information on the observatory, visit [www.kartongbirdobservatory.org](http://www.kartongbirdobservatory.org)). A first-summer male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was photographed on the beach on 3 May (*CCr* per *OF*). A **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* was ringed on 18 January—the first record for Kartong (Fig. 9; *OF*). A male **European Golden Oriole**



7



10



8



11



9



12

*Oriolus oriolus* was photographed on 20 April (CCr per OF). On 7 January, the first **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* to be ringed at the site was a first-year (OF). A young male **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* was photographed on 25 January (Fig 10; JR); there are no previous documented records for Senegambia, but a juvenile was apparently seen further north on the coast, near Gunjur fishing village, in c.2005 (MG). A first-winter **Garden**

**Figure 7.** Peregrine Falcon / Faucon pèlerin *Falco peregrinus*, Tendaba, Lower River Division, The Gambia, 25 January 2016 (Bart van Hoogstraten)

**Figure 8.** Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadribrachys*, between Janjanbureh and Kunkilling Forest Park, Central River Division, The Gambia, 23 January 2016 (Lee Gregory)

Martin-pêcheur azuré *Alcedo quadribrachys*, entre Janjanbureh et Kunkilling Forest Park, Central River Division, Gambie, 23 janvier 2016 (Lee Gregory)

**Figure 9.** Eurasian Scops Owl / Petit-duc scops *Otus scops*, Kartong, Western Division, The Gambia, 18 January 2016 (Lee Gregory)

**Figure 10.** Red-backed Shrike / Pie-grièche écorcheur *Lanius collurio*, Kartong, Western Division, The Gambia, 25 January 2016 (Jan Erik Roer)

**Figure 11.** Bar-breasted Firefinch / Amarante pointé *Lagonosticta rufopicta*, Kartong, Western Division, The Gambia, 10 January 2016 (Lee Gregory)

**Warbler** *Sylvia borin* ringed on 17 January was an unusual record, as

**Figure 12.** Eurasian Wigeon / Canard siffleur *Mareca penelope*, Sakumono Lagoon, Tema, Ghana, 1 February 2016 (Anders Odd Wulff Nielsen)

most Garden Warblers pass through Senegambia in October–November to winter further south. An adult **Bar-breasted Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta* was ringed on 10 January (Fig. 11); another ‘first’ for Kartong, of a species that is usually found further inland (OF).

### Ghana

Two female **Eurasian Wigeons** *Mareca penelope* were at Sakumono Lagoon, Tema, on 26 January–1 February 2016 (Fig. 12; AN); there are just four previous records for Ghana, all in December–February, in 1972, 2010, 2011 and 2012, the latter three also from Sakumono Lagoon. A **Grey-throated Rail** *Canirallus oculus*, a rarely seen species, was observed at Ankasa National Park on 9 February (SD). An **African Blue Flycatcher** *Elminia longicauda* at Dzita, west of Keta, on 9 February (AN), is remarkable, as there are only a few old records from the coast (the most recent in 1972) and this is a new site (cf. Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014. *Birds of Ghana*).

### Kenya

The following reports are from the period November 2015–May 2016. A **Common Teal** *Anas crecca*—a rare Palearctic migrant to the region—was at Thika Sewage Ponds on 17 January (Fig. 13) and a pair of **African Black Ducks** *A. sparsa* in Kakamega Forest on 22 May (an unusual record from this location; per SH). A singing **Star-spotted Nightjar** *Caprimulgus stellatus* was seen on the lava plains north of Marsabit on 23 April. In Tsavo East National Park (=NP), an impressive passage of >300 **Common Cuckoos**



**Figure 13.** Common Teal / Sarcelle d'hiver *Anas crecca*, Thika Sewage Ponds, Kenya, 17 January 2016 (Washington Wachira)

**Figure 14.** African Crane / Râle des prés *Crex egregia*, Maasai Mara, Kenya, 20 January 2016 (Nate Dias)

**Figure 15.** Quail-plover / Turnix à ailes blanches *Ortyxelos meiffrenii*, near Voi Gate, Tsavo East NP, Kenya, 16 April 2016 (Callan Cohen / Birding Africa)

**Figure 16.** Collared Lark / Alouette à collier *Mirafra collaris*, north of Garissa, Kenya, 3 May 2016 (Callan Cohen / Birding Africa)

**Figure 17.** Karamoja Apalis / Apalis du Karamoja *Apalis karamojae*, Mara Naboisho Conservancy, Kenya, 23 April 2016 (Arjan Dwarshuis)

*Cuculus canorus* occurred on 15 and 16 April (*MM* & *CC*). A **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* was reported from Voi on 11 February; this species is rare in the east.

**Madagascar Squacco Herons** *Ardeola idae* were observed in coastal Haller Park on 14–22 May—an uncommon and declining migrant. A **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* was at Lake Naivasha on 15 March; this species is rarely recorded on inland waters (per *SH*). Unseasonal **African Crakes** *Crex egregia* were recorded in the Maasai Mara on 20 and 23 January (Fig. 14; per *SH*). A **Quail-plover** *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* was found on Rukinga Ranch on 3 November (per *SH*), with another near Voi Gate in Tsavo East NP on 16 April (Fig. 15; *MM* & *CC*). A **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrua elegans* was noted in Kakamega Forest on 29 April (*MM* & *CC*). In the Aberdares, a **Striped Flufftail** *S. affinis* was flushed in January (per *SH*), with others heard and sound-recorded there on 17 and 19 April, and four on Mount Kenya on 19 April (*MM* & *CC*). A **Denham's Bustard** *Ardeotis denhami*, now

rare and declining, was noted in the Mugie Conservancy, Laikipia District, on 1 March. **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopiterus* were found at Rukinga Ranch on 20–21 February and in Mara Naboisho Conservancy on 22 April (a pair)—a very uncommon intra-African migrant to southern Kenya. A **Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* in Nairobi NP on 4 June was either a very late or early record. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was on Jumba Beach on 1 February. Two **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were on Lake Naivasha on 19 May, with 15 on Lake Nakuru on 20 May; the species is very uncommon in this part of the country.

Noteworthy raptors include a pair of **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* at Aruba Dam in Tsavo East NP on 28 March, a **Beudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beudouini* in the Mara Triangle on 3 January, and a **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga* in Nairobi NP on 10 January–19 February. A **Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera* was at Nguni Nature Sanctuary on

19 February; this species is rarely reported from the coast. A pair of **Grey Parrots** *Psittacus erithacus* was at the Rondo Retreat Centre in Kakamega Forest on 24 May; this species has become very rare in Kenya (per *SH*).

The endemic **Williams's Lark** *Mirafra williamsi* was seen at Shaba on 22 April, whilst five **Collared Larks** *M. collaris* were found north of Garissa on 3 May (Fig. 16; *MM* & *CC*). A **Karamoja Apalis** *Apalis karamojae* was photographed in Mara Naboisho Conservancy on 23 April (Fig. 17; per *SH*). An **East Coast (Pale) Batis** *Batis soror* was reported from Manda Island on 11 April—possibly a first record for the island; also there were three **Somali (Black) Boubous** *Laniarius nigerimus* (*MM* & *CC*). A small group **Hinde's Babblers** *Turdoides hindei* near Tatu in April may represent the southernmost record of this endangered species (per *SH*). Two flocks of c.50 **Clarke's Weavers** *Ploceus golangi*, including many males in full breeding plumage, were seen in Soko Forest on 12 April (*MM* & *CC*). A pair of **Somali Sparrows** *Passer castanopterus* found nesting at Archer's Post in November is the first confirmed breeding record from this area: the species appears to be spreading south. The first **Yellow-crowned Canary** *Serinus canicollis* for Nairobi NP was noted on 13 March (per *SH*).

## Madeira

The first confirmed **Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciata* for the archipelago was captured on video at Ponta do Pargo on 8 May. Other reports from April–May 2016 include a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* at Paul da Serra on 13 May; a **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* at Ponta do Pargo on 27 April–8 May; a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Lugar de Baixo on 8 May; two **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* at Tanque Pond, Porto Santo, on 22 May; a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Lugar de Baixo on 31 March–14 April; a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* at Ponta do Pargo on 27 April; and a **Northern**

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* also at Ponta do Pargo on 8 May (per *www.madeirabirds.com*).

## Mali

An **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus* was singing in Bamako from 9 January 2016 until at least 15th (sound-recorded: *www.xeno-canto.org/299401*); the winter quarters of this Palearctic migrant are still poorly known and there are just a few records from Mali (*BP*).

## Mauritania

A **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* was photographed flying west off Iwik, Banc d'Arguin, on 1 May 2016; the species does not figure in Isenmann *et al.* (2010). *Birds of Mauritania*). The second **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* for Mauritania was found at Banc d'Arguin on 17 April; the first was recorded there in January 2006. In the Adrar Region, three **Golden Nightjars** *Caprimulgus eximius* were heard near Gelb El Richat on 11 April. The same day, a male **Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos goertae* was photographed there and c.40 **Sudan Golden Sparrows** *Passer luteus* were found at various sites in the area (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 240–253).

## Morocco

The following were reported for the period January–May 2016. In south-western Morocco, flocks of 16 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* at Oued Chebeika and six at Akhfennir were observed on 9 January. In Western Sahara, **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* were reported from Gleib Jdiane on 15 March (two males) and 16 March (a male and a female) and near Aousserd on 18 March (three); the first breeding record was documented when a juvenile, with at least two males and two females, was photographed at Mejik, on 14 May. The first for the north was found near Rabat on 14 March. **Golden Nightjars** *Caprimulgus eximius* were reported from Aousserd and Oued Jenna, Western Sahara, on 16 March (at least four), Oued Jenna on 19–20 April (four), and Soutouf, Adrar (at

Zawyate Antajjate on 23 March and at Oued Archane on 27 March); a male was found dead on the road near Oued Jenna on 20 April; the new records indicate that the species is breeding in Western Sahara (the first record was of a male between Dakhla and Aousserd on 3 May 2015).

