AFRICAN BIRD CLUB

Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 24 No 1 March 2017

ISSN 1352-481XISSN 1352-481X

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£25 Europe (except UK): UK£28 Rest of the World: UK£30
Family	UK£30
Student	UK & Africa: UK£12 Rest of the World: UK£14
Supporting	UK£40 minimum
Life	UK£600

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

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ABC particularly wishes to thank its Corporate Sponsors for their invaluable financial support in 2017: Akamba, Ashanti African Tours, Birdfinders, Birding Africa, Birding Ecotours, Birdquest, Field Guides, Lawsons, Letaka Safaris, Limosa, Rockjumper, Safariwise, Safari Consultants, Sunbird and Venture Uganda.

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

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

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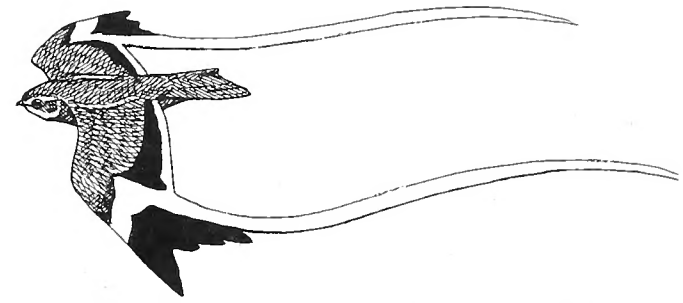

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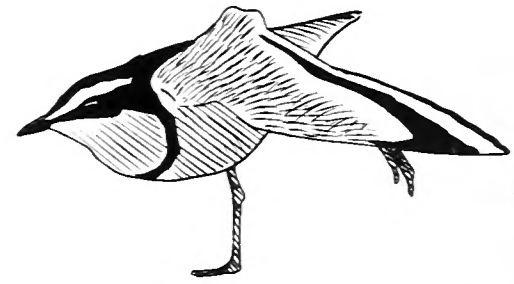


ABC Bulletin news

Bull. ABC, under the editorship of Ron Demey and Guy Kirwan, is rightly regarded as one of the Club's key intellectual assets. The quality, diversity and interest of its content ensure that it is widely read by members, professional ornithologists, field workers and birding enthusiasts internationally. It is therefore a duty of Council to encourage the widest possible access to it, and the past year has seen two major developments in this regard.

Firstly, many past issues of *Bull. ABC* are now freely available via the Biodiversity Heritage Library (www.biodiversitylibrary.org). Working with the Natural History Museum at Tring, who are providing the specialist scanning service required, the Club has made the publication available online with a five-year latency to the current issue. The Biodiversity Heritage Library improves research methodology by collaboratively making biodiversity literature openly available to all as part of a global biodiversity community. Hard copies of *Bull. ABC* back issues remain available to purchase via the Club website.

Secondly, ABC has commissioned PageSuite, an international digital publishing company, to produce an electronic version of the Bulletin (eBABC), evaluation of which was completed in December 2016. It is intended, at least initially, for distribution to new members in Africa (see the following item) and not to offer it to all members, but that option will be retained for the future.

Extending ABC membership in Africa

Following on from the above item, it is a key plank of the Club's five-year strategy to increase membership in Africa, especially for those otherwise constrained by cost. From January 2017, the Club will offer free membership to new applicants in Africa, linked to receiving the electronic version of *Bull. ABC*. The product is designed for use on several platforms: desktop PC and Mac devices, tablets and smartphones. Council intends to work with our many partners and existing members in Africa to identify those wishing to become members under this scheme, making the benefits of ABC membership much more widely available throughout the continent.

ABC Code of Practice

The axiom that 'the welfare of the bird comes first' is a principle that should guide all ornithological field work, whether conducted by the individual birder or bird ringer, or by organised groups and clubs. At their annual meeting at the British Bird Watching Fair in 2016 the chairmen of the regional bird clubs (ABC, OSME, NBC and OBC), recognising reports of undesirable practices in the field, agreed to produce a generic template for a Code of Practice that could be tailored to the specific perceived needs of each region, if required. Accordingly, the ABC Code of Practice, approved by the other clubs, is now available via the website, and Council commends it to all members. Clearly, the Code is advisory, there being no authority to impose its tenets. However, Council would encourage members to promote the principles of the Code whilst in the field, and to bring attention to obvious transgressions of good practice; high standards will benefit birds themselves, and both present and future human visitors to their habitats.

Marsh Christian Award for Josie Hewitt

The 2016 winner of the Young Ornithologist of the Year award, supported by the Marsh Christian Trust in association with the British Trust for Ornithology, is Josie Hewitt (Fig. 1)—we are delighted to offer her our warm congratulations. Josie is a member of ABC Council, representing Next Generation Birders of which she is the Vice-Chair. Josie has been a 'C' Permit ringer for two years, and organises many events and visits for young birders; she has spoken at Birdfair about

Figure 1. Josie Hewitt (right) is presented with the Young Ornithologist of the Year 2016 Award by Emma Howarth of the Marsh Christian Trust at their joint awards ceremony with the British Trust for Ornithology at the Society of Wildlife Artists exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London (Nick Caro)

Josie Hewitt (à droite) reçoit le prix « Jeune Ornithologue de l'Année 2016 » des mains de Emma Howarth du Marsh Christian Trust lors de la cérémonie conjointe avec le British Trust for Ornithology à l'exposition de la Society of Wildlife Artists à Londres (Nick Caro)

her experiences and appeared on the BBC's television programme Springwatch Extra in 2015. Josie is a role model for those developing an interest in ornithology, which is why we were so pleased to recruit her to ABC Council. We are very proud of her achievements!

ABC Trustee changes

We are delighted to welcome back two Trustees who have each formerly served with distinction: John Caddick and Nigel Redman. After leaving Council at the end of his term, John continued to provide indispensable support in maintaining and developing the website and AFBID, the bird identification resource. Consequently, John has generously consented to re-join Council with a specific website remit. Equally, Nigel is also well known to many members, and will again contribute his incomparable experience of African ornithology and the publishing world to Council's work. We thank them for their renewed commitment to the Club. Regrettably, Chris Abrams has tendered his resignation from Council for personal reasons; we thank him for his work on the website and wish him well for the future.

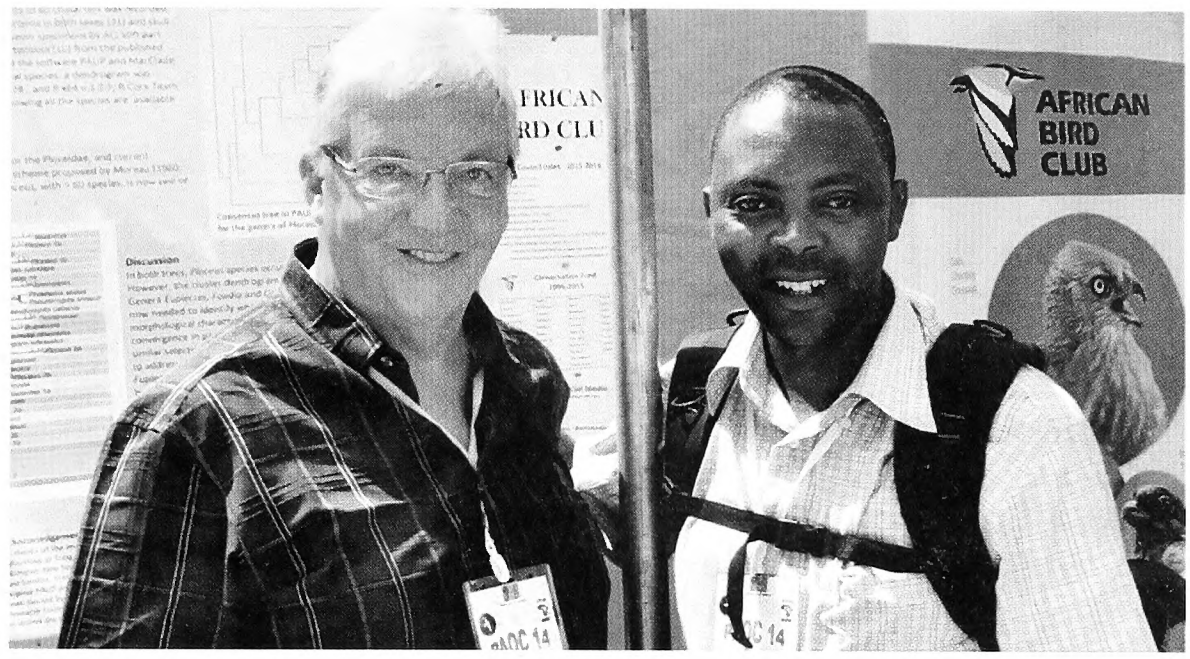


Figure 2. Dominic Kimani (right), an ABC-sponsored student presenter at the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, with Richard Charles, ABC Chairman, at the Club stand (Phil Hall)

Dominic Kimani (à droite), un étudiant qui a présenté un exposé au 14ème Congrès Panafricain d'Ornithologie et dont la participation à cet évènement a été sponsorisé par le ABC, avec Richard Charles, Président du ABC, au stand du Club (Phil Hall)

Pan-African Ornithological Congress, 2016

The 14th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC 14) took place in Dakar, Senegal, between 16 and 21 October 2016, and it was my privilege to chair the scientific committee. It is easy to overlook the significance of this event: I believe the PAOC to be the largest scientific meeting for ecologists of any type in Africa. This year, PAOC was attended by *c.*250 delegates from across Africa and elsewhere, delivering 140 talks across 17 symposia covering topics as diverse as vultures, immunology, seabirds, migration and conservation biology, with excellent plenaries challenging us to think anew about a wide variety of topics, from phylogeny to urban birds. Between them, the talks included field data from 40 bird families collected in more than 80% of African nations, so I think we really can claim to be Pan-African—a remarkable achievement. ABC sponsored the attendance of two African students whose papers had been accepted for publication, and awarded prizes for the best two poster presentations, which were assessed by the Scientific Committee (Fig. 2).

Although the range of talks was diverse, three themes emerged constantly during the week. One was the inevitability of change. As conservationists, it is all too easy to become depressed about declines in common birds. Certainly, we heard of many species in decline, from the precipitous decreases in African vultures, to the more insidious declines in many Palearctic migrants. But we repeatedly heard how it is imperative that Africa develops, with inevitable and concomitant loss of diversity: in the developed world, we saw these same declines decades ago, it is Africa's turn now. It is important therefore not to despair, but to prioritise action appropriately: we can lose millions of Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* without decimating the overall population, but unless vulture declines are halted fast, several of these species may soon be extinct. Equally, while in Europe we might be sad to see our summer visitors declining, we should remember these are African birds that winter over such large areas that it seems unlikely they will totally vanish any time soon: the important question therefore is how many Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* is 'enough'?

Secondly, and with those declines of widespread species in mind, we were encouraged to think beyond protected areas. If we are to slow declines in wide-ranging species, we need to be considering not just landscape-scale conservation, but of regional efforts: to rely on protected areas alone will not be sufficient. But we were also reminded of how hard this is in reality. For all the millions of euros spent on agri-environment schemes across the EU it is hard to see evidence for widespread increases in farmland birds. If landscape-scale conservation is difficult in Europe, it's easy to see the challenges facing Africa. Pertinent to the support of conservation projects in Africa was the ABC Plenary Lecture, delivered by Dr Chris Magin, Chairman of the ABC Conservation Committee, who described the many ways in which ABC contributes via its funding of research and field work.

Finally, I personally became aware of the scale and reach of

the trade in many bird species, for food, traditional medicine and the pet trade. Whilst we all know that many parrots are threatened by the latter, with increasing awareness that vultures are being targeted for traditional medicine, I was far less conscious of the number and scale of other birds species being captured, transported around the continent and sold. This is not just a problem for certain taxa, but increasingly any large bird is a target, from thousands of seabirds to hornbills, from ibis to ducks. What concerned me most was the evidence that demand, as measured by the price in local markets, is on the rise: a growing urban middle class seems to be driving rapidly increasing demand that far outstrips sustainable supply for many species. Knowing how illegal markets for mammals can lead to prices that incentivise searching out the very last individual, I see this growing trend as a particular concern.

The PAOC wasn't just about the talks though—we all enjoyed some excellent day trips, with enjoyable visits to the Ile de Madeleine to see Red-billed Tropicbirds *Phaethon aethereus*, as well as the coast to woodland and wetland habitats, or out to sea to enjoy the hundreds of Cape Verde Shearwaters *Calonectris edwardsii*, assorted petrels and a host of other pelagic species. With early morning seawatching, Sudan Golden Sparrows *Passer luteus* and West African specials visible from the congress hotel, everyone got to savour some of the highlights that Senegal has to offer, certainly whetting my appetite for more trips! Many of the highlights of both scientific and social programmes could be followed on Twitter, with around 500 tweets from >120 individuals reaching well over 43,000 followers around the globe, bringing a taste of the congress to those who couldn't make it to Dakar. Overall, PAOC 14 was, yet again, a great gathering of those committed to ornithology across Africa and, if you couldn't make it, I hope you'll be able to join us in Ethiopia in four years time!

Prof. Colin Beale, Chairman, Scientific Committee, PAOC 14

African East Atlantic Flyway Guide

The authors of this outstanding publication, Clive Barlow and Tim Dodman, have most generously made available profits from its sale to the ABC Conservation Fund, and we thank them warmly for their generosity. The book was reviewed by John Caddick (*Bull. ABC* 23: 254–255) and is available from WildSounds (www.wildsounds.com).

ABC at Bird Fair 2016

The Club was again well represented by its stand at the Birdfair, Rutland Water, in August 2016. There were several highlights. A Memorandum of Understanding was established between ABC and BirdLife International, committing the organisations to close collaboration across a wide range of activities aimed to conserve African birds, with annual reviews of mutual activities and achievements. Thanks are due particularly to Paul Buckley, Vice Chairman, ABC, and Hazell Thompson, a Global Director of BirdLife, for authoring the Memorandum and bringing it to fruition; the agreement was signed on the ABC stand by Patricia Zurita, CEO, BirdLife International, and Richard Charles, Chairman, ABC (Fig. 3).

The ABC Lecture was delivered by Paul Buckley, Vice Chairman, addressing the subject of *Vleis and vultures—a future for Africa's threatened birds*, and was well received by a substantial audience. John Kinghorn, the Club's Country Representative for South Africa, and a leading light in the burgeoning Youth Africa Birding organisation, heroically subjected himself to the rigours of the 'Bird Brain of Britain' competition, with his specialist subject being *Flufftails of the world*. His efforts earned the

Figure 3. Patricia Zurita (left) and Richard Charles sign the Memorandum of Understanding between BirdLife International and ABC at the British Birdfair, August 2016 (Paul Buckley)

Patricia Zurita (à gauche) et Richard Charles signent le protocole d'accord entre BirdLife International et le ABC au British Birdfair, août 2016 (Paul Buckley)

Club a monetary prize, swelling the Conservation Fund coffers. Finally, we are exceptionally grateful to Martin Woodcock for donating a specially commissioned original painting of Grey-necked Rockfowl *Picathartes oreas* for auction, raising UK£600 for the Club.

ABC Members' Day and AGM: Saturday 1 April 2017

Council looks forward to welcoming many members and others to this annual highlight in the Club's calendar; as in other recent years, it will be held in the Flett Lecture Theatre, at the Natural History Museum, London. Once again, our thanks are due to Prof. Ian Owens, Director of Science, and to Esther Murphy who makes everything possible on the day. Where permission is given, lectures will be videoed and posted on YouTube for the benefit of those unable to join us on the day. The final programme will be circulated and posted on the Club website early in 2017.

African Bird Club *Conservation Fund*

New awards—October 2016

The Conservation Committee reviewed 26 proposals ahead of the 29 October 2016 ABC Council meeting, and recommended four for funding. Council agreed to fund all four projects totalling UK£7,891, for which ABC found UK£3,995 from sponsors. Brief details of the successful proposals are given below.

Usambara Weaver study, Tanzania

Usambara Weaver *Ploceus nicolli* is listed as Endangered by IUCN and is endemic to Tanzania. It occurs in low densities in the East and West Usambara, Uluguru and Udzungwa Mountains, all of which are Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). Emmanuel Fidelis Mgimwa received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000 to undertake an up-to-date assessment of the Usambara Weaver's population size and distribution, and to assess the habitat status and threats in Magamba Nature Reserve, and Shume and Mazumbai Forest Reserves—all in the Lushoto District of the West Usambara Mountains. Conservation and management measures for the bird and its habitat will be recommended. Other bird species of conservation interest, e.g. Banded Green Sunbird *Anthreptes rubritorques* (VU), Swynnerton's Robin *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* (VU), Usambara Akalat *Sheppardia montana* (EN) and Amani Sunbird *Hedydipna pallidigaster* (EN) should also be recorded. Two local bird enthusiasts will be trained as field assistants to assist with data collection.

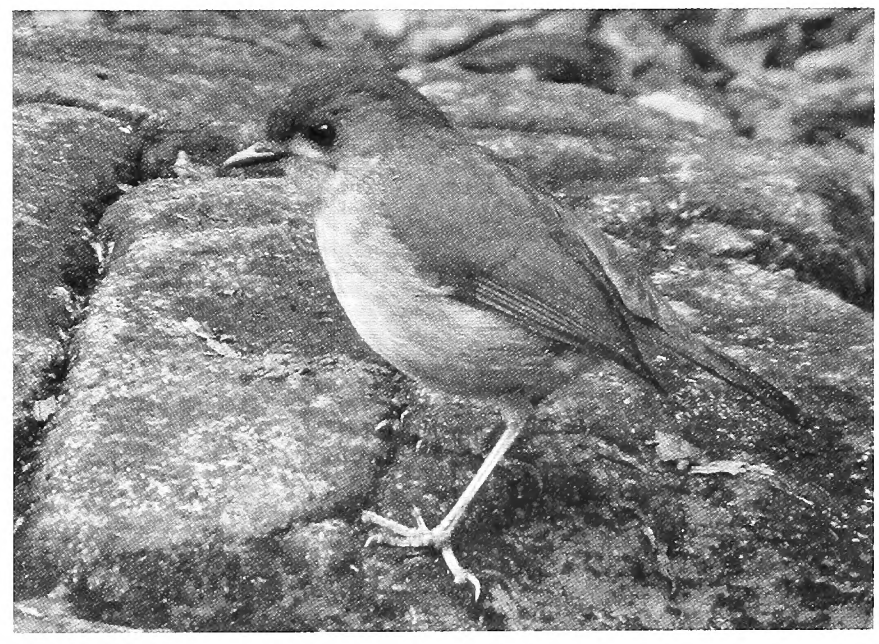
Conservation of migratory waterbirds in Benin

Aina Fataï of Amis de l'Afrique Francophone-Bénin (AMAF-Benin) received a Conservation Award of UK£1,995 to conserve mangrove vegetation and migratory bird species, especially African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*, on Lac Nokoué, part of a 91,600-ha Ramsar site 'Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, Lagune de Porto-Novo, Lac Nokoué'. The project aims to raise the awareness of schoolchildren and communities in Sô-Ava as to the importance of conserving mangroves as a fish, crustacean and mollusc breeding and nursery ground;

Usambara Weaver / Tisserin des Usambara *Ploceus nicolli* (Nik Borrow)

Banded Green Sunbird / Souimanga à col rouge *Anthreptes rubritorques* (Nik Borrow)

Swynnerton's Robin / Rougegorge de Swynnerton *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* (John Caddick)



Usambara Akalat / Rougegorge des Usambara *Sheppardia montana* (Nik Borrow)

African Skimmer / Bec-en-ciseaux d'Afrique *Rynchops flavirostris* (Lionel Sineux)

and to reduce conflicts between fishermen and birds. This award was generously sponsored by Avifauna.

Avifaunal survey of Maio Island, Cape Verde

Maio is the last remaining large island in Cape Verde that has escaped mass-tourism development. The other islands of Sal, Boa Vista and Santiago have undergone significant changes in the last decade through the construction of international airports and large hotels that annually accommodate thousands of tourists and visitors. Alex Tavares received a Conservation Award of UK£1,896 to conduct an in-depth study of the avifauna of all protected areas on Maio. A database will be created to assist with regular monitoring of birds on the island, as well as contributing to the Protected Area Monitoring Plan. Members of the local community will be engaged through the conservation efforts and awareness activities, thus promoting positive changes in people's attitude towards bird protection throughout the island, and bird and tourist guides will be trained in each community.

Avifaunal survey of Mangea Hill forest, Kenya

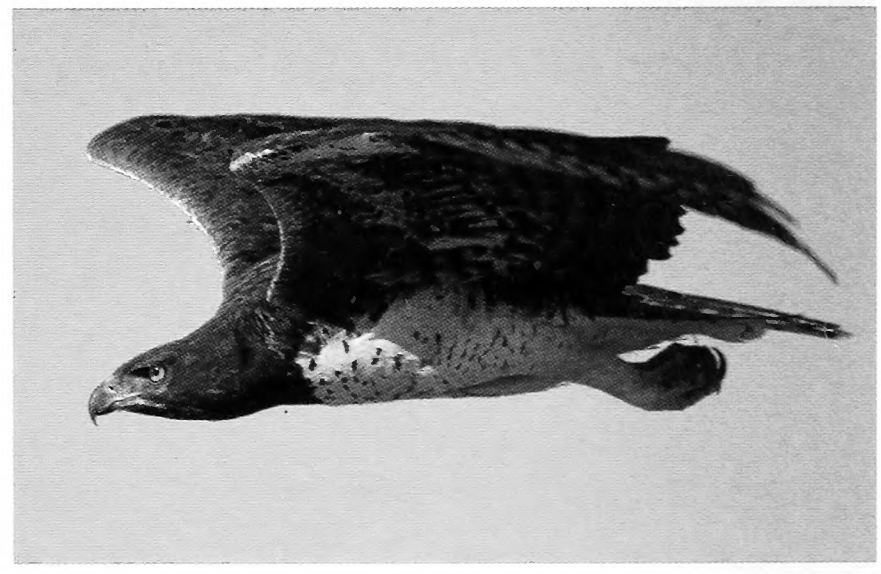
Njuguna Edwin Gichohi of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) received a UK£2,000 Conservation Award, kindly sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to investigate the avifauna of Mangea Hill. This little-known 'island' of lowland coastal forest rises 200–500 m above the surrounding farmland north of Mombasa. Mida Creek, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Dakacha woodlands and the Sabaki River mouth IBAs are all nearby. The survey will document the bird species composition of Mangea Hill, noting species richness and abundance, and species of conservation concern, i.e. biome species, range-restricted species, IUCN Red-listed species etc.; identify the habitat types present, and the current and potential threats to birds and habitats; raise awareness regarding the importance of conserving Mangea Hill forest; and recommend appropriate conservation measures. The seven-strong field team will consist of members of NMK, *Nature*Kenya (the BirdLife Partner in Kenya), community scouts, and A Rocha Kenya, a conservation group that has been instrumental in preservation efforts along the Kenyan coast.

Reports received

Martial Eagle satellite-tracking in Kruger National Park, South Africa

In June 2013 Dr Arjun Amar of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology received a UK£1,500 Conservation Award for student Rowen van Eeden's Ph.D. project to satellite-tag Martial Eagles *Polemaetus bellicosus* in Kruger National Park (KNP). With an area of *c.*20,000 km^2, KNP is often regarded as the stronghold for Martial Eagles in South Africa, hosting an estimated 110 breeding pairs. At the time, the species was listed as Near Threatened by IUCN, but in 2014 it was uplisted to Vulnerable because of widespread declines. A total of eight adult and nine juvenile Martial Eagles were satellite-tagged, and this award, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, was used to cover some of the costs of acquiring and attaching state-of-the-art GPS-GSM and PTT tags to juveniles. The key research findings were as follows.

Adults held large home ranges of *c.*108 km^2 with little overlap. Thus even the largest protected areas have a limited carrying capacity for pairs of breeding adults. Martial Eagles used areas within their home ranges associated with high tree cover, near rivers, at relatively lower elevation with gradual slopes, and they preferred dense bushveld to moderate bushveld or grassland. The decline of trees in KNP due to increasing elephant numbers and changing fire regimes is thus of concern given their preference for wooded habitats. However, bush encroachment in areas that are dominated by



Martial Eagle / Aigle martial *Polemaetus bellicosus* (Mark Anderson)

grasses may benefit Martial Eagles. Previously, it was thought that adults occupied home ranges throughout their breeding lives. However, four of the tagged adults ranged widely (*c.*44,000 km²) and had high mortality rates associated with anthropogenic threats during their wide-ranging movements. These included an electrocution in Swaziland, and two birds that were lost to subsistence hunting activities in neighbouring Mozambique. Two resident birds also suffered natural mortalities.

Juveniles had a prolonged post-nesting dependency phase of 7–9 months, during which they remained reliant on parental provisioning. This limited the breeding frequency of adults, as juveniles remain in the natal territory well into the next breeding season. During their dependency, juveniles developed flight and hunting skills, and made numerous exploration trips of 150 km or more before returning to the nest. Juveniles experienced higher mortality during this period. Although settlement was not detected after 36 months of tracking, individuals remained in large ranges (*c.*5,900 km²) that sometimes incorporated their nesting sites. The extent of their movements was similar to non-breeding adults. Encouragingly, relatively low mortality rates were detected following the onset of dispersal.

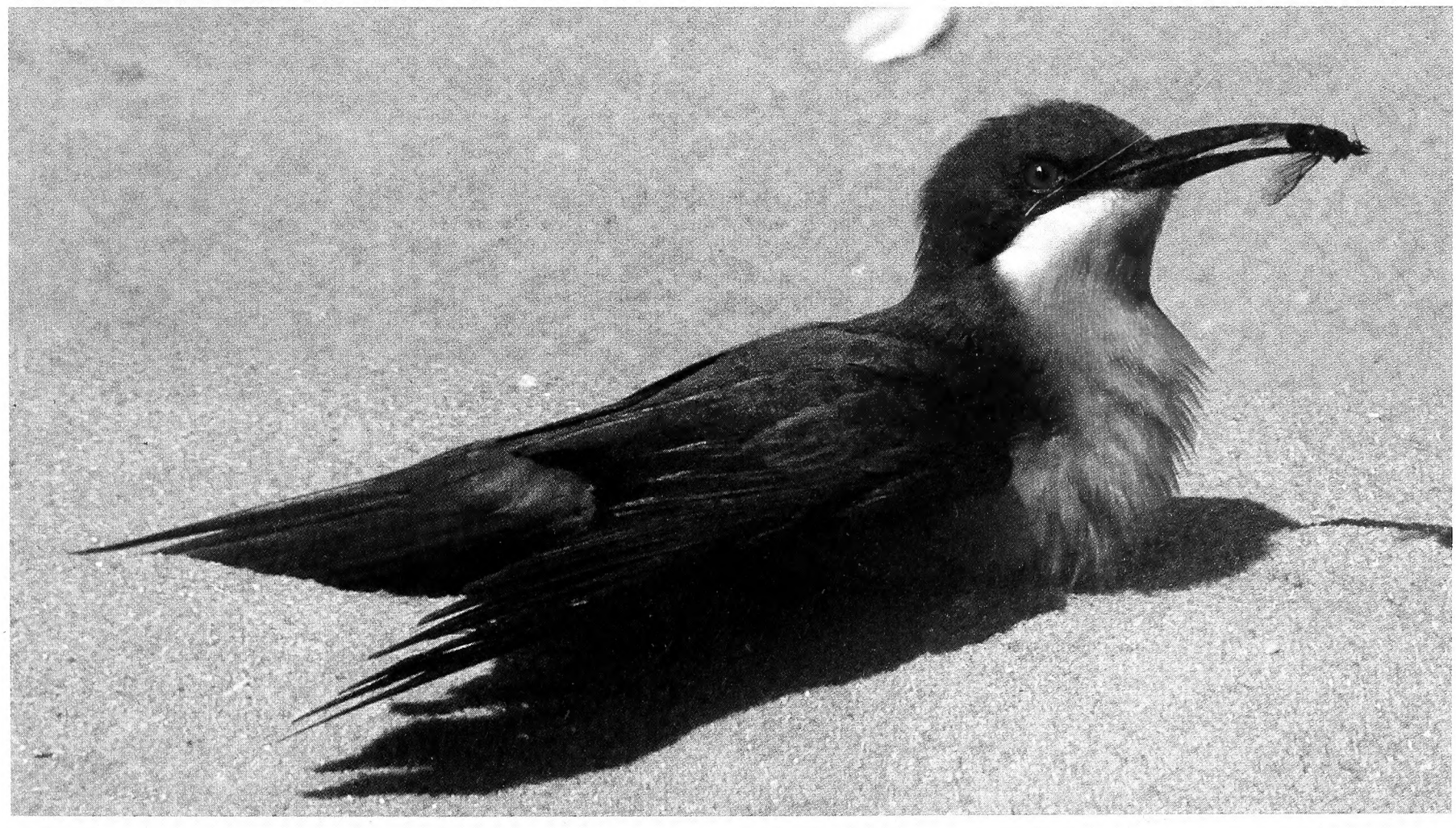
Breeding pairs had the lowest productivity (0.23 young per pair per year) yet recorded in any study of the species. Population models suggested that this productivity rate was sufficient to drive declines in the absence of any other impacts, such as decreased survival rates. Nest site distribution models and descriptions of nest site selection highlighted the importance of tall (*c.*12 m) trees for nesting. The number of tall trees in KNP is declining, also due to increasing elephant numbers and changing fire regimes. It is worth noting that these data were collected during a drought that may have impacted on the breeding performance of the species by limiting prey abundance.

A rosy future for bee-eaters?

In February 2013 Dr Manu Shiiwua of the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) based in Jos received a UK£2,553 Expedition Award, generously covered by Tasso Leventis, to study the breeding biology of Rosy Bee-eaters *Merops malimbicus*, which nest in large colonies on sandbars in slow-flowing rivers. Although only nine breeding locations are known in Africa, the species is classed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List.

Between 24 April and 25 May 2013 reconnaissance trips were made by boat to historical breeding sites along the Kaduna (09°04'N 05°48'E), Eggan (08°40'N 08°30'E), Loko (08°00'N 07°48'E) and Simanka Rivers (08°10'N 09°45'E) but all were deserted. On 26 May 2013 a large breeding colony was located on a sandbar along the middle River Niger (08°41'N 06°21'E) *c.*8 km from Katcha, a fishing community in Niger state, north-central Nigeria.

This colony was studied between 31 May and 10 June 2013. Two papers based on this study have



Rosy Bee-eater / Guêpier gris-rose *Merops malimbicus* (John Caddick)

Greater Honeyguide / Grand Indicateur *Indicator indicator* (Paul van Giersbergen)

been submitted to the *Bull. ABC*, one reporting the general results including breeding behaviour, potential predators, interaction with humans around the colony, and conservation, and the other dealing with parasitisation of bee-eaters by Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*, and these will appear in the next issue.

In conclusion, the observations from about 13,000 breeding pairs suggest that Rosy Bee-eater depends on insect abundance in its breeding habitat, which seems to be influenced by nomadic cattle presence along the river banks. The seasonal flow pattern of the Niger River is becoming increasingly unpredictable and may lead to loss of breeding habitat, increased predation and destruction of colonies. To ensure the conservation of the Rosy Bee-eater, a comprehensive review of the species' status and threats is needed, coupled with sustainable utilisation of land and water resources along the River Niger.

Hooded Vultures outside protected areas in Uganda

In February 2016 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 conduct a survey of populations of Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* (now Critically Endangered) outside protected areas. The 15 towns with the largest human populations in the country were surveyed, since Hooded Vultures are highly commensal with man and urban habitats, and are particularly attracted to abattoirs and rubbish dumps. Data were collected by direct counts of birds. At each site counts were conducted in the morning (feeding counts) and in the evening (roost counts). All sites were counted four times in both breeding and non-breeding periods, with the exception of Kampala, which was counted ten times.