A first-year **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* at Gleib Jdiane, Western Sahara, from 18 February to 2 March was the 13th for Morocco, whilst the ninth **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* for the country was photographed at Oued Massa on 25 February. Two unringed **Northern Bald Ibises** *Geronticus eremita* photographed at Larache, northern Morocco, on 1 March, were either from the Moroccan populations (at Tamri and Souss-Massa National Park, c.640 km to the south-west) or from the reintroduced population in southern Spain (near Barbate, Andalusia, c.120 km to the north); ringed Bald Ibises from the Spanish population have already been observed in Morocco (e.g. in 2006 and 2007). A dark-morph **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* was observed at Dakhla Bay on 28 January. At Oued Souss, a first-winter **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was seen on 12 February and 11 and 21 March, with a second-winter **Common Gull** *Larus canus* also there on 15–16 February. Adult **Kelp Gulls** *L. dominicanus vetula* were seen, e.g., at Anza, Agadir, on 25 January and at Dakhla Bay, Western Sahara, on 4 March. A rare influx of **Razorbills** *Alca torda* for south-western Morocco occurred with, e.g., an immature as far south as Dakhla Bay on 28 January, up to eight off Agadir on 18 February and up to ten foraging off the Tamri coast on 20 March (where earlier in the month several were picked up dead on the beach).

At Jbel Moussa, northern Morocco, 3,730 **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus*, 2,159 **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans*, four **Rüppell's Vultures** *Gyps rueppellii* and one **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* were counted on 5 May. Also at this site, due to bad weather at the Strait of Gibraltar,



a large concentration of migratory vultures roosted on 7 May, including 58 **Egyptian Neophron percnopterus**, six **Rüppell's**, >800 **Griffon Gyps fulvus** and three **Cinereous Vultures Aegypius monachus**. The fourth **Lesser Spotted Eagle Clanga pomarina** for Morocco was a second-calendar-year bird at Jbel Moussa on 21 May; previous records are from 1996, 2007 and 2010.

A **Spanish Imperial Eagle** with a satellite transmitter was noted in the Guelmim area, southern Morocco, in mid January, whilst a second-calendar-year was photographed south of Jbel Moussa on 27 April.

The **Pied Crow Corvus albus** present since March 2015 south of Zagora, was seen again at Ouled Driss, M'Hamid, on 29 February. In Western Sahara, a juvenile **Sudan Golden Sparrow Passer luteus** was seen at Oued Jenna on 20 April (per [www.magornitho.org](http://www.magornitho.org) and *Dutch Birding* 38: 102, 186–190, 240–253).

## Mozambique

In December 2015–June 2016 the following were reported. The most interesting record from the period was the discovery of two **Whimbrels Numenius phaeopus** of the distinctive

subspecies *alboaxillaris*, **Steppe Whimbrel**, in Maputo Bay, on 10–12 February, which were tentatively sexed as male and female; the female remained in the area until 28 February and the male until 24 March. This is the first record in Africa of this taxon since 1965; full details will be published in a future *Bull. ABC* (GA).

A cruise through the Mozambique Channel from Durban in early February, produced four **Red-footed Boobies Sula sula**, a **Barau's Petrel Pterodroma barau**, a **Brown Noddy Anous stolidus** and hundreds of **Sooty Terns Onychoprion fuscatus**. A **Brown Noddy** was seen on Inhaca Island, near Maputo, on 11 December. An immature **Lesser Frigatebird Fregata ariel** flew along the Maputo coastline on 20–21 February (per *TH*) and 12 June (Fig. 18; *AW*). Four **Greater Frigatebirds F. minor** were seen 12 km off Ponto da Barra on 18 June (Fig. 19; *GA*). On the Bazaruto archipelago, a large flock of c.90 **Crab-plovers Drömas ardeola** and two **Eurasian Oystercatchers Haematopus ostralegus** were on the São Sebastião Peninsula on 11 April. At least one **Crab-plover** was present at Pomene on 17 April and two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** in Maputo

Bay on 16 May. No fewer than three **Lesser Black-backed Gulls Larus fuscus** were found together in Maputo Bay on 16 January, all of them thought to be of the nominate race (Baltic Gull, Fig. 20; *GA*); one was also there on 21 February, and 12 and 14 June (per *TH*).

Around mid January, the area north-west of Inhassoro produced some noteworthy species, including **Striped Crake Amaurornis marginalis**, **Dwarf Bittern Ixobrychus sturmi**, **Lesser Moorhen Gallinula angulata**, **Ayres's Eagle Hieraaetus ayresii**, **Thrush Nightingale Luscinia luscinia** and **Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah Vidua obtusa** (possibly the first record south of the Save River). A **Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo Cercococcyx montanus** was calling regularly 4 km west of the ENI between Vilanculos and Inhassoro on 27 January, rather far south for this species. **European Honey Buzzards Pernis apivorus** were noted near Unguana on 11 January (two), north-west of Inhassoro on 20 January (two) and in the Inhassoro area in late January (up to four).

A **Basra Reed Warbler Acrocephalus griseldis** was discovered along the Pungwe River near Chitengoa Camp, in Gorongosa



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**Figure 18.** Immature Lesser Frigatebird / Frégate ariel *Fregata ariel*, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 12 June 2016 (Alan Waterman)



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**Figure 19.** Greater Frigatebird / Frégate du Pacifique *Fregata minor*, off Ponto da Barra, Mozambique, 18 June 2016 (Gary Allport)

**Figure 20.** Lesser Black-backed Gulls / Goélands bruns *Larus fuscus*, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 16 January 2016 (Gary Allport)



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National Park, on 4 April. The **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* and female **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*, found on Mount Gorongosa on 29 November 2015, were still present until at least late December. A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* was located at the Crown Energy farm at Sena on 12 December and a **Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi* on the São Sebastião Peninsula near Vilanculous on 21 December (per *TH*).

## Namibia

Records from late December 2015–June 2016 include the following. The first record of **Yellow-throated Leafloves** *Chlorocichla flavicollis* for Namibia and the southern African subregion was made at Katima Mulilo, where a pair remained in the gardens of Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge from late January until at least June and successfully raised two broods, the first fledging on 3 March and the second on 23–24 April; the species occurs from Senegal to Angola and Zambia, with the previous southernmost record at Senanga, in south-west Zambia, c.200 north of the Namibian location.

A vagrant **Garganey** *Spatula querquedula* was at Otjiwarongo Sewage Works on 25 February–2 March. Up to three **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* remained at Gammams Waste Water Treatment Works in Windhoek from 13 February until at least 9 April. **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were reported from Namutoni, Etosha National Park (=NP), on 23 December (one) and Katima Mulilo Sewage Works on 16 February (at least three), whilst single **African Crakes** *Crex egregia* were at Kunene River Lodge on 30 December, in Academia, Windhoek, on 15 January and at Otjiwarongo Sewage Works on 27–28 February. A **Corn Crake** *C. crex* at Le Mirage Desert Lodge in Sossusvlei on 1 January, with another at Otavi in late December, are possibly only the third and fourth records for the country. A **Dwarf Bittern** *Isobrychus sturmii* was at Otjiwarongo Sewage Works on 27–28 February. Two **African**

**Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* circled over Windhoek on 15 January and up to five remained at Gammams Waste Water Treatment Works, Windhoek, from 24 January until 30 May; one flew over the city's Northern Industrial Area on 5 June—all seemingly part of the small irruption taking place across the subregion.

A **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* was at Otjiwarongo Sewage Works on 27–28 February. Up to 30 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were present just outside the King Nehale gate to Etosha NP on 22 December. Noteworthy waders in the Walvis Bay area included up to five **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* from 22 December until 14 April; a **Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus* on 14–19 April; two **Greater Sand Plovers** *C. leschenaultii* on 19 April; an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* on 4–5 January; a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* on 4–5 January; at least two **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* on 4–5 January; single **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* on 6 January and 20 February; a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Steganopus tricolor* on 20–21 March; and several **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* in January–February, with max. 44 on 6 February and at least one still present on 24 June. A **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was seen at Mile 4 Salt Works, just north of Swakopmund, on 30 December and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* at Rehoboth Sewage Works on 28 February, with another at Lake Liambezi on 26 April. A group of eight **Grey-headed Gulls** *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* was found at Gobabis on 11 June; this species is rather unusual in central Namibia and is normally only found singly or in pairs. A **Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* was reported from the mouth of the Kunene River on 18 December. At Mile 4 Salt Works, Swakopmund, a tern resembling an **Elegant Tern** *T. elegans* was observed on 8 February; this is the fourth record for Namibia and the tenth for the southern

African subregion—but the identity of these terns has still not been unequivocally established. A tern resembling a **Lesser Crested Tern** *T. bengalensis* was located at Walvis Bay on 9 February, with another (the same?) at Mile 4 Salt Works on 19 February.

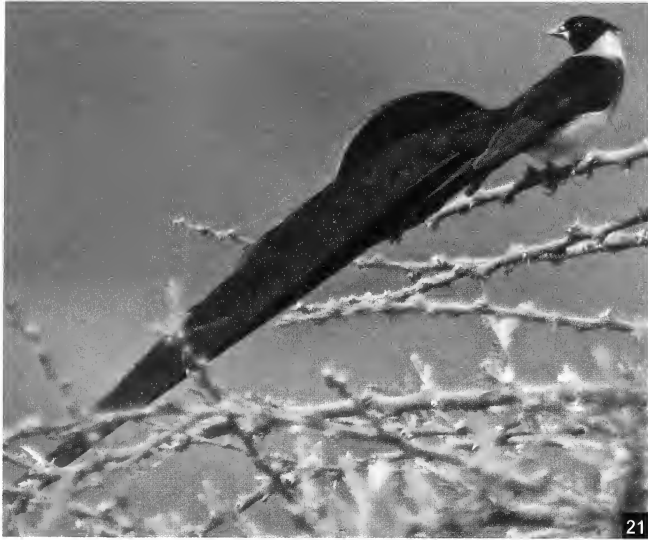
At least 15 **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported between 31 December and 26 February, including at least ten from Windhoek. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was located at Hardap Dam, near Mariental, on 20 May—a rather unusual record for this part of the country. A **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was observed near Ngepi Camp, western Caprivi Strip, Kavango region, on 27 April and an **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* near Halali Camp, Etosha NP, on 13 February. A **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* was seen at Palmwag on 31 December and a **Southern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicoides* at Ameib Ranch, north of Usakos, on 8 February. The long-staying **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* was still in Walvis Bay on 6 January; the bird was first seen in the area in May 2014. A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* was at Otjiwarongo Sewage Works on 27–28 February (per *TH*).

## Niger

For the first half of 2016, no remarkable reports were received, but 4,404 historical records from the Makalondi area made during the period 1968–98 have been added to the West African DataBase ([www.wabdab.org](http://www.wabdab.org)). The 311 species involved included at least two with no other records in Niger: **Fanti Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne obscura* and **Blackcap Babbler** *Turdoides reinwardtii* (PS per JB).

## Rwanda

The first **Eastern** (Long-tailed) **Paradise Whydah** *Vidua paradisaea* for the country was photographed near Ibanda-Makera Forest, Kirehe District, on 15 May 2016 (*JHo & JdG*); the species is not mentioned in Vande weghe & Vande weghe (2011. *Birds in Rwanda*). Possibly the same male was observed c.30 km away, at



**Figure 21.** Eastern Paradise Whydah / Veuve de paradis *Vidua paradisaea*, Akagera National Park, Rwanda, 5 June 2016 (James Hogg)

**Figure 22.** Ruddy Turnstones / Tournepierres à collier *Arenaria interpres*, Praia Inhame, São Tomé, 26 December 2016 (Bruno Portier)

the edge of Akagera National Park, on 3 and 5 June (Fig. 21; *JHo*). An **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* was photographed near Bambou Lodge, at the edge of Volcanoes National Park, on 15 May—a notable sighting (per *JHo*). A male **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was noted in Kigali on 18 March; this species is seldom recorded in Rwanda (*JHo*).

### São Tomé & Príncipe

The first **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* for the islands was photographed at Praia Inhame, at the southern tip of São Tomé, on 24–25 December 2015. At least three **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* were seen between Praia Inhame and Praia Piscina on 25–28 December (Fig. 22); there are few records of this species. A brief pelagic trip to the Sete Pedras Islets, c.5 km south-west of São Tomé, on 23 December, produced at least seven **White-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon lepturus*, c.1,000 pairs of **Black Noddies** *Anous minutus*, c.1,000 pairs of **Brown Noddies** *A. stolidus*, 50 **Brown Boobies** *Sula leucogaster* and 15 **Bridled Terns** *Onychoprion*

*anaethetus*. On 27 December, at Mucumbli Lodge, Ponta Figo, a singing **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* in a maize field was sound-recorded; this appears to be only the second record for the island (*BP*).

### Senegal

The following records are mainly from the period December 2015–early June 2016, with a few from earlier dates. Two species were reported for the first time in the country: **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*—photographed in Parc de Hann, Dakar, where at least three were present on 5–8 May (Fig. 23; *BP*)—and, more surprisingly, **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus*—photographed in Langue de Barbarie National Park (=NP) on 10 December (*RBe*; details elsewhere in this *Bulletin*).

At least three **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were noted in Djoudj NP on 27 December (*BP*); this is a regular winter visitor albeit in small numbers. Two **Red-necked Nightjars** *Caprimulgus ruficollis* were observed at Trois-Marigots,

near Saint-Louis, on 25 October 2015 (*FB*), and two **European Nightjars** *C. europaeus* in Boundou Community Reserve, in the south-east, in January (*JD*). Two adult **Brown Boobies** *Sula leucogaster* at Îles de la Madeleine on 2 January is a rare winter record (*SM* & *SDU*); an immature was at Ngor, Dakar, on 17 May (*BP*). A pair of **Bronze-winged Coursers** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* was found on recently burnt ground at Guéréo, near the Lagune de Somone, on 18–19 March (Fig. 24; *BP*); there are only a few records from western Senegal. Two pairs of **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor*, including one with a 2–3-week-old juvenile, were seen at Trois-Marigots, near Saint-Louis, on 7 June (*FB*). The sixth **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* for the country was at Dakar Technopôle on 17 January (*BP, JG* & *BD*). Also there were a first-winter **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* on 6–9 March (Fig. 25; *BP, GC, BD* & *JC*); an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* on 9 March (*BP, JC* & *BD*), with a subadult on 7 May (*BP*); and at least six **Mediterranean Gulls** *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus* between



**Figure 23.** Eurasian Collared Dove / Tourterelle turque *Streptopelia decaocto*, Dakar, Senegal, 8 May 2016 (Bram Piot)  
**Figure 24.** Bronze-winged Courser / Courvite à ailes bronzées *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*, Guéréo, Senegal, 18 March 2016 (Bram Piot)  
**Figure 25.** First-winter Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*, Dakar Technopôle, Senegal, 6 March 2016 (Bram Piot)  
 Mouette pygmée *Hydrocoloeus minutus*, 1<sup>er</sup> hiver, Dakar Technopôle, Sénégal, 6 mars 2016 (Bram Piot)  
**Figure 26.** Eastern Olivaceous Warbler / Hypolaïs pâle *Iduna pallida*, Guéréo, Senegal, 19 March 2016 (Bram Piot)

21 January and 9 March (BP, WM, GC & AD); the latter species has been seen here annually since at least 2012. A **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* ringed in the Netherlands on 26 July 2015 and observed on 30 January appears to be the first ringed individual of this species to be reported from Senegal (BP).

A **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolopha* was reported from the Saloum Delta, near Toubaouta, in late January (PB & GH) and a **Pallid Heron** *Ardea*

(*cinerea*) *monicae* from Langue de Barbarie NP on 12–13 February (FB). **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were seen at Dakar Technopôle, where rare, on 30 April (two) and 7 May (one) (BP). A flock of 48–52 **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* was observed in Ndiel Faunal Reserve on 30 December (FB) and nine at Anguili, Boundou Community Reserve, in January (JD). On 9 November 2015, no fewer than 1,200 **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were counted in the lower Senegal Valley (FB).

Two **Booted Eagles** *Hieraetus pennatus* were near Belly, Boundou Community Reserve, in December–January (JD). A **Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciata* was at Saint-Louis on 25 October 2015, with another in Ndiel Faunal Reserve on 9 January (FB). A juvenile **Greater × Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga* × *pomarina* from Lithuania was satellite-tracked through Senegal and The Gambia, from the Mauritanian border along the Ferlo to Casamance and the Saloum (see <http://ornithondar.blogspot>).

fr/2016/01/exceptionnel-un-hybride-lituanien-aigle.html); at one point it only just managed to avoid a wind turbine, after which it remained on the ground for more than 20 hours, probably stunned by the pressure from the turbine. In addition to a few records from the north during the 2015/16 winter, **Barbary Falcons** *Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides* were noted eight times at Kousmar and Kaolack between late October and mid-December 2015, including twice a male and female together (SC); one was also reported from Palmarin on 30 December (SMe & SDu). A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* was photographed at Langue de Barbarie NP on 15 November 2015 (RBe).

Two **Bearded Barbets** *Lybius dubius* near Gokho, south of Mboro, on 30 March, were well north of their known range; the species may be expanding northward and is now present up to Saint-Louis: it has been regularly reported from Bango since 2008 (FB) and also from Gandiol. Up to two **Greater Honeyguides** *Indicator indicator* were seen in Saint-Louis between 10 December and 22 April (FB). Breeding of **Little Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos elachus* was recorded in the Gandiol area, south of Saint-Louis, in February–April (FB, BP et al.).

A **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* at Technopôle on 20 February appears to be the fourth for the Dakar area (BP). Four **Red-chested Swallows** *Hirundo lucida* were seen in Djoudj NP and at least nine, with evidence of breeding, at N'Digué, in the lower Senegal Valley, on 8 April (FB). An **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Iduna pallida* was photographed and sound-recorded at Guéréo, south of Dakar, on 19 March (Fig. 26; BP); there are very few records for this species outside the Djoudj area. At least three **Cricket Warblers** *Spiloptila clamans* at Trois-Marigots on 7 June were the second record there, the first being in 2004 (FB; see <http://ornithondar.blogspot.sn>). Single males of **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* and the rarely recorded **Common Rock Thrush** *M. saxatilis* were seen at Popenguine on

14 February (BP & BD). An **African Thrush** *Turdus pelios* and a **White-crowned Robin Chat** *Coscypha albicapilla* were at Toubab Dialaw, near Dakar, on 26–27 March, both at the northern edge of their ranges in Senegal. A **Spotted Creeper** *Salpornis spilonotus* was observed at Mako, south-east of Niokolo Koba NP, on 1 February (BD); the species is very rare and inadequately known in the country, with apparently just one previous record, in Niokolo Koba NP. Two **Red-billed Queleas** *Quelea quelea* landed briefly on a ship c.100 km off the Senegalese coast at 15°20'10.4280"N 18°03'23.1480"W (north-west of Dakar); this is extraordinarily far out at sea (RQ). An **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* was at Saint-Louis on 25 October 2015 (FB).

### Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period November 2015–May 2016 include the first country records of four species: a **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus* on St. François, on 11 November (Fig. 27), a first calendar-year male **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* at La Passe, Silhouette, on 7 December–21 January (Fig. 28), a first calendar-year **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* over Aride on 30 December (Fig. 29) and an adult female **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* on Île Persévérance on 30–31 January.