Hooded Vultures were observed in 11 (73%) of the 15 towns surveyed. Across these 11 towns, feeding counts averaged a total of 292 individuals. Kampala had the largest numbers (53% of birds observed), followed by Jinja with 22%. Abattoirs were strongly preferred to dumps as feeding sites. Roost counts across the 11 towns averaged 330 individuals, 57% of which were in Kampala. Jinja, Masaka and Entebbe also had large roosts, but Masindi, Busia, Gulu and Soroti had no roost sites, although birds were recorded during feeding counts. The majority of roost sites were on electric pylons, which when available appear to be preferred over trees. A generalised linear model was constructed which showed that the variables that most affected Hooded Vulture numbers were the number of animals or cows slaughtered at abattoirs; the composition of abattoir refuse; the degree of abattoir accessibility; and the level of refuse accessibility. Fewer birds were recorded during the breeding period, but the difference was not significant. The species' breeding season coincides with the dry season, possibly due to the increased availability of ungulate carcasses providing carrion. Despite intensive searching only one small breeding colony with three nests (all *c.*10 m above ground in trees) was located, at Bugoloobi in Kampala.

Interview questionnaires were conducted with 53 respondents, 90% of them butchers working in abattoirs. Electrocution and collision with electric wires were identified as the greatest causes of mortality in the species. Interviewees also reported that acidification of unwanted carcasses and poisoning of maggots and flies as a way of improving abattoir hygiene was the second major mortality factor as it caused accidental poisoning of Hooded Vultures. Other threats reported were demand for body parts for use in traditional beliefs, consumption (by Karamajong) as food, stone throwing by children and collision with moving vehicles.

Hooded Vultures are important scavengers, providing essential ecosystem services by feeding on decomposing carcasses and thus reducing the risk of disease transmission. However, they have undergone an estimated 80% decline over the past three generations.

Hooded Vulture / Vautour charognard *Necrosyrtes monachus* (Lionel Sineux)

The government of Uganda should enact strict laws against the killing of Hooded Vultures and trade in their parts; and conservation organisations and other stakeholders should actively participate in campaigns to raise awareness of the species' utility and its plight, especially in those areas where it still occurs.

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

The ABC website (www.africanbirdclub.org/conservation-fund-past-projects) shows the complete list of conservation projects and awards made since the inception of the programme over a decade ago. **A remarkable total in excess of UK£280,000 has been disbursed during this period.** Many of the final project reports, including full versions of those summarised above, can be viewed by clicking on the hyperlinks on the webpage.

An update on APLORI—West Africa's only ornithological research institute

Will Cresswell

Des nouvelles de APLORI – le seul institut de recherches ornithologiques en Afrique de l'Ouest. L'Institut de Recherches ornithologiques A. P. Leventis (APLORI) a été crée en 2001 à Jos, au centre du Nigeria, comme institution indépendante ayant comme objectif d'améliorer et faciliter les recherches ornithologiques en Afrique de l'Ouest. Jusqu'à présent APLORI a formé 84 étudants au niveau de la maîtrise. Plus de 80 licenciés en biologie de conservation œuvrent pour les oiseaux en Afrique grâce à APLORI. Sept des diplomés se présentent et décrivent leurs recherches.

The A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) was established in 2001 as an independent institution in Jos, central Nigeria, with the aim of improving and facilitating ornithological research in West Africa. To date, APLORI has trained 84 students to M.Sc. level. Of 77 students for which information is currently available, 48% have gone on to do or are doing a Ph.D., and 30% have obtained Ph.D. places in universities outside Africa (including Oxford and Cambridge, UK; Lund, Sweden, and Groningen, Netherlands), 25% hold university positions in Africa, 22% work for conservation NGOs in Africa, 20% work in government departments, 9% are school teachers and 8% are undertaking post-graduate research at APLORI. Perhaps most importantly, only one of the graduates has left Africa to work outside conservation. There are thus more than 80 conservation biology graduates working for birds in Africa as a result of APLORI. Below, seven graduates present themselves and their research. Their individual stories best illustrate what APLORI does and what hope there is for the future for local ornithology and biodiversity in West Africa.

Dr Shola: Research into intra-African migratory bird species

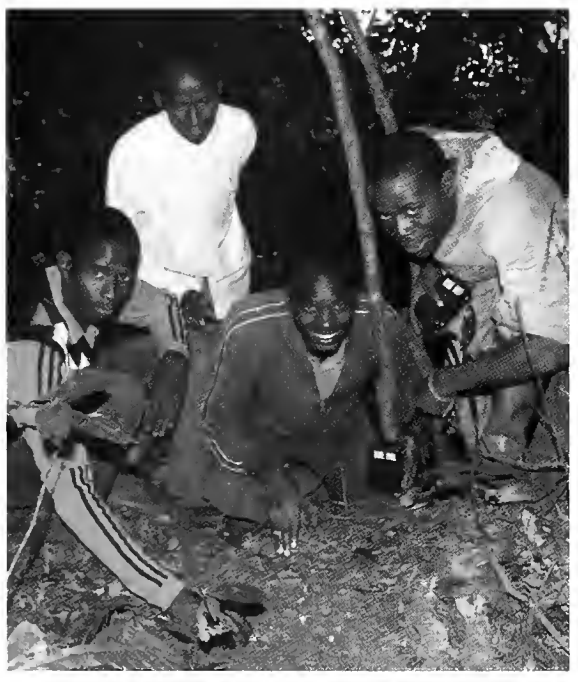
Knowledge of the timing and extent of the migration of many intra-African migrants is scant. Since 2013, I have been tracking the migration of African Cuckoos *Cuculus gularis* from their breeding grounds in Jos, Nigeria, using satellite-based technology—a project funded by the Leventis Conservation Foundation. Of five African Cuckoos equipped with solar-powered satellite transmitters (PTTs), three successfully migrated to their non-breeding grounds: two to the Adamawa region of Cameroon and one to western Central African Republic. The distances they covered were 487–1,179 km. In 2014, the project was expanded to include Black Coucal *Centropus grillii* and hopefully more species will be included in the coming years.

Dr Mary Molokwu: Conservation implementation, training and leadership

Following my M.Sc. in Conservation Biology at APLORI, I went on to obtain a Ph.D. in Animal Ecology at Lund University, studying factors influencing foraging decisions of granivorous birds in the dry tropical savannah of the Amurum Forest Reserve in Jos. While conducting research at Amurum, I became interested in working with local communities and eventually formed a community-based conservation organisation, Sustainability and Conservation Education for Rural Areas (SCERA), addressing environmental and social issues, and increasing awareness as to the need for sustainable resource use, via local youth groups. In the last six years, SCERA has supported the establishment of a community piggery and a woodlot, the construction of four water boreholes and the introduction of a local school conservation education programme. The community piggery has been a huge success and is now being fully managed by the local community. We are currently investigating problems of bird–farmer conflicts around the reserve. In 2012, I moved to Liberia as technical advisor for the Fauna & Flora International (FFI) project, 'Building the Capacity of the Next Generation of Conservation Professionals', launched in April

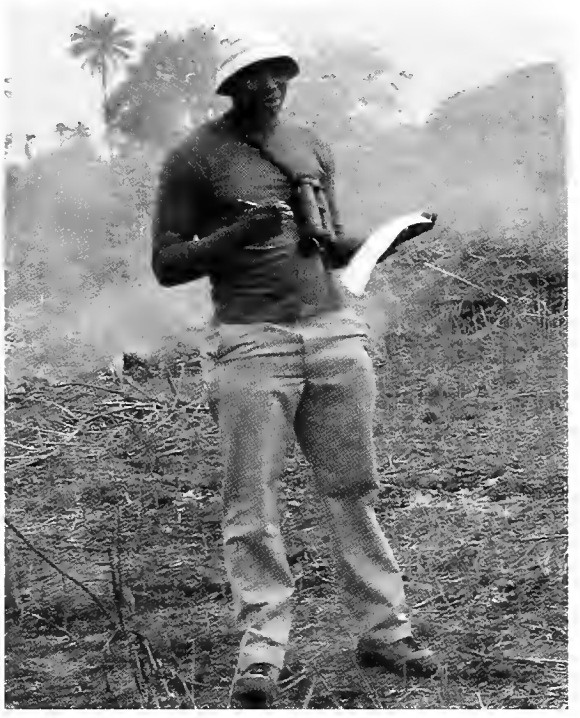
2012 and involving the establishment of the Sapo Conservation Centre (SCC) for training Liberian forestry professionals and students in conservation and applied research, and development of conservation modules for the forestry curriculum of the University of Liberia. SCC is now fully operational (*cf.* http://www.fauna-flora.org/news/sapo-conservation-centre-opens-in-liberia/) and hosts residential courses for forestry students and professionals thrice per year. Via the collaboration between APLORI and SCC, a Liberian student has successfully completed the APLORI M.Sc. Conservation Biology programme in October 2014. Another attended the Tropical Biology Association Course in Tanzania in August 2014. I recently assumed the post of the Country and Operations Manager, FFI Liberia.

Godwill Yadok Biplang: Ant chats and seed dispersal in montane forest rats



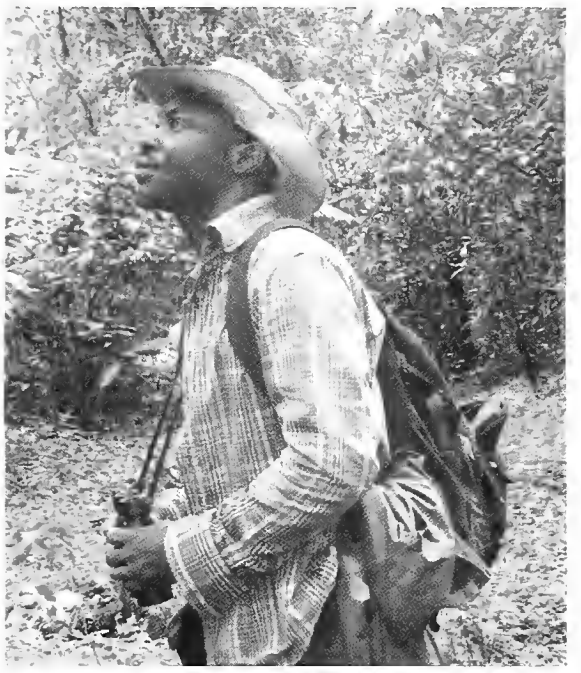
After studying Northern Anteater Chats *Myrmecocichla aethiops* around APLORI's Amurum Forest Reserve for my M.Sc. (now published in *Ostrich*), I became Science Coordinator for the Nigerian Montane Forest Project, a research station in Ngel Nyaki forest on the Mambilla Plateau. I have since studied the efficiency of *Cricetomys* rats in large-seed dispersal for a Ph.D. at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. I am also collaborating with researchers from Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and South Africa in a proposed study of the ecosystem impacts of the *Chromolaena odorata* invasion in Africa.

Dr Hope Ovie: Research and implementation of bird-friendly farming



After obtaining my M.Sc. in Conservation Biology at APLORI in 2008, I became a research associate studying frugivory in southern Nigeria's tropical rainforest, while also coordinating research at Arakhuan Research Station in Okomu National Park. In 2009, while working as a conservation manager of a woodland in southern Nigeria, I received a Miriam Rothschild Scholarship from the University of Cambridge, UK, to study for a Ph.D. in Zoology specialising in Conservation Science. My Ph.D. thesis built on my M.Sc. project, which investigated the effect of farmland hedgerow structure and plant composition on bird species richness; I described the ongoing process of agricultural intensification in West Africa, determined the ecological consequences of different agricultural management types, and explained the processes that are leading to changes in bird populations. I am now Executive Director of the Leventis Foundation (Nigeria), a charitable company of the Leventis group, working with state and federal governments to train farmers in modern and sustainable agricultural practices.

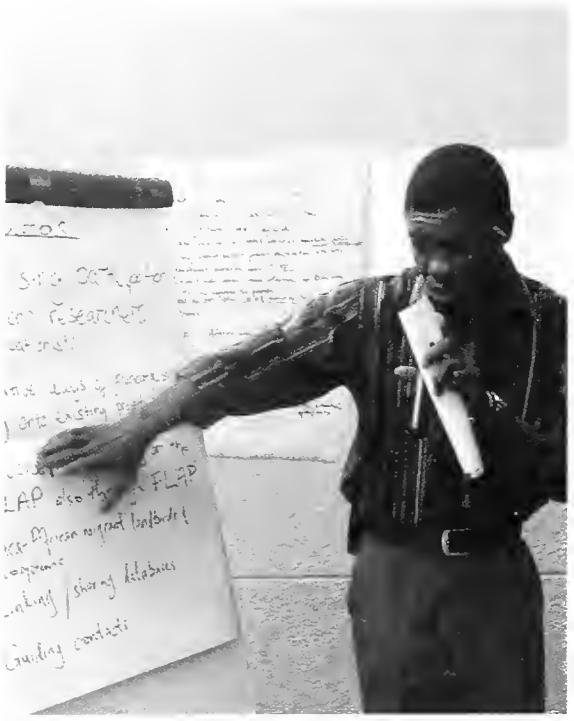
Dr Sam Ivande: Research into Palearctic migrants in Africa



I started a Ph.D. at the University of St Andrews, UK, not long after completing the Conservation Biology M.Sc. at APLORI. My Ph.D. focused on the distribution ecology of Palearctic migrants wintering in the humid Guinea savannahs in Nigeria. Species wintering in this region are showing the greatest population declines among Palearctic migrants. My results suggest that although migrants are ecologically flexible, using a wide range of habitats over a large latitudinal range, this is apparently not sufficient to cope with accelerating rates of habitat change in Africa. Conservation efforts for these mainly wide-ranging species should therefore aim to preserve habitat on a large scale, perhaps through the promotion of sustainable land-use practices.

Dr Samuel Temidayo Osinubi (Dayo): Working for bird conservation NGOs in Africa

I graduated from APLORI in 2005. I am presently working with BirdLife International as a Flyways Officer and Coordinator of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP)—a UN Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) resolution. AEMLAP is an initiative that aims to improve the conservation status of migratory



landbirds in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. As part of this project, I undertook a one-year Darwin Fellowship, working with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Partner in the UK).

Dr Joseph Daniel Onoja: Human wildlife conflict and research into Abdim's Stork

I graduated from APLORI in 2008 and conducted research at Yankari Game Reserve, where APLORI had a research station, for a Ph.D. entitled 'Habitat utilization by birds and large mammals: an assessment of the extent and impact of anthropogenic activities on Yankari Game Reserve'. I defended my Ph.D. successfully in 2015. I am currently undertaking research, funded by the British Ecological Society, into the breeding phenology of Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii* and the species' intra-African migrations. In 2015 ten storks were fitted with GPS tags. I have recently

taken a full-time conservation officer position with the Nigerian Conservation Foundation.

University of St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9TH, Scotland, UK.

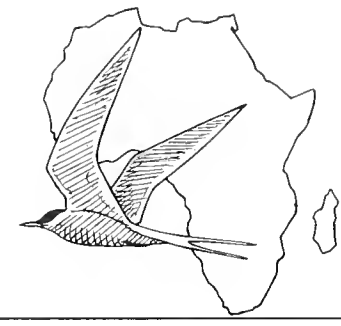
Corrigenda *Bull. ABC* 23(2)

In the paper on the birds of Equatorial Guinea, the raptor in Fig. 2, on p. 155, labelled as Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*, is actually a European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*. Dick Forsman commented as follows: 'Although the image is of rather poor quality, it shows beyond doubt a wing with only five fingered primaries (no signs of visible moult; Wahlberg's Eagle, like most eagles, has six 'fingers'), a clearly broader 'arm' than 'hand' (Wahlberg's Eagle has rather parallel-edged wings), convex tail-edges (typical of European Honey Buzzard), a tiny head and a window formed by paler inner primaries (not found in Wahlberg's Eagle).' Therefore, Wahlberg's Eagle cannot (yet) be accepted on the Equatorial Guinea list.

In the paper on bird observations around Huye, southern Rwanda, the raptor in Fig. 7, p. 201, is erroneously labelled as a juvenile Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*—it is a dark juvenile African Harrier Hawk *Polyboroides typus*.

Africa Round-up

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



General

Population decline in Common Cuckoo linked to migration route

Satellite-tracking of 42 male Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* breeding in the UK has found that mortality during the post-breeding migration is highly dependent on the route selected, this in turn being correlated with population decline. Common Cuckoos breeding in Britain use two distinct routes to reach the same wintering grounds in Central Africa, permitting survival to be assessed independently of origin and destination. The birds head either south-west via Spain, or south-east via Italy or the Balkans, with very high individual route consistency between years. Mortality prior to completion of the Sahara crossing, the major ecological barrier encountered on both routes, is greater for those birds that use the shorter western route. The proportion of birds using the western route is correlated with the extent of local breeding population decline across the nine areas of the UK in which cuckoos were tagged, assessed using both the 1998–2001 and 2007–11 breeding bird atlases and annual breeding bird surveys. This is the first direct evidence that conditions encountered on migration can have an impact on breeding populations.

Source: Nature Communications *7: 12296.*

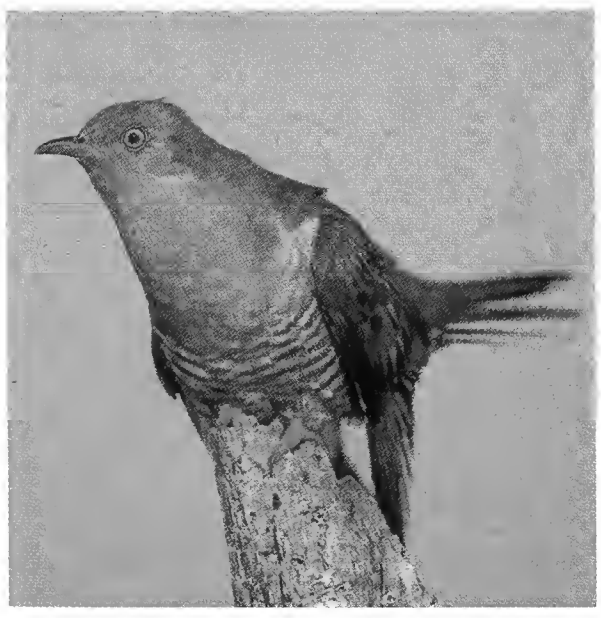
Arctic Tern holds longest recorded migration route

To uncover the migration routes of Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* nesting on the Farne Islands, off the coast of Northumberland, UK, 28 individuals were fitted with tiny GPS transmitters that record day length and temperature. Data were successfully retrieved from 15 individuals upon their return to the breeding grounds in 2016. It appeared the terns had headed south via the West African coast, then east to the southern Indian Ocean, continuing south into Antarctic waters. One of them completed a 96,000 km-round trip from its nest to its wintering area in the Weddell Sea, Antarctica, which is the longest migration route of any bird ever recorded. The bird departed England on 25 July 2015, rounded the tip of South Africa on 25 August, then moved into the Indian Ocean where it spent nearly all of October, after which it continued its journey, ending up in the Weddell Sea on 3 February. Its return journey started on 23 March and it arrived on the Farne Islands on 4 May. It is thought that the birds follow such a circuitous route due to huge, spiralling wind patterns in the atmosphere, and avoid flying into the wind. In 2013, a similar study was undertaken in the Netherlands, to and from which birds were also found to follow a zigzag route, this time 'bouncing' from West Africa to South America on their return to the Arctic. One of the Dutch birds flew 90,000 km—the previous longest recorded trip.

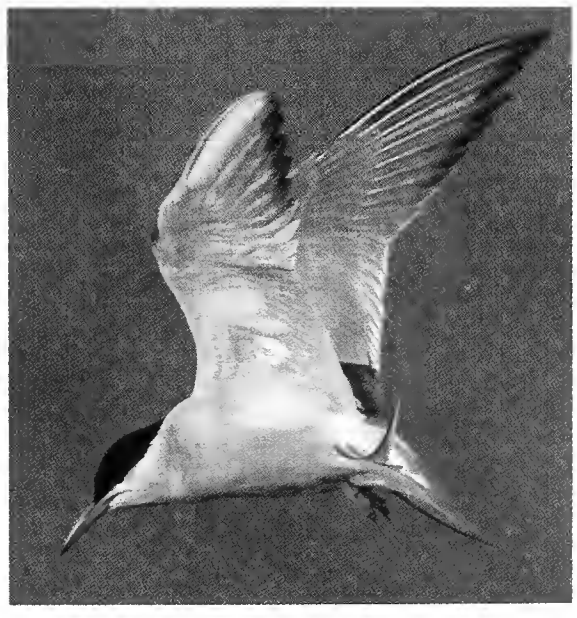
Source: www.bbc.com/earth/story/20160603-mystery-migration-solved

Common Tern non-breeding areas and migration routes

Twelve routes of nine Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* were tracked using geolocators following their breeding season in the German North Sea colonies. The birds started their southward migration approximately four weeks after leaving the breeding colony, paused around the Canary Islands (in both spring and autumn) and spent most of the winter in upwelling areas off the West African coast. Pair members wintered at different locations, and



Common Cuckoo / Coucou gris *Cuculus canorus* (Lilian Sineux)



Arctic Tern / Sterne arctique *Sterna paradisaea* (Sergey Dereliev)

Common Tern / Sterne pierregarin *Sterna hirundo* (Jacques de Spéville)

the three females remained further north and further offshore than the six males. Spring migration was more protracted than in autumn.
Source: J. Ornithol. *157, pp. 927–940*

'Learning the ropes' in young eagles

Juvenile Short-toed Snake Eagles *Circaetus gallicus* migrate later than their parents, irrespective of whether or not their migration route involves long detours to avoid long over-water crossings. Birds that hatched in Italy first migrate north and then west to enter Africa via the Iberian Peninsula at the Strait of Gibraltar. Juveniles do not follow their parents and hence apparently learn this circuitous route from older individuals. Very late Italian juveniles tend to head south and may winter in Sicily and southern Italy.
Source: Bird Study *http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2016.1264362*

Poison used by ivory poachers threatens African vultures

Widespread poisoning is a major cause of the alarming decline in African vultures. Prior to 2012, poisoning of vultures was mostly due to illegal attempts at predator control by livestock farmers, in which vultures were unintended victims. Recently, however, ivory poachers have been using poisons to kill elephants or to contaminate their carcasses specifically to eliminate vultures, whose overhead circling might otherwise reveal the poachers' activities. In 2012–14, Darcy Ogada and colleagues recorded 11 poaching-related incidents in seven countries (Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa and DR Congo), in which 155 elephants and 2,044 vultures were killed. In at least two incidents, the collecting of vulture body parts for fetish may have constituted an additional motive. The researchers have established that vulture mortality associated with ivory poaching has increased more rapidly than that associated with other poisoning incidents, and presently accounts for one-third of all vulture poisonings recorded since 1970.
Source: Oryx *50, pp. 593–596*

African Journal of Ecology papers on birds

Unusually, the *African Journal of Ecology* has devoted almost an entire issue (vol. 64, no. 3, published in September 2016) to papers about birds. There is quite a wide range of material including the following. Understorey birds in the Uluguru Nature Reserve, Tanzania (pp. 299–307) with special reference to the lower-level forests that have been particularly hard hit by degradation (and one of the authors has a second paper on this general subject in *Ostrich* 87: 255–262); the hazards of birds flying across an airport runway (pp. 308–316)—nearly 800 birds of pigeon-size and above crossed 400 m of runway in 14 hours at OR Tambo International airport in South Africa, during which time 200 aircraft took off; livestock grazing on Afromontane grassland and its effects on birds in the Bale Mountains (Ethiopia) (pp. 328–335)—basically grazing reduces diversity; species diversity in and around North Nandi Forest (Kenya) (pp. 342–348)—numbers are higher in farmland and plantations, but diversity is higher in indigenous and disturbed forest patches. In addition, there are shorter pieces on: Kimboza Forest Reserve (Tanzania) as a refugium for altitudinal migrant birds (pp. 375–378); Piapiacs *Ptilostomus afer* and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers *Buphagus africanus* avoid each other on buffaloes (pp. 389–391); methods for determining seed removal rates by birds (pp. 281–288); drinking habits of the Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae* and poisoning of waterholes (pp. 289–298); the conservation of Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela* in the Angolan Escarpment forest (pp. 317–327); and the use of mistletoes by Grey Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor* in south-west Zimbabwe (pp. 336–341).
Source: Afr. J. Ecol. *64(3)*

Yellow-billed Oxpeckers / Piquebœufs à bec jaune *Buphagus africanus* (Lionel Sineux)

Grey Go-away Bird / Touraco concolore *Corythaixoides concolor* (John Caddick)

Sahelian prognosis offers no good news for wildlife

In the same issue of *African Journal of Ecology* mentioned above, a literature review by Bruno Walther of recent ecological changes in the Sahel has drawn rather pessimistic conclusions. The exceptionally severe Sahel drought in the late 20th century proved extremely detrimental to both human society and nature, but rainfall, agricultural productivity and human welfare have since increased. However, a dramatic increase in human populations and their ecological footprint has seen Sahelian biodiversity becoming progressively more impoverished. The most severe declines have involved woody vegetation, birds and mammals. Two bird groups that are declining particularly rapidly comprise the large raptors, vultures and gamebirds, and Palearctic migrants that overwinter in the Sahel or spend long periods there.

Source: Afr. J. Ecol. *54, pp. 268–280*

Habitat availability unlikely to be a factor in migrant declines

Theory predicts that migrants should be more generalist than residents. This was tested by the authors of a recent study who compared Afro-Palearctic migrant species with related resident species in the savannahs of Africa. Migrants as a group could not be clearly distinguished as generalists relative to residents in terms of habitat attributes. The only difference was that migrants tended to occur over a wider latitudinal range. Hence availability of specific habitat requirements in wintering grounds is unlikely to be a primary limiting factor for many migrants.

Source: Ibis *158, pp. 496–505*

Four out of six great apes one step away from extinction

Eastern Gorilla *Gorilla beringei*, the world's largest living primate, has been listed as Critically Endangered due to illegal hunting, according to the latest update to the IUCN Red List, released at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawaii in September 2016. Four out of six great ape species are now treated as

Eastern Gorilla / Gorille de l'Est *Gorilla beringei* (Sergey Dereliev)

Critically Endangered—only one step away from going extinct—with the remaining two also under considerable threat of extinction.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin *September/October 2016*

African rhinos: continent-wide conservation plan launched

African rhino conservation has seen a major boost with the launch of the continent-wide African Rhino Conservation Plan, led by South Africa and the IUCN Species Survival Commission's African Rhino Specialist Group. The plan focuses on areas where African rhino range states can work together to enhance rhino conservation, such as sharing and analysing intelligence information, re-establishing rhinos across boundaries, and enhancing effective funding for conservation. It does not seek to duplicate existing national plans, but rather to complement them.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin *September/October 2016*

North Africa

Conserving a threatened race of francolin

The Critically Endangered subspecies of Double-spurred Francolin *Francolinus bicalcaratus ayesha* is endemic to north-west Morocco, where it inhabits forests of cork oak *Quercus suber*. To improve the viability of this threatened population, 300 captive-bred francolins were released into a game reserve, and post-release monitoring was conducted. Auditory detection was used during transect surveys of calling males to locate birds and their habitat occupation. Comparison of occupied and random plots showed that the francolins mostly preferred level topography with a high cover of shrubs and dense cork oak trees, near to the release site and water source. Conservation of this subspecies will depend on the choice of release point within the cork oak forest, which should be in proximity to suitable cover of cork oak trees, shrubs and water points. Further multi-scale studies are needed to improve our understanding of the effects of ecological factors on the processes of habitat selection by this endemic subspecies.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *26, pp. 323–336*

Alarming decline of Great Bustard in Morocco

A Great Bustard *Otis tarda* survey, carried out in spring 2015 in north-west Morocco by Juan Carlos Alonso and co-workers, recorded a 40% decline in ten years of the species' only population in Africa. Only 40–44 individuals remained at just two lekking sites (in 2005 there were still seven leks). The sex ratio was still strongly female-biased, with one male to three females, but less than in previous surveys, which suggests that trophy hunting has not been the major mortality cause. With 0.29–0.33 juveniles per female, productivity was the highest ever recorded in this population, indicating that breeding success does not represent a major problem. The main threat is probably collision with powerlines.

Source: Ostrich *87, pp. 277–280*

Action Plan for Great Bustards in Morocco 2016–25

To halt the decline of the Moroccan population of Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, an Action Plan has been launched with the goal that, by the year 2025, the key sites of Araoua

Great Bustard / Outarde barbue *Otis tarda* (Werner Suter)

and Tleta-Rissana will be safeguarded by appropriate national designations abetted by strong local community support, while the species' national population will have increased to 80–100 birds and be starting to expand to former areas.

Source: https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/45693?dm_i=2GI3,TKD3,40EJCK,259LV,1

North African Coal Tits do not react to playback of Eurasian populations

Stefan Pentzold and co-workers examined geographic variation in Coal Tit *Periparus ater* song across the Palearctic. Their analyses revealed a rather uniform song in continental Europe, Corsica and Sardinia, with a broad overlap of acoustic parameters between populations and strong reactions to field playback of songs from eastern Russia and Japan. However, songs from populations of northern Morocco (presumably *P. a. atlas*), northern Tunisia (*P. a. ledouci*) and Cyprus (*P. a. cypriotes*) were significantly different in having lowest minimum frequencies, and playback of the song of the Eurasian populations did not elicit any response by these birds. Thus, there is geographic variation in Coal Tit song across continents, with reduced species recognition between Central European and Mediterranean populations.

Source: Vert. Zool. *66, pp. 191–199*

Effects of degradation in an Algerian forest

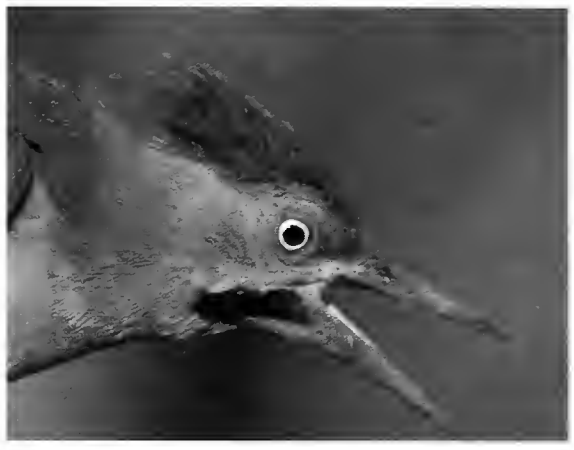
In a montane cedar forest in north-east Algeria only 17 species were found breeding during the period 2007–10, a major reduction from the 29 found when the forest was not degraded. Overall density ranged from 17–31 pairs of all birds per ha with the lower figures in the most degraded areas.

Source: Alauda *84, pp. 221–230*

Breeding data on three Algerian species

Recent issues of *Alauda* have published breeding statistics for Levaillant's Woodpecker *Picus vaillanti*, Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* and European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* in Algeria. Seven nests of Levaillant's Woodpecker in the Babors Mountains, Bejaia, were followed in 2013–16. The first eggs were laid in the first third of April, mean clutch size was 6.28 eggs, breeding success at hatching 5.42 young, and 85% of broods were successful (adverse weather conditions causing the collapse of a nesting tree accounted for the losses).