A **Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* on Denis on 8 January was the fourth record for the archipelago, with a second calendar-year **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* at Providence, Mahé, on 6–7 February (Fig. 30) and presumably the same individual shot at Seychelles international airport on 11 February, also being the fourth. Eleven **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata* on Alphonse on 29–30 January, with four still present on 1 February (Fig. 31), represent the sixth Seychelles record, the first from anywhere other than the Aldabra group and only the second since 1977. A second



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**Figure 27.** Eurasian Reed Warbler / Rousserolle effarvatte *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, St. François, Seychelles, 11 December 2015 (Wayne Haselau)

**Figure 28.** Immature male Common Teal *Anas crecca*, La Passe, Silhouette, Seychelles, 11 January 2016 (Ella Nancy)

Sarcelle d'hiver *Anas crecca*, mâle immature, La Passe, Silhouette, Seychelles, 11 janvier 2016 (Ella Nancy)

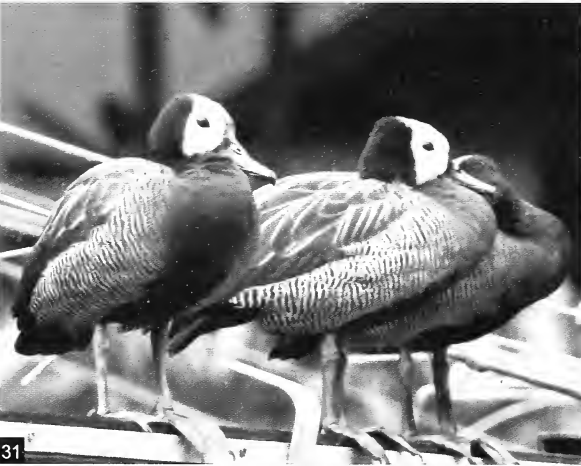
**Figure 29.** Immature Eurasian Spoonbill / Spatule blanche *Platalea leucorodia*, Aride, Seychelles, 30 December 2015 (Nicholas Pluchon)



**Figure 30.** Immature Western Marsh Harrier / Busard des roseaux *Circus aeruginosus*, Providence, Mahé, Seychelles, 6 February 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Figure 31.** White-faced Whistling Ducks / Dendrocygnes veufs *Dendrocygna viduata*, Alphonse, Seychelles, 31 January 2016 (Pep Nogués)

**Figure 32.** Great Bittern / Butor étoilé *Botaurus stellaris*, Denis, Seychelles, 3 December 2015 (Martijn van Dinther)



**Figure 33.** Adult non-breeding Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, Providence, Mahé, Seychelles, 27 March 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

Guifette moustac *Chlidonias hybrida*, adulte internuptial, Providence, Mahé, Seychelles, 27 mars 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Figure 34.** Hepatic female Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Aldabra, Seychelles, 28 December 2015 (Karen Chong Seng)

Coucou gris *Cuculus canorus*, femelle forme brune, Aldabra, Seychelles, 28 décembre 2015 (Karen Chong Seng)

calendar-year Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* was observed on Desroches on 18 February (five previous records), a Little Swift *Apus affinis* on Farquhar on 5 February (six records), a Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* on Denis from 3 December until at least 17 May (seven records; Fig. 32), a Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

on Mahé on 27 March–15 May (eight records; Fig. 33), and a second-calendar-year male **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* on Alphonse on 28–31 March (nine records).

Single **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* were reported on Alphonse on 10 December and on Mahé on 16 April, with a second also there on 4 May. An adult **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* in breeding plumage was on Mahé on 14 February, and a **Madagascar Pond Heron** *A. idae* on Farquhar on 4 April (six records east of the Aldabra group, where it breeds). Other noteworthy records include a second-calendar-year **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* on Alphonse on 11–19 January, an **Eleonora's Falcon** *F. eleonorae* on Aldabra on 9 January, a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* on Desroches on 28 April, three **Common Snipes** *Gallinago gallinago* on Mahé on 14 February, a **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* on Mahé on 7 February, single **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* on Desroches on 26 January and 11 February, a **Pacific Swift** *A. pacificus* on Alphonse in the first week of December, a hepatic female **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* on Aldabra on 28 December (Fig. 34), and a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on Farquhar on 2–17 January.

Single **White Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* were reported on Denis on 1 December, on Aride on 25 November–3 December, on Farquhar on 11–14 December and on Providence Atoll on 21 March. A **Yellow Wagtail** *M. flava* was on Farquhar on 9 February. Six **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were observed: a male on Desroches on 30 December, two females on Alphonse 20–21 January, a female on Farquhar on 31 January, an adult male on Alphonse on 12–16 February and an adult female also on Alphonse on 23–25 February.

Historical records submitted to the website ebird.org have recently been assessed by SBRC and the following were accepted: an **Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* on Praslin on 19 October 1982, an **Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus*

on Praslin on 19 October 1982, a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* on Mahé on 22 October 1982, a **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* c.100 miles north of Mahé on 7 November 1984, a **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* on Praslin on 27 March 1990, an **Intermediate Egret** *Ardea intermedia* on Mahé on 11 April 1990, a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardenna carneipes* between Mahé and Praslin on 6 October 2014, a **Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax* between Mahé and Praslin on 10 October 2015, a female **Ruff** on Bird on 25 October 2015 and a **Collared Pratincole** on Bird on 25 October 2015 (per AS).

### South Africa

The following records are from late December 2015–June 2016. Noteworthy species seen in the waters south and west of Cape Point include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (one on 23 April; up to 12 in May; six on 22 June), **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora* (two on 23–24 April), **Northern Royal Albatross** *D. (e.) sanfordi* (one on 31 March; two on 23–24 April), **Light-mantled Albatross** *Phoebastria palpebrata* (one on 5–6 April; probably only the 14th record for southern Africa), **Grey-headed Albatross** *Thalassarche chrysostoma* (one on 12 June), **Buller's Albatross** *T. bulleri* (one on 7 May; sixth record for southern Africa), **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates leucorhous* (c.12 on 31 March), **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea* (one on 7 May), **Spectacled Petrel** *P. conspicillata* (one on 6 February; at least three on 24 February and 31 March; one on 22 June) and **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardenna carneipes* (one on 13 May).

In the waters south of Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, a juvenile **Wandering Albatross** was seen on 16 May. Species observed in the waters south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, include a **Tropical Shearwater** *Puffinus bailloni* on 21 February, and an immature **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca* and two **White-faced Storm-petrels** *Pelagodroma marina* on 4 June.

In KwaZulu-Natal, southern Africa's eighth **King Penguin** *Aptenodytes patagonicus* was picked up at St. Lucia on 22 January (it died en route to a rehabilitation centre), whilst a freshly dead **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* was found at Empangeni on 20 March, and an exhausted **Tropical Shearwater** on North Beach, Durban, on 30 March. In Western Cape, a **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* was present around Seal Island in False Bay on 12 April, whilst up to two **Australian Gannets** *Morus serrator* remained on Malgas Island in Saldanha Bay from 21 December until at least 23 June.

A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellatus* was seen near Sappi Stanger bird hide, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14 December and remained there for several days. A **Little Bittern** *Iscobrychus minutus* was in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, on 26 December. No fewer than eight **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath*, including two juveniles, were counted at Verlorenvlei in Eland's Bay, Western Cape, on 27 January, with 11 there on 5 May; the species has obviously become resident at this site. Three **Goliath Herons** were still present along the Berg River east of Velddrif on 22 May.

A small irruption of **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* occurred throughout the country, with birds reported from Mpumalanga (two in January–February), North West Province (up to six in January; one in April), Gauteng (at least six in December–January), KwaZulu-Natal (>100 in December–February; two in June), Free State (four in January–March), Eastern Cape (at least five in late December–February), Western Cape (c.5 in January–April) and Northern Cape (one in February). In Western Cape, single **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* were observed on Hermon Road on 23 December and in Plettenberg Bay in mid February. Up to two **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* remained at Voelvlei, near Vleesbaai, Western Cape, from 7 December to at least 17 January. Single **Abdim's**

**Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* were observed near Underberg, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12–13 December; near Stutterheim, Eastern Cape, on 25 January; and between Stanford and Napier, Western Cape, on 31 January. A **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was at a dam in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands on 25 December, with another between Leandra and Kinross, Mpumalanga, on 14 April.

**European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apiivorus* continued to be reported from all provinces, with >110 records in late December–April, in Limpopo (at least eight), Mpumalanga (two), KwaZulu-Natal (35), Gauteng (>40), North West Province (seven), Free State (six), Eastern Cape (five) and Western Cape (six). Single **Palm-nut Vultures** *Gypohierax angolensis* were recorded in Northern Cape (an immature near Strydenberg on 13 December), Eastern Cape (north of Grahamstown on 17 February), Western Cape (an immature at Strandfontein Sewage Works on 24 April), North West Province (a juvenile at the vulture restaurant at VulPro on 19–22 May), KwaZulu-Natal (at Eshowe Environmental Education Centre on 13 June) and Limpopo (a long-staying adult regularly visiting the vulture restaurant on Mockford farm, Polokwane, throughout the period). An adult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was seen in Kruger National Park (=NP), Mpumalanga, between Numbi Gate and Pretoriuskop Rest Camp on 14 February. A pair of **Bateleurs** *Terathopius ecaudatus* was regularly reported over Kariega Game Reserve, Eastern Cape, in January, whilst a sub-adult was noted in Weenen Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 23–27 May. A **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was present at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, until at least 8 February, with two there on 31 January; others were observed at Potchefstroom, North West Province, on 11 January; at Brackendowns, Gauteng, on 7 February; and at Sappi Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 16 January–7 February. **Montagu's Harriers**

*C. pygargus* were reported from Eastern Cape (a sub-adult male in the St. Francis Bay area on 1–14 January; a male in Addo NP on 28 December; a female c.50 km north of Grahamstown on 13 February), Western Cape (a sub-adult male c.4 km north of Darling on 23–24 January), Northern Cape (one c.20 km south of Britstown in late January), Free State (one near Harrismith on 30 January) and KwaZulu-Natal (an immature near Himeville on 2 February).

Out-of-range eagles included **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* (three records in Eastern Cape between 31 December and 23 January, and one in Western Cape, in the Stanford area, on 14 January); **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* (in KwaZulu-Natal—one at Albert Falls Dam on 31 December; two at Hilton College Nature Reserve on 22 December; one near Pietermaritzburg on 30 January—and Gauteng—one at Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve on 30 January); **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* (singles at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 26 December; between Steynsburg and Middelburg, Eastern Cape, on 20 February; and west of Harrismith, Free State, on 14 June); **Steppe Eagle** *A. nivalensis* (juveniles west of Prieska, Northern Cape, in late January; and between Graaff-Reinet and Kendrew, Eastern Cape, on 9 April); **Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraetus wahlbergi* (two still present near Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, on 13 February; first seen there on 2 October 2015); **Ayres's Eagle** *H. ayresii* (three records of singles in KwaZulu-Natal: near Manguzi on 21 March, at Empangeni on 13 May, and at Richards Bay on 27 May); and **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* (one at Botlierskop Reserve, Western Cape, on 21 March; and one c.27 km north of Petrus Steyn, Free State, on 25 May).

**Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* were noted in Mpumalanga (a female between Leandra and Kinross on 24 February), KwaZulu-Natal (one west of Nqutu on 3 January; singles along the Sani Pass road on 28 December,

25 January and 22 February; a female near Winterton on 25 January; up to four near Himeville on 27–28 February), North West Province (a female along the Zaagkuilsdrift Road on 20 February) and Eastern Cape (one near Kei Mouth on 2 February). In Western Cape, up to six **Amur Falcons** *F. amurensis* were reported (one south of Ladysmith on 19 December; one in the Stanford area on 16 January; two c.60 km north of Beaufort West on 17 January; one at De Hoop Nature Reserve on 2 February; and one near Bredasdorp on 13 February). Single **Sooty Falcons** *F. concolor* were observed in Gauteng (between the Duiker Hide and Blesbokspruit bridge on 10 January), Kruger NP (near Kruger Gate on 1 February; near Numbi Gate on 4 February; near Skukuza on 14 February–16 April), Mpumalanga (at Charleston on 11 May), KwaZulu-Natal (at Tembe Elephant Park on 16 December; north of Mbazwana on 25–27 January, with two south of Mbazwana on 17 March–9 April; at oNgoye on 20 February; near Gingindlovu on 21 February) and Western Cape (near Plettenberg Bay from March until at least 10 April). An **African Hobby** *F. cuvierii* was reported in the Soutpansberg Mountains near Entabeni, Limpopo, on 19 December. A very westerly family of **African Scops Owls** *Otus senegalensis* was at Graaff-Reinet, Northern Cape, from at least 28 December until early January.

An influx of **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* occurred, with birds being reported from Gauteng (up to four at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 1 January–7 February; one at Nirox on 2 January; one found dead near Muldersdrift on 17 January; and one at Waterfall Estate in Midrand on 21 January–2 March), Free State (one at Ingula from 24 March until at least early May), KwaZulu-Natal (up to three at the Sappi Stanger hide on 1 January–2 March and one at Port Edward on 17 January–14 February), Eastern Cape (one at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, near Grahamstown, in January), Eastern Cape (up to two at Kei Mouth on



24–31 January and one at Ngciyo Pans, near Kenton-on-Sea, on 27 February–17 March) and Northern Cape (one in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park on 21 December). Out-of-range **African Crakes** *Crex egregia* were found at Witsand Nature Reserve, Northern Cape, on 25 December; c.70 km north of Vryburg, North West Province, in late December; and at Vredefort Dam, Free State, on 12 April. **Corn Crakes** *C. crex* were observed in North West Province (one c.8 km north of Potchefstroom on 8 January), KwaZulu-Natal (one at Esikhuma on 31 December; two at Sappi Stanger on 16–17 January; and one in iSimangaliso Wetland Park near Cape Vidal on 23 January), Eastern Cape (one near East London on 8 January) and Northern Cape (one in Tswalu Kalahari Reserve on 24 December). In December–February, **Lesser Moorhens** *Gallinula angulata* were reported from Gauteng (at Hamerkop Bird Sanctuary in Florida on 30 December–11 January; at Rondebult Bird Sanctuary on 2 January; at Glen Austin Pan on 10–27 January; and at Bullfrog Pan in Benoni on 17–24 January), North West Province (at Klerksdorp Dam on 20 December–1 February and in Pilanesberg NP on 6 February), KwaZulu-Natal (at Zimanga Private Game Reserve on 22 December; at Wakkerstroom on 29 December; up to two near Port Edward on 7–31 January; at Sappi Stanger on 27 December–11 February; at Muzi Pan on 15 February; and two in Weenen Game Reserve on 13–20 February) and Eastern Cape (at Zwelitsha Pans on 13–16 December and along the Umngazi River south of Port St. Johns on 26 January). The long-staying **Wattled Crane** *Bugeranus carunculatus* was still present near Devon, Mpumalanga, until at least early June, as usual within a flock of Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradiseus*.

Six **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were reported from Mpumalanga (up to five at Komatidraai Dam on 21 January and one at Skukuza in Kruger NP on 10 April–30 June), with another seven in KwaZulu-Natal (singles south of

Midlands Saddle and at Mooi River on 4–14 February; one at Empangeni on 20 February; one at Darvill Bird Sanctuary, Pietermaritzburg, on 2 April–27 June; one at Umdloti River mouth on 29 April; and one at the Northern Waste Water Treatment Works, Durban, on 27 June). Two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were south of Umlalazi River mouth in Mtunzini, KwaZulu-Natal, on 22 December. A **Burchell's Courser** *Cursorius rufus* was in Eston, KwaZulu-Natal, on 9 February, and up to 13 **Temminck's Coursers** *C. temminckii* between Humansdorp and Kareedow, Eastern Cape, on 18–27 June. Three **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were seen in the Humansdorp area, Eastern Cape, on 19 March. In KwaZulu-Natal, at least 15 **Collared Pratincoles** *G. pratincola* came to roost at Sappi Stanger on 23 May (with at least four there on 25 June), whilst one was at Darvill Bird Sanctuary, Pietermaritzburg, on 27 May. **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were observed from December to February in Limpopo (up to 12 in Kruger NP on 31 December–1 February), Mpumalanga (up to 18 at Mkhombo Dam in December–early February), KwaZulu-Natal (up to four in Phinda Private Game Reserve on 28 December), North West Province (up to seven on the Kgomo Kgomo floodplain on 13 December), Northern Cape (two near Strydenburg on 18 December; up to four between Hanover and Colesburg on 24 December–9 February) and Western Cape (two at Kliphoeck Salt Pans, Velddrif, on 7 January–11 February). In Western Cape, the long-staying **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was still present at Gouritzmond until at least 21 April (first seen there on 17 October 2015), with another at De Mond Nature Reserve near Arniston on 16 April. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* remained at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, until at least 31 January (from 23 November 2015). A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *C. falcinellus* was at Kliphoeck Salt Pans in Velddrif, Western Cape, on 22

January and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* at Dullstroom, KwaZulu-Natal, on 11 January. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* remained at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, from 26 December–24 January; up to two were still at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 28 February (from at least November 2015). A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was at the Swartkops estuary, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 26 January–30 April. **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were observed in Mpumalanga (singles in Kruger NP on 16 January, on the Sabie River on 20–21 December, and at Sabi Sands on 29 January), North West Province (one in Pilanesberg NP on 23 February), Gauteng (one in Rietvlei Nature Reserve throughout January and one still at Modderfontein Nature Reserve on 14 April) and KwaZulu-Natal (up to three at Darvill Bird Sanctuary in December–January and one at Intaba Ingwe in December). A **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 16–26 January (two were there on 23 January), with one near Himeville, KwaZulu-Natal, on 27 February–1 March, and another at Hartbeespoort Dam, Gauteng, on 12 March. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *P. lobatus* first located at Kliphoeck Salt Pans, Velddrif, Western Cape, on 1 November 2014, remained at the site until at least late June (it was joined there by two other individuals in early 2016); it thus stayed throughout 2015 when it moulted into breeding plumage, and it seemed set to spend another austral winter at Velddrif.

A **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was at Cape Recife near Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 12 December, whilst one in full breeding plumage was at St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 23 December, with another in the Durban area, KwaZulu-Natal, from 11 January until at least 29 May, by which time it had also acquired full breeding plumage. A **Hartlaub's Gull** *Chroicocephalus hartlaubii* was observed at Cannon Rocks, Eastern Cape, on 23 December, with another in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal,

on 30 December. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* first found at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 1 August 2015, remained until at least 28 February; another was at the mouth of the Great Fish River, Eastern Cape, on 21 February, whilst in the same province an immature was at Orient Beach in East London on 20 April, with an adult also there on 21 April–17 May. In KwaZulu-Natal, a **Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* was seen in iSimangaliso Wetland Park on 27 December, whilst one remained, once again, at the St. Lucia estuary from 13 January until 3 May; an exhausted juvenile was picked up near Stanger on 5 April and taken into care. In Western Cape, single **Elegant Terns** *Thalasseus elegans* were in tern roosts at Laaipek near Velddrif on 21–25 December and at Hermanus on 4–20 February. A **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* photographed at Kij Kij waterhole in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, on 15 May, looked rather out of place in the Kalahari Desert. An **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* was present at Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 19 December–31 January, whilst another was photographed in Kruger NP on 25 June; since the last South African breeding record in 1944, the species has been only sporadically recorded across the country.

Immature **Great Spotted Cuckoos** *Clamator glandarius* were recorded in Western Cape, in Table Bay Nature Reserve on 18–28 February and 70 km north of Beaufort West on 9 March. Single **Common Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* were noted in Western Cape (c.60 km north of Beaufort West on 17 January; in Karoo NP on 23 January; in Table Bay Nature Reserve on 28 January–2 February; and c.5 km east of Stanford on 28–30 January), Eastern Cape (in Jeffrey's Bay on 22 January; along the Grahamstown–Riebeeck East road on 28–31 January; along the Cannon Rocks–Alexandria road on 7–8 February; and at Gamtoos River mouth on 19 February) and Gauteng (in Waterfall Estate in Midrand on 11–21 January and in Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve

on 16 January). An **African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* was reported over Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Western Cape, on 18 June.