Data collected in 2009 and 2012 on Southern Grey Shrikes in the northern Sahara revealed densities varying between four breeding pairs/167 ha and six pairs/10 ha in palm groves, but there were four pairs in a 8-ha 'daya' (a last remnant of forest vegetation). The species



Levaillant's Woodpecker / Pic de Levaillant *Picus vaillanti* (Georges Olioso)

nested in young Date Palms *Phoenix dactylifera* and, in dayas, in *Ziziphus lotus* (jujube) trees and Pomegranates *Punica granatum*.

Breeding of European Greenfinch was studied in 2007–09 at a 170-ha study site at Djebel Amour, in the Atlas Mountains, at 1,300–1,470 m. Nest density was 2.73 nests/10 ha and mean clutch size 4.09 ± 0.75 eggs/nest (relatively lower than in Europe). Breeding took 59 days and hatching success (72.35%) and fledging success (62.65%) were relatively high.

Sources: Alauda *84, pp. 105–110, 177–186 & 231–235*

Waterbirds in the Gulf of Gabès

A total of 49 species of waterbirds was recorded in the Gulf of Gabès wetlands, Tunisia, with nearly three-quarters of the total numbers of birds being winter visitors. The avifauna was dominated by shorebirds (52% of records), followed by large wading birds (25%). For four species the 1% population level criterion of the Ramsar Convention was exceeded. Overall, the results demonstrated that the Gulf of Gabès hosts important numbers of waterbirds with different ecological requirements, and confirms the importance of this gulf as a wintering area for Palearctic waterbirds.

Source: Ostrich *87, pp. 217–223*

Atlantic Ocean islands

Louisiana Waterthrush removed from the Canary Islands bird list

The Spanish rarities committee has recently reassessed and rejected the

record of Louisiana Waterthrush *Parkesia motacilla* on La Palma, Canary Islands, in November 1991—the species' only record for the Western Palearctic. The bird was re-identified as the first Northern Waterthrush *P. noveboracensis* for the Canary Islands.

Source: www.reservoirbirds.com/Articles/RBAR_000020.pdf

Another American landbird reaches Tristan da Cunha

Tristan da Cunha lies 2,800 km from South Africa, and >3,000 km from the coast of Brazil in the South Atlantic Ocean, meaning that it is only occasionally visited by vagrant landbirds, mostly from the Americas, with Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* being the commonest, with single records of Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* and Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*. The latest addition is a Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, an individual of which was found barely alive in November 2015; it soon succumbed, and was prepared as a specimen now held at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *136, pp. 214–216*

West and Central Africa

Iceland's Whimbrels fly non-stop to Africa

Alaskan Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica baueri* and Pacific Golden Plovers *Pluvialis fulva*, wintering in New Zealand and Hawaii, respectively, perform extremely long non-stop flights over water but, in both cases, no alternative routes over coastal landmasses are possible without considerably increasing overall flying distances. Geolocators have now shown that Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus islandicus* breeding in Iceland and wintering in West Africa also perform long non-stop flights over the ocean, despite the partial availability of alternative overland routes. In autumn 2012 four individuals flew non-stop to their wintering areas, covering *c.*3,900–5,500 km in five days and, on occasion, achieving the fastest recorded speeds for terrestrial birds on long-distance flights over oceanic waters. During the return migration, however, two birds stopped in the British Isles for 11 and 15 days, and travelled round-trip distances of 10,500 and 11,000 km, respectively. The other two returned to Iceland non-stop, covering round-trip distances of 7,800 and 11,000 km, respectively.

Source: Scientific Reports *6: 38154*

Montagu's Harrier tracked to Ghana coast

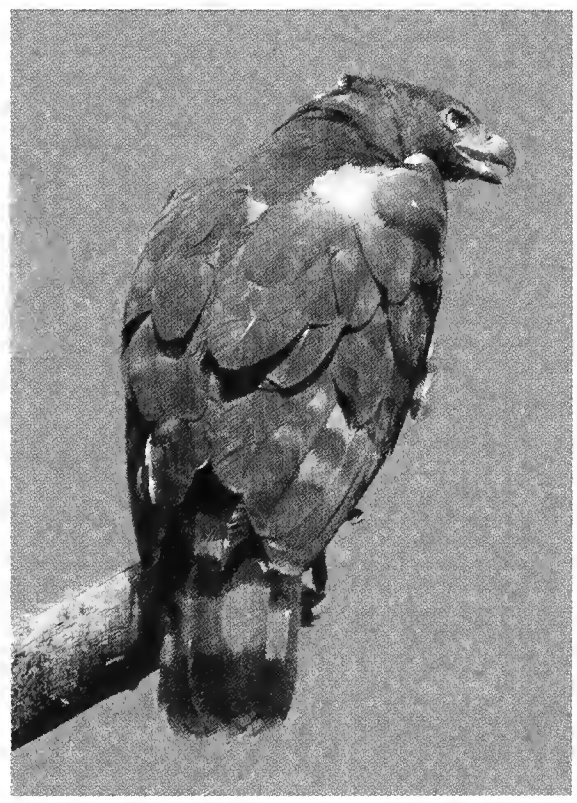
A female Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* equipped with a satellite transmitter in Norfolk, UK, in 2016, migrated all the way to the Ghanaian coast. She left her breeding site on 15 August and initially followed the migration route of other British Montagu's Harriers, with a first stop in south Mauritania. The male with whom she had successfully raised two young wintered in Senegal, as he did in 2015, while the female remained in the Mauritania–Mali border area from 4 September until 24 October, after which she flew to Côte d'Ivoire. In early December she was in Ghana's Volta Basin and subsequently reached the coast. Although the species has been recorded at the Ghanaian coast before, it is definitely rare there (*cf.* Dowsett-Lemaire, F. & Dowsett, R. J. 2014. *The Birds of Ghana: An Atlas and Handbook*) and this is the first time in 12 years of tracking 67 Montagu's Harriers with transmitters that an individual has been observed so far south. The other 66 harriers spent the boreal winter in the Sahel, between Senegal and Chad.

Source: www.naturetoday.com/intl/nl/nature-reports/message/?msg=23174

Fetish and bushmeat trade threaten vultures and other large raptors

To evaluate the impact of fetish ('traditional medicine') and bushmeat trade on raptors in western Africa, Ralph Buij and colleagues examined

Palm-nut Vulture / Palmiste africain *Gypohierax angolensis* (Ingrid & Ron Eggert)



Crowned Eagle / Aigle couronné *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (John Caddick)

carcassess sold in markets at 67 sites across 12 countries, from Mali to Gabon (with one in western DR Congo), in 1990–2013. In total, 2,646 carcasses comprising 52 species were recorded. Twenty-seven percent of carcasses were of species classified as Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened. Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* together accounted for 41% of the carcasses. Estimates based on data extrapolation indicated that within the region, 73% of carcasses were traded in Nigeria, 21% in Benin and 5% elsewhere. Annual

offtake was estimated at 975–1,462 Hooded Vultures, 356–534 Palm-nut Vultures *Gypohierax angolensis*, 188–282 Rüppell's Vultures *Gyps rueppellii*, 154–231 White-backed Vultures *G. africanus*, 143–214 Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotos* and 40–60 Crowned Eagles *Stephanoaetus coronatus*. This is an important proportion of regional populations, suggesting that trade contributes significantly to declines.

Source: Oryx *50, pp. 606–616*

Seabirds on the Tinhosas Islands in the Gulf of Guinea

The Tinhosas Islands, in São Tomé e Príncipe, host the most important seabird breeding colony in the Gulf of Guinea, but information has been lacking since 1997. A two-day expedition to the islands in 2013 found a decrease of 80% in Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* numbers, possibly due to occasional exploitation, but a 30% increase in Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* and Black Noddy *Anous minutus* numbers compared to 1997 data, although survey methods differed. The islands are not legally protected but no immediate threats to the Tinhosas colony were detected.

Source: Ostrich *87, pp. 209–215*

Birds of the Muanda area, including Mangrove Marine Park

A recent paper in *Malimbus* presents an annotated preliminary list of birds recorded in the Muanda area, including the Parc Marin des Mangroves, in coastal Democratic Republic of Congo. Since January 2009, 245 species have been observed, including several that are little known in the region, such as African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*, Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*, Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*, African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*, White-collared Starling *Grafisia torquata* and Loango Weaver *Ploceus subpersonatus* (Vulnerable). This exceptional biotope is, however, threatened by human encroachment.

Source: Malimbus *38, pp. 50–79*

One of Africa's most biodiverse regions protected

Itombwe Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one of Africa's most biodiverse sites, has had its boundaries formally approved recently by the provincial governor—a critical step in establishing and ensuring the effective protection of this important site. The move follows requests by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and its partners to finalise the reserve's establishment in order to conserve Grauer's Gorilla *Gorilla beringei graueri*, among other species.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin *June 2016*

Scimitar-horned Oryx back in Chad

After an absence of more than 25 years, Scimitar-horned Oryx *Oryx dammah* are again present on Chadian soil. In March 2016, 25 oryx drawn from the world herd

Scimitar-horned Oryx / Oryx algazelle *Oryx dammah* (Werner Suter)

being assembled by the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD) in the United Arab Emirates, were flown to Abéché, Chad. They were released into their holding pen in Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve and, following a period of acclimatisation, collared for satellite-based monitoring and released into the wild. Further shipments of oryx from Abu Dhabi are expected over the next 1–3 years, with an initial target of 500 free-ranging animals. The initative, piloted by EAD and the Chadian government, is implemented by the Sahara Conservation Fund, with the assistance of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, the Zoological Society of London, and the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center.

The bulk of Chad's oryx were lost in a short period between 1979 and 1982, when the country was torn by civil war and partially invaded by Libyan troops. At the time, the majority of the world's remaining

Sooty Tern / Sterne fuligineuse *Onychoprion fuscatus* (Augusto Faustino)

Black Noddy / Noddi noir *Anous minutus* (Augusto Faustino)

oryx, perhaps 5,000 in all, occurred in Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Game Reserve, with a small number in neighbouring Niger. Niger's last oryx probably died in the mid 1980s as a result of hunting and drought. The species finally became extinct in the wild with the death of the last remaining animal in 1989.

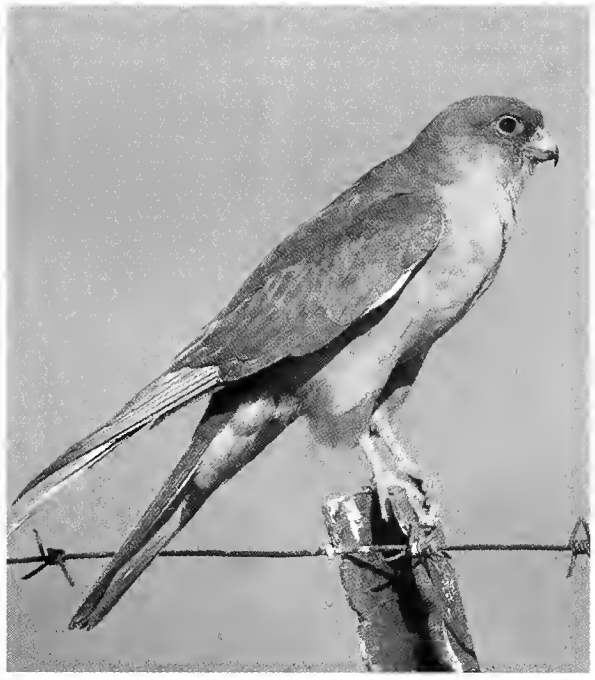
Source: Sandscript *19 (2016)*, saharaconservation.org/?-Sandscript

East Africa

Ringing of migrants at Ngulia Lodge, Kenya, 2013–2015

In a recent issue of *Scopus*, published by the Bird Committee of the East Africa Natural History Society, David Pearson reports on ringing activities at Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, in 2013–15. Ringing of Palearctic birds at Ngulia, mostly conducted during the main period of southbound migration in November–December, began in 1969 and since then a staggering 535,418 birds have been ringed. As the attraction of migrant passerines to floodlights depends on night mist under moonless conditions, ringing sessions are organised over periods of 2–3 weeks centred on a new moon. During the sessions in 2013–15, 35,000 Palearctic birds were trapped and 20 recoveries reported, which brings the total number of controls and recoveries to 243.

Between 25 November and 13 December 2013 regular and persistent night mists accounted for a successful season with 21,052 migrants ringed. Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* formed 49% of the catch. A Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* was the first mist-netted here for 20 years. The season of 16 November–2 December 2014 produced good species variety, but night mists were confined to the first week. Thrush Nightingale was the dominant species in a modest Palearctic catch of 7,051. Marsh Warbler numbers were unusually low, and one regular species, Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*, was almost absent. Heavy showers brought >1,000 European Rollers



Amur Falcon / Faucon de l'Amour *Falco amurensis* (Warwick Tarboton)

Fischer's Turaco / Touraco de Fischer *Tauraco fischeri* (Ken Behrens)

Coracias garrulus and 1,500 Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* to the lodge on the afternoon of 1 December. In 2015, a late season with nine misty nights between 6 and 20 December resulted in 7,638 migrants ringed, with Marsh Warbler again by far the dominant species. Basra Reed Warbler numbers had returned to normal, and those of Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* and Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* were unusually high.

Source: Scopus *36, pp. 17–25*

Avifauna of Boni-Dodori National Reserves, Kenya

Boni and Dodori National Reserves, in Garissa and Lamu Counties respectively, on the north coast of Kenya, were gazetted in 1976 and their remote location and history of insecurity have resulted in a comparatively low human population density and minimal development. Most of the indigenous coastal habitat in these forests has remained undisturbed and continues to support biodiversity that has been little studied. The results of a bird survey conducted in April 2012–November 2013, in both reserves, the connecting Aweer Community Conservancy corridor, and the adjacent forests, have recently been published in *Scopus*. A total of 184 bird species was recorded, including two classified as Near Threatened (Southern Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus* and Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri*), 19 Palearctic migrants (including Eurasian Rollers *Coracias garrulus* and large flocks of Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis*), two Afrotropical migrants (White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* and Northern Carmine Bee-eater *M. nubicus*) and 14 East African coastal biome species (of which Little Yellow Flycatcher *Erythrocercus holochlorus* was the commonest). There were eight forest specialist and 29 forest generalist species. A form of Red-naped Bushshrike *Laniarius ruficeps* was observed that is not illustrated in guide books, but presumed to be of the subspecies *kismayensis*. Data from this survey led to the upgrading of the Boni-Dodori area from a potential Important Bird Area (IBA) to full IBA status.

Source: Scopus *36, pp. 1–16*

Distribution and behaviour of Rufous-winged Sunbird investigated

Rufous-winged Sunbird *Cinnyris rufipennisis*, classified as Vulnerable, is endemic to the Udzungwa Mountains, central Tanzania, where it occurs in nine montane forests. Based on field surveys between 2011 and 2014, supplemented by observations made since the early 1990s, Flemming Jensen and co-workers have estimated the size of the core areas where the species is common at *c.*120 km^2 and the total range as *c.*200 km^2. Prime habitat appeared to be tall, undisturbed

Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill / Calao du Ruaha *Tockus erythrorhynchus ruahae* (David Bygott)

Ashy Starling / Choucador cendré *Lamprotornis unicolor* (Sergey Dereliev)

montane forest. Breeding took place during the rainy season, in November–February, with the breeding territory usually centred on a forest glade or treefall gap, mainly at 1,300–1,700 m altitude. The bird forages at flowering plants from the forest understorey to canopy, and in glades and treefall gaps, depending on the season and species of plant in flower. Outside the breeding season, Rufous-winged Sunbirds wander widely in search of food. Presumed lekking courtship display was observed, with up to three males assembling in a clearing and excitedly hopping from branch to branch, singing aggressively at each other, while a single female looked on.

The data collected during the study extend the known range of Rufous-winged Sunbird to include a larger area in Uzungwa Scarp forest and highlight the importance of this forest as well as Iyondo forest as two of the core areas for the species. Uzungwa Scarp and Iyondo forests are outside the relatively well-protected Udzungwa Mountain National Park and suffer from widespread illegal forest destruction. Unless this situation changes quickly and effective protection is applied, it is feared that the situation could soon become critical for the many Udzungwa endemics that depend on these montane forests.

Source: Scopus *36, pp. 37–41*

Recolonisation of rehabilitated areas evaluated at a Tanzanian mine site

To document bird communities in the Golden Pride Project area, a gold mine in Nzega District, central Tanzania, and to assess the extent to which rehabilitated areas had been recolonised, a study was undertaken between March 2010 and December 2014. A total of 181 bird species was recorded at the mine area, including two taxa endemic to Tanzania (Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus ruahae* and Ashy Starling *Lamprotornis unicolor*). Rehabilitated areas held about half the number of species found in unmined areas. The use by birds of areas under rehabilitation suggested that habitat restoration can be used to create corridors linking fragmented landscapes. Additionally, results implied that in mining areas it is useful to have an unmined area where vegetation is allowed to regenerate naturally, free of human activity. These unmined areas can later act as source habitats, from which birds can disperse into rehabilitation areas once the vegetation structure is sufficiently complex.

Source: Scopus *36, pp. 26–37*

Additions to the country lists of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

In its report for 2013–2015, the East African Rarities Committee Report accepts several additions to three country lists. First records accepted for Kenya are Christmas Island Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi* (near Malindi, December–January 1969–70) and Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (near Meru National Park, 26 September 2014). Firsts for Uganda include Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (Lake Munyamyange, 5 December 2014); Akun Eagle Owl *Bubo leucostictus* (Semliki National Park, 27 September 2014); Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans* (Queen Elizabeth National Park, 14 June 2013); Tiny Cisticola *Cisticola nanus* (Kidepo Valley National Park, 4 September 2011); and Northern Masked Weaver *Ploceus taeniopterus* (near Fort Portal, October 2014).

Accepted additions to the Tanzania list are as follows: Forest Francolin *Peliperdix lathami* (Minziro Forest, 19 July 1987), Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* (Bagamoyo, 4 March 2012), Fox Kestrel *Falco alopex* (Osugat Plain, 8 March 2006), Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* (Serengeti National Park, 25 June 2014), Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* (Maziwe Island, 20 March 2009), Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica* (Fanjove Island, 3 September 2013), European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (Serengeti National Park, 23 February 1997), Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowi* (Minziro, November 1993), Little Grey

Greenbul *Eurillas gracilis* (Minziro, 26 October 1998); Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus* (Minziro, July 1987), White-tailed Ant Thursh *Neocossyphus poensis* (Minziro, July 1987), Blue-shouldered Robin Chat *Cossypha cyanocampter* (Minziro, July 1987), Forest Robin *Stiphrornis erythrothorax* (Minziro, July 1987), Yellow Longbill *Macrosphenus flavicans* (Minziro, July 1987), Grey Longbill *M. concolor* (Minziro, October 1998), Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota* (Minziro, July 1987), Shrike Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulatus* (Minziro, 8 July 1987), Grey-throated Flycatcher *Myioparus griseigularis* (Minziro, 20 July 1987), Jameson's Antpecker *Parmoptila jamesoni* (Minziro, July 1987) and Papyrus Canary *Crithagra koliensis* (Kagera River Valley, 1 December 1993).

Source: Scopus *36, pp. 57–64*

Elephants in trouble in Selous National Park

Unless urgent measures are taken, the elephant population in Selous National Park, Tanzania, could disappear by 2022. Since the 1970s, the park has lost on average *c.*2,500 elephants per year, with current numbers being at an all-time low of 15,000 individuals. At the height of the poaching wave in 2010–13, an average of six elephants were killed every day. Moreover, 75% of the park is covered by oil and gas concessions. Comprehensive assessments of the impact of mining activities are required to ensure a sustainable future for this World Heritage Site.

Source: www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jun/01/elephants-vanish-africas-key-reserves-six-years-tanzania-selous-national-park

Indian Ocean islands

A Lesser Flamingo tracked between mainland Africa and Madagascar

A female Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*, satellite-tagged at Delareyville, in North West Province, South Africa, has been tracked crossing the Indian Ocean from Mozambique to Madagascar. It covered 1,069 km in a single 16-hour flight, from the Mozambique coast at Maxixe to the western shore of Madagascar near Morombe. Lesser Flamingo is a winter visitor to Madagascar but this seems to be the first instance that one has been tracked making the crossing from mainland Africa.

Source: https://endangeredwildlifetrust.wordpress.com/2016/06/20/extraordinary-flamingo-movements-amaze-scientists/

Aldabra landbirds largely doing fine

Long-term survey data are needed for many purposes. Seven landbird species on Aldabra have been monitored over 11 years, by a team led by Janske van de Crommenacker. Location, season and habitat were analysed against abundance of the different species, as were their population trends. Six of the seven (not Aldabra Drongo *Dicrurus aldabranus*) increased over the period. Season and habitat played parts and the interaction differed between species. Counts were affected also by timing of monitoring, number of observers and weather conditions. Results are used to review current monitoring procedures and the authors recommend some changes. Overall there is no immediate concern for any of the species studied.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *26, pp. 337–349*

A significant boost to conserving Madagascar's lemurs

IUCN through SOS—Save Our Species is now in a position to protect even more of Madagascar's endemic lemurs—94% of which are threatened with extinction. Thanks to a significant donation from a private Geneva-based foundation, IUCN is now able to implement the recommendations of the Lemur Conservation Strategy. With this news SOS will continue to help civil society organisations for the next six years with grants allowing them to implement lemur conservation actions starting in January 2017.

Mongoose Lemur / Lémur mongos *Eulemur mongoz* (Paul van Giersbergen)

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin *November 2016*

Community radio around Ranomafana National Park

Working to promote lemur conservation education around Ranomafana National Park, Katherine Kling of Stony Brook University needed a way to reach a wide audience while involving many other community members in the production process. A radio series offered the ideal solution. This exciting collaboration between Stony Brook's Institute for the Conservation of Tropical Environments (ICTE), Centre ValBio (CVB) and PLAY Madagascar has already begun: making a ten-episode radio series weaving scientific perspectives concerning lemur lives with the cultural fabric of rural communities. "The series is complemented by an education pack and teacher training activities. These support rural children in better understanding the interconnected environmental needs right here in their backyard", said Emma Browne, a community radio organiser working closely with Katherine.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin *June 2016*

African Penguin / Manchot du Cap *Spheniscus demersus* (Augusto Faustino)

Rufous-cheeked Nightjar / Engoulevent à joues rousses *Caprimulgus rufigena* (John Caddick)

Southern Africa

Human disturbance affects African Penguins

Populations of African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* are in rapid decline. Permitting humans to get close to their colonies clearly causes some disturbance, but equally is often good for promoting public awareness and can generate money from ecotourism. Comparisons of the effects at four colonies revealed that the birds tolerated humans much more when they were most often disturbed, even when people were close to their nests. Hence human disturbance might be mitigated potentially by increased levels of tolerance or displacement of shyer birds. However, this could increase stress and reduce reproduction. Ecotourism must be managed carefully to ensure some areas are left completely unvisited.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *26, pp. 307–322*

Extraordinary cooling process in Rufous-cheeked Nightjar unveiled

The ability of nightjars to tolerate extreme heat when day-roosting has been studied in Rufous-cheeked Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufigena* by Ryan O'Connor, Ph.D. student at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Despite temperatures at roosting sites occasionally reaching >50°C, Rufous-cheeked Nightjars were found to maintain daytime body temperatures slightly lower than most birds. They do this using very efficient physiological cooling mechanisms. Any bird that finds itself in an environment where the temperature exceeds 40°C needs to off-load heat to the environment faster than it gains heat from its surroundings. To achieve this, birds dissipate heat via evaporation, which they mostly do by panting. However, panting requires muscles to contract, which itself produces heat. In order to off-load heat, birds therefore must generate heat—a rather paradoxical situation. However, nightjars roosting in extremely hot sites off-load heat at virtually zero metabolic cost, apparently using their large gapes as an evaporative surface. It appears that this cooling process is more efficient in Rufous-cheeked Nightjars at Dronfield than in any other bird species studied to date.

Source: African Birdlife *5(2), p. 10*

Hornbills use their large bills for non-evaporative heat dissipation

A recent study by Tanja van de Ven from the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Cape Town, South Africa, and co-workers, established that Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills *Tockus leucomelas* in the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa dilate blood vessels in their bills to thermo-regulate and cool off. The researchers raised the air temperature around 18 wild-caught Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills and tracked their heat loss using thermal imaging. They found that the birds dissipated heat via the bill at air temperatures between 30.7°C and 41.4°C, and that bills accounted for up to 20% of the birds' non-evaporative heat loss. For those hornbills living in desert, heat loss via the bill could be important as, in contrast to panting, it may reduce the amount of water needed for evaporative cooling.

Source: PLoS One *11(5), DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0154768*

Secretary-bird's diet and productivity examined

A study, supported by BirdLife South Africa, of the Secretary-bird's *Sagittarius serpentarius* diet and productivity in the greater

Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill / Calao leucomèle *Tockus leucomelas* (Liz World)

Secretary-bird / Messager sagittaire *Sagittarius serpentarius* (Désiré Darling)

Wakkerstroom area, carried out by Eleen Strydom, revealed that a large and productive Secretary-bird population occurs in the area. The productivity rate of 1.6 young per territorial pair indicates that a pair can replace itself every two years, demonstrating that the area acts as a source population for the region. Prey selection was found to be very heterogeneous and to include terrestrial and semi-aquatic organisms. The most dominant reptile species in the Secretary-bird's diet was the endemic Rinkhals Snake *Hemachatus haemachatus*, whereas the most numerous mammal was the semi-aquatic Vlei Rat *Otomys irroratus*; both species are associated with wetlands. The most numerous prey taxa, i.e. coleopterans, orthopterans, scorpions and shrews, were associated with wet grasslands.

Source: BirdLife South Africa e-Newsletter *May 2016*

Vulture counts in Kruger National Park, South Africa

Aerial counts and 'plotless density estimator' methods were used to assess the numbers of three vulture species in Kruger National Park in 2013. The authors of the study include some discussion of the merits of both methods and found that aerial surveys over *c.*35% of Kruger are probably sufficient to assess changes over time. The results highlight the park's globally important breeding populations.

Source: Ostrich *87, pp. 241–246*

Eleonora's Falcon accepted on Zimbabwe list

After 30 years of reports, Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* has finally been accepted on the Zimbabwe bird list: a tracked individual was recorded twice in the Makonde District in November 2010.

Source: Honeyguide *62, pp. 12–14*

Taxonomic proposals

Hildebrandt's Francolin best treated as monotypic

Hildebrandt's Francolin *Pternistis hildebrandti* ranges from Kenya and northern Tanzania south to northern Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. Almost all authorities—including, recently, Dickinson & Remsen

Hildebrandt's Francolin / Francolin de Hildebrandt *Pternistis hildebrandti* (Werner Suter)

(2013. *The Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*. Fourth edn.) and del Hoyo & Collar (2014. *HBW and Birdlife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World*)—recognise three subspecies, from north to south: *altumi*, *hildebrandti* and *johnstoni*. Only Crowe, in *The Birds of Africa* (1986), considered that any geographical variation in Hildebrandt's Francolin was clinal and not well described by subspecies. A recent examination by Don Turner of specimens at the Natural History Museum at Tring, UK, revealed that mottling on the mantle and breast in females was most evident in specimens from around Lakes Nakuru and Naivasha, but decreased in birds further south, with examples from the Mara-Serengeti, Mt. Meru and Mt. Kilimanjaro exhibiting only a very small amount of breast mottling. With variation in female plumage highly variable and clinal, Turner concludes that any subspecific division within *S. hildebrandti* appears unwarranted, and the species is best regarded as monotypic. Certainly there appears no justification for recognising *altumi*, described solely on the basis of two males, the corresponding females having already been named as *hildebrandti*.

Source: Scopus *36, pp. 44–45*

African Hawk Eagle / Aigle fascié *Aquila spilogaster* (Warwick Tarboton)

Study of 'booted eagle' phylogeny confirms recent treatment of African taxa

A study by Heather Lerner and 15 co-workers into the phylogeny of all 'booted eagles' (38 extant and one extinct species), based on analysis of published sequences from seven loci, found molecular support for five major clades within the 'booted eagles': *Nisaetus* (ten species), *Spizaetus* (four species), *Clanga* (three species), *Hieraaetus* (six species) and *Aquila* (11 species). Concerning species occurring in Africa, the study underlines other recently published work and merely confirms present taxonomic treatment, e.g. using the genus *Clanga* for the spotted eagles and including Wahlberg's Eagle in *Hieraaetus* and Cassin's Eagle in *Aquila*. Additionally, it recommends retaining two monotypic genera: Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*, due to its distinctive morphology, and Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, given its lack of close relatives and persistent phylogenetic uncertainty. For consistency in English names, the authors recommend that the term 'hawk-eagle' be used only for those species in the genera *Nisaetus* and *Spizaetus*, none of which occur in Africa. They therefore suggest to drop 'hawk' in Cassin's Eagle *Aquila africana* and Ayres's Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*, which should be easy enough to follow ('Ayres's Eagle' already being widely used). The current name African Hawk Eagle, for *A. spilogaster*, however, is obviously more problematic and the authors propose to change it to Bonaparte's Eagle, honouring Charles Lucien Bonaparte, describer of the species in 1850 (and nephew of Emperor Napoleon).

Source: Zootaxa *4216(4), pp. 301–320*

A scops owl on Príncipe Island, Gulf of Guinea

In July 2016, an exploration in search of *Otus* owls on Príncipe Island by Philippe Verbelen confirmed the existence of what appears to be an undescribed species. Its possible existence on Príncipe had been discussed previously by Martim Melo and Martin Dallimer in 2009 (*Malimbus* 31: 109–115). They recorded the calls of what was probably a scops owl, and this, together with reports from parrot harvesters who saw, in tree holes, a bird whose description suggested a small *Otus* sp., indicated the presence of an undescribed species on Príncipe. However, it had not been observed by ornithologists, until now. Verbelen saw at least two different birds, and was able to photograph both. He explored the same forest where Melo and Dallimer obtained their first recordings. Calls were heard at various locations indicating that the bird is not uncommon in undisturbed forests, but providing the first confirmation of a scops owl on Príncipe. The difference in vocalisations from those of São Tomé Scops Owl *Otus hartlaubi* suggests the Príncipe bird is an undescribed species. Work is currently in progress to confirm, and eventually formally describe the bird, by a team comprising Philippe Verbelen, Martim Melo and George Sangster.

Source: www.hbw.com/news/scops-owl-otus-discovered-forests-principe-island-gulf-guinea

Global spatial ecology suggest limited gene flow among three closely related gadfly petrels

The taxonomy of the three closely related gadfly petrels that breed in Macaronesia, Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* (Critically Endangered), Desertas Petrel *P. deserta* (Vulnerable) and Cape Verde Petrel *P. feae* (Near Threatened) is still a matter of debate, partly because of the scarce information on their spatial ecology. Using geolocator and capture-mark-recapture data, Raül Ramos and co-workers examined their phenology, natal philopatry and breeding-site fidelity, year-round distribution, habitat usage and at-sea activity. All *P. feae* remained around the breeding area during their non-breeding season, whereas *P. madeira* and *P. deserta* dispersed far from their colony, migrating either to the Cape Verde region, further south to equatorial waters of the central Atlantic, or to the Brazil Current. The breeding periods of the three taxa clearly did not overlap. No individuals were recaptured away from their natal site and survival estimates were relatively high at all study sites, indicating strong philopatry and breeding-site fidelity for the three taxa. The combination of high philopatry, marked breeding asynchrony and substantial spatio-temporal segregation of their year-round distribution suggest very limited gene flow among the three taxa.

Source: Sci. Rep. *6:23447, dx.doi.org/10.1038/srep23447*

Phylogenetic relationships of herons

A study on DNA barcoding and phylogenetic relationships of 32 heron species Ardeidae from 17 genera by Huang *et al.* (2016) revealed that each species possessed a unique barcode except Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Snowy Egret *E. thula*, which shared the same barcode, putting in doubt their specific status. The results further suggested that Great Egret *Ardea alba* and Intermediate Egret *A. intermedia* are closer to Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* than to Little Egret, and should preferably be placed in separate genera, *Casmerodius* and *Mesophoyx*, respectively.

Source: Genetics & Mol. Res. *15 (3), gmr.15038270*

Mascarene Parrot does belong with the *Psittacula* parakeets

The phylogenetic position of the extinct Mascarene Parrot *Mascarinus mascarin* from La Réunion has been unresolved for centuries. A recent molecular study unexpectedly placed *M. mascarin* within the clade of phenotypically very different vasa parrots *Coracopsis*. Based on DNA extracted from the only other preserved *Mascarinus* specimen, Lars Podsiadlowski and co-workers have demonstrated that the previously obtained cytochrome-*b* sequence is probably an artificial composite of partial sequences from two other parrot species, and that *M. mascarin* is indeed a part of the *Psittacula* diversification, closest to Alexandrine Parakeet *P. eupatria* and Seychelles Parakeet *P. wardi*.

Source: Mol. Phyl. & Evol. *107, pp. 499–502*

Phylogeny of *Nesillas* warblers

The brush warblers of the genus *Nesillas* are endemic to the Indian Ocean islands of Madagascar, Comoros and Aldabra, although the species on the last (Aldabra Brush Warbler *N. aldabrana*) is extinct. A Bayesian phylogeny has recently been used to show that the two species on Madagascar are not sister taxa and diverged from the others more recently (Madagascar Brush Warbler *N. typica* and Subdesert Brush Warbler *N. lantzii*), and that the two Comoros species are paraphyletic and older (Grand Comore Brush Warbler *N. brevicaudata* and Moheli Brush Warbler *N. mariae*). Patterns were shaped by multiple long-distance dispersal events and inter-island colonisation, and are consistent with the taxon cycle.

Madagascar Brush Warbler / Nésille malgache *Nesillas typica* (Werner Suter)

Grand Comore Brush Warbler / Nésille de Grande Comore *Nesillas brevicaudata* (Paul van Giersbergen)

Source: Biol. J. Linn. Soc. *119, pp. 873–889*

Saw-wing swallow taxonomy

Psalidoprocne is a genus of swallows endemic to sub-Saharan Africa that is normally considered to include five species with several subspecies. Sequences of two mitochondrial genes from 20 individuals yielded similar results under maximum likelihood and Bayesian phylogenetic analyses, revealing the existence of multiple well-supported mitochondrial clades. There is geographic overlap of distinct lineages suggesting reproductive isolation, but the clades do not correspond entirely with current species designations.

Source: Ostrich *87, pp. 271–275*

Three new taxa of Forest Robin described

Forest Robin *Stiphrornis erythrothorax* is considered to possess five lineages—*erythrothorax*, *gabonensis*, *pyrrholaemus*, *sanghensis* and *xanthogaster*—treated as races by most authorities (e.g. Dickinson & Christidis 2014) and as species by those adopting a phylogenetic species concept. As part of their ongoing exploration of the genetic and geographic variation of African birds, Gary Voelker and co-workers conducted scientific collecting in Lama Forest, Benin, and near Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Five specimens of Forest Robin were collected in Benin and ten in DRC; based on geography, the former were attributable to the taxon *erythrothorax* and the latter to *xanthogaster*. Tissue samples from these 15 specimens were then included in a study of *Stiphrornis* systematics that included genetic analyses of samples from all five currently recognised taxa. As a result, they described three new taxa of Forest Robin, two from West Africa and one from the Congo Basin, representing distinct phylogenetic lineages. In addition to genetic differentiation, each new taxon appears to exhibit some (relatively minor) morphological and plumage differences (that would be virtually impossible to distinguish in the field from their nearest relative). The new taxa—which are treated as species by the authors, who follow a phylogenetic species concept—were named *inexpectatus* (apparently restricted to the Central and Brong-Ahafo Regions of Ghana), *dahomeyensis* (restricted to Benin and the Central Region of Ghana) and *rudderi* (occurring near Kisangani, DRC).

Source: Syst. & Biodiver., *DOI:10.1080/14772000.2016.1226978*

Steppe Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris* at Maputo, Mozambique, in February–March 2016, with a review of the status of the taxon

Gary Allport

Des Courlis corlieux *Numenius phaeopus* de la sous-espèce *alboaxillaris* à Maputo, Mozambique, en février–mars 2016, avec une analyse du statut de ce taxon. Deux Courlis corlieux *Numenius phaeopus* de la sous-espèce *alboaxillaris* ont été découverts dans la baie de Maputo, Mozambique, les 10–12 février 2016—les premiers à être observés en Afrique depuis 1965. Des différences de taille, de structure et de plumage semblent indiquer qu'il s'agissait d'un mâle et d'une femelle. La femelle était présente dans la zone jusqu'au 28 février et le mâle jusqu'au 24 mars. Le taxon est peu connu et a été déclaré éteint à tort en 1994, mais un petit nombre de nicheurs a récemment été découvert en Russie. Son histoire est obscure et sa taxonomie peu claire. Il est recommandé de rechercher cet oiseau en Afrique pendant l'été autral.

Summary. Two Steppe Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris* were found at Maputo Bay, Mozambique, on 10–12 February 2016, the first record in Africa since 1965. They were tentatively sexed as male and female; the female was resident in the area until 28 February and the male until 24 March. The taxon is little known and was erroneously declared extinct in 1994, but was recently found breeding in very small numbers in Russia. Its history is obscure and taxonomy unclear. Observers are encouraged to search for this bird in Africa during the austral summer.

In early February 2016, Ross Hughes (RH) and I found a group of Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* in Maputo, only our second record of the species in more than five years of birding in Mozambique. Wanting to learn more about the race *N. a. orientalis*, I reviewed Corso *et al.* (2014) and found illustrations of *N. phaeopus alboaxillaris,* a subspecies of Whimbrel, whose type specimen was collected at Inhambane, Mozambique, in 1906 (Lowe 1921). As details in most relevant reference works (Clancey 1996, Turpie 2005) were scant, I posted a call for information online. This elicited no interest, so I decided to repost the request with some images of Whimbrel to attract attention, only to find that I had none. On 10 February, I stopped briefly at Maputo Bay to photograph a flock of 27 Whimbrels at a high-tide roost (25°56'29.52"S 32°37'28.24"E). Upon reviewing the images later that day I discovered, to my amazement, some of a bird with clean white underwings and a very pale lower rump matching the description of *N. p. alboaxillaris*. I shared these online and received rapid responses from J. F. J. Jansen, P. Köhler, T. Prater, P. Tomkovich and V. Morozov, who confirmed its identity. According to the literature, the taxon, informally named 'Steppe Whimbrel' (Zöckler 1998, British Birds Rarities Committee 2016), is very rare and little known.

I returned to the site next day, but could not relocate the bird. However, on 12 February, at the same spot, RH and I found a Steppe Whimbrel that was clearly different from the first bird, being smaller and greyer, with a darker bill. After a series of sightings along the Maputo seafront, two birds were found at the roost in the afternoon.

Their routine was established fairly quickly, both birds mostly roosting on a sandy beach with a group of 20–30 *N. p. phaeopus*. The smaller individual fed in a well-defined and vigorously defended territory on the intertidal zone *c.*400 m from the roost, while the first foraged along the shore 1 km away, without apparently defending a territory. The birds were aged as adults based on their very fresh plumage (Cramp & Simmons 1983) and were tentatively sexed (see below) as a female (Fig. 1) and a male (Fig. 2). The female was last observed on 28 February (RH) and the male on 24 March. They were seen by a small number of observers and were photographed.

Description and Identification

Both birds were similar overall to *N. p. phaeopus*, to which they could be compared directly, but had a clean white belly and vent, lacking any

Figure 1. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult female, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 10 February 2016 (Gary Allport). Note wing projection beyond tail, crisp plumage tones, fine and well-defined breast streaking, and clean white unmarked vent and undertail.

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus* de la sous-espèce *alboaxillaris*, présumé femelle adulte, baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 10 février 2016 (Gary Allport). Noter la projection de l'aile au-delà de la queue, le plumage aux tons nets, les stries de la poitrine fines et bien définies, et le bas-ventre et les sous-caudales blanc pur.

Figure 2. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult male (third from right) with Whimbrels *N. p. phaeopus*, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 14 February 2016 (Gary Allport). Note slightly larger size, and paler and greyer plumage than adjacent nominate *phaeopus*. Breast cleanly marked dark grey on white background with pectoral band demarcated higher on breast. Wings shorter than the first *alboaxillaris*, approximately same length as tail.

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, présumé mâle adulte (troisième à partir de la droite) avec Courlis corlieux *N. p. phaeopus*, baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 14 février 2016 (Gary Allport). Noter la taille légèrement plus grande et le plumage plus pâle et plus gris de *N. p. alboaxillaris*. Poitrine aux rayures gris foncé nettes sur fond blanc et bande pectorale plus haute sur la poitrine. Ailes plus courtes que chez le premier *alboaxillaris*, environ aussi longues que la queue.

dark lanceolate streaking or chevrons on the vent and undertail-coverts; the upperparts were colder and paler greyish brown. The first individual was larger, longer- and broader-winged than the second, and not vocal; it was tentatively sexed as a female. It was also less strikingly plumaged, with more brownish tones than the second bird, but had a primary extension well beyond the

Figure 3. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult female, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 12 February 2016 (Gary Allport). Note white axillaries with fine blackish shaft-streaks towards the tip, narrow band of barring on the flanks, and pale tail.

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, présumé femelle adulte, baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 12 février 2016 (Gary Allport). Noter axillaires blanches aux fins traits rachials noirâtres vers le bout, bande étroite de rayures sur les flancs, et queue pâle.

Figure 4. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult male, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 21 February 2016 (Callan Cohen). Note clean white axillaries and underwing, and white outer tail.

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, présumé mâle adulte, baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 21 février 2016 (Callan Cohen). Noter axillaires et dessous de l'aile blanc pur, et l'extérieur de la queue blanc.

tail—a feature so far found only in this individual (Fig. 1). The second individual was paler and greyer than most Whimbrels present (Fig. 2), smaller and shorter winged than the female, and very vocal and aggressive, especially later in the period; it was tentatively sexed as a male.

Based on the photographs, the following features were identified as separating the two *alboaxillaris* from nominate *phaeopus* (based on adults in freshly moulted plumage):

1. Axillaries and underwing initially appeared pure white, but in photographs both birds

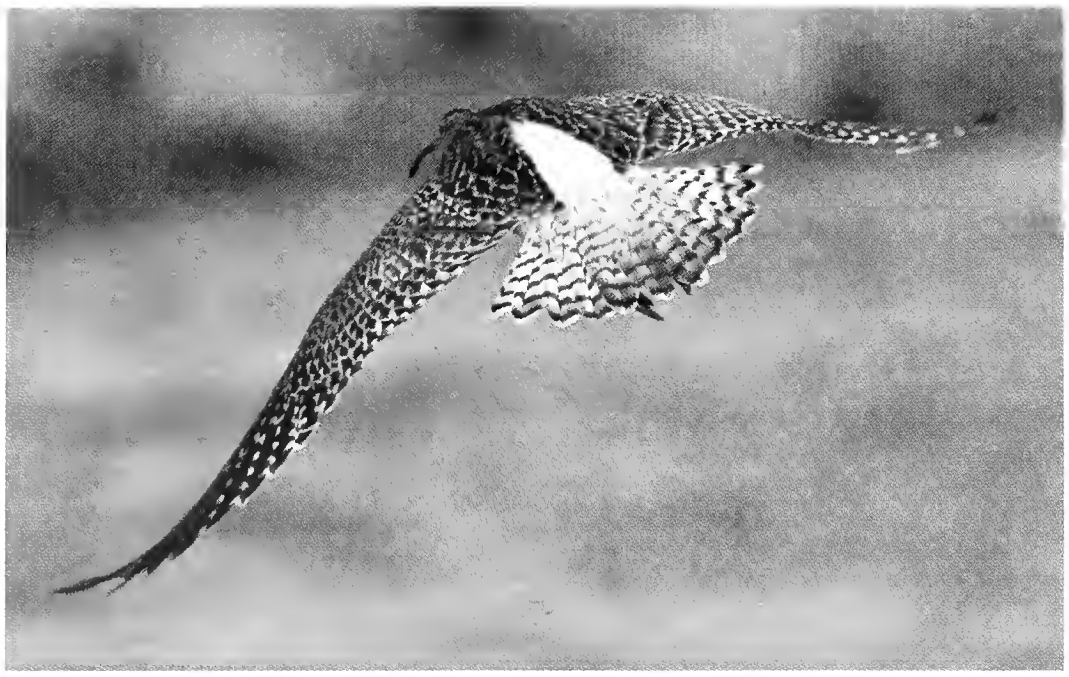


Figure 5. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult male, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 14 February 2016 (R. Hughes). Note pale lower rump with relatively few thin shaft-streaks and black-and-white 'laddered' outer tail, with darker central tail feathers.

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, présumé mâle adulte, baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 14 février 2016 (R. Hughes). Noter le bas du croupion pâle avec assez peu de traits rachials minces, extérieur de la queue quadrillée noir-et-blanc, et rectrices centrales plus sombres.

Figure 6. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult female (right), with adult Whimbrel *N. p. phaeopus* showing differences in rump and tail pattern, and larger body size in *alboaxillaris*, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 21 February 2016 (Callan Cohen)

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, présumé femelle adulte (à droite), avec *N. p. phaeopus* adulte montrant les différences de pattern du croupion et de la queue et la taile plus grande de *alboaxillaris* ; baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 21 février 2016 (Callan Cohen)

had fine blackish shaft-streaks over the terminal 15% of the length of the axillaries (Figs. 3–4). The underwing primary-coverts were finely barred grey. The axillaries in nominate *phaeopus* are barred blackish brown and white.

2. Upper rump and lower back clean white, although there was a suggestion of darker centres at the base of the white back feathers in some photographs (Fig. 5). The lower rump showed some narrow dark streak-centred feathers, which varied in visibility, but close

Figure 7. Steppe Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, presumed adult male (right) with Whimbrel *N. p. phaeopus*, Maputo Bay, Mozambique, 21 February 2016 (Callan Cohen). Note clean white underwings, axillaries, vent and undertail-coverts of *alboaxillaris*; also more narrowly barred and paler tail, narrow flank bars and cleaner-toned upper breast and face.

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris*, présumé mâle adulte (à droite) avec *N. p. phaeopus*, baie de Maputo, Mozambique, 21 février 2016 (Callan Cohen). Noter le dessous de l'aile, les axillaires, le bas-ventre et les sous-caudales blanc pur de *alboaxillaris* ; de plus la queue plus étroitement barrée et plus pâle, les rayures aux flancs plus étroites et le haut de la poitrine et la face plus nets.

examination of photographs showed max. 3 on the female and eight on the male (Figs. 5–6). The uppertail-coverts were 'laddered' with clean black-and-white bars, and differed from the lower rump feathers (the two have been confused in some texts). The *phaeopus* showed shaft-streaks on the upper rump and many lanceolate shaft-streaks and chevrons on the lower rump.

3. Outer tail feathers were clean white in the male (Fig. 5) and greyish white (with a buff wash in some lights) tipped white in the female (Fig. 6); both were 'laddered' with narrow black bars on both webs over their entire length. The tail was very pale but showed contrast between the darker central rectrices (patterned with pale grey and black 'laddering') and paler outer feathers (Fig. 5). In contrast, most *phaeopus* had pale to mid-brown tails, barred black and relatively uniform (Figs. 6–7). Some *phaeopus* had a pale outer web to the basal third of the outermost tail feathers.
4. The outer web of the fifth primary (from the innermost) had five clean pale greyish-brown spots, which reached the outermost edge of the web. No *phaeopus* exhibited this feature, although a few had similar but very faint barring.
5. The breast was finely streaked blackish brown on a clean white or greyish-white background, the streaking ending in a pectoral band higher up the breast than in many, although not all, *phaeopus* (Figs. 1, 2, 4 and 7).
6. Both *alboaxillaris* appeared more bulky—'tubby'—than nominate *phaeopus*, and had noticeably broader and longer wings in flight, with longer secondaries and more paddle-

shaped primaries. At rest, the primaries extended beyond the tail in the female.

Key identification features were outlined by Lowe (1921) in the type description: 'axillaries, under-wing coverts and undertail coverts were pure white. The back and rump were also pure white with no hidden spots as in *Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*, while the fore neck and upper pectoral region were marked with thin streaks of brown, not so numerous nor extending so far down the breast and flanks as in typical *N. phaeopus*.' Examination of the type series in the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHMUK), exhibited by Lowe in 1921 reveals that only one of the four specimens—the holotype (NHMUK 1903.10.14.292)—has a completely unstreaked rump (N. J. Collar pers. comm.; A. J. Prater *in litt.* 2016). The other three exhibit minor streaking on the lower rump, similar to the birds in Maputo, which would probably be invisible in the field but is evident in good-quality digital images. C. S. Roselaar (*in* Cramp & Simmons 1983: 496) gave the most detailed description of the diagnostic features, which fit very well with the characters observed in the birds in Maputo. Both birds also matched illustrations of *alboaxillaris* in Corso *et al.* (2014).

Behaviour

In addition to differences in plumage and structure, the male displayed a distinctive behavioural trait: an aggressive stance in which it lowered its head, fanned and twisted its tail through nearly 90°, in response to Grey-headed Gulls *Larus cirrocephalus* attempting kleptoparasitism and towards other Whimbrels entering its feeding territory. This was not observed in other Whimbrels at Maputo, but a similar display is described for *phaeopus* near its nest (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

Both birds also behaved differently from nominate *phaeopus* at the high-tide roost. When disturbed, all *phaeopus* would take flight, often leaving the *alboaxillaris* to stroll away alone: both were often very confiding, permitting close approach. The two were never seen interacting with one another. The male's territory covered a very public area of beach, which is a religious site, frequently used for baptisms in the shallow surf, with often tens or hundreds of people present. The male Steppe Whimbrel completely ignored them, often casually feeding within a few metres of worshippers.

Vocalisations

The male called frequently, mostly giving the 'bubbling' call (Cramp & Simmons 1983) or the 'low trill' (Skeel 1978), but this was truncated to two phrases, with sometimes a third additional trill (the latter recorded; see http://www.xeno-canto.org/308217). When the bird called at other Whimbrels flying over its feeding territory, it uttered a much more forceful, three or four-part bubbling call, comprising two or three trills rolling into one another, followed by a short pause and a more staccato third / fourth phrase, almost akin to the flight call. The many nominate *phaeopus* 'bubbling' calls heard consisted of a trailing series of up to 14 phrases; other Whimbrels have only very occasionally been heard to utter a three-part call with the pause–staccato phrase.

It is worth noting that the 'bubbling' call is frequently used by Whimbrels in the southern African and Indian Ocean wintering areas. This call is little known to European birders, who are usually more familiar with the seven-note flight call used on passage, leading to some misidentifications of Whimbrel making the 'bubbling' call as Eurasian Curlew since it is very similar to the more well-known song of that species (R. Safford *in litt.* 2016).

History of the taxon

Although the earliest specimens were collected in Russia and Central Asia, the taxon was described from specimens collected later in eastern Africa. The description of *N. p. alboaxillaris* is in the minutes of a dinner of the British Ornithologists' Club in April 1921, authored by Percy Lowe. He exhibited four specimens, all now in Tring:

- NHMUK 1882.12.3.2. Collected in Mombasa, Kenya, by Rev. H. F. Buxton. Undated.
- NHMUK 1894.2.19.99. Collected on Zanzibar, Tanzania, in 'winter' by Dr Kirk (*per* H. Seebohm). Undated.
- NHMUK 1897.2.26.21. Collected in Mozambique (no precise locality) in 1897 by W. A. Churchill (British Consul to Mozambique).
- NHMUK 1903.10.14.292 (holotype). Collected at Inhambane, Mozambique,

on 25 September 1906, by C. H. B. Grant (presented by C. D. Rudd). That a specimen collected in 1906 has a registration number starting '1903' is a consequence of it forming part of a large collection made over an extended period that reached the museum in batches, the first of which arrived in 1903; specimens were subsequently categorised according to taxonomy, not by date (Sclater 1911: 209). The specimen was specified by Sclater (1912: 60), confirming the collection details. Warren (1966: 9) gives the collection date as '25 Sept. 1900'. It is probable that she misread the specimen label '06' for '00', and was perhaps induced to do so by the seeming contradiction between collecting date and registration number (R. Prŷs-Jones *in litt.* 2016).

The type description refers to both the plumage characters and the restricted distribution of the four specimens, which was considered especially important in conjunction with Meinertzhagen's record of Whimbrel breeding on Flat Island, Mauritius, in November 1910 (Meinertzhagen 1912). The latter record was considered by the editor of *Ibis* as needing confirmation (editorial footnote in Meinertzhagen 1912: 102) and is now generally regarded as dubious (R. Safford pers. comm.). In light of what we now know of Meinertzhagen's fraudulent behaviour (Knox 1993, Rasmussen & Collar 1999, Rasmussen & Prŷs-Jones 2003, Garfield 2007) there is good reason to be cautious. Flat Island is now well known and there have been no further records (R. Safford pers. comm.). Nevertheless, the Mauritian record cannot be completely discounted, as a Whimbrel collected on 6 November 1928 on Madagascar had two well-developed eggs in its ovaries (Lavauden 1932 *per* R. Safford) and there is strong evidence—but no proof—of Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* and Eurasian Curlew breeding in the austral summer in southern Africa (Hockey & Douie 1995).

The role Meinertzhagen's report played in the description of *alboaxillaris* is unclear, but it may well have aroused Lowe's curiosity to search through Whimbrel specimens from eastern Africa. Clancey, who knew Meinertzhagen personally (D. Allan pers. comm.), later commented 'When Lowe described the form in 1921 he believed that it bred in the lowlands of East Africa and on the island of Mauritius' (Clancey 1964a). If Meinertzhagen's report was fabrication then this was a remarkable twist of fate.

The taxon was not recorded in Africa after 1906 until two were shot in Durban Bay, South Africa, in 1961 (Clancey 1964a,b); both specimens are preserved in the Durban Natural Science Museum (DNSM 1043–1044; Allport & Allan 2016). A female was subsequently collected at Mikindani Bay, Tanzania, on 19 April 1965 (RMNH.AVES 31034; Naturalis, Leiden, *per* C. S. Roselaar). Finally, there is a recently identified specimen, mounted for public display in the Museu de Historia Natural, Maputo, without collection details, but which may have been collected alongside seven Whimbrels taken in 1941–57 at Maputo Bay, including two birds *c.*1.5 km from the location in 2016 (Allport *et al.* 2016). A photograph claimed to be of this taxon from the Durban area (Brooke 1974) shows that ornithologists were aware of the form in the 1970s (J. C. Sinclair pers. comm.), but the picture is too poor for certain identification.

The known range in the region is therefore East and south-eastern Africa. The taxon is stated as occurring on the Indian Ocean islands and Madagascar (e.g. CMS 2014) but the only notional evidence of this is from Meinertzhagen (1912) in Mauritius (see above). There are no records from Madagascar (Hawkins & Safford 2013).

It is unclear when the records from the breeding grounds were linked to the African specimens and the type description. Details of specimens from Russia and Central Asia are patchy, and analysis is mostly in Russian. Morozov (1998, 2000) provided the best summary of the history of *alboaxillaris* records and distribution. The first specimens from the Asian steppes were collected around Orenburg and Samara by Eversmann (1866) in 1861–62 and Ryabinin (1875) in 1852–68 (specimens in the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg; ZISP). Russian ornithologists mentioned the form as early as 1934 (Buturlin 1934, Gladkov 1951), but it was only when Gladkov (1951) became widely available in English translation (in Dementiev *et al.* 1966) that the link between the records from East Africa with those from Central Asia and Russia emerged in the wider literature.

Status

N. p. alboaxillaris has never been reported as common. Sightings and specimens collected from the steppe zone were made until 1974 (Morozov 2000), but as concern grew for the flagship birds of the steppe grasslands, such as Slender-billed Curlew *N. tenuirostris*, in the 1980s and ornithological research in the region intensified, it was clear that *alboaxillaris* was very rare indeed, and in 1994 it was declared extinct (Belik 1994).

However, in 1997, during efforts to find Slender-billed Curlew, 5–6 pairs of *alboaxillaris* were found breeding in Russia, east of the southern end of the Urals, in wet valley grasslands in the steppe zone (Morozov 1997, 1998, 2000; V. Morozov *in litt.* 2016). The area was revisited in 1998, and possibly as many as 11 pairs were found at a nearby locality (Zöckler 1998, Zakharov 2006 *per* V. Morozov; C. Zöckler *in litt.* 2016). The 15 km^2 of floodplain meadows was revisited and 3–5 pairs were found breeding in 1999–2000, with 5–6 pairs in 2001, one or two pairs in 2002 (Zakharov 2006 *per* V. Morozov) and eight pairs in 2007 (Morozov & Kornev 2009). In addition, a pair was found nesting at Abdulino, in north-west Orenburg Oblast (near Polibino, where a specimen with a brood patch was taken in May 1896: Karamzin 1901) on 10 May 2009 (Morozov & Kornev 2009). This is the last documented sighting; it is unclear if anyone has revisited the main site since.

As part of further Slender-billed Curlew searches, 11 birds considered to be possibly *alboaxillaris* were observed on the north shore of the Caspian Sea within a group of 300 Whimbrels in August 2010 (Köhler *et al.* 2011, 2012).

Based on the above, in 2014 the Expert Working Group on Numeniini for the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) estimated that the global population of *alboaxillaris* was 100 individuals or fewer (CMS 2014) and probably declining, making it the least known and rarest extant taxon of the Numeniini in the world.

Breeding range and phenology

Little is known concerning the breeding range of *alboaxillaris*. There are just two proven breeding localities, near the village of Baimovo in Chelyabinsk region, in the southern foothills of Russia's Urals (53°45'N 58°50'E; Zöckler 1998, Morozov 2000) and at Polibino, *c.*400 km to the west. There are other records in the breeding season, including specimens with brood patches, from two localities in Kazakhstan, 250 km to the east, and Chapaevo, 600 km to the south-west (Morozov 2000). All records are from damp areas, in broad open river valleys in the steppe region, rather than in the more extensive dry steppe grasslands (Morozov 2000).

The known and suspected breeding range of *alboaxillaris* lies south of the eastern part of the 'West Siberian' range of *phaeopus* (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Tomkovich 2008). The exact limits of the range of nominate *phaeopus* remain to be established (Tomkovich 2008, Lappo *et al.* 2012), but there is no evidence of an overlap in breeding range of the two forms. However, it is clear that Whimbrels breeding further north pass over the breeding grounds of *alboaxillaris* in some numbers en route to their own breeding grounds in the southern tundra and taiga zone. Many accounts from Central Asia refer to *phaeopus* on passage; most recently Wassink (2015) described *phaeopus* as a common passage migrant throughout Kazakhstan, and specimens are available from within the breeding range of *alboaxillaris* presumably involving birds on spring passage (Engelmoer & Roselaar 1998: Table 86, note 5).

Breeding phenology can be tentatively inferred from the hatching dates of 25–26 May 1997 (Morozov 2000) and from a chick collected on 16 May 2007 (ZMMU 261), and compared with incubation, pairing and arrival times of *phaeopus* in Scotland and Iceland (Grant 1989, Gunnarson 2010). This suggests that *alboaxillaris* arrives on its breeding grounds in early to mid April, 3–4 weeks ahead of nominate *phaeopus* (Gunnarson 2010). This fits with mid-April collection dates of Whimbrels in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (Engelmoer & Roselaar 1998). In Shetland, Whimbrels arrive around 24–26 April, either as established pairs or with males arriving *c.*4 days before females (Grant 1989). Skeel (1979) reports that singing commences as females arrive, and in Shetland pairing and egg laying commences within ten days. The migration schedule for nominate *phaeopus* is not very clear in Central Asia, but it is probable that the birds pass through the breeding grounds of

alboaxillaris as the latter is establishing territories during the last two weeks of April (Engelmoer & Roselaar 1998).

Taxonomic status

N. p. alboaxillaris has had a mixed taxonomic history. Several authors subsumed it within nominate *phaeopus*, without explanation (e.g. Meinertzhagen 1930, Peters 1934, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1962, Vaurie 1965, Urban *et al.* 1986). However, the majority of handbooks accept its validity (e.g. Cramp & Simmons 1983, Hayman *et al.* 1986, van Gils & Wiersma 1996, van Gils *et al.* 2016).

There is also reference to individuals with intermediate characters. Morozov (2000) assigned 26 fully grown specimens held in the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University (ZMMU) and ZISP, as *alboaxillaris*; of these, five have pure white axillaries, while the rest show 'some brownish flecks'. All 26 are reported to have a pure white lower back and 'short tail coverts'. Of eight additional birds reported as 'transitional', all have flecks on the axillaries and three have flecks on the upper back, but it is unclear if these are the features used to assign the specimens as transitional.

C. S. Roselaar (*in* Cramp & Simmons 1983) stated that 'Nominate *phaeopus* and *alboaxillaris* probably intergrade somewhere in south-east European USSR, as intermediately coloured birds with only sparsely marked axillaries, under-wing coverts and flanks occur, sometimes migrating as far west as central Europe.' No reference is given in the text, but intergrades were reported until 1969 on passage in Hungary (Sterbetz 1995). However, Engelmoer & Roselaar (1998: 208, 211) make no mention of intergrades; indeed, having undertaken a thorough analysis, they make much of the distinctiveness of *alboaxillaris*. They include birds with white axillaries and those with 'brown bars along one side with one or two bars on top of the other' as *alboaxillaris*.

Ranges of Whimbrel taxa

N. phaeopus is polytypic, comprising a stepped cline range of taxa across the northern Holarctic, with the majority of its breeding range lying in the tundra and northern taiga zone above 60°N (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Taxonomists variously recognise three (*phaeopus*, *variegatus* and *hudsonicus*) to six forms breeding in different parts of the tundra and northern taiga. Nominate *phaeopus* can include *islandicus* and *rogachevae* (and *alboaxillaris*—see above); *variegatus* is consistently treated as a single subspecies; *hudsonicus* can include *rufiventris* (see van Gils *et al.* 2016).

Engelmoer & Roselaar (1998) undertook the most complete and consistent recent examination of morphology and demonstrated that there is a cline in size in the tundra and taiga breeding forms, ranging from the largest in the west, in Iceland *(N. p. islandicus*) and Fennoscandia and western Siberia (nominate *phaeopus*) (both of which migrate to Africa) through *variegatus* in eastern Siberia (migrating to South-East Asia and Australasia), to the North American forms *rufiventris*, breeding in Alaska, and *hudsonicus* in the Hudson Bay area (both migrating to South America), which are the smallest. Note that the recently described and very poorly known form *rogachevae* from central Siberia (Tomkovich 2008; non-breeding area unknown) was not covered by Engelmoer & Roselaar (1998).

There is also a trend in coloration. The Icelandic breeding population is palest and there is increasing depth to the underwing and axillaries barring and darkness of rump coloration within the breeding range of some subspecies—notably *phaeopus*—and across the tundra and taiga breeding forms in a cline of increasing dark coloration from west to east, the extreme being the wholly dark *hudsonicus*.

This cline in coloration and size in the tundra and taiga breeding forms is clear, but there is scant mention in any taxonomic work of how *alboaxillaris* fits within these otherwise straightforward trends. In fact, *alboaxillaris* is the largest and palest taxon, and breeds to the south of all the other taxa. Thus, it lies outwith the cline and at a longitude where Whimbrels breeding further north are quite dark-plumaged west Siberian *phaeopus* (and probably the birds wintering alongside *alboaxillaris* in eastern Africa). Analysing biometrics Engelmoer & Roselaar (1998: Fig. 96) found *alboaxillaris* 'clustered' with populations of *islandicus* from Iceland and the British Isles, and are morphologically more dissimilar from a subsample of *phaeopus* taken in Kazakhstan (which are presumably birds en route to the nearest adjacent west Siberian breeding areas further north) than *islandicus*.