A **Little Bee-Eater** *Merops pusillus* was briefly in East London, Eastern Cape, on 16 May; this is a very rare species in the province. Quite out of range were a **White-fronted Bee-eater** *M. bullockoides* on the Cape Peninsula on 3–7 and 20–21 May, with at least four near Calitzdorp, Western Cape, until at least 6 May; and a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *M. persicus* near Kei Mouth, Eastern Cape, on 6 February. A **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *M. hirundineus*, a particularly rare species in KwaZulu-Natal, was at Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve on 24–26 May. Southern Africa's 17th **White-throated Bee-eater** *M. albicollis* was discovered in Kruger NP, Mpumalanga, on 23 January. A **Rufous-crowned (Purple) Roller** *Coracias naevius* was in Mountain Zebra NP, Eastern Cape, on 8–12 April; there are very few, if any, previous records for the province. Also outside their usual range were a **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* in Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, Northern Cape, on 23 December, a **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *H. leucocephala* at Amanzimtoti, KwaZulu-Natal, on 25 December, and two **Common Scimitar-bills** *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* c.5 km north-west of Alicedale, Eastern Cape, on 1 May. A **Trumpeter Hornbill** *Bycanistes bucinator* in Wilderness on 13–14 January was almost certainly the first for Western Cape. In Mpumalanga, up to two **Red-fronted Tinkerbirds** *Pogoniulus pusillus* near Mananga on 14–21 January appear also to be the first for the province.

A **Dusky Lark** *Pinarocorys nigricans* was encountered in Imfolozi Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 24 April. **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* were reported from Western Cape (up to five at Voelvllei near Vleesbaai, on 3–18 January; one at Moullie Point on 25–29 January; and one in Garden Route NP from late January–13 February), Eastern Cape (one in Addo NP on 15

February), Northern Cape (at least two at Spitskop Dam near Kimberley on 20 February) and KwaZulu-Natal (one still present at Sappi Stanger until at least 27 June). A **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* was seen in the Wolkberg region, Limpopo, on 20 December, whilst another remained at Wonderboom Nature Reserve near Pretoria, Gauteng, on 5 February–1 March. In Limpopo, two **White-breasted Cuckooshrikes** *Coracina pectoralis* were well out of range near Mabula on 11 April. A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* was observed along Zaagkuilsdrift Road, North West Province, on 23 January. A **Sickle-winged Chat** *Emarginata (Cercomela) sinuata* remained near Devon, Mpumalanga, on 30 April–20 June (with three there on 12 June); another was at Suikerbosrand, Gauteng, on 5 June. Two **White-browed Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* were ringed in Nature's Valley, Western Cape, on 19 April, with another on 17 May; 11 individuals have now been recorded in the province, of which nine were mist-netted. A **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* mist-netted at Princess Vlei, Western Cape, on 6 February was a surprising find. A **Bush Blackcap** *Lioptilus nigricapillus* was noted at Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 8 May and 5 June, in the area where the species was also present in 2015; another was at Governor's Kop, near Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, on 5 June. At the latter site up to three **Gurney's Sugarbirds** *Promerops gurneyi* remained from 5 June until at least 17th. An unusual record for Eastern Cape concerned a **Brubru** *Nilaus afer* in Oviston Nature Reserve on 19 February. In the same province, **Violet-backed Starlings** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* were seen at Mdumbi on 7 January (a male), in KwanDwe Private Game Reserve near Grahamstown on 2 February (a small flock), and near Berlin on 28 February (one) (*all per TH*).

## Tunisia

The first **White-winged Snowfinch** *Montifringilla nivalis* for the country was photographed at Kalaat es

Senam, Kef, on 22 February (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 193).

## Zimbabwe

The following records are from the period January–May 2016, with a few from earlier dates. A **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* was at Salt Pans Dam, Hwange National Park (=NP) in January; this species is very rare in the country (*DR-G*). At Mongwe, 830 **Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* counted on sandbanks in the Zambezi River in late May was apparently the highest number there in >10 years (*DR-G* & *PR-G*). Two pairs of **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* were at Mongwe Camp, below Chirundu, on 29 May (*DR-G*). About 640 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* flew over Marangora on 5 March and another 436 over Rifa Camp, Chirundu, on 7 March (*IR*), whilst 183 **Abdim's Storks** *C. abdimii* counted at a roost at Hippo Pools Camp, Shamva, on 23 January was the largest concentration reported during the period (*DR-G* & *PR-G*). Two **Common Buttonquails** *Turnix sylvaticus* were found at Art Farm, Harare, on 7 December 2015; the species has become uncommon around the capital (*DR-G*). A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* observed at Eiffel Flats, Kadoma, on 13 February, is a new site record (*MP*). In Hwange NP, 150 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanii* were counted at Salt Pans Dam in January; this species is not frequently reported. A **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*, a rare visitor, was seen at Mandavu Dam, in the same park (*JB*). Ten **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were at Chipinda Pools, Gonarezhou NP, on 30 March (*CK* & *DR-G*).

### A Thick-billed Cuckoo

*Pachycoccyx audeberti*—a rare and elusive species—was photographed at Hippo Pools Camp, Shamva (*TN*), whilst another was seen at Rifa

Camp, Chirundu, on 4–8 March (*IR*). Two **Yellowbills** *Ceuthmochares aereus* were encountered in Mahenya sand forest. Save/Runde junction, on 27 April (*GS* & *TM*). Breeding **Secretary-birds** *Sagittarius serpentarius* were noted at Bon Accord Farm, Shangani, on 4 April (*DR-G* & *RC*) and at Kyle Dam, Masvingo, on 22 May (*JP*). A **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was reported from Marlborough Sewage Ponds, Harare, on 7 February (per *TH*) and a **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* was seen at Fly Camp, Nottingham Estate, Beitbridge, on 3 April (*DR-G*). In January, an **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis* was at Carswell Farm, Zvimba (per *DR-G*), with another at Aberfoyle Tea Estate, Mutasa District (*MS*), the latter well out of range.

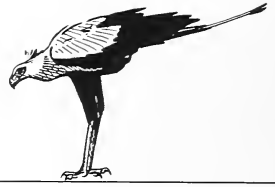
**African Pittas** *Pitta angolensis* were found at Chitake Springs, Mana Pools NP (*JF*) and at Hippo Pools, Shamva, where last seen in 2005 (*TN* & *IL*). A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* was at Richlands Farm, Shamva, on 24 January (per *DR-G*) and a male **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* in Vumba Botanical Gardens on 11 February (per *TH*). **Hartlaub's Babblers** *Turdoides hartlaubii* were photographed at Imbabala Lodge, near the border with Botswana, Namibia and Zambia, on 10 May (per *DR-G*). A **Miombo Rock Thrush** *Monticola angolensis* was photographed at Gleneagles Forest, Mutasa District, well beyond its known range, on 25 May (*MS*). A **Dusky Indigofinch** *Vidua purpurascens* was singing at Mongwe on 24–29 May (*DR-G*).

*Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Gary Allport (GA), Frédéric Baeuz (FB), Rubén Barone (RB), Pierre Baumgart (PB), Rafa Benjumea (RBe), Bruno Boedts (BB), Nik Borrow (NB), J. &*

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# Letter to the Editor



## 'Pheasant drives' in Madagascar

In November–December 2015, I enjoyed a successful trip to Madagascar courtesy of the UK-based company 'Birdfinders'. As it was my first trip to the island, I greatly enjoyed the new fauna and flora. The only blight on the experience was the behaviour of some of the local guides. I should point out that the main guide who accompanied the tour throughout was very good, and I have no complaints about him.

Local guides are specialists in their areas, are invaluable in that they possess much useful knowledge, particularly concerning active nests, and a few aid the main guide in each area visited. In their enthusiasm to find target species for clients, particularly some skulking forest

denizens, if playback does not work, they will often attempt to drive birds towards the birders. They do this as if on a hunt, shouting and bashing the vegetation. Extra assistance may be sought from nearby villages. This is obviously distressing to the birds, as well as to many of the birders on the tour. The practice was especially bad in the forests of the Vahiparara/Taiatakiy area. It results in birds retreating further and further into the forest, and in this case, there was a general lack of birds until one reached c.1 km inside the forest. In the long term this will be counterproductive and not only disastrous for the bird population, but could destroy the livelihood of the guides. I pointed this out to the chief local guide, explaining that if playback failed, then baiting with

mealworms should be tried. His response surprised me and I find it difficult to believe. He claimed that he used to bait with mealworms, but birders had told him this was 'artificial' and preferred the birds to be driven.

I think if visitors can take the time to explain how damaging the practice of 'driving' the birds is, and suggest alternatives, this may have some effect. Baiting seems to work well in several parts of the Neotropics (e.g. Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) and is used in at least one place in Kerala (India). 'Artificial' or not, it is surely preferable to 'driving'. If there is any institution that trains guides this should be communicated to them. Readers may have other suggestions.

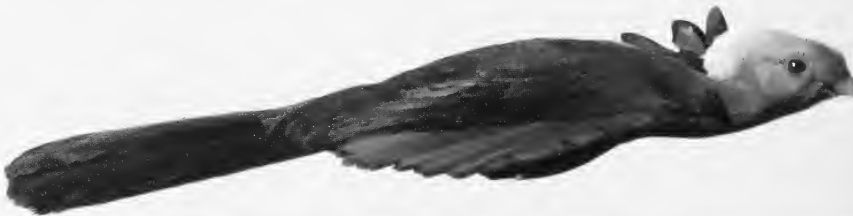
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# Reviews



Several books reviewed in the *Bulletin*, and many others, including the major African field guides and avifaunas, can be purchased via the African Bird Club website from WildSounds. The Club receives a donation for its Conservation Fund for every item purchased via the Books and Media Sales page. Click the 'Buy Now' button by the

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Plusieurs livres analysés dans le *Bulletin*, et beaucoup d'autres, parmi lesquels les guides et avifaunes les plus importants, peuvent être achetés via le site web

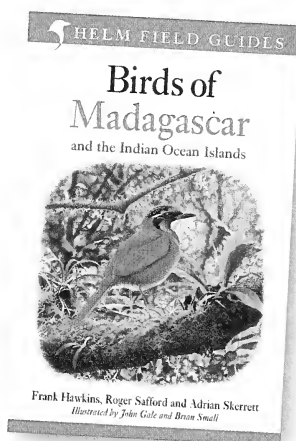
de l'African Bird Club auprès de WildSounds. Pour chaque article acheté via la page « Book and Media Sales », le Club reçoit une donation pour son Fonds pour la Conservation. Cliquez sur l'onglet 'Buy Now' à côté de l'article recherché afin de vérifier le dernier prix, et aidez-nous à protéger les oiseaux africains en l'achetant.

## Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands

Frank Hawkins, Roger Safford and Adrian Skerrett, illustrated by John Gale and Brian Small. 2015, Bloomsbury, London, UK. 336 pp, 124 colour plates, many colour maps. Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4729-2409-4. UK£30.

I first visited Madagascar in 1989, when there was effectively no field guide—I can remember studying the tail shape on singing jeries perched on treetops in the hope of finding one with a wedge-shaped tail—I eventually discovered that Wedge-tailed Jery, as it was then (now Wedge-tailed Tetraka *Hartertula flavoviridis*), is a bird of forest undergrowth. Over the years things have improved somewhat, and this is at least the fourth guide in English to the birds of Madagascar (in this review I will confine myself to Madagascar, as I have never visited the other islands covered).

This new title in the Helm field guides series is essentially a 'baby' version of *The Birds of Africa* volume 8, which is most definitely *not* a field guide. The taxonomy followed is much the same, although it has been updated to reflect the expansion of the Vangidae to include Ward's 'Flycatcher' *Pseudobias wardi*, Crossley's 'Babbler' *Mystacornis crossleyi* and the newtonias *Newtonia* spp., and the recognition of four warbler families in line with the



ongoing shake-up of the former Sylviidae. We have also lost Benson's Rock Thrush *Monticola bensoni* (fair enough!) and there is again only one scops owl (*Otus* sp.) on Madagascar (a backwards step in my opinion, not least because *BOA*'s 'perceived vocal differences' are real enough in my experience).

The book contains the usual introductory sections, but with the addition of a great discussion of 'biogeography: colonisation, differentiation and survival' and a very useful review of endemic families and genera. The main field guide section is divided into colour-coded sections. Part 1 deals with waterbirds, raptors and gamebirds, groups in which most species are common to the whole region (and indeed, widespread in the Old

World). Part 2 covers passerines and near-passerines, divided into seven islands or island groups. Part 3 covers vagrants to the region (of which there are many). Thus, for Madagascar, most landbirds are found in Part 2 (with no confusing species from the Seychelles, Comoros etc.), but some landbirds—raptors, rails, mesites and gamebirds—are found in Part 1 (together with those from Seychelles, Comoros etc.), which is also where you will find herons, ducks, waders etc. I understand the logic behind this, but it is a bit confusing at times. Surely, in this day and age, it would not be too hard to have produced separate field guides for each island or island group? It is presumably a case of perceived commercial interest winning over functionality, although it is true that a field guide to the birds of the Comoros is unlikely to be a best seller at the present time.

How do the field guide sections stand up? The illustrations are generally very good, and there are useful range maps, although in some cases these seem to be more maps of available habitat and less maps of actual records than the introduction suggests (e.g. Red-tailed *Newtonia newtonia fanovanae*). The text is competent, with brief but helpful notes on behaviour. Confining myself to landbirds, I looked at the handful of birds that are hard to identify on Madagascar, and at the sections on

vocalisations. Tricky identifications include Madagascar Cuckoo-hawk *Aviceda madagascariensis*, Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*, Madagascar Sparrowhawk *Accipiter madagascariensis* and the vasa parrots *Coracopsis* spp. Sadly, the illustration of Madagascar Cuckoo-hawk fails to capture its distinctive large, dark, centrally-placed ‘bug’ eyes, and this is not emphasised sufficiently in the text—in my experience the eyes are the single best feature for separating perched birds from Madagascar Buzzard *Buteo brachypterus* (similarly, the painting of Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris* has eyes that are too small, thus failing to impart the species’ ‘character’). Of course, most species are easy to identify and very distinctive, and for most species the illustrations are more than adequate.

Looking at the descriptions of vocalisations, I was more disappointed. It is hard—very hard—to transcribe bird vocalisations in any meaningful way, but the text should at least point out obvious and distinctive calls, and attempt to convey the *character* of the call. Yet, looking at Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra*, there is no mention of the fact that its calls commonly include shrill, clear *whistles*, most unusual for a parrot. Similarly, we are not informed that the ‘check-in’ call of Verreaux’s Coua *Coua verreauxi* is a series of loud *croaks*, that a good rendition of the flight call of Cuckoo-roller *Leptosomus discolor* is easily *whistled*, and there is no indication that the song of Schlegel’s Asity *Philepitta schlegeli* consists of a series of thin, *high-pitched, squeaky* notes (‘*hu-hu-hu-hi-hi-hu hu*’ could just as well be some sort of owl!). At least nowadays it is easy enough to listen to recordings of the real thing, making the verbal descriptions a little superfluous, but the text should still point out what is distinctive.

All in all, this is clearly an excellent field guide. It is significantly better than the other recent guide to the region (Sinclair & Langrand 2013) and should undoubtedly be your first choice when visiting Madagascar or any of the other Indian Ocean islands. It is aimed,

however, at the visiting birder or world lister, rather than the indigenous population. It would be really good to see the artwork, which is mostly excellent, used in genuinely local field guides for each island or island group, with the text in the local language. Come on BirdLife, there’s a challenge!

Simon Harrap

## Reference

- Sinclair, I. & Langrand, O. 2013. *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands*. Third edn. Cape Town: Struik Nature.

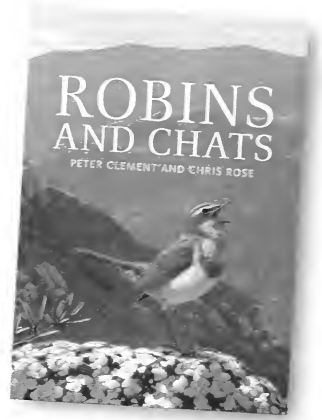
## Robins and Chats

Peter Clement and Chris Rose. 2015. *Bloomsbury, London, UK. 688 ppp. 62 colour plates. 600 photos, 175 maps. Hardback. ISBN 978-0-7136-3963-6. UK£60.00.*

Fifteen years after Peter Clement published his companion volume on *Thrushes*, we have this magnificent new work in the Helm Identification Guides series on *Robins and Chats*. Eagerly awaited for many years, even before *Thrushes* appeared, to say that it does not disappoint would be an understatement.

It covers an exceptionally attractive, and rather homogenous, group of birds, amongst which are some of the best-loved and most familiar species, as well as some of the very rarest, shyest and most restricted in range. A cursory glance reveals the unsurpassed quality of Chris Rose’s artwork, covering a very comprehensive range of plumages depicting age, sex and racial variation, interspersed with vignettes of tail patterns or flight images. There are no fewer than 23 figures for Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*, and the exhaustive text for this species runs to 20 pages, with several maps, diagrams and 11 colour photographs. This example indicates the depth of treatment throughout, and aficionados of such groups as wheatears (for which the author is a declared enthusiast) need look no further.

Seven pages of introduction, engagingly entitled ‘What is a chat?’



are followed by 12 pages describing the scope and layout of the book, discussing all of the features of the species accounts, including voice, habitat, breeding, distribution, moult, measurements, etc. There is also a section on taxonomy, which is further elaborated in an eight-page essay—a masterclass on the subject—by Per Alström, which will be especially welcomed by people who may feel somewhat buffeted by the winds of taxonomic change blowing through the avian world. On this subject, concern has been raised because the first eight species with which the text commences—the North American bluebirds (*Sialia* spp.), Asian cochoas and Fruithunter *Chlamydochaera jefferyi* from Borneo—have for some years been regarded as more closely allied to ‘true’ thrushes than the chats. However, when Clement was working on the *Thrushes* book this was not clear, and in his introduction to that volume he envisaged that these species, or at any rate the bluebirds and the Fruithunter, would eventually appear in the present volume.

A total of 175 species is treated and, aside of the bluebirds, almost all of the rest are Old World in distribution: a swift analysis revealed that (omitting the few island forms), no fewer than 74 of 163 species (45%) occur only in Africa south of the Sahara. More interestingly, diversity at the generic level is much higher in Africa than in Eurasia, with 18 genera represented (13 in Eurasia) or an average of four species per

genus compared to more than seven in Eurasia.

The species accounts, incorporating range maps and colour photographs, occupy 527 pages, or a mean of three pages per species, though some, as already noted, are very much longer. Great detail is presented on all of the usual subjects: behaviour, breeding, voice, descriptions, taxonomy, similar species and identification. Problems of rendering vocalisations in words are discussed in the introduction, and sonograms are not included; readers are advised to listen to the many excellent recordings on relevant websites.

The colour plates each contain c.12 figures, and my main concern is that the illustrations for some juvenile plumages do not accord with the relevant photographs, which for some of the robins, robin-chats and scrub robins appear to depict subadults rather than juveniles. I take this to be an error with the legends rather than the plates.

The fourth volume of *The Birds of Africa* containing the robins and chats appeared in 1992, and much has changed since then; these birds are now known to be more closely related to Old World flycatchers than to 'true' thrushes. Among changes, some of them established for some years, in the wheatears, Cyprus *Oenanthe cyprica* is now split from Pied *O. pleschanka* and the race *bottae* of Heuglin's *O. heuglini* becomes Red-breasted Wheatear. Confusingly, Kurdistan (or Kurdish) *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* is the new name for Red-tailed, itself now a full species (split from *O. chrysopygia*). The alethes have been split into two genera, with Fire-crested *Alethe castanea* and White-tailed *A. diademata* remaining in *Alethe*, while the rest are now in *Chamaeotylas* (*Pseudaethe* is a synonym); the two genera are possibly not even closely related. The split of Himalayan *Tarsiger rufilatus* from Red-flanked Bluetail *T. cyanurus* is also recognised. The taxonomic treatment adopted here is thus mostly in line with recent thinking, the exception being Common Stonechat, which

is now often split into three species, European *S. rubicola*, Siberian *S. maurus* and African *S. torquatus*, but is here treated as a single, polytypic species, basically on the grounds that more research is needed. Further taxonomic changes are undoubtedly on the way; for instance, of the eight rock chats, here placed in *Cercomela*, a recent study has proposed that the three sickle-winged chats be placed in *Emarginata*, with the rest removed to *Oenanthe*. More recently, and only dealt with in a footnote, Ruaha Chat *Myrmecocichla collaris* has been split from Arnot's Chat *P. arnoti*.