In summary, across most if its breeding range, Whimbrel varies clinally and a varying number of subspecies are recognised that intergrade more or less 'continuously' into one another across its northern Holarctic, mostly tundra breeding, distribution. However, there is an additional and separate outlying taxon, *alboaxillaris*, which does not fit this pattern. *N. p. alboaxillaris* is also sympatric with *phaeopus* at the time of mate choice, which together with the possible differences in voice suggest that its taxonomic position merits further attention.

Next steps

Basic identification information for Steppe Whimbrel is badly needed. The first high-quality illustration of *alboaxillaris* was published by Corso *et al.* (2014). To date, there is no consolidated information on the taxon, nor any full description of its field characters. The species account in *Roberts* (Turpie 2005), the authoritative work on southern African birds, treats *alboaxillaris* as if extinct, providing scant detail and overlooking subsequent important work such as Morozov (1997 *et seq.*). It is not covered by Chittenden *et al.* (2012) for the same reason (D. Allan pers. comm.) or by modern field guides, except Ayé *et al.* (2012), which includes a basic illustration. Until the birds in Maputo were discovered, there were no published field photographs and very few field ornithologists have had the opportunity to observe it in the wild.

The birds in Maputo have aroused interest in Steppe Whimbrel and it is hoped that this will lead to a better understanding of its distribution, numbers and taxonomic status. DNA analysis of Whimbrel and other *Numenius* is underway, to examine the latter question in more detail.

The limited evidence suggests that *alboaxillaris* spends the austral summer in southern Mozambique and on the east coast of South Africa, with a small number of sites, such as Maputo Bay, being of special importance (Allport & Allan 2016, Allport *et al.* 2016). Given that the most recent population estimate of *alboaxillaris* is 100 individuals or fewer (CMS 2014), it may occur over a small area of coast, so observers are strongly encouraged to search carefully, especially in this area, in September–March. Finding additional birds is a critical first step in research and conservation action to ensure the continued survival of this form, which is undoubtedly yet another taxon of *Numenius* on the brink (Pearce-Higgins *et al.* submitted).

Acknowledgements

Many people assisted in the search for Whimbrels in Maputo. Callan Cohen and Ross Hughes, in particular, spent much time in the field and provided very useful photographs, and Felix Koimburi, Mariana Carvalho, Sue & Rob Lindsay-Rae, Bridget Crumpton, Jesper Morch, Edith Morch-Binnema and Kate Greany all helped with observations. Callan Cohen gave much time to analytical thinking, which was of enormous value. The identification and study of specimens was greatly abetted by David Allan, Tony Prater, Robert Prŷs-Jones and Richard Porter (from whom I received Corso *et al.* 2014), with advice and analysis of taxonomy from Nigel Collar and Lincoln Fishpool. Literature and other thoughts came from Roger Safford, Frank Hawkins, Colin Jackson, Vladimir Morozov, Pavel Tomkovich, Justin Jansen, Andrea Corso, Graeme Buchanan, John Fanshawe, Mark Cocker, Peter Köhler and Stuart Williams. My Whimbrel 'core team' were Nicola Crockford, Szabolcs Nagy, Phil Atkinson, Rhys Green and Nigel Clark. Christoph Zöckler kindly shared photographs and further details of the sightings in Russia in 1998. Vladimir Morozov generously shared up-to-date information and important details from texts available only in Russian. Finally, my wife Emma Brigham and the rest of the family withstood the unplanned shock of field work for six weeks. I thank them all.

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Received 20 April 2016; revision accepted 1 November 2016.

Bird observations along the Noumbi River, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville

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Observations ornithologiques au bord de la rivière Noumbi, Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Congo-Brazzaville. Un bref inventaire ornithologique de huit jours a été effectué en juillet 2013 le long de la rivière Noumbi, dans le Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Zone Importante pour la Conservation des Oiseaux au sud-ouest du Congo-Brazzaville. Des 78 espèces enregistrées, huit n'avaient pas encore été observées dans le parc, dont une classée comme Vulnérable (le Perroquet Jaco *Psittacus erithacus*). Avec ces additions, la liste pour le parc s'élève à 298 espèces. Ces résultats soulignent la nécessité de poursuivre les prospections sur le terrain afin d'améliorer les connaissances de l'avifaune de ce hotspot de la biodiversité.

Summary. A brief bird survey of eight days was carried out in July 2013 along the Noumbi River, within Conkouati-Douli National Park, an Important Bird Area in south-west Congo-Brazzaville. In total, 78 species were recorded, eight of which had not previously been observed in the park; one of these is classified as Vulnerable (Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*). With these additions, the bird list for Conkouati-Douli National Park currently numbers 298 species. These results highlight the need for further field work to improve knowledge of the avifauna of this biodiversity hotspot.

The avifauna of the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) remains incompletely known, partly due to the lack of resident ornithologists (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001). Moreover, political instability and violence in the 1990s have not encouraged birders to visit. At present, the country checklist includes 664 species with confirmed records (Dowsett *et al.* 2016).

Incomplete knowledge of the avifauna is particularly true for Conkouati-Douli National Park (CDNP), in the south-west (Fig. 1a). CDNP was gazetted as a faunal reserve in 1980 and classified as a national park in 1999, by Executive Order No. 99-136. The park is managed by the Ministère de l'Economie forestière et du Développement durable, in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society. Very few bird surveys have been undertaken in the area: the only efforts known to us are those of Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991) and Doumenge (1992), who reported on species recorded opportunistically in the western and eastern parts of the park, respectively. There are also unpublished reports of a brief survey in October–November 1996 (Cruickshank *c.*1997) and on occasional waterbird censuses at the lagoons (Mokoko Ikonga 2007). Additionally, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1989, 1991) carried out bird surveys in the nearby Kouilou River basin. Although monitoring programmes are operated by governmental bodies and NGOs for several natural resources (fisheries, oil extraction) and taxonomic groups (sea turtles, cetaceans, large terrestrial mammals) at CDNP (Devers & Vande weghe 2006), the avifauna has received relatively little attention to date and clearly merits further field work (Rainey *et al.* 2009).

F. Dowsett-Lemaire (*in litt.* 2016) compiled a tentative bird list for CDNP based on the surveys presented by Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991), Doumenge (1992) and especially Cruickshank (*c.*1997), of which only the list of species restricted to the Guinea-Congo forest biome has been published (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001). Dowsett-Lemaire (2001) commented that the number of confirmed species (288) was undoubtedly below the potential (probably >400)—the better surveyed Lower Kouilou basin, which has several habitat types in common with, and only half the surface area of CDNP, harbours 378 confirmed species.

CDNP has been recognised as an Important Bird Area, based on the presence of a breeding population of Rosy Bee-eaters *Merops malimbicus* and of 117 of the 200 species restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome recorded in Congo-Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001). Additionally, CDNP lies within the Secondary Endemic Bird Area 'Gabon–Cabinda Coast', which includes the distribution of Loango Weaver *Ploceus subpersonatus*, a restricted-range species (Bulens & Dowsett 2001). Finally, it was proposed as a Ramsar Site of International Importance (Heath

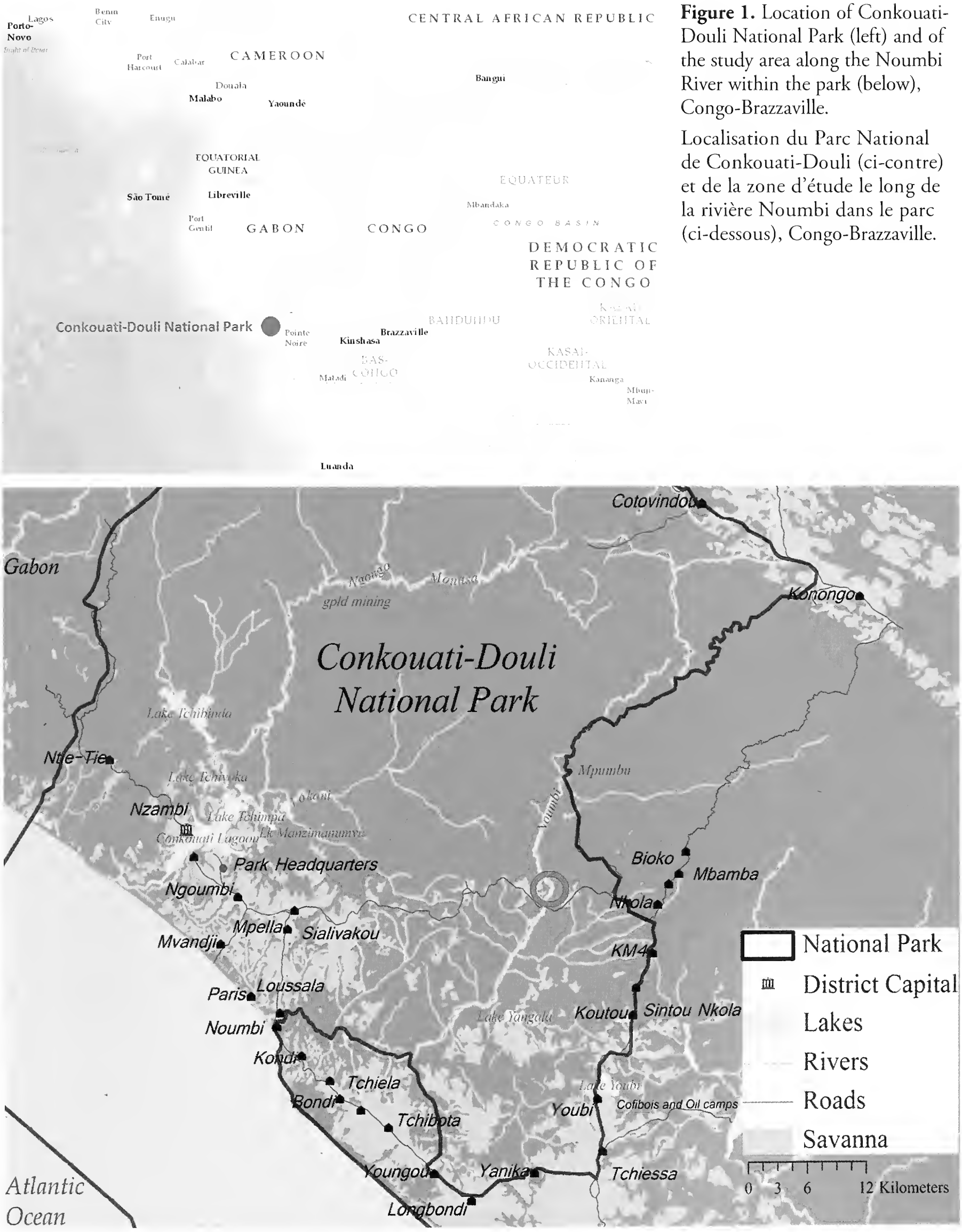

Figure 1. Location of Conkouati-Douli National Park (left) and of the study area along the Noumbi River within the park (below), Congo-Brazzaville.

Localisation du Parc National de Conkouati-Douli (ci-contre) et de la zone d'étude le long de la rivière Noumbi dans le parc (ci-dessous), Congo-Brazzaville.

2002) on the basis of a breeding population of African River Martin *Pseudochelidon eurystomina* (Maisels & Cruickshank 2000), a Data Deficient species, despite the fact that on the central African coast this martin is not water-dependent but breeds in dry sandy savannah.

This paper presents the results of a brief bird survey along the Noumbi River, in the eastern section of CDNP. At this location, a

project to reintroduce previously captive Mandrills *Mandrillus sphinx* into the wild has been undertaken since 2012 by the Jane Goodall Institute. The bird survey was part of wider fauna and flora inventories, aimed to gain knowledge of the biodiversity and environmental features of the forest area where Mandrills are to be released.

Study area

CDNP is situated within Kouilou administrative region, the south-westernmost part of Congo-Brazzaville (Fig. 1). The park lies between 03°23'–04°18'S and 11°06'–11°43'E. It is limited to the north and west by the international border with Gabon, to the east by the lower Kouilou basin, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 1). It covers 505,000 ha, 75% of which is terrestrial, from sea level to *c.*600 m on the Mayombe massif, in the north-east. Non-marine habitats include coastal and tall-grass savannahs, lagoons and rivers, and forests. CDNP's tropical forests, which form part of the Lower Guinean block, account for 73% of the land surface and comprise mangroves, littoral and sublittoral forests, and swamp and semi-evergreen rainforests. Together with the neighbouring Gamba-Mayumba ecoregion in coastal Gabon, CDNP is regarded as a critical hotspot for biodiversity in West-Central Africa, based on the richness of its flora, the large mammal populations (including African Manatee *Trichechus senegalensis*, Forest Elephant *Loxodonta africana cyclotis*, Central Chimpanzee *Pan t. troglodytes*, Western Lowland Gorilla *Gorilla g. gorilla* and other primates and ungulates) and sea turtle breeding sites (Devers & Vande weghe 2006).

Human population density in and around CDNP is low, but pressure on natural resources disproportionately exceeds local demands. Several logging concessions have operated in recent decades, even following the park's creation. Apart from changing the structure and composition of the forest, mining and logging activities have facilitated human exploitation of other resources. Hunting and bushmeat trade are major conservation concerns and are thought to be reducing populations of medium-sized and large mammals at an unsustainable rate (Wieland 2008), provisioning the metropolitan area of Pointe-Noire (*c.*1,000,000 inhabitants). In general, birds are not the primary target of such hunting activities, at least not in forest tracts more distant from villages (Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga 1991).

The Noumbi is one of the largest rivers in southern Congo-Brazzaville, after the Koilou. It meanders through the eastern sector of CDNP, successively traversing Mayombe forest, the forest–savannah mosaic and the coastal forests and shrublands near the river mouth. Our field work was carried out along a 6 km-long stretch in the middle section of the river (04°01'S 11°37'E). Here the riverbed is 15–20 m wide, lined by a narrow strip of secondary gallery forest (Fig. 2), temporarily flooded and dominated by *Raphia* spp., *Berlinia* spp., *Alstonia congensis*, *Uapaca heudelotii*, *Coelocaryon botryoides*, *Guibourtia* spp. and *Sclerosperma mannii*. This gallery is embedded within a 2–4 km-wide dense transitional rainforest between the pure Mayombe and sublittoral forests, giving way to patches of savanna (Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga 1991). The current zoning of the park includes this area as an 'ecodevelopment' sector, where fishing and gathering of non-timber forest products are permitted (Weiland 2008). The closest permanent human settlement is 20 km away, but there is regular activity by fishermen in the area.

Methods

Bird species were recorded on a fixed itinerary of 4.6 km along the Noumbi River. As there are no terrestrial routes in this part of CDNP, we used a small rowing boat (pirogue). The field team consisted of three people, two scanning the riverside and canopy, and noting observed species, and the third directing navigation. The boat was paddled at a very low speed (2–3 km/hour), and frequent stops were made to identify passing flocks, bird parties or particular individuals under difficult light conditions (birds high up in the canopy or in the shade). Each survey began in the morning (at *c.*09.00 hrs) and lasted until the afternoon (14.00–15.00 hrs). Each day, we made short walks from the riverbank into the adjacent forest, using paths made by fishermen and small clearances created by elephants (Fig. 3). The same itinerary was followed every day, upstream first and downstream subsequently, and was repeated daily between 17 and 24 July 2013. We did not count the number of birds, but a relative index of species abundance was inferred based on the daily frequency of occurrence.

Figure 2. Dense gallery forest along the Noumbi River, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville, July 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Forêt galerie dense le long de la rivière Noumbi, Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Congo-Brazzaville, juillet 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Figure 3. Small clearings created or maintained by elephants provide habitat patches for a number of bird species; Noumbi River, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville, July 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Les petites clairières, créées ou maintenues par les éléphants, offrent un habitat favorable à de nombreuses espèces d'oiseaux ; rivière Noumbi, Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Congo-Brazzaville, juillet 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Figure 4. Adult male Black-headed Bee-eater *Merops breweri*, Noumbi River, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville, July 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Guêpier à tête noire *Merops breweri*, mâle adulte, rivière Noumbi, Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Congo-Brazzaville, juillet 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Figure 5. Adult Banded Prinia *Prinia bairdii*, Noumbi River, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville, July 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Prinia rayée *Prinia bairdii*, adulte, rivière Noumbi, Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Congo-Brazzaville, juillet 2013 (Nerea Ruiz de Azua)

Birds were mainly identified visually, using Borrow & Demey (2001, 2010). Occasionally, photographs of individual birds were taken, the identification subsequently being confirmed with the aid of online image databases (http://www.africanbirdclub.org/afbid/; http://ibc.lynxeds.com/). We did not rely on vocalisations alone for identification.

Results and Discussion

We recorded 78 species, of which eight are additions to the avifauna of CDNP and 50 (64%) are restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome. All of these are shown in Appendix 1, with the complete (previously unpublished) checklist for CDNP prepared by F. Dowsett-Lemaire (*in litt.* 2016) and two recent updates (see below).

Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* (classified as Vulnerable) was fairly abundant in gallery forest, where a communal roost of *c.*100 individuals was located. During the daytime the flocks dispersed into the forest, where the species' presence was much less apparent. The population of this parrot in Congo-Brazzaville might be stable, although local declines attributed to trapping activities have been reported here (Martin *et al.* 2014) and in neighbouring countries (Hart *et al.* 2016). Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii* was irregularly encountered; this species, which was previously considered Near Threatened (Stattersfield & Capper 2000), has been downgraded to Least Concern due to its large range and estimated global population size above the criterion threshold, although major declines have been reported in West Africa (BirdLife International 2016). Rosy Bee-eater *Merops malimbicus* was observed once: a group of ten in flight over the river on 17 July. Maisels & Cruickshank (2000) discovered a colony of 1,000–1,500 birds in the coastal sector of CDNP. Although the species is not classified as globally threatened at present, the distribution of its breeding colonies and its conservation status are poorly known (Fry & Kirwan 2016) and better knowledge may lead to its reclassification. Several Banded Prinias *Prinia bairdii* (Fig. 5) were observed at small clearings created by elephants in the forest–river contact strip, on 23–24 July. The species was apparently not known previously from CDNP and distribution maps show a small gap in south-west Congo-Brazzaville and coastal south-east Gabon (e.g. Borrow & Demey 2014).

Dowsett-Lemaire (2001) reviewed the available data and compiled a list of 288 species, based almost entirely on the survey by Cruickshank (*c.*1997), who identified *c.*265 species. Additional species were taken from Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991) and Doumenge (1992), who produced much shorter lists with a higher proportion of errors (Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2016). Since then, two additions have been published (Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: Rainey *et al.* 2009; Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*: N. Honig in *Bull. ABC* 20: 97). The results of our brief and local survey suggest that the CDNP bird list is still far from complete, and that the park deserves more extensive field efforts.

Acknowledgements

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire kindly made her unpublished checklist for CDNP available to us. Comments by Ron Demey, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, Bruno Portier and Hugo Rainey greatly improved the draft. Invaluable help was received from the staff of the Jane Goodall Institute in Congo-Brazzaville, with special thanks to Debby Cox, Noel Kiyindou, Fernando Turmo and Miles Woodruff. Laura Mari and Eduard Sanz were excellent teammates during the field work.

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Received 4 July 2015; revision accepted 23 November 2016.

Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in Conkouati-Douli National Park, Congo-Brazzaville.
(Dowsett-Lemaire 2001 and *in litt.* 2016, with a few additions from Rainey *et al.* 2009, Honig *in Bull. ABC* 20: 97 and this study).
Species recorded along the Noumbi River in July 2013 have a coded encounter rate; additions to the list are denoted *.
Sequence and taxonomy generally follow Dowsett *et al.* (2016), with a few amendments (*cf.* Borrow & Demey 2014).

Status in Congo-Brazzaville (Dowsett *et al.* 2016): R = resident; B = breeding confirmed; M = intra-African migrant; P = breeds in Palearctic; W = winters (non-breeding season); V = vagrant.

IUCN threat status (BirdLife International 2016): VU = Vulnerable; NT = Near Threatened; DD = Data Deficient.

Biome: GC = restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001).

Encounter rate: c = common or fairly common (encountered several times per day or on most days); u = uncommon (irregularly encountered); r = rare (rarely encountered).

Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées au Parc National de Conkouati-Douli, Congo-Brazzaville.
(Dowsett-Lemaire 2001 et *in litt.* 2016, avec quelques ajouts de Rainey *et al.* 2009, Honig *in Bull. ABC* 20: 97 et cette étude).
Les espèces observées sur la rivière Noumbi en juillet 2013 ont un taux de rencontre codé ; les additions à la liste sont marquées d'un *.
L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent en général Dowsett *et al.* (2016), avec quelques changements (*cf.* Borrow & Demey 2014).

Statut au Congo-Brazzaville (Dowsett *et al.* 2016) : R = résident ; B = reproduction confirmée ; M = migrateur intra-africain ; P = espèce nichant dans la région paléarctique ; W = hivernant (en dehors de la saison de reproduction) ; V = espèce occasionnelle.

Statut de conservation UICN (BirdLife International 2016) : VU = Vulnérable ; NT = Quasi menacé ; DD = Données insuffisantes.

Biome : GC = confiné au biome des forêts guinéo-congolaises (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001).

Taux de rencontre : c = commune ou assez commune (notée quotidiennement ou presque) ; u = peu fréquent (irrégulièrement notée) ; r = rare (rarement notée).

		Status in Congo-Brazzaville	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
PODICIPEDIDAE					
Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	RB			u
PELECANIDAE					
Great White Pelican	*Pelecanus onocrotalus*	M			
PHALACROCORACIDAE					
Long-tailed Cormorant	*Microcarbo africanus*	R			
ANHINGIDAE					
African Darter	*Anhinga rufa*	R			
ARDEIDAE					
White-crested Tiger Heron	*Tigriornis leucolopha*	RB		GC	
Squacco Heron	*Ardeola ralloides*	R/PW			
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	RB			
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	R/PW			
Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	R			
Black-headed Heron	*Ardea melanocephala*	RB			
Goliath Heron	*Ardea goliath*	R			
Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	R/P			
Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	R/PW			
SCOPIDAE					
Hamerkop	*Scopus umbretta*	RB			u
CICONIIDAE					
African Openbill	*Anastomus lamelligerus*	M			
Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*	R			
THRESKIORNITHIDAE					
Hadada Ibis	*Bostrychia hagedash*	R			
ANATIDAE					
Hartlaub's Duck	*Pteronetta hartlaubii*	R		GC	u
African Pygmy Goose	*Nettapus auritus*	R			
PANDIONIDAE					
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	P			
ACCIPITRIDAE					
Bat Hawk	*Macheiramphus alcinus*	R			
Black-shouldered Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	R			
Yellow-billed Kite	*Milvus migrans parasitus*	MB			
African Fish Eagle	*Haliaeetus vocifer*	RB			r
Palm-nut Vulture	*Gypohierax angolensis*	RB			c
Black-breasted Snake Eagle	*Circaetus pectoralis*	R			
Congo Serpent Eagle	*Dryotriorchis spectabilis*	RB		GC	
African Harrier Hawk	*Polyboroides typus*	R			c
African Goshawk	*Accipiter tachiro toussenelli*	R			
Red-thighed Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter erythropus*	R		GC	
Black Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter melanoleucus*	R			u
Long-tailed Hawk	*Urotriorchis macrourus*	RB			
Red-necked Buzzard	*Buteo auguralis*	RB			
Cassin's Hawk Eagle	*Aquila africana*	R			
Crowned Eagle	*Stephanoaetus coronatus*	RB	NT		
NUMIDIDAE					
Black Guineafowl	*Agelastes niger*	R		GC	
Helmeted Guineafowl	*Numida meleagris*	R			
PHASIANIDAE					
Latham's Forest Francolin	*Peliperdix lathami*	RB		GC	
Scaly Francolin	*Pternistis squamatus*	R			
TURNICIDAE					
Common Buttonquail	*Turnix sylvaticus*	R			
Black-rumped Buttonquail	*Turnix hottentottus*	M			
RALLIDAE					
*Nkulengu Rail	*Himantornis haematopus*	R		GC	r
Black Crake	*Amaurornis flavirostra*	RB			u
SAROTHRURIDAE					
White-spotted Flufftail	*Sarothrura pulchra*	R		GC	
HELIORNITHIDAE					
African Finfoot	*Podica senegalensis*	RB			u
OTIDIDAE					
Black-bellied Bustard	*Lissotis melanogaster*	RB			
JACANIDAE					
African Jacana	*Actophilornis africanus*	RB			
BURHINIDAE					
Water Thick-knee	*Burhinus vermiculatus*	R			
GLAREOLIDAE					
Temminck's Courser	*Cursorius temminckii*	R			

		Status in Congo-Brazzaville	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
CHARADRIIDAE					
Grey Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*	P			
White-headed Lapwing	*Vanellus albiceps*	RB			
Senegal Lapwing	*Vanellus lugubris*	MB			u
SCOLOPACIDAE					
Sanderling	*Calidris alba*	P			
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*	P			
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*	P			
Eurasian Curlew	*Numenius arquata*	P	NT		
Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	P			
Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	P			
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	PW			
Ruddy Turnstone	*Arenaria interpres*	P			
LARIDAE					
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	P			
Royal Tern	*Thalasseus maximus*	R			
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	P			
Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*	M			
COLUMBIDAE					
African Green Pigeon	*Treron calvus*	RB			u
Blue-headed Wood Dove	*Turtur brehmeri*	RB		GC	u
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	*Turtur afer*	RB			u
Tambourine Dove	*Turtur tympanistria*	RB			
Western Bronze-naped Pigeon	*Columba iriditorques*	R		GC	
Afep Pigeon	*Columba unicincta*	R		GC	c
Red-eyed Dove	*Streptopelia semitorquata*	RB			
PSITTACIDAE					
Grey Parrot	*Psittacus erithacus*	RB	VU	GC	c
*Red-fronted Parrot	*Poicephalus gulielmi*	RB			u
Red-headed Lovebird	*Agapornis pullarius*	R			
MUSOPHAGIDAE					
Great Blue Turaco	*Corythaeola cristata*	R			
Green Turaco	*Tauraco persa*	R		GC	u
Yellow-billed Turaco	*Tauraco macrorhynchus*	R		GC	u
CUCULIDAE					
Jacobin Cuckoo	*Clamator jacobinus*	V			
Thick-billed Cuckoo	*Pachycoccyx audeberti*	R			
Red-chested Cuckoo	*Cuculus solitarius*	MB			
Black Cuckoo	*Cuculus clamosus*	MB			
Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo	*Cercococcyx olivinus*	RB		GC	
Yellow-throated Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx flavigularis*	R		GC	
Klaas's Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx klaas*	RB			
African Emerald Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx cupreus*	R			
Dideric Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx caprius*	M			
Yellowbill	*Ceuthmochares aereus*	R			c
Gabon Coucal	*Centropus anselli*	R		GC	u
Black Coucal	*Centropus grillii*	RB			
Senegal Coucal	*Centropus senegalensis*	RB			
STRIGIDAE					
Spotted Eagle Owl	*Bubo africanus*	R			
Vermiculated Fishing Owl	*Scotopelia bouvieri*	RB		GC	
African Wood Owl	*Strix woodfordii*	R			
Sjöstedt's Owlet	*Glaucidium sjöstedti*	R		GC	
Marsh Owl	*Asio capensis*	M			
CAPRIMULGIDAE					
Bates's Nightjar	*Caprimulgus batesi*	RB		GC	
Swamp Nightjar	*Caprimulgus natalensis*	RB			
Square-tailed Nightjar	*Caprimulgus fossii*	RB			
Fiery-necked Nightjar	*Caprimulgus pectoralis*	R			
Pennant-winged Nightjar	*Caprimulgus vexillarius*	M			
APODIDAE					
Sabine's Spinetail	*Rhaphidura sabini*	R		GC	
Cassin's Spinetail	*Neafrapus cassini*	R		GC	c
African Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus parvus*	RB			
Common Swift	*Apus apus*	PW			
Little Swift	*Apus affinis*	RB			
COLIIDAE					
Speckled Mousebird	*Colius striatus*	RB			
TROGONIDAE					
Narina's Trogon	*Apaloderma narina*	R			
Bare-cheeked Trogon	*Apaloderma aequatoriale*	R		GC	
ALCEDINIDAE					
Chocolate-backed Kingfisher	*Halcyon badia*	R		GC	u
Woodland Kingfisher	*Halcyon senegalensis*	M			
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon malimbica*	R			
Striped Kingfisher	*Halcyon chelicuti*	R			
African Pygmy Kingfisher	*Ispidina picta*	MB			
White-bellied Kingfisher	*Corythornis leucogaster*	RB		GC	
Malachite Kingfisher	*Corythornis cristatus*	RB			
Shining-blue Kingfisher	*Alcedo quadribrachys*	RB			c
Giant Kingfisher	*Megaceryle maxima*	RB			u
Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	R			
MEROPIDAE					
Black-headed Bee-eater	*Merops breweri*	RB		GC	c
Black Bee-eater	*Merops gularis*	RB		GC	c
Little Bee-eater	*Merops pusillus*	R			
White-fronted Bee-eater	*Merops bullockoides*	RB			
Blue-breasted Bee-eater	*Merops variegatus*	RB			u
Rosy Bee-eater	*Merops malimbicus*	RB		GC	r

		Status in Congo-Brazzaville	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
CORACIIDAE					
Blue-throated Roller	*Eurystomus gularis*	RB		GC	c
Broad-billed Roller	*Eurystomus glaucurus*	M			
UPUPIDAE					
Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	R			
BUCEROTIDAE					
Black Dwarf Hornbill	*Horizocerus hartlaubi*	RB		GC	u
White-crested Hornbill	*Horizocerus albocristatus*	RB		GC	
Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill	*Tockus camurus*	R		GC	
African Pied Hornbill	*Tockus fasciatus*	RB		GC	c
Piping Hornbill	*Bycanistes fistulator*	R		GC	
White-thighed Hornbill	*Bycanistes albotibialis*	R		GC	
Black-casqued Hornbill	*Ceratogymna atrata*	RB		GC	c
RAMPHASTIDAE					
Bristle-nosed Barbet	*Gymnobucco peli*	RB		GC	
Naked-faced Barbet	*Gymnobucco calvus*	RB		GC	
*Speckled Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*	RB		GC	u
Red-rumped Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus atroflavus*	R		GC	
Yellow-throated Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus subsulphureus*	RB		GC	
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus bilineatus*	RB			
Yellow-spotted Barbet	*Buccanodon duchaillui*	R		GC	
*Hairy-breasted Barbet	*Tricholaema hirsuta*	R		GC	u
Black-backed Barbet	*Pogonornis minor*	R			
Yellow-billed Barbet	*Trachylaemus purpuratus*	RB		GC	
INDICATORIDAE					
Lyre-tailed Honeyguide	*Melichneutes robustus*	R		GC	
PICIDAE					
Green-backed Woodpecker	*Campethera cailliautii*	R			u
Brown-eared Woodpecker	*Campethera caroli*	RB		GC	
Cardinal Woodpecker	*Dendropicos fuscescens*	R			
Yellow-crested Woodpecker	*Chloropicus xantholophus*	RB		GC	
EURYLAIMIDAE					
Rufous-sided Broadbill	*Smithornis rufolateralis*	R		GC	
ALAUDIDAE					
Flappet Lark	*Mirafra rufocinnamomea*	RB			
HIRUNDINIDAE					
African River Martin	*Pseudochelidon eurystomina*	MB	DD	GC	
Banded Martin	*Neophedina cincta*	MB			
Grey-rumped Swallow	*Pseudhirundo griseopyga*	R			
Lesser Striped Swallow	*Cecropis abyssinica*	RB			
Red-breasted Swallow	*Cecropis semirufa*	MB			
Mosque Swallow	*Cecropis senegalensis*	R			
White-throated Blue Swallow	*Hirundo nigrita*	RB		GC	c
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	P			
Square-tailed Saw-wing	*Psalidoprocne nitens*	RB		GC	u
Black Saw-wing	*Psalidoprocne pristoptera*	RB			u
MOTACILLIDAE					
Mountain Wagtail	*Motacilla clara*	R			
Long-legged Pipit	*Anthus pallidiventris*	RB		GC	
Yellow-throated Longclaw	*Macronyx croceus*	RB			
CAMPEPHAGIDAE					
Petit's Cuckooshrike	*Campephaga petiti*	R		GC	
Blue Cuckooshrike	*Coracina azurea*	R		GC	c
PYCNONOTIDAE					
Little Greenbul	*Eurillas virens*	RB			
Little Grey Greenbul	*Eurillas gracilis*	RB		GC	u
Cameroon Sombre Greenbul	*Eurillas curvirostris*	R		GC	u
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	*Eurillas latirostris*	RB			
Slender-billed Greenbul	*Stelgidillas gracilirostris*	RB			
Golden Greenbul	*Calyptocichla serinus*	R		GC	u
Honeyguide Greenbul	*Baepogon indicator*	RB		GC	
Spotted Greenbul	*Ixonotus guttatus*	R		GC	c
Simple Greenbul	*Chlorocichla simplex*	RB		GC	
Yellow-throated Leaflove	*Chlorocichla flavicollis*	RB			
Swamp Palm Bulbul	*Thescelocichla leucopleura*	RB		GC	u
Leaflove	*Pyrrhurus scandens*	RB		GC	
Icterine Greenbul	*Phyllastrephus icterinus*	RB		GC	
Red-tailed Bristlebill	*Bleda syndactylus*	RB		GC	u
Lesser Bristlebill	*Bleda notatus*	RB		GC	
Eastern Bearded Greenbul	*Criniger chloronotus*	RB		GC	
White-bearded Greenbul	*Criniger ndussumensis*	RB		GC	
Red-tailed Greenbul	*Criniger calurus*	RB		GC	u
Common Bulbul	*Pycnonotus barbatus*	RB			
Black-collared Bulbul	*Neolestes torquatus*	RB			
NICATORIDAE					
Western Nicator	*Nicator chloris*	RB		GC	u
Yellow-throated Nicator	*Nicator vireo*	RB		GC	
TURDIDAE					
Red-tailed Ant Thrush	*Neocossyphus rufus*	RB			
White-tailed Ant Thrush	*Neocossyphus poensis*	R		GC	
Rufous Flycatcher Thrush	*Stizorhina fraseri*	RB		GC	
African Thrush	*Turdus pelios*	RB			
CISTICOLIDAE					
Red-faced Cisticola	*Cisticola erythrops*	R			
Winding Cisticola	*Cisticola galactotes*	RB			
Croaking Cisticola	*Cisticola natalensis*	RB			
Short-winged Cisticola	*Cisticola brachypterus*	RB			
Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*	RB			
Tawny-flanked Prinia	*Prinia subflava*	RB			
*Banded Prinia	*Prinia bairdii*	R			c

		Status in Congo-Brazzaville	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
White-chinned Prinia	*Schistolais leucopogon*	RB			
Buff-throated Apalis	*Apalis rufogularis*	RB		GC	
Grey-backed Camaroptera	*Camaroptera brachyura*	RB			
Olive-green Camaroptera	*Camaroptera chloronota*	RB		GC	
Yellow-browed Camaroptera	*Camaroptera superciliaris*	R		GC	
MACROSPHENIDAE					
Green Crombec	*Sylvietta virens*	RB		GC	u
Grey Longbill	*Macrosphenus concolor*	RB		GC	
PHYLLOSCOPIDAE					
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	PW			
Wood Warbler	*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	PW			
SCOTOCERCIDAE					
Chestnut-capped Flycatcher	*Erythrocercus mccalli*	RB		GC	
Green Hylia	*Hylia prasina*	RB		GC	u
SYLVIIDAE					
Garden Warbler	*Sylvia borin*	PW			
MUSCICAPIDAE					
Fire-crested Alethe	*Alethe castanea*	RB		GC	
White-browed Scrub Robin	*Cercotrichas leucophrys*	RB			
Snowy-crowned Robin Chat	*Cossypha niveicapilla*	RB			
Forest Robin	*Stiphrornis erythrothorax*	RB		GC	
African Stonechat	*Saxicola torquatus*	R			
Sooty Chat	*Myrmecocichla nigra*	RB			u
Pale Flycatcher	*Bradornis pallidus*	RB			
Fraser's Forest Flycatcher	*Fraseria ocreata*	RB		GC	u
White-browed Forest Flycatcher	*Fraseria cinerascens*	RB		GC	u
Spotted Flycatcher	*Muscicapa striata*	P			
Cassin's Flycatcher	*Muscicapa cassini*	RB		GC	c
Olivaceous Flycatcher	*Muscicapa olivascens*	RB		GC	r
Sooty Flycatcher	*Muscicapa infuscata*	RB		GC	u
Yellow-footed Flycatcher	*Muscicapa sethsmithi*	RB		GC	
STENOSTIRIDAE					
African Blue Flycatcher	*Elminia longicauda*	R			
MONARCHIDAE					
*Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone rufocinerea*	RB		GC	c
Red-bellied Paradise-Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone rufiventer*	RB		GC	u
PELLORNEIDAE					
Blackcap Illadopsis	*Illadopsis cleaveri*	RB		GC	
Pale-breasted Illadopsis	*Illadopsis rufipennis*	RB			
Brown Illadopsis	*Illadopsis fulvescens*	RB		GC	
Arrow-marked Babbler	*Turdoides jardineii*	R			u
PLATYSTEIRIDAE					
Chestnut Wattle-eye	*Dyaphorophyia castanea*	RB		GC	
Common Wattle-eye	*Platysteira cyanea*	RB			
Black-and-white Flycatcher	*Bias musicus*	RB			
Western Black-headed Batis	*Batis erlangeri*	RB			
NECTARINIIDAE					
Fraser's Sunbird	*Deleornis fraseri*	RB		GC	
Mouse-brown Sunbird	*Anthreptes gabonicus*	R		GC	
Violet-tailed Sunbird	*Anthreptes aurantius*	RB		GC	
Green Sunbird	*Anthreptes rectirostris*	RB		GC	
Collared Sunbird	*Hedydipna collaris*	RB			u
Reichenbach's Sunbird	*Anabathmis reichenbachii*	RB		GC	
Green-headed Sunbird	*Cyanomitra verticalis*	RB			u
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	*Cyanomitra cyanolaema*	RB		GC	u
Olive Sunbird	*Cyanomitra olivacea*	RB			u
Green-throated Sunbird	*Chalcomitra rubescens*	R		GC	
Carmelite Sunbird	*Chalcomitra fuliginosa*	RB		GC	
Olive-bellied Sunbird	*Cinnyris chloropygius*	RB			
Tiny Sunbird	*Cinnyris minullus*	R		GC	
Copper Sunbird	*Cinnyris cupreus*	RB			
Superb Sunbird	*Cinnyris superbus*	RB		GC	
LANIIDAE					
Common Fiscal	*Lanius collaris*	RB			
Lesser Grey Shrike	*Lanius minor*	P			
MALACONOTIDAE					
Sabine's Puffback	*Dryoscopus sabini*	R		GC	c
Black-shouldered Puffback	*Dryoscopus senegalensis*	RB		GC	u
Black-crowned Tchagra	*Tchagra senegalus*	R			
Sooty Boubou	*Laniarius leucorhynchus*	R		GC	
Swamp Boubou	*Laniarius bicolor*	R			
VANGIDAE					
Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike	*Prionops rufiventris*	RB		GC	
ORIOLIDAE					
Western Black-headed Oriole	*Oriolus brachyrhynchus*	RB		GC	
Black-winged Oriole	*Oriolus nigripennis*	R		GC	
DICRURIDAE					
Velvet-mantled Drongo	*Dicrurus modestus*	RB		GC	c
Shining Drongo	*Dicrurus atripennis*	RB		GC	
CORVIDAE					
Pied Crow	*Corvus albus*	RB			
STURNIDAE					
Chestnut-winged Starling	*Onychognathus fulgidus*	RB		GC	
Purple-headed Glossy Starling	*Hylopsar purpureiceps*	RB		GC	
Splendid Glossy Starling	*Lamprotornis splendidus*	RB			
Violet-backed Starling	*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*	M			
BUPHAGIDAE					
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	*Buphagus africanus*	R			
PASSERIDAE					
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	*Passer griseus*	RB			

		Status in Congo-Brazzaville	IUCN	Biome	Encounter rate
PLOCEIDAE					
Cassin's Malimbe	*Malimbus cassini*	RB		GC	c
Blue-billed Malimbe	*Malimbus nitens*	RB		GC	r
Red-headed Malimbe	*Malimbus rubricollis*	RB		GC	u
Crested Malimbe	*Malimbus malimbicus*	RB		GC	
Black-necked Weaver	*Ploceus nigricollis*	RB			
*Orange Weaver	*Ploceus aurantius*	RB		GC	r
Vieillot's Black Weaver	*Ploceus nigerrimus*	RB		GC	u
Village Weaver	*Ploceus cucullatus*	RB			
Compact Weaver	*Ploceus superciliosus*	RB			
Red-headed Quelea	*Quelea erythrops*	M			
Yellow-mantled Widowbird	*Euplectes macroura*	RB			
ESTRILDIDAE					
White-breasted Negrofinch	*Nigrita fusconotus*	R		GC	
Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch	*Nigrita bicolor*	RB		GC	u
Grey-headed Negrofinch	*Nigrita canicapillus*	RB			c
*Pale-fronted Negrofinch	*Nigrita luteifrons*	RB		GC	u
Grey Waxbill	*Estrilda perreini*	R			
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	*Estrilda melpoda*	RB			
Common Waxbill	*Estrilda astrild*	RB			u
Western Bluebill	*Spermophaga haematina*	RB		GC	c
Black-bellied Seedcracker	*Pyrenestes ostrinus*	R			
Blue-bellied Firefinch	*Lagonosticta rubricata*	RB			
Black-chinned Quailfinch	*Ortygospiza gabonensis*	R			
Zebra Waxbill	*Amandava subflava*	R			
Bronze Mannikin	*Spermestes cucullata*	RB			
Black-and-white Mannikin	*Spermestes bicolor*	RB			u
VIDUIDAE					
Pin-tailed Whydah	*Vidua macroura*	R			
FRINGILLIDAE					
Black-faced Canary	*Crithagra capistrata*	R			
EMBERIZIDAE					
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	*Emberiza tahapisi*	R			

Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* at the Red Sea in Egypt

Jens Hering[a], Elmar Fuchs[b], Wieland Heim[c], Hans-Jürgen Eilts[d], Peter H. Barthel[e] & Hans Winkler[f]

La Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* à la Mer rouge en Égypte. En avril 2012, nous avons découvert la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* sur la côte de la Mer rouge près de Hamata, au sud de l'Égypte. C'était la première mention de cette sous-espèce pour le Paléarctique occidental. Lors d'inventaires supplémentaires les années suivantes, nous avons observé des Rousserolles des mangroves en train de nicher. En plus des caractéristiques morphologiques et génétiques, nous avons collecté des données concernant l'habitat, la reproduction (y compris la première description de nids conservés naturellement par le sel), l'abondance, les autres espèces présentes et les menaces auxquelles la population est confrontée. En juillet–août 2015 nous avons trouvé des individus dans les mangroves de Shura Al-Rowaisseya, sur la péninsule du Sinaï. Il est recommandé de mener des recherches supplémentaires sur ce taxon afin de préciser sa distribution, son écologie de reproduction et son statut migratoire.

Summary. In April 2012, we discovered Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* at the Red Sea coast near Hamata, in southern Egypt. This was the first record of this subspecies for the Western Palearctic. During additional surveys in subsequent years, we also observed breeding Mangrove Reed Warblers. In addition to morphological and genetic data, we collected information on breeding habitat, breeding biology (including the first description of salt-preserved nests), abundance, other species present and population threats. In July–August 2015 we found *A. s. avicenniae* in the mangroves of Shura Al-Rowaisseya, on the Sinai Peninsula. Further research on this taxon is recommended to clarify its distribution, breeding ecology and migratory status.

In recent years, new insights into genetic relations within the Eurasian Reed Warbler complex *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* have been obtained as a result of intensive field and laboratory work (e.g. Leisler *et al.* 1997, Fregin *et al.* 2009, Winkler *et al.* 2012, Olsson *et al.* 2016). We have previously studied the different *Acrocephalus* taxa found in Libya and Egypt (Hering *et al.* 2009, 2010a,b, 2011a,b), including the description of a new subspecies, Siwa Reed Warbler *A. s. ammon* (Hering *et al.* 2016). In April 2012, we recorded Mangrove Reed Warbler *A. s. avicenniae* for the first time on the Red Sea, near Hamata in southern Egypt (Hering *et al.* 2012a,b). This also was the first record for the Western Palearctic. Until then, this taxon, which according to recent genetic studies forms a clade with the eastern Reed Warbler subspecies *A. s. fuscus* (Leisler *et al.* 1997, Fregin *et al.* 2009, Winkler *et al.* in prep.), was known to breed only in the mangroves of Sudan, Eritrea, northern Somalia and the south-western Arabian Peninsula (Ash *et al.* 1989, Pearson 1997, Meadows 1999, Dyrcz 2006). In addition to genetic and morphological data, we collected information on the breeding habitat and abundance of the Mangrove Reed Warbler in southern Egypt. However, the search for freshly built nests in 2012 was unsuccessful. Instead, we found old nests that were frequently encrusted with salt. In July 2013, in Wadi el-Gemal National Park, we again studied this reed warbler taxon, which appears to be closely tied to saltwater habitats. We found occupied nests and observed a recently fledged juvenile (Hering *et al.* 2013). During surveys of suitable habitat further north, in July–August 2015, we finally recorded an individual of the same subspecies in the mangroves of Shura Al-Rowaisseya on the Sinai Peninsula. The present paper summarises all recent records of Mangrove Reed Warbler in Egypt and provides information on its breeding biology.

Methods

The first Mangrove Reed Warbler was recorded during an expedition funded by the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft (DO-G) between 18 April and 6 May 2012 that included visits to Wadi el-Gemal National Park in southern Egypt, on the Red Sea, on 24–28 April and 4 May (JH, EF, WH, H-JE). Subsequent surveys of this area and of the more southerly mangroves of Mersa El-Hamira were made on 25–30 May (JH, PHB, H-JE).

Additional field work was undertaken on 8–16 July 2013 at Wadi el-Gemal National Park and in the northerly mangroves of Sharm El-Qebli, Sharm El-Bahari, Wadi Abu Hamra and South Safaga (JH, EF, K. Müller). Our investigations were permitted and supported by the Wadi el-Gemal National Park administration. A short survey of the mangroves in Sinai was carried out on 30–31 December 2013 (JH, H. Hering). Final surveys took place on 30 July–5 August 2015 on the island of Abu Minkar, in Wadi Abu Hamra, and in the mangroves of Shura Al-Rowaisseya and Shura Al-Manquata, all in Sinai (JH, H-JE, WH, M. Habib, A. Heim).

Birds were captured using mist-nets together with tape lures playing the songs of Eurasian and African Reed Warblers (recordings by Chappuis 2000, Schulze 2003) as well as our own recordings of the local reed warblers. Ringing and biometric measurements followed the current standard methods of the DO-G (2011). Two Mangrove Reed Warblers caught in Wadi Lahami on 28 April 2012 and six caught in July 2013 were fitted with rings from Helgoland Bird Observatory (Helgoland, Germany).

Blood samples were taken from nine Mangrove Reed Warblers for molecular comparison with sampled Siwa Reed Warblers (Hering *et al.* 2011a, 2016). Two samples from Wadi Lahami were sequenced at the Konrad Lorenz Institute of Ethology, Vienna, Austria, in the course of our study on *A. s. ammon* (Hering *et al.* 2016); resources for sequencing more samples were limited at that time. A section of the cytochrome *b* gene was obtained from both samples. There were no differences between these two sequences. In addition, the control region II of the mitochondrial genome (Singh *et al.* 2008) was successfully sequenced for one sample, whereas the analysis of the second one failed.

Reference samples used in comparative molecular analyses stemmed from specimens sampled near Lake Neusiedl, Austria, and, for *A. s. avicenniae* and *A. s. fuscus*, were provided by S. Fregin (*cf.* Leisler *et al.* 1997, Fregin *et al.* 2009) and for *A. baeticatus guiersi* (Senegal) and *A. s. scirpaceus* (Lake Constance, Germany) by V. Salewski.

A digital audio recorder (Swissonic MDR 2) was used to record bird songs and calls. Recordings were made in uncompressed WAV format with 44.1 kHz sampling frequency and 16-bit resolution, and were analysed at the Museum für Naturkunde, Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Germany, using the Avisoft SASLab Pro (version 5.0.14) software. Acoustic documentation of Mangrove Reed Warblers made during this study can be accessed online at www.tierstimmenarchiv.de (files: TSA:Acrocephalus_scirpaceus_DIG_154_6_1, _DIG_154_7_1, and _DIG0164_23 to _DIG0164_25).

Study area

We documented Mangrove Reed Warblers in two areas of Wadi el-Gemal National Park. With 7,450 km^2 the area represents the third largest national park in Egypt and is characterised mostly by mountainous desert terrain (Eastern Desert) and a *c.*110 km-long and on average 15 km-wide coastal zone (*cf.* Baha El Din 1998, 2003, Samy *et al.* 2011). The offshore islands of Qulân and Wadi Gimal are designated as Important Bird Areas (Baha El Din 2001). A further observation was made on 8 August 2015 in the mangroves of Shura Al-Rowaisseya. This area is one of a total of five mangrove stands in the south-east Sinai Peninsula (PERSGA 2004). The mangroves of Shura Al-Rowaisseya form part of Nabq Protected Area (*cf.* Al-Mufti 2000, Baha El Din 2001).

Those mangroves surveyed by us unsuccessfully for *A. s. avicenniae* along the Red Sea coast in Egypt are as follows: Marsa Hemira, Sharm El-Qebli, Sharm El-Bahari, Wadi Abu Hamra, South Safaga, the island of Abu Minkar near Hurghada, and Shura Al-Gharqana, Mersa Abu Zabad, and Shura Al-Manquata in Sinai. The mangroves on the island of Safaga, which lie within a restricted military area, were inaccessible (*cf.* PERSGA 2004).

Mangrove Reed Warblers recorded in coastal habitats of the Red Sea were observed in both closed-canopy and partially open, shrubby mangrove vegetation. The following descriptions of the studied mangroves are based on our own observations and on information from PERSGA (2004). Fig. 1 shows those sites around the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden where Mangrove Reed Warblers were previously known to occur, and the newly documented sites in Egypt.

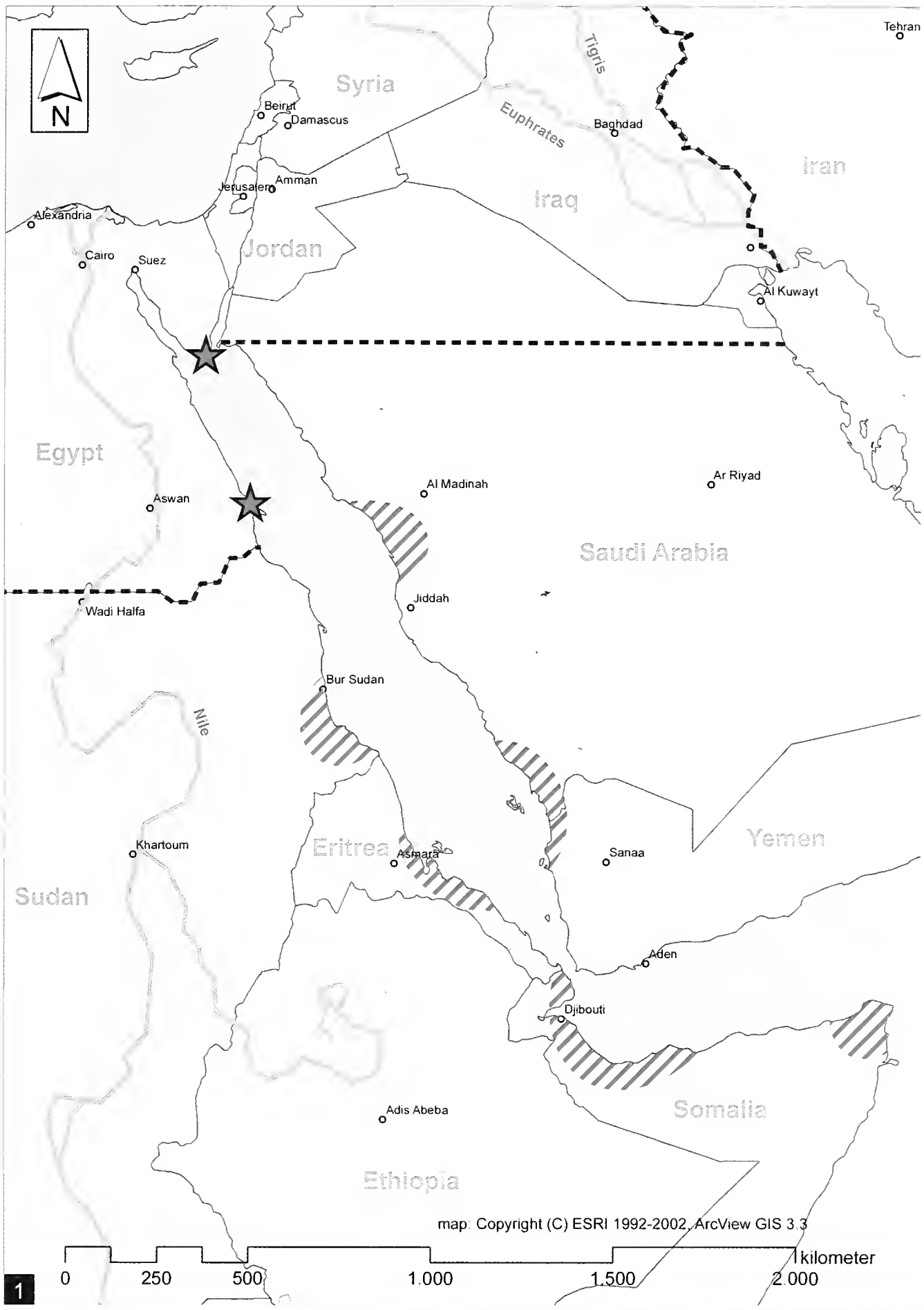

Figure 1. Distribution of Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* and newly discovered sites (red stars) in Egypt; broken line: boundary of the Western Palearctic *sensu* Cramp & Simmons (1977).

Distribution de la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* et nouveaux sites découverts (étoiles rouges) en Égypte ; ligne pointillée : limites du Paléarctique occidental *sensu* Cramp & Simmons (1977).

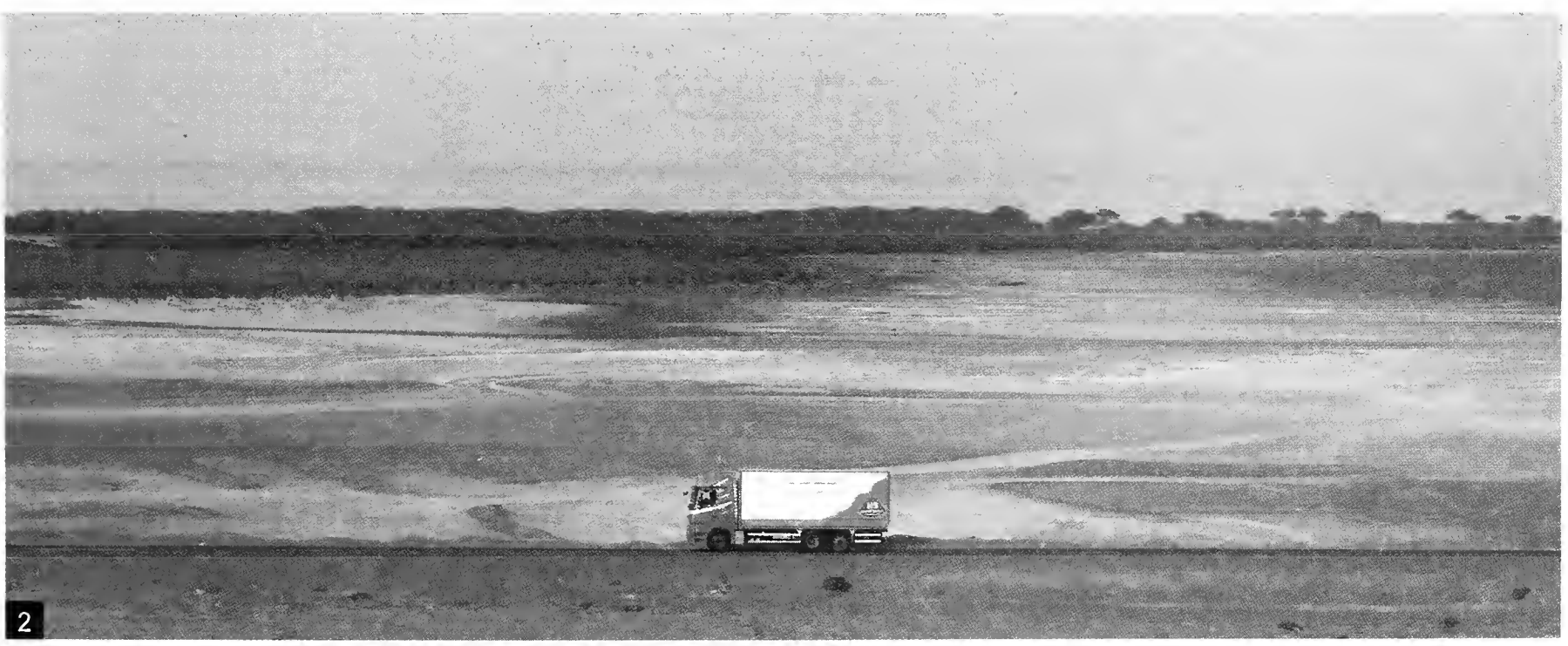

Figure 2. The mangroves of Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012; Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* prefers the low vegetation at the edge (Jens Hering)

Les mangroves de Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 ; la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* préfère la végétation basse au bord (Jens Hering)

Figure 3. Low-growing, largely closed-canopy Grey Mangroves *Avicennia marina* in Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012 (Jens Hering)

Mangrove basse et principalement fermée constituée de Palétuviers gris *Avicennia marina* à Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 (Jens Hering)

Figure 4. Partly open Grey Mangroves *Avicennia marina* in which significant densities of Mangrove Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers *Iduna pallida alulensis* were detected, Hamata, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Mangrove partiellement ouverte constituée de Palétuviers gris *Avicennia marina* dans laquelle on a enregistré des densities importantes de la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* et de l'Hypolaïs pâle *Iduna pallida alulensis*, Hamata, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

Wadi Lahami

Coordinates: 24°13'20.06"N 35°25'2.72"E (Figs. 2–3); *c.*32 ha (length 1,500 m, max. width *c.*400 m), located in a bay and formed by stands of Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* as in other mangroves on the Red Sea in Egypt (Loop-root Mangrove *Rhizophora mucronata* occurs naturally only near the Egypt / Sudan border); mean height 2.8 m, max. height 5.6 m in the east of the area; lower shrubby vegetation is conspicuous in the north-eastern part. The area is characterised by a closed lagoon surrounded completely by mangroves and two smaller lagoons that open into the sea. A campsite lies almost directly adjacent to the south. The northern boundary is formed by a hotel under construction (see Population threats). On the landward side, the mangroves are restricted by salt flats, which are sparsely vegetated with halophytes.

Up to five singing Mangrove Reed Warblers were detected on 26–28 April 2012 and up to 16 on 25–30 May 2012. Five singing individuals and a breeding pair with one fledgling were observed on 8–16 July 2013. On 15 July 2013, a recent nest, from which young had fledged, was collected. Preferred nesting sites were at low to medium height in dense mangroves at the western edge of the area. Five birds were caught in natural clearings in up to 2.5 m-high bushes in the west of the area (two on 28 April 2012 and singles on 8, 13 and 14 July 2013).

Figure 5. Low-growing mangroves in Shura Al-Rowaisseya—the trapping site of a first-year Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Sinai, Egypt, August 2015 (Jens Hering)

Mangroves basses dans la zone de Shura Al-Rowaisseya – le site de capture d'une Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* de première année, Sinaï, Égypte, août 2015 (Jens Hering)

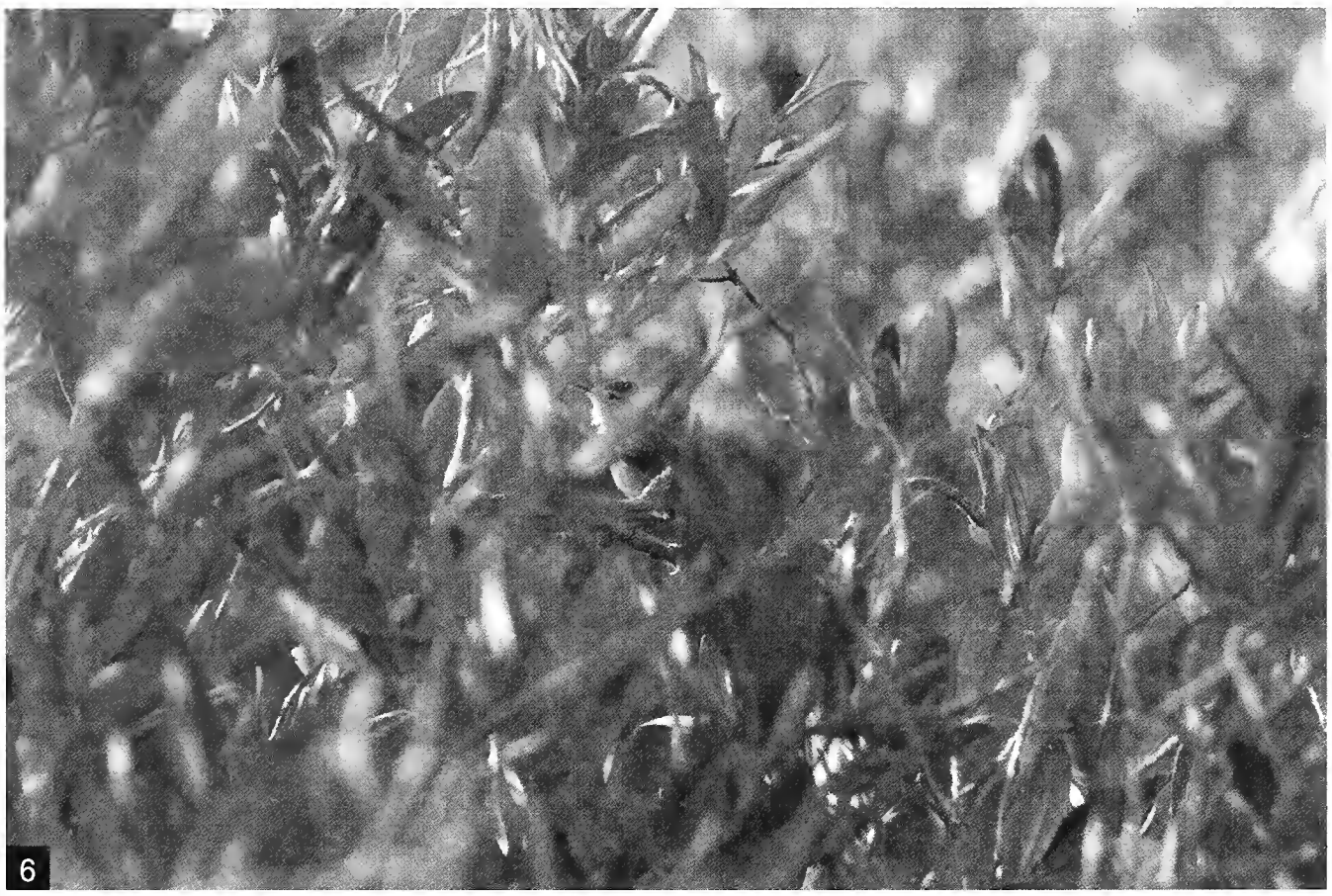

Figure 6. Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* is difficult to see in dense mangroves, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012 (Jens Hering)

La Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* est difficile à détecter dans les mangroves denses, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 (Jens Hering)

Hamata Mangroves

Coordinates: 24°18'36.99"N 35°21'41.97"E (Fig. 4); consists of four relatively large mangrove stands at the outlets of the wadis of Mastura, Al-Qulaan, Rawada Al-Edaiah and Harbiyyah; mean height 2.8 m, max. height 5.5 m. On the landward side, the mangroves are mostly surrounded by desert.