Progress and changes in relationships and nomenclature will continue, but this book will stand as a mine of information for a very long time, especially for those captivated by this charismatic group of birds. It is beautifully produced and designed, and fully maintains the high standards set by its predecessors in the Helm Identification Guides series.

Martin Woodcock

### The State of Uganda's Birds: Indicators of our Changing Environment 2014

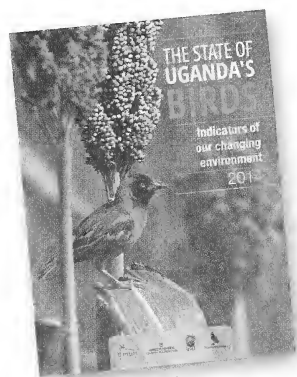
A. Byaruhanga, D. Nalwanga and M. Opigi-Odull, 2015. *NatureUganda*, Kampala. 78 pp, 43 colour photos, four maps, 61 figures and two tables. Paperback. ISBN 978-9970-714-04-X. UK£10. Available from Chris Magin, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. E-mail: Chris.Magin@rspb.org.uk

Uganda is one of Africa's most species-rich countries with, according to this report, 1,057 species (although c.20 of these have not yet been officially recognised on the national list). This nicely produced work covers almost all aspects of Uganda's birds. It has many excellent photographs, mostly by Achilles Byaruhanga, who is the Executive Director of *NatureUganda*, which provide a good impression of the country's avifauna, including both common and rare species. As the report rightly demonstrates, birding is an important part of the growing tourist industry, and the state of Uganda's birds thereby gains extra

importance. The four main sections commence with present status, followed by pressures and threats, responses and benefits.

Uganda has a well-established monitoring programme, run by *NatureUganda*, with c.100 landbird sites and 30 waterbird sites, the majority of which are counted twice a year, in January and July, yielding many data, some of which are summarised here. And, as one might expect, some species are doing well—African Fish Eagles *Haliaeetus vocifer* and Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* have shown remarkable increases—whilst others have proven less fortunate. Most notably, Uganda's national bird, Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*, is reported to have declined from c.35,000 individuals in the 1990s to around 13,000 in the present decade. There are a few peculiarities in the data presentation, such as the graphs on pp. 28 and 29, where the y-axis units are values of the statistic lambda as used with Timed Species Counts (Freeman *et al.* 2003, *Afr. J. Ecol.* 41: 337–348); and Fig. 11b is actually for waterbirds. But in general the presentation is very clear.

Uganda has 30 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), and most of these are regularly monitored, revealing a number of threats, the most important being habitat degradation and, in some cases, loss (deforestation is currently rampant in Uganda, as the growing human population requires more land and there is an ever-increasing



demand for charcoal). Wetlands are also being converted, usually to agriculture but also for building sites, and this largely explains the decline in crane numbers.

It is encouraging to note a variety of responses to these threats, such as site-support groups for several unprotected IBAs and a range of public awareness activities, including the lobbying, where likely to be productive, of politicians and others in the class generally known as 'decision-makers'.

Birds are important pollinators and seed-dispersers, especially in forests, but a more evident benefit is the revenue derived from visiting (and some local) birders. Many of those who have visited Uganda will know that there are really knowledgeable bird guides, both as rangers in the national parks and with the many tour companies. Armed with this excellent report, visitors will appreciate Ugandan birding even more.

*Derek Pomeroy*

### **Turaco Country: Reminiscences of East African Birding**

*Dale A. Zimmerman. 2015. Sky Island Press, Portal, AZ. 784 pp., 930 colour photographs. Hardback. ISBN 978-0-9823217-0-6. US\$82.50 (see [www.ecouniverse.com](http://www.ecouniverse.com)).*

Dale Zimmerman is a biologist of some considerable standing, but to birders he is undoubtedly best known for being the illustrator and co-author of two seminal field guides, *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*, and *Birds of New Guinea*. Rather less well known, but equally important for the aspiring field birder in Kenya in the days before there was a decent field guide, was a slim booklet written by Zimmerman and published by the American Museum of Natural History in 1972 entitled *The Avifauna of the Kakamega Forest, Western Kenya, including a Bird Population Study*. This fairly obscure publication was essential reading for anyone wanting to unravel the confusing bulbuls and illadopsises of Kakamega Forest. This was my first

encounter with the name of Dale A. Zimmerman.

Zimmerman's association with East Africa (and especially Kenya) is particularly profound, and he made repeated visits between 1961 and 1992 to study the region's incomparable fauna, notably the birds, mammals and butterflies. This sumptuous volume, running to almost 800 pages and filled with hundreds of large-format colour photos, is both a readable account of these visits, based on his diaries and those of his wife Marian, and a celebration of the fabulous wildlife that he encountered.

It all makes for fascinating reading. The author writes well and the pages are filled with glorious anecdotes of living, travelling and birding in East Africa in its golden age. The three decades or so that are described in the book are the years when East African wildlife was still abundant and good habitats were not confined to national parks, yet modern transport enabled naturalists to explore the region with relative ease. Huge population growth and vast environmental deterioration are now placing enormous pressures on the region's wildlife, and future generations are unlikely to be able to experience the East Africa described in this book.

Zimmerman's memoir is a hugely enjoyable read, especially if you know the birds and places described, and share the author's passion for them. But, if I can be brutally honest, the extravagance of the photographs is a trifle self-indulgent, especially as many look decidedly inferior compared to modern digital images. Many are of historical interest and thus irreplaceable, while others are superb portraits of Africa's iconic wildlife. But some have simply been reproduced too large or are of relatively little interest. This heavy tome would have worked just as well with fewer photographs and a smaller format. That might also have helped to make the book more affordable, and thus more widely appreciated. Nevertheless, I for one am delighted that Dale Zimmerman has provided

us with this fascinating account of his long love affair with an East Africa that we may never see again.

*Nigel Redman*

### **African East Atlantic Flyway Guide: Photographic Field Guide to Waterbirds and Seabirds of Africa's Western Coastline**

*C. R. Barlow and T. Dodman. 2015. Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, Wilhelmshaven, Germany; BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK; Programme Rich Wadden Sea, Leeuwarden, Netherlands. 287 pp., 1,143 photographs, four colour plates. Paperback. Note: this publication is not available for general purchase.*

The aim of this guide is to assist wildlife personnel, students and enthusiasts along the East Atlantic Flyway of the western coastline of Africa to learn more about the waterbirds of the region and identify them correctly. It was conceived as a freely available identification aid for Africans who lacked the resources to purchase a field guide. The guide focuses on birds found in coastal wetlands, covering waterbirds, as well as seabirds that might be seen from shore. In addition, other species that are associated with wetlands such as birds of prey, owls, kingfishers and wagtails are also included. Thus,





all birds in waterbird monitoring schemes, especially the International Waterbird Census, are covered, including many migrants from the Palearctic.

The book contains a number of introductory sections covering topics such as taxonomy, migration, habitat types, summary of the major habitats within each of the 23 African countries along the flyway, conservation issues, monitoring and research programmes, ringing, and bird topography. These sections include many links to valuable website resources including the African Bird Club. This is followed by a useful section describing the characteristics of each of the 35 bird families covered by the guide.

The bulk of the work comprises descriptions and photographs

of each species covered. The species descriptions are fairly brief, providing information on size, key identification features, differences where they exist between males, females and immatures, flight characteristics and habitat preferences. Each species is illustrated by several photographs, some of which are reproduced quite small, but complement the text and depict a variety of plumages including birds in flight where necessary.

Only time will tell how successful this guide will be in fulfilling its aims, but the following features will no doubt contribute to its success: the quality of the photographs and descriptive text; the inclusion of simple maps of the western coast of Africa to show species ranges; the fact that the guide is presented in

English, French and Portuguese; and, last but not least, that it is available free of charge to institutions, field workers and students along the length of the East Atlantic Flyway in Africa, from northern Morocco to the Cape of Good Hope. With a print run of 3,000 copies, those who will benefit most from owning a copy of the guide should therefore be able to obtain one.

Thanks are clearly due to the several sponsors named in the book who funded its production, notably the Federal Environment Ministry of Germany, to the large number of photographers who provided their work free of charge, and to the authors, translators, illustrators and others, who have worked hard to bring this project to fruition.

*John Caddick*



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African Pitta - Adam Ripley

## Notes for Contributors

The *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N. J. & Stuart, S. N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, 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 group, the Azores and the Canaries. Contributions will

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

### Submissions

Submissions are accepted in English or French and should be sent by e-mail to editor@africanbirdclub.org. All submissions are acknowledged. French summaries are required for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for

translation into English, or French, as appropriate. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, place names should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

### Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained on request from the Editor.



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**Interested in becoming a Representative?** We are seeking new Representatives in a number of countries. If you are interested in supporting and promoting ABC in your country please contact the Country Representatives' Coordinator ([reps@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:reps@africanbirdclub.org)) attaching a CV and a statement of how you think you can develop the role. The Coordinator will be happy to provide further information if required.

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### Countries requiring Representatives

We are currently seeking Country Representatives for: Algeria, Angola, Azores, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, São Tomé & Príncipe, Socotra, Somalia, Spain, St. Helena, Tanzania, Togo and Tristan da Cunha.

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

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

### ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you

are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Phil Hyde. E-mail: [info@africanbirdclub.org](mailto: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](mailto:AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the Membership Secretary: [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org).

### Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they