On 29 May 2012 four singing individuals were detected and on 8–16 July 2013 max. 6 singing individuals were present. We also found a nest with three eggs on a mangrove island on 15 July 2013. On 16 July 2013 three Mangrove Reed Warblers were caught here.

Marsa Hemira Mangroves

Coordinates: 23°28'47.87"N 35°29'20.09"E; *c.*9.2 ha (length *c.*2,000 m), located in a restricted military area within a long bay; mean height 3.0 m, max. height 5.8 m. The mangroves are bordered by a military base to the south and by desert terrain elsewhere.

We heard two singing Mangrove Reed Warblers during a short visit on 28 May 2012.

Shura Al-Rowaisseya

Coordinates: 28°10'51.69"N 34°26'45.25"E (Fig. 5); the largest mangrove on the Sinai Peninsula, 27.6 ha (length 3 km); lowest mangroves up to 1.5 m on the landward side, max. height 5–6 m in the central zone, particularly around a lagoon and subtidal pools. At the north-east side of the mangrove is a small café run by Bedouins.

On 4 August 2015 we caught a first calendar-year Mangrove Reed Warbler in a natural clearing within low mangroves.

7

9

8

Identification criteria and vocalisations

Nine Mangrove Reed Warblers were caught, measured and genetically sampled. All trapped and observed individuals had conspicuously short, rounded wings (length 58.5–62.5 mm, mean 59.7 mm), and adults had heavily worn plumage. Compared to migrating Reed Warblers (*A. s. scirpaceus* and *A. s. fuscus*) and the closely related taxon from Siwa, the Mangrove Reed Warblers had a dark brownish-grey plumage similar to that of *A. s. fuscus*. A juvenile, caught in August 2015, had fresh plumage, tongue spots and visible gape flanges. The trapped individuals were clearly identified as *A. s. avicenniae*, based on the biometric characteristics established by Ash *et al.* (1989) and further described in Kennerley & Pearson (2010). Molecular analysis of the mitochondrial control region II and the cytochrome *b* gene permitted clear assignment to *A. s. avicenniae*. Both sequence types also confirmed the close relationship of *A. s. avicenniae* to *A. s. fuscus* and *A. s. ammon* (see Hering *et al.* 2011a, 2016).

Figs. 6–9 show this hitherto rarely described Eurasian Reed Warbler subspecies in the field and in the hand (but see Porter & Stanton 2011, Hering *et al.* 2012b, Hering *et al.* 2013).

Mangrove Reed Warbler song is very similar to that of other Eurasian Reed Warbler subspecies and to African Reed Warbler *A. baeticatus*. However, like *A. s. ammon*, the frequency of the individual song elements appears to be lower than in Eurasian Reed Warbler (*cf.* G. Nikolaus *in* Leisler *et al.* 1997, Hering *et al.* 2016). Comparative sonograms demonstrate that the song of *A. s. avicenniae* and that of the birds from Siwa differs from that of *A. s. scirpaceus* (Hering *et al.* 2011a). This difference, however, was not evident for calls and distress calls, which resembled those of nominate Eurasian Reed Warbler and African Reed Warbler. Full song was registered at the study areas in southern Egypt in April, May and July. In some places, several individuals sang simultaneously within just a few square metres. It merits reporting that some singing Mangrove Reed Warblers neither reacted to playback of their own taxon's song nor to recordings of *A. s. scirpaceus*.

Figures on facing page

Figure 7. Singing Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* en train de chanter, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

Figure 8. Adult Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012 (Jens Hering)

Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* adulte, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 (Jens Hering)

Figure 9. Primary projection of *A. s. avicenniae* (top) compared to *A. s. scirpaceus*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012 (Jens Hering)

Projection des primaires de *A. s. avicenniae* (en haut) comparée à celle de *A. s. scirpaceus*, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 (Jens Hering)

Habitat and breeding biology

The Mangrove Reed Warblers observed in Egypt occurred predominantly in closed-canopy (to some extent also in open) low-growing Grey Mangrove. Above heights of *c.*3 m, the mangrove-specialist subspecies of Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida alulensis*, recently discovered in Egypt (Baha El Din *et al.* 2010), prevailed. Direct interspecific neighbourhood and habitat overlap were occasionally documented.

After failing to find active nests in Wadi Lahami and near Hamata in April and May 2012, we found two nests in July 2013, both in dense mangroves *c.*3 m tall: one contained three eggs (Fig. 10) while the other was fresh but without eggs. In addition, we observed a recently fledged juvenile (Fig. 12). This indicates that the peak breeding season occurs around July with its extreme temperatures of 40–50°C. This accords with findings from Saudi Arabia, where fledglings have been observed in July (Jennings *et al.* 1987, Jennings 1995). Active nests had not been described for *A. s. avicenniae* (e.g. Kennerley & Pearson 2010). It is noticeable that Mangrove Reed Warbler constructs sturdy, tightly woven nests, while Eastern Olivaceous Warbler nests are more loosely bound (Figs. 10–14). In addition to the two active nests, we found numerous nests from the previous season or years, which could no longer be assigned to species. The nests built in the middle of the mangroves (n = 52) were all 1.0–2.1 m above the ground and attached to twigs or sited on a forked branch. Nest material consisted entirely of fibres of rotten mangrove wood or

Figure 10. Nest and eggs of Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*; the whitish ground colour of the eggs differs from the brown-greenish tones of *A. s. scirpaceus* eggs, these eggs are more similar to those of *A. palustris*, Hamata, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Nid et œufs de la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* ; la couleur de fond blanchâtre des œufs diffère des tons bruns-verts des œufs de *A. s. scirpaceus*, ces œufs-ci ressemblent plutôt à ceux de *A. palustris* ; Hamata, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

Figure 11. Active nest of Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Nid occupé de la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

Figure 12. Recently fledged Mangrove Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Jeune Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* à peine sortie du nid, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

mangrove bast fibres. A special feature is the continuous excretion of salt from the mangroves, which prevents the nests from disintegrating post-breeding (Figs. 15–16). Over time, an increasingly thick salt crust covers the nests until they are virtually fossilised. Such 'naturally conserved' songbird nests were hitherto unknown. However, differentiating such older Acrocephalidae nests to species was impossible. We collected several nests for detailed analyses, e.g. to clarify how and why salt crusts form (Fig. 17). Atomic spectroscopy and X-ray analysis demonstrated that the encrusted nest material contains mostly halite (NaCl). Thus, sea salt crystallises on the nests and forms the salt crusts (Hering *et al.* 2013).

Both fresh Mangrove Reed Warbler nests were found near 'naturally conserved' nests. This was also the case for Eastern Olivaceous Warbler nests. Perhaps these old visible nests indicate breeding habitat quality, possibly signalling nest sites with lower predation risk, and attract potential breeders, as is known in, e.g., European Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (Flade & Franz 1993). In any case, the unequal distribution of nests in loose aggregations within the mangroves is conspicuous (Fig. 18). Loose nest aggregations are regularly observed in Acrocephalidae (Leisler & Schulze-Hagen 2011).

Figures 13–14. Active nest of Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida alulensis*, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Nid occupé de l'Hypolaïs pâle *Iduna pallida alulensis*, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

Figure 15. Presumably one-year-old Acrocephalidae nest, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012 (Jens Hering)

Nid d'Acrocephalidé, probablement de l'année précédente, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 (Jens Hering)

Figure 16. Salt-encrusted Acrocephalidae nest, presumably several years old, Wadi Lahami, Egypt, May 2012 (Jens Hering)

Nid d'Acrocephalidé incrusté de sel et vieux de probablement plusieurs années, Wadi Lahami, Égypte, mai 2012 (Jens Hering)

Accompanying species

The following additional breeding (B) or probably breeding (pB) bird species in mangroves were documented during our surveys: Striated Heron *Butorides striata* (B), Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* (B), Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* (pB), Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* (B; Hering *et al.* 2012c), Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (B), Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (B), Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (B; Hering & Heim 2015), African Collared Dove *S. roseogrisea* (pB), Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* (B), Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* (B; Hering *et al.*

Figure 17. Fresh and 'naturally conserved' Acrocephalidae nests from the mangroves of Hamata and Wadi Lahami, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Nids récents et 'conservés naturellement' d'Acrocephalidés des mangroves de Hamata et Wadi Lahami, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

Figure 18. Aggregation of nests in a mangrove: fresh nest of Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida alulensis* (left) next to a one-year-old nest (bottom right) and probably a several-years-old nest (top right), Wadi Lahami, Egypt, July 2013 (Jens Hering)

Groupe de nids dans la mangrove : nid recent d'Hypolaïs pâle *Iduna pallida alulensis* (à gauche) près d'un nid d'un an (en bas à droite) et d'un autre vieux de probablement plusieurs années (en haut à droite), Wadi Lahami, Égypte, juillet 2013 (Jens Hering)

2015a) and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida alulensis* (B; Hering *et al.* in prep.).

Population threats

Potential predators of eggs, nestlings or fully grown Mangrove Reed Warblers include Striated Heron and Yellow Bittern, which inhabit low and dense mangroves. According to our own observations and to information provided by employees of the national park, reptiles do not occur in the studied areas. Mice may play a potential role as nest predators, as assumed for Namaqua Dove (*cf.* Hering *et al.* 2015a).

A major threat to the Egyptian coast mangroves are free-ranging Dromedaries *Camelus dromedarius*, which feed on leaves and shoots, thereby permanently damaging the mangroves (PERSGA 2004). We repeatedly observed grazing animals in the Wadi Lahami mangroves (Fig. 19). Moreover, the growth in tourism and the associated construction of hotel complexes have major impacts. This is evident in the Wadi Lahami area, which is bordered by a bungalow settlement with a scuba-diving school in the south and an unfinished hotel complex (prohibited by the

Figure 19. Dromedaries *Camelus dromedarius* at the mangroves of Wadi Lahami, Egypt, April 2012 (Jens Hering)

Dromadaires *Camelus dromedarius* au bord des mangroves de Wadi Lahami, Égypte, avril 2012 (Jens Hering)

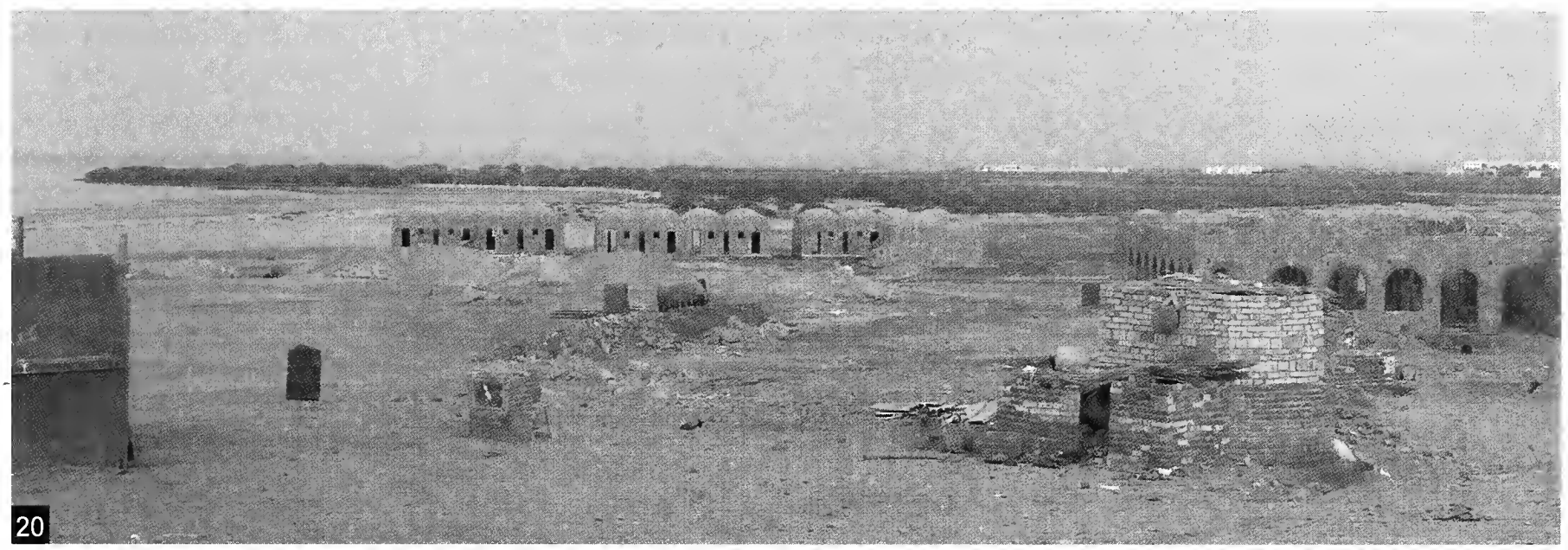

Figure 20. Hotel under construction at the northern edge of the mangroves of Wadi Lahami, Egypt, May 2012 (Jens Hering)

Hôtel inachevé à la limite nord des mangroves de Wadi Lahami, Égypte, mai 2012 (Jens Hering)

national park administration) in the north (Fig. 20), as well as by a nearby luxury hotel. Apart from the discharge of waste water, disturbance by hotel guests is problematic. We met tourists several times at low tide, also in the mangroves. Even now, mangrove wood is used by locals for charcoal production or as firewood and timber. Finally, floating debris and discarded plastic waste is a major problem (*cf.* Baha El Din 2003, PERSGA 2003, 2004). We found significant quantities of coloured plastic string in the nests of Ospreys, herons, doves and Acrocephalidae. A positive development in recent years is the noticeable conservation effort, especially the designation of national parks. Conservation activities around the Hamata mangroves include nursery plantations, accompanying scientific studies, public awareness campaigns, etc. (e.g. Baha El Din 2003, Kholeif 2007, Samy *et al.* 2011). It is worth mentioning that all Mangrove Reed Warblers were observed in areas already protected.

Discussion

Our investigations show that Mangrove Reed Warbler is a regular breeder in southern Egypt within sufficiently large and low-growing mangroves. It is very likely, however, that this subspecies breeds only sporadically in the more northerly mangroves of the Red Sea, although our record of a first calendar-year bird in suitable habitat indicates that *A. s. avicenniae* may even breed on the Sinai Peninsula. Further surveys of this region, as well as in mangroves of the Arabian Peninsula along the Red Sea coast, are required to clarify this taxon's distribution. Lack of knowledge of the distribution of Mangrove Reed Warbler along the Arabian coast is confirmed by Meadows (1999), Jennings (2010) and Porter & Stanton (2011). A first dedicated search for *A. s. avicenniae* in suitable habitat beyond the Red Sea, in Oman (Mahawt Island, Liwa) was made unsuccessfully in 2015/16 (J. Hering). In contrast, Mangrove Reed Warblers were observed frequently in a mangrove forest in Djibouti, which represented the first

record of the subspecies in this country (Hering *et al.* 2015b). Both findings suggest that *A. s. avicenniae* is endemic to coasts of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The Red Sea coast south of Marsa Alam in Egypt is particularly attractive to birdwatchers, being the only part of Cramp's Western Palearctic where species such as Goliath Heron, Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* and Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* are regularly observed. But why did the Mangrove Reed Warbler remained undiscovered for so long, despite searches for these largely Afrotropical species? It seems clear that no attention was previously paid to *A. s. avicenniae*, because singing reed warblers were generally classified as *A. s. scirpaceus* or *A. s. fuscus*, which stop-over in large numbers on spring migration. It is worth mentioning that another bird species in the mangroves of southern Egypt, Yellow Bittern, went undiscovered until we recorded it as a breeding bird for the first time in the Western Palearctic and Africa (Barthel & Hering 2012, Hering *et al.* 2012c).

The results of our study call for further research into the distribution, abundance, density, breeding biology and behavioural ecology of the Mangrove Reed Warbler. For example, it is currently unknown whether *A. s. avicenniae* is a year-round resident or a short-distance migrant.

Acknowledgements

We thank Mohamed Habib, Arend Heim, Heidi Hering and Klaus Müller for field assistance, as well as the Wadi el-Gemal National Park administration, in particular Saied Noby and Mohamed Negm, for permission and technical support of our field work. Wouter van Dongen ran the genetic analysis. Carl Zeiss Sports Optics kindly provided optical equipment. Panasonic provided an Outdoor-Notebook for the expedition in 2012, which was funded by the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft. Also, many thanks to Timothy Coppack for translating the manuscript. Finally, we thank Peter Becker, Gerd Fanghänel, Karl-Heinz Frommolt, Olaf Geiter, Gudrun Hilgerloh, Haitham Ibrahim, Thomas Kraft, Bernd Leisler, Jochen Martens, István Moldován, Dieter Saemann, Karl Schulze-Hagen, Niels Sigmund and Till Töpfer for their support. David Pearson, Karl Schulze-Hagen and Guy Kirwan made useful comments on the submitted version of this paper.

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Received 4 September 2016; revision accepted 17 January 2017.

Fifth report of the Seychelles Bird Records Committee

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Cinquième rapport du Comité d'Homologation Seychellois. Le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois, crée en 1992, a publié des rapports quinquennals dans *Bull. ABC* depuis 1996. Le cinquième rapport, présenté ici, comprend les données acceptées d'espèces occasionnelles (espèces enregistrées moins d'une fois par an) pour la période du 1er janvier 2011 au 31 décembre 2015. Le statut de certaines espèces a changé : trois espèces précédemment considérées comme occasionnelles ont été reclassées comme annuelles, tandis qu'une espèce précédemment considérée comme annuelle a été reclassée comme occasionnelle. Une espèce a été rayée de la liste des Seychelles. Onze des 15 nouvelles espèces enregistrées sont documentées par des photos. Le nombre des espèces enregistrées aux Seychelles est ainsi passé à 269.

Summary. Seychelles Bird Records Committee, formed in 1992, has published reports in *Bull. ABC* at intervals of five years since 1996. This fifth report summarises accepted records of vagrants (species recorded less than annually) during the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2015. The status of some species has changed, including three from vagrant to annual in occurrence and one from annual to vagrant. One species has been removed from the Seychelles List. Eleven of 15 new species during the period are illustrated with photographs. The number of species recorded in Seychelles has increased to 269.

Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) was formed in 1992 and has published reports at five-year intervals in *Bull. ABC* since 1996 (Skerrett 1996, Skerrett *et al.* 2001, 2006, 2011). A summary of unverified sightings received by SBRC has been published every six months in the Recent Reports section of the *Bull. ABC* in almost every issue since the journal's initiation. Accepted records are reported at the website www.seychellesbirdrecordscommittee.com.

This fifth report summarises records of vagrants (species recorded less than annually) accepted during the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2015. During this period, SBRC members examined evidence for 476 records. In addition, 595 sets of coordinates for 30 geolocator records were also received and accepted. Of the sight records, 421 (88.4%) were accepted to species level and another 17 (3.6%) accepted to a qualified category (e.g. *Cuculus* sp. or Pintail *Gallinago stenura* / Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala*). Three records remained pended at the end of 2015 for further consideration and 35 records (7.4%) were rejected as 'not proven'. A comparatively high number of records accepted to species level were submitted to SBRC either unidentified or misidentified: 42 (10% of accepted records). This perhaps reflects the fact that many records are received from individuals unfamiliar with the avifauna of regions outside of Seychelles. It is a positive aspect of the digital era that local observers are able to obtain good photographs aiding identification of records that might otherwise be 'lost'. On the other hand, although record forms are submitted to SBRC for almost all reports, it is now rare for observers to include any meaningful description, relying instead on photographic evidence alone to authenticate the record. This is unfortunate as descriptions can add pertinent details. A full checklist including the number of accepted records for each species and each island can be downloaded from the SBRC website.

More than half of records received by SBRC during the period were submitted by the local staff and volunteers of two organisations: Seychelles Islands Foundation (143 records from Aldabra and Assumption) and Island Conservation Society (147 records, mainly from Alphonse, Aride, Desroches, Farquhar, St. François and Silhouette). The next most important sources were members of SBRC (51 records) and Denis Island (32 records). Undoubtedly many vagrants on other islands, where observers are less meticulous in their reporting to SBRC, are missed.

Additions to the Seychelles List

Fifteen species were added to the Seychelles List during the period under review. This total includes the first records accepted based on geolocator data, all relating to a study of 'Round Island Petrel' *Pterodroma arminjoniana* at Round Island,

Mauritius. 'Round Island Petrel' is a hybrid swarm involving three species of *Pterodroma* (*c.*80% thought to be morphologically close to Trindade Petrel *P. arminjoniana*, *c.*10% Herald Petrel *P. heraldica* and 10% Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta*) breeding on Round Island (Safford & Hawkins 2013). Not previously recorded in Seychelles, geolocator data revealed that it is probably a regular visitor to waters around the Seychelles Bank (unpubl. tracking data).

Other species added to the Seychelles List are: Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Knob-billed (Comb) Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, Common Teal *Anas crecca*, Red-billed Duck *A. erythrorhyncha*, Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata*, Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*, Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, Madagascar Kingfisher *Alcedo vintsioides*, Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*, Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa* and Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Records of 11 of these 15 species new to the Seychelles List are supported by photographs. The exceptions are 'Round Island Petrel', Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* and Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa*. However, the first was supported by geolocator evidence and all of the others by good descriptions plus a convincing field sketch in the case of the last mentioned. Photographs of the other 11 new species are included here.

Deletion from the Seychelles List

New information came to light concerning the only record of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferrugina*, suggesting possible confusion with Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*. Due to inconsistencies in the evidence, the record has been rejected and the species removed from the Seychelles List.

With fifteen additions and one deletion, the number of species recorded in Seychelles at 31 December 2015 increased to 269. This figure has risen by 80 (42.3%) in the 20 years since the first report as follows:

Report	No. of spp.
First report, 1996	189
Second report, 2001	222
Third report, 2006	237
Fourth report, 2011	255
Fifth report, 2016	269

Changes in status

At the 20th annual meeting of SBRC, held on 30 December 2011, it was agreed to define an annual species in Seychelles as one recorded in at least eight of the previous ten years with a mean of at least two records per annum. However, exceptions are made and retained for consideration by SBRC where two or more vagrant species are frequently confused. Current exceptions are Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (this last species also retained for interest in which races occur in Seychelles).

As a result of the new definition, the status of three species has changed from vagrant to annual. These are Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, European Roller *Coracias garrulus* and Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. However, in the case of Purple Heron, the definition as annual applies only to islands east of latitude 52°E (Amirantes and inner islands) and it is retained as a vagrant west of 52°E (Farquhar and Aldabra groups). The status of Little Stint has changed from annual to vagrant following a huge decline in the number of reports of this once regular species.

With respect to potential future changes in status, it is worth noting that at present all petrel species are classified as vagrants. However, new records accepted during the period under review suggest some are regular in Seychelles waters. These come from the 'Round Island Petrel' study referenced above, observers aboard the cruise ship *Costa Romantica* on 9 February 2011, entering Seychelles waters (unusually) from south-east of Mahé (A. Ross *et al.*), records from a seismic survey vessel in June–July 2014 (E. Juxon) and the first chumming operation over the Seychelles Bank, on 25–26 November 2014 (H. Shirihai & A. P. Skerrett).

The number of extinct species increased during the period from seven to ten, due to the successful eradication of two introduced species, Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* and House Crow *Corvus splendens*, and the natural disappearance of a third introduced species, Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*. For the same reasons, the number of breeding species reduced from 65 to 62.

In summary, as at 31 December 2015, the Seychelles List maintained by SBRC comprises 269 species recorded in Seychelles, including 62

breeders, 28 annual migrants, ten extinct species and 169 vagrants.

Review of previously accepted records

SBRC maintains an archive of information to authenticate all vagrant records. Members can request to review any record or group of records. Following discussion at annual meetings, examination of specimens at the Natural History Museum (Tring) and e-mail exchanges, it was decided to review, in the light of improved identification criteria, all *Ardeola* records and those of Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*, Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* and Eurasian Hobby *F. subbuteo*. This has led to some changes in earlier decisions, described in the summary of records in this paper.

Out-of-range records

In addition to vagrant records of non-breeding species, SBRC considers records of Seychelles breeding species observed on islands outside their normal breeding range. These are not listed here, but accepted out-of-range records of special interest are:

1. The first record of Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* in the coralline outer islands (west of Mahé), a male at Desroches on 31 October–1 November 2014 (A. Fernández *et al.*).
2. The first record of Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* in the coralline outer islands, an adult at African Banks on 28 November 2013 (J. A. Mortimer).
3. The first records on any other island of three species resident at Aldabra, all observed on Assumption: Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni*, 5 February 2014 (G. Angell, P. Haverson), Comoro Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas sganzini*, 18–22 March 2012 (C. J. Feare) and Madagascar Coucal *Centropus toulou*, 29 January–12 November 2013 (J. Moumou *et al.*).
4. The first confirmed records of Seychelles Kestrel *Falco araeus* on La Digue: one, 3 March 2015 (T. Hibbert, L. Booth) and one, 10 April 2015 (D. Rosengren); possibly the same individual. Earlier reports include 'Frequently seen on nearly all islands' (Vesey Fitzgerald 1940). This was subsequently assumed to include La Digue and that the species was extirpated; it was also assumed second-hand reports from unknown observers were valid (Watson 1981). However, these reports do not rule out the possibility of confusion with migrant falcons.

Summary of accepted vagrant records

The following vagrant records were accepted in the five years to 31 December 2015. Species whose status changed from vagrant to annual during the period are not included. Numbers in parentheses represent, first, the total number of accepted records to date, and, second, the number of records accepted during the five-year period. The abbreviation 1cy/2cy etc., is used to indicate birds aged as first/second-calendar year etc. for birds breeding in the Northern Hemisphere (the vast majority of vagrants). This system works less well in the Southern Hemisphere as the breeding season may span two calendar years and for these species immature/juvenile is used.

'Round Island Petrel' *Pterodroma arminjoniana* (31, 31)
Thirty geolocator records in Seychelles EEZ in 2010–11 with 595 sets of coordinates concentrated at the edges of banks from Farquhar to the Amirantes and especially the eastern edge of the Seychelles Bank; earliest date 12 April and latest 21 October. One sight record, south of Coëtivy, 9 February 2011 (A. Ross *et al.*).

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes* (7, 3)
One off Mahé, 21 October 2013 (P. N. Collin). More than 100 east of Mahé at 04°49'S 57°31'E, 4–26 July 2014 (E. Juxon, I. Sikora). One near Denis at 03°29'S 55°47'E, 25 November 2014 (H. Shirihai, A. P. Skerrett).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (2, 1)
Two south-east of Mahé at 05°14'S 57°41'E, 23 June 2014 (E. Juxon).

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* (13, 2)
At least 30 from near Agalega, south of Seychelles EEZ at 09°45'S 56°28'E to near Coëtivy at 07°50'S 56°05'30"E, 9 February 2011 (A. Ross *et al.*). One south-east of Mahé at 05°17'S 56°53'E, 3 July 2014 (E. Juxon).

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (12, 6)
One north of Bird at 00°82'S 53°83'E, 23 October 1962 (N. G. C. Cheshire). Ten north of Denis, 25 November 2014: one *c.*5 nautical miles north of the island; three at 03°37'S 55°36'E; three at 03°29'S 55°47'E; and three at 03°35'S 55°43'E (Shirihai & Skerrett 2016). About 15 east of Denis at 03°47'S 56°11'E, 26 November 2014 (Shirihai & Skerrett 2016).

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* (5, 2)
One south-east of Mahé at 05°26'S 56°38'E, 26 July 2014 (E. Juxon). One south-east of Mahé at 05°29'S 57°16'E, 27 July 2014 (E. Juxon).

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica* (3, 2)
One east of Mahé at 04°27'S 56°46'E, 28 July 2014 (E. Juxon). One near Denis at 03°47'S 56°11'E, 26 November 2014 (Shirihai & Skerrett 2016).

Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Hydrobates matsudairae* (6, 5)
Eleven north of Denis, 25 November 2014: one *c.*15 nautical miles north of the island; five at 03°37'S 55°36'E; four at 03°29'S 55°47'E; and one at 03°35'S 55°43'E; three east of Denis at 03°47'S 56°11'E, 26 November 2014 (Shirihai & Skerrett 2016).

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (11, 4)
Adult, race *indicus*, Bird, 7–8 April 2008 (J. Babbington). Two Frégate, 16 October 2012 (M. Lautenbach *et al.*). Adult, Alphonse, 10 October 2013 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Three, Cosmoledo, 8–9 February 2014 (M. Cosson).

Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* (6, 3)
One, Aldabra, 12 February 2012 (D. Birch). One, Aldabra, 23 April–6 May 2012 (C. Onezia *et al.*). One, Assumption, 3 April 2015 (P. Banville).

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (8, 2)
One, Frégate, 13 October 2012 (M. Lautenbach, L. Clarke). One, Denis, 3 December 2015 (M. van Dinther).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (1, 1)
1cy, Bird, 23 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (13, 5)
Six pre-2011 accepted records were reviewed; one decision was changed to *Ardeola* sp. New records were: adult, Bird, 17–20 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). 1cy or non-breeding adult, Bird, 12–19 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Non-breeding adult, Alphonse, 18 November 2013 and presumed same individual, St. François, 20 November 2013 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, probably 2cy, Desroches, 6–26 February 2014 (P. Nogués *et al.*). Adult, Mahé, 2 November 2015 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). One, Mahé, 2 November 2015 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave).

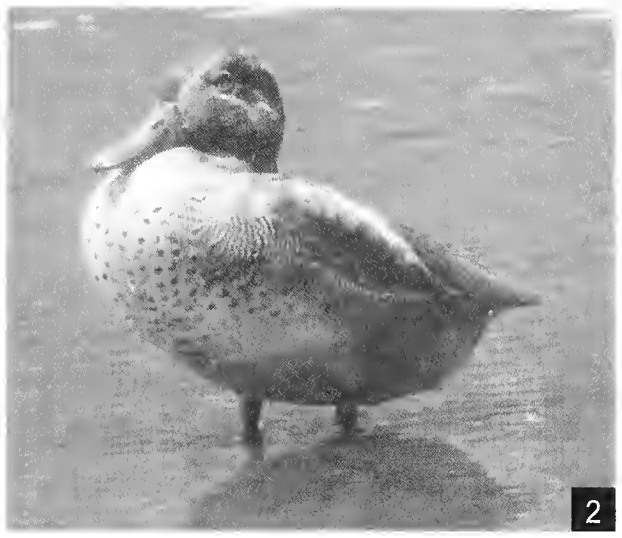
Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* (3, 0)
Eight pre-2011 records were reviewed; two were confirmed, three accepted as Squacco Herons and three as *Ardeola* sp.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* or **Indian Pond Heron** *A. grayii*
Two, Assumption, 16 February 2012 (C. J. Feare).

Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae* (5, 2)
Four pre-2011 out-of-range records (east of Aldabra) were reviewed; three were confirmed and one accepted as Indian Pond Heron. New records were: immature, Assumption, 4–17 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). Two immatures, Farquhar 2–6 February 2015 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec).

***Ardeola* sp.**
Two of five pre-2011 records were reviewed; one was accepted as Squacco Heron. New record: one, Mahé, 7 November 2015 (A. P. Skerrett).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (37, 11)
One, Bird, 9 December 2010 (K. Jolliffe, J. Henwood). Three, Bird, 22 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Non-breeding adult, Alphonse, 24–26 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Mahé, 6–8 December 2012 (A. P. Skerrett). One, Île Persévérance, 1–12 May 2013 (A. P. Skerrett, G. McKinlay). One, Mahé, 9 December 2012 (C. Larose). One, Mahé, 7 June 2013 (C. J. Feare). Two, Curieuse, 23 January–May 2013 (P. J. Woods). One, St. François, 12 December 2013 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, St. François, 18 February 2015 (S. Balderson, C. Narty). One, Denis, 25–27 October 2015 (J. van de Cromennacker).



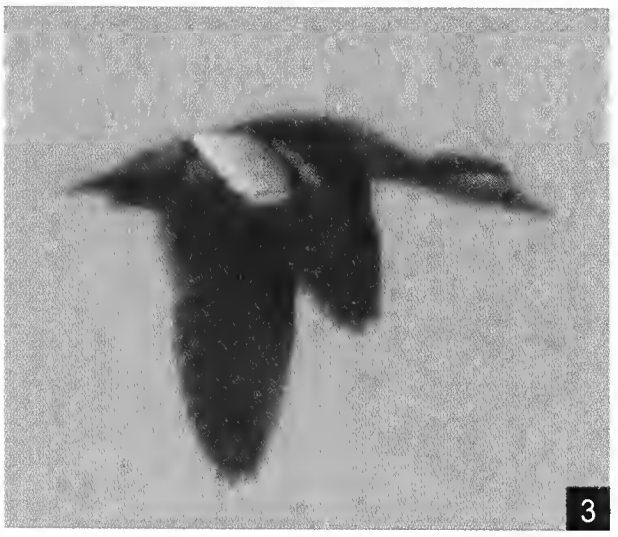


Figure 1. Female or immature Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, Grand Terre, Aldabra, 16 March 2011 (P. Haupt)

Canard à bosse *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, femelle ou immature, Grand Terre, Aldabra, 16 mars 2011 (P. Haupt)

Figure 2. First-winter Common Teal *Anas crecca*, La Passe marsh, Silhouette, 11 January 2016 (E. Nancy)

Sarcelle d'hiver *Anas crecca*, 1er hiver, marais de La Passe, Silhouette, 11 janvier 2016 (E. Nancy)

Figure 3. Red-billed Duck / Canard à bec rouge *Anas erythrorhyncha*, Grande Terre, Aldabra, 10 January 2012 (J. Souyave)

Great Egret *Ardea alba* (19, 3)
Adult breeding, Aldabra, 14 November 2011 (C. Onezia). Adult, Aldabra, 27 January 2012 (M. Šúr). One, Aldabra, 21 April 2012–3 October 2012 (C. Onezia).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (1, 1 western Seychelles)
Juvenile, Assumption, 2 November 2012 (C. J. Feare).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (13, 3)
One, Mahé, 5 January 2011 (S. Ansell *et al.*). Immature, Aride, 1–2 October 2012 (L. Calabrese, J. Simeon). Adult, Aride, 1 October 2015 (U. Samedi *et al.*).

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (1, 1)
Female or immature at Cinq Cases, Grand Terre, Aldabra from 16 March 2011, joined by a second, 11 April 2011 (Fig. 1; P. Haupt *et al.*).

Northern Shoveler *Spatula* (*Anas*) *clypeata* (13, 4)
Female, Denis, 23 November 2011 (M. Unrath, J. Chang Tave). 1cy male, Desroches, 20 October 2015 (P. Nogués). Female, Aride, 31 October 2015 (U. Samedi). 1cy, Mahé, 2 November 2015 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave).

Common Teal *Anas crecca* (1, 1)
1cy male at La Passe, Silhouette, 7–9 December 2015 (Fig. 2; E. Nancy, B. Moncherry).

Red-billed Duck *Anas erythrorhyncha* (2, 2)
Adult at Grande Terre, Aldabra, 10 January 2012 (Fig. 3; J. Souyave. D. Rose). One at Grande Terre, Aldabra, 30 November 2012 (C. Onezia, S. Etienne).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (5, 1)
1cy male and 1cy female, Desroches, 13 November 2014 (P. Nogués *et al.*).

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (7, 3)
Adult, Denis, 22–29 November 2010 (R. M. Mason). One, North Island, 19 November 2011 (E. Mokhobo *et al.*). One, Praslin, 27 January and 8 February 2012 (A. Reuleaux *et al.*).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (4, 1)
Adult, Aldabra, 12–15 February 2012 (A. Gouffe *et al.*).

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* (8, 2)
One, Alphonse, 18–23 January 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Assumption, 4–6 August 2013 (L. Koehler, P. Banville).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (9, 3)
Adult male, Frégate, 19–22 March 2012 (G. Canning *et al.*). 2cy male, Desroches, 22–28 March 2014 (P. Nogués). Adult female, Alphonse, 15–16 March 2015 (S. Balderson, C. Narty).

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (3, 2)
Female or 2cy, Alphonse, 17–18 February 2015 (S. Balderson, M. Betts). One, Denis, 30 November–1 December 2015 (J. van Crommenacker, M. van Dinther).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* (39, 8)
Eleven pre-2011 records were reviewed; three were confirmed, four were rejected, two were accepted as 'Eleonora's or Sooty Falcon' and two remain pended. New records: one pale morph, Assumption, 14–21 November 2012 (T. Mahoune). 15–20, Aldabra, 12 April 2013 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). 2cy, 4 November 2013 (C. Onezia). Adult dark morph, Assumption, 13 November 2013 (P. Banville). 1cy, Denis, 11–12 December 2013 (R. M. Mason). Two 1cy, Alphonse, 25–30 December 2013 (A. Duhec *et al.*). At least three, Aldabra, 29 October–6 November 2014 (C. Onezia). Two, including one 2cy pale morph, Aldabra, 7–9 December 2014 (C. Onezia).

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* (8, 2)
1cy, Assumption, 5 December 2013 (P. Banville, G. Angell). 1cy, Farquhar, 12 December 2014 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne).

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (28, 5)
Nine of 25 pre-2011 records were reviewed; three were confirmed, three rejected, two accepted as Eleonora's Falcon and one accepted as Sooty Falcon. An old published record (and the first chronologically) was accepted: one collected on Bird, November 1936, while consuming a Fairy Tern *Gygis alba* (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1940), but apparently the specimen was not preserved. New records: 1cy, La Digue, 30 December 2010 (P. Biseth). 1cy, Alphonse, 19 November 2011 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec). 1cy, Bird, 24 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). Adult, Astove, 19 February 2015 (M. Betts). 1cy, Silhouette, 8 November 2015 (E. Elizabeth *et al.*).

Corncrake *Crex crex* (4, 1)
1cy, North Island, 23 October 2014 (C. J. Havemann *et al.*).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* (2, 1)
Adult, Etoile, 26 November 2013 (G. Rocamora *et al.*).

Figure 4. Lesser Moorhen / Gallinule africaine *Gallinula angulata*, Desroches, 10 March 2012 (T. Jupiter)

Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata* (2, 2)
Juvenile at Basin Flamant, Grand Terre, Aldabra, 29 July 1999 (T. Jupiter, B. Betsy). Juvenile at the IDC village, Desroches, 10 March 2012 (Fig. 4; T. Jupiter).

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (8, 2)
2cy, Silhouette, 16–28 June 2004 (R. Gerlach *et al.*). 1cy, Cosmoledo, 18 November 2015 (M. Betts).

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (2, 2)
One, Bird, 22–23 November 2012 (Fig. 5; N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, Grand Soeur, 29 December 2012 (G. Saout). Possibly the same individual involved.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (5, 1)
Adult or 2cy, Île Persévérance, 1–8 November 2015 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*).

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (11, 1)
One, Alphonse, 1 February–17 March 2015 (S. Balderson, M. Betts).

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* (2, 2)
One post-juvenile at various localities, Bird, at least 17–26 November 2010 (R. J. Allen *et al.*). One at La Promenade, Mahé, 28 December 2010–6 April 2011 at least (Fig. 6; R. Martin *et al.*). The two records almost certainly refer to the same individual as both records involved a bird that was ringed.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (17, 4)
Adult and 1cy, Denis, 23 November 2011 (M. Unrath, J. Chang Tave). Two adults, Aldabra, 21



Figure 5. Pied Avocet / Avocette élégante *Recurvirostra avosetta*, Bird Island, 23 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips)

Figure 6. Spur-winged Lapwing / Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus*, La Promenade, Mahé, 7 January 2011 (A. P. Skerrett)

Figure 7. Adult Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Pointe Dot, Alphonse, 29 October 2012 (A. Duhec)

Bécasseau maubèche *Calidris canutus*, adulte, Pointe Dot, Alphonse, 29 octobre 2012 (A. Duhec)

October 2013 (C. Onezia *et al.*). 1cy, Denis, 19 October 2015 (J. van de Crommenacker, M. van Dinther). Adult, Praslin, 21–22 October 2015 (P. Boswell).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (14, 4)
Adult, Mahé, 17 May 2010 (A. Starke). One, Aldabra, 11 January 2012 (C. Onezia *et al.*). Adult, Bird, 7 April 2008 (J. Babbington). Adult breeding, Desroches, 8–11 April 2014 (E. Nancy, P. Nogués).

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* (21, 6)
Adult breeding, Alphonse, 12 April 2012 (J. Lagoa *et al.*). One, Bird, 28–29 October 2012 (J. Ferdinand *et al.*). Adult, Bijoutier, 2 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Alphonse, 5–6 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Adult, Desroches, 22 October 2015 (P. Nogués, G. Rocamora). Adult, Île Persévérance, 15–22 November 2015 (C. Onezia *et al.*).

Pratincole sp. *Glareola* sp.
One, Desroches, 3–9 November 2012 (T. Jupiter *et al.*).

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* (1, 1)
One adult at Pointe Dot, Alphonse, 29 October 2012 (Fig. 7; A. Duhec).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (9, 4)
1cy, Alphonse, 14 October 2011(R. Jeanne). Adult male, Alphonse, 18–20 January 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Adult non-breeding, Desroches, 9 November 2012 (T. Jupiter, K. Machin). One, Cousine 2–30 November 2013 (I. Olivier *et al.*).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 1)
1cy, Alphonse, 20 November 2011 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne).

Ruff *Calidris* (*Philomachus*) *pugnax* (34, 3)
Adult male, Île Persévérance, 7 October 2012 (A. P. Skerrett, R. Fanchette). Adult female, Bird, 13–24 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 4 December 2013 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris* (*Limicola*) *falcinellus* (6, 2)
Adult, Mahé, 10–12 February 2011 (M. Barnett *et al.*). Adult non-breeding, Île Persévérance, 15 November 2012 (G. McKinlay).

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (23, 7)
One, Bird, 24 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Frégate, 15 November 2010–6 February 2011 (G. Canning). One, Île Persévérance, 9–18 November 2012 (G. McKinlay). Two, Bird, 18–24 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, Île Persévérance, 30–31 October 2015 (C. Onezia *et al.*). Two, Île Persévérance, 7 November 2015 (A. P. Skerrett). Two, Île Persévérance, 3 December 2015 (M Betts).

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (4, 1)
One, Alphonse, 12–13 October 2011 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec).

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* or
Swinhoe's Snipe *G. megala*
One, Desroches, 9 October 2011 (T. Jupiter, A. Nahaboo). One, Alphonse, 8 January 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Frégate, 20 October 2012 (M. Lautenbach, D. Marx).

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (8, 1)
One, Denis, 2–8 December 2012 (R. M. Mason).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 2)
One, Île Persévérance, 18 November 2012 (S. Ansell). Adult and 1–2 1cy, Alphonse, 28 October 2015 (A. Fernández).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (3, 1)
One, Aldabra, 5 April 2015 (C. Onezia).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* (5, 1)
1cy, Bird, 8 July 2013 (C. J. Feare, C. Larose).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* (1, 1)
Two pale-morph adults and one unaged, halfway between Coëtivy and Agalega at *c*.08°17'S 56°11'E, 9 February 2011 (A. Ross *et al.*).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (12, 3)
3cy/4cy race *heuglini*, Sainte Anne National Park, 28 April–late July 2014 (A. Dufrenne *et al.*). 3cy race *heuglini*, Desroches, 1–16 December 2014 (P. Nogués *et al.*). One race *fuscus*, Alphonse, 16–19 December 2014 (S. Balderson).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (13, 1)
One, Mahé, 5 December 2009–31 January 2010 (G. Rocamora).

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* (6, 1)
One, Assumption, 23–24 October 2011 (C. J. Feare).

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii velox* (3, 2 vagrant race records)
One, Alphonse, 28 September 2011 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec). Adult, St. François, 15 February 2012 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec).

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa* (3, 1)
1cy, Aride, 2–3 January 2012 (A. Barra *et al.*).

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* (3, 2)
One, Aldabra, 21 April 2012 (C. Onezia *et al.*). Two adults, Mahé, 6–7 March 2015 (T. Hibbert, L. Booth).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (8, 3)
One, Mahé, 1–4 November 2010 (M. Hunter, P. Constance). One, Aldabra, 5 December 2010 (M. Šúr, P. Haupt). One, Île Persévérance, 4 May 2013 (A. Brown *et al.*).

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (10, 2)
2cy, Alphonse, 22 January 2013 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec). 1cy, Aride, 2–4 November 2014 (J. Michel, M. Curran).

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* (3, 3)
Adult female, Aldabra, 11–15 December 2011 (Fig. 8; M. Šúr). Sub-adult female, Assumption, 16–17 January 2012 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). Immature male, Aride, 8–10 October 2012 (L. Calabrese *et al.*).

Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* (12, 2)
1cy, Aride, 25 December 2011 (T. Catry *et al.*). 2cy, Poivre, 18 January 2012 (L. Mair, L. Chong Seng).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (2, 1)
1cy, Aldabra, 30 December 2011–1 January 2012 (M. Šúr).


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Figure 8. Adult female Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, Picard, Aldabra, 11 December 2011 (M. Šúr)

Tourterelle masquée *Oena capensis*, femelle adulte, Picard, Aldabra, 11 décembre 2011 (M. Šúr)

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (50, 12)
One, Alphonse, 11 November 2010 (J. Michel *et al.*). 1cy, Aridė, 1 December 2010 (C. Bresson *et al.*). 1cy, Cousine, 17 December 2010 (K. Jolliffe, S.-M. Jolliffe). 1cy, Cousine, 10–14 January 2010 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*). Adult female, Mahé, 18 November 2011 (U. Samedi). One, Aride, 26 December 2011 (T. Catry, I. Catry). 2cy, Aride, 4 January 2012 (T. Catry, I. Catry). Adult, Alphonse, 12 December 2013 (R. Jeanne). 1cy, Cousin, 16 December 2013 (A. Underwood, J. Souyana). One, Desroches, 14 February 2014 (P. Nogués, E. Nancy). 1cy, Aldabra, 19 November 2014 (G. Rose, C. Onezia). 1cy, Silhouette, 13–18 November 2014 (A. Street). One, Cousin, 5 January 2015 (T. Hibbert).

Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus* (21, 6)
1cy, Bird, 16–20 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Aldabra, 24 December 2011 (M. Šúr). 2cy, North Island, 15 January 2011 (G. Wepener *et al.*). One, found dead, Mahé, 20 January 2011 (A. P. Skerrett). 2cy, Cousine, 2 May 2011 (K. Jolliffe *et al.*). Adult, Assumption, 29 October 2013 (J. Moumou *et al.*).

Cuckoo sp. *Cuculus* sp.
One, Cerf, 26 January 2011 (E. Palmer). One, Desroches, 1 November 2012 (T. Jupiter, A. Commettant). One, Alphonse, 12 December 2012 (R. Jeanne). One, Assumption, 24 June–4 July 2013 (J. Moumou).

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (8, 2)
One, Frégate, 10 January–2 February 2011 (G. Canning, J. Gane). One, Desroches, 24 November 2015 (P. Holden *et al.*).

Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (5, 1)
Female or 1cy, Bird, 19 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips).

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* (6, 1)
One, Aride, 21 November 2011 (I. Bullock, L. Calabrese).

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* (3, 2)
One over the settlement, Assumption, 2–5 March 2012 (C. J. Feare, P. Benoit, T. Mahoune, J. Hoareau). One race *gracilis*, Aldabra, 2 June 2014 (C. Onezia, G. Rose).

Common Swift *Apus apus* (35, 14)
One, Bird, 7 November 2010 (M. Hunter, T. R. Bresson). One, St. François, 11 January 2011 (A. Nahaboo *et al.*). One race *pekinensis*, Aldabra 6–7 October 2011 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). One, Denis, 8 October 2011 (C. J. Feare, T. Leibrick). One, Desroches, 29 September 2011 (T. Jupiter, A. Commettant). Three, Assumption 17 December 2011 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 22–23 January 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Assumption, 31 January 2012 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). Two, 4 February 2012 (C. J. Feare). Two, Assumption, 6–10 February 2012 (C. J. Feare). 1cy, Bird, 17 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Aldabra, 27 December 2012 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). Two Aldabra, 30 January 2013 (G. McKinlay, T. Mahoune). Two, Aldabra, 6–17 October 2014 (C. Onezia *et al.*).

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (15, 2)
One, Denis, 5 June 2014 (J. West *et al.*). One near the Indian village, Desroches, 13–15 November 2015 (A. P. Skerrett *et al.*).

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (6, 1)
One, Frégate, 11 or 18 November 2010 (G. Canning).

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* (2, 1)
One, Mahé, 29 December 2013–12 January 2014 (P. Desnousse).

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* (25, 11 records east of Aldabra group)
One, Bird, 21 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Bird, 26–27 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Desroches, 13–19 October 2011 (A. Commettant *et al.*). Adult race *glaucurus*, Alphonse, 19 November 2011 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec). One, Alphonse, 12–13 March 2013 (J.-C. Vidot *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 13 December 2013 (A. Latif, R. Jeanne). Adult, Alphonse, 6 October 2014 (S. Balderson *et al.*). Adult, Desroches, 7–21 November 2014 (A. Fernández *et al.*). Three, Farquhar, 7 December 2014 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec). One, St. François,

Figure 9. Madagascar Kingfisher / Martin-pêcheur vintsi *Alcedo vintsioides*, Research Station, Picard, Aldabra, 20 March 2013 (C. Ferguson)

18 February 2015 (S. Balderson, C. Narty). Adult, Alphonse, 27–29 October 2015 (A. Fernández).

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* (2, 1)
Adult, Desroches, 29 December 2010 (M. Collins, J. Brotherton).

Madagascar Kingfisher *Alcedo vintsioides* (1, 1)
One at the Research Station, Picard, Aldabra, 20 March 2013 (Fig. 9; C. Ferguson, A. de Groene, C. Quanz).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* (21 + 4 invasions, 4+1 invasion)
Summary of 2010–2011 invasion: up to 30, Bird, 1–20 December 2010 (S. Murgatroyd *et al.*); up to ten, Silhouette, 2–6 December, 2010 (R. Gerlach); ten, Cousine, 22 December 2010 (K. Jolliffe); one, D'Arros, 3–10 January 2011, and two, 23–27 March 2011 (J. A. Mortimer). Other records: four, Aldabra, 16 December 2011, three until 21 December 2011 (M. Šúr). Two, Frégate, 17–23 December 2012 (G. Canning). 1cy, Bird, 13–16 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). 1cy, Cousin 16–17 November 2014 (A. Burt, A. Underwood).

Madagascar Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* (2, 1)
Up to four, Aldabra, 9 August–15 September 2013 (C. Onezia *et al.*).

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (4, 1)
One race *senegalensis*, Aldabra, 1–2 August 2013 (C. Onezia *et al.*).

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (7, 3)
One, Denis, 24 September 2009 (C. Onezia). One, Bird, 26 October 2012 (J. Ferdinand, H Galow). One, Aldabra, 4 November 2013 (M. van Dinther *et al.*).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (37, 15)
One, Assumption, 4–12 January 2012 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). One, Assumption, 31 January–4 February 2012 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). One, Assumption, 2 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). One, Alphonse, 9 March 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Île Persévérance, 7–8 October 2012 (A. P. Skerrett, R. Fanchette). One, Bird, 28 October 2012 (J. Ferdinand, H Galow). One, Bird, 12–14 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Île Persévérance, 18 November 2012 (G. McKinlay). Three, Desroches, 29 October 2012 (T. Jupiter, M. Curran). One, Desroches, 11 March 2013 (T. Jupiter, S. Adeline). One, Alphonse, 10 February 2014 (S. Balderson). One, Desroches, 4–6 June 2014 (P. Nogués). One, Alphonse, 28–29 May 2015 (C. Narty). One, Alphonse, 14 June 2015 (C. Narty). Two, Denis, 24–27 October 2015 (M. van Dinther, J. van de Crommenacker).

Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica* (16, 9)
Immature, Assumption, 3–4 April 2012 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). Two, Aldabra, 11 March 2012 (J. van de Cromennacker *et al.*). At least three, Aldabra, 6 May 2012 (C. Onezia *et al.*). One, St. François, 14 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Aldabra, 8 April 2013 (C. Onezia). One, Aldabra, 21–28 August 2013 (J. Brice *et al.*). 2–3, Aldabra, 22 April–6 May 2014 (J. Agricole *et al.*). One, Farquhar, 5 October and 10–14 October 2014 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Farquhar, 4 February 2015 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne).

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* (21, 12)
Five, Aldabra, 28 November 2010 (M. Šúr). 2–3 1cy, Bird, 19 December 2010 (A. P. Skerrett, R. Bresson). One, Assumption, 4 February 2012 (C. J. Feare, P. Benoit). 2cy, Aldabra, 6–7 February 2012 (D. Birch *et al.*). Up to four, Assumption, 8–11 February 2012 (C. J. Feare, P. Benoit). 2cy, Assumption, 26 February 2012 (C. J. Feare). Up to six, Assumption, 2–10 March 2012 (C. J.

Feare). One, Bird, 22 April 2013 (P. Woods, N. Dunn). One, probably adult, Desroches, 2 May 2015 (P. Nogués). 2–5 including at least two 1cy, Aldabra, 23–26 October 2014 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). One, Alphonse, 15–17 April 2015 (L. Martin, S. Balderson). Adult, Cosmoledo, 14 November 2015 (M. Betts).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (49, 18)
1cy male, Bird, 20 December 2010 (A. P. Skerrett, T. R. Bresson)). 1cy male, Bird, 27 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Male, probably race *beema*, Frégate, 7 February 2011 (G. Canning). Male, probably race *beema*, Alphonse, 10–14 January 2011 (D. Louis *et al.*). Male, Aldabra, 6 April 2011 (P. Haupt, J. van de Crommenacker). Two males race *lutea*, Assumption, 12–15 January 2012, one until 19 January 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. F. Linnebjerg). One, Assumption, 16 January 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. F. Linnebjerg). One, Assumption, 19 January 2012 (C. J. Feare). Male race *feldegg*, Assumption, 29 February–3 March 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. F. Linnebjerg). Male probably race *beema*, Frégate, 21 March 2012 (G. Canning). Male race *lutea*, Aldabra, 29 March–5 April 2012 (S. Denis *et al.*). 1cy, Bird, 14–24 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et a*l.). Male, probably race *beema*, Aldabra, 25 October 2013 (J. Souyave *et al.*). One, Alphonse, 22 March 2014 (S. Balderson). One, North Island, 29 October 2014 (T. Havemann, C. J. Havemann). Male *beema / flava*, Aldabra, 14 March 2015 (F. Gamble). 1cy, Alphonse, 12–16 October 2015 (A. Fernández). 1cy, Aldabra, 5 November 2015 (J. Hoareau, A. Burt).

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (40, 10)
1cy, Denis, 19 November 2009 (C. Onezia). Male, Aldabra, 16 November 2011 (C. Onezia). Female or 1cy, Alphonse, 15–20 November 2011 (A. Duhec, E. Duhec). One, Alphonse, 21–23 December 2011 (R. Jeanne, A. Duhec). One, Bird, 12–15 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Male, North Island, Farquhar, 16–22 November 2012 (J. Niemandt, G. Brooke-Sumner). Adult, Alphonse, 19 December 2014 (S. Balderson, C. Narty). Up to three (male and two female/1cy), Île Persévérance, 13–28 November 2015 (S. Agricole *et al.*). 1cy, Aride, 25 November–3 December 2015 (G. Jessie, J. Michel, M. Curran U. Samedi). Adult, Denis, 1 December 2015 (M. van Dinther).

Figure 10. Adult Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*, Assumption, 5 February 2012 (C. J. Feare)

Pipit de Richard *Anthus richardi*, adulte, Assumption, 5 février 2012 (C. J. Feare)

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* (1, 1)
One adult at the airstrip, Assumption, 15 January–21 February 2012 (Fig. 10), with two, 17–18 January 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. Linnebjerg).

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (29, 12)
1cy, Aldabra, 12 December 2010 (M. Šúr). At least four 1cy, Bird, 16–24 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). 1cy, Alphonse, 10–14 January 2011 (A. Duhec *et al.*). Three, Alphonse, 12 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Two 1cy, Bird, 14–24 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Adult, Alphonse, 2–11 December 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Six, Desroches, 17–25 November 2012 (T. Jupiter *et al.*). Two adults, Alphonse, 23 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). One, Aldabra, 3–4 January 2013 (P. Haupt *et al.*). 1cy, Rémire, 27 November 2013 (G. Rocamora *et al.*). Adult, Denis, 19–26 May 2014 (C. J. Feare, C. Larose). Two, Alphonse, 26 November 2014 (S. Balderson).

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (18, 7)
1cy female, Denis, 7 November 2009 (C. Onezia). Female, Aride, 11–20 November 2010 (C. Bresson *et al.*). 1cy male, Bird, 16–23 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips, T. R. Bresson). 1cy male, Bird, 22–23 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, possibly two 1cy males, Bird, 15 November and 17–21 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). Adult male race *samamisicus*, Aride, 12 December 2013 (J. Cotin). Male, possibly race *samamiscus*, Denis, 24 October 2015 (M. van Dinther, J. van de Crommenacker).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (5, 3)
One, Bird, 17–19 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). Female, Desroches, 17 November 2012 (T. Jupiter). One, Denis, 28 November 2014 (H. Shirihai).

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (69, 21)
Adult, Alphonse, 1 February 2011 (J. Michel). Male, Aldabra, 21 December 2011 (M. Šúr). Male, Aldabra, 11 January 2012 (C. Onezia *et al.*). 1cy, Alphonse, 11 January 2012 (R. Jeanne). Male and female, Assumption, 15–18 January 2012, plus second female, 18 January 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. Linnebjerg). Male, Assumption, 16–18 January 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. Linnebjerg). Adult male, Alphonse, 20–27 January 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Minimum four males and one female, Assumption, 26 January–16 February 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. Linnebjerg). 2cy male, Aldabra, 1 March 2012 (S. Denis *et al.*). One, Assumption, 4–5 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). 2cy/first-summer male, Aldabra, 4 March 2012 (C. Onezia). 1cy male, Alphonse, 12 October 2012 (A. Duhec). 1cy male, Desroches, 1 November 2012, 2 November 2012 and 14 November 2012 (T. Jupiter). Female, Alphonse, 27 December 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Male breeding, Bijoutier, 21 January 2013 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). Adult male, Aldabra, 4 February 2013 (C. Onezia *et al.*). 2cy, Aldabra, 13–17 February 2013 (G. McKinlay, L. Reiter). One, Desroches, 8 February 2013 (K. Machin). One, Desroches, 20 January 2014 (J. Michel). Female, Alphonse, 16 February 2014 (S. Balderson). Male breeding, Aldabra, 6 January 2015 (G. Rose, C. Onezia). Female, Desroches, 10–13 February 2015 (P. Nogués, A. Fernández).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (5, 3)
Male, Aldabra, 17 February 2011 (M. Šúr, N. Victor). 1cy male, Bird, 14 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). 1cy male, Denis, 7–9 December 2012 (R. M. Mason).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (3, 1)
Female, Denis, 23–24 November 2009 (C. Onezia).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (8, 1)
One, Assumption, 26 January 2012 (C. J. Feare).

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* (5, 2)
Adult, Bijoutier, 2 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne). 1cy, Bird, 16 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (6, 2)
Up to four, Bird, 21–26 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). Adult, Assumption, 3 March 2012 (C. J. Feare, J. Hoareau).

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (6, 2)
One, Assumption, 11 May 2012 (T. Mahoune *et al.*). One, Aldabra, 10 December 2013 (W. Falcon *et al.*).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (2, 1)
One, Assumption, 7 December 2013 (P. Banville).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (6, 4)
1cy male, Aride, 14 November 2010 (C. Bresson *et al.*). Male, Assumption, 31 March 2012 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). One probably female, Bird, 13–16 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). One, Assumption, 21 November 2013 (G. Angell).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (3, 1)
2cy male, Aldabra, 6 April 2012 (R. Baxter, D. Hansen).

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (9, 3)
Adult male, Assumption, 11 December 2011 (C. J. Feare). Adult female or 1cy, Bird, 24 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips *et al.*). One, Aldabra, 31 March 2014 (H. Richards *et al.*).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* (47, 17)
One, Aldabra, 5 November 2011 (C. Onezia). One, Aldabra, 10–11 November 2011 (C. Onezia *et al.*). One, Aldabra, 24–26 November 2011 (C. Onezia). One, Assumption, 12 December 2011 (C. J. Feare *et al.*). One, Aldabra, 3–14 January 2012 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). 2cy, Aldabra, 31 January 2012 (M. Šúr). One, Assumption, 3 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). One, Assumption, 7 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). One, Assumption, 13 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). One, Assumption, 15 March 2012 (C. J. Feare). One, Mahé, 30 October 2012 (C. J. Feare). 1cy, Alphonse, 14 November 2012 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne).

Figure 11. Common Starling / Étourneau sansonnet *Sturnus vulgaris*, Denis Island, 6 March 2015 (P.-A. Åhlen)

One, Bird, 29 October 2012 (J. Ferdinand, H. Galow). One, Bird, 18 November 2012 (N. J. Phillips). One, Aldabra, 30 March 2014 (J. van de Crommenacker). One, Aldabra, 13 November 2014 (C. Onezia *et al.*). One, Farquhar, 6 March 2015 (A. Duhec, R. Jeanne).

Pied / Collared / Semi-collared Flycatcher
Ficedula hypoleuca / albicollis / semitorquata
One, Aride, 21 November 2011 (I. Bullock, G. Lewis).

Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa* (1, 1)
One adult male at Takamaka, Grand Terre, Aldabra, 19 January 2015 (F. Gamble, M. Dubel).

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (1, 1)
One, Denis, 5–10 March 2015 (Fig. 11; P.-A. Åhlen).

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* (5, 2)
Female, Aldabra, 5 October 2011 (C. Onezia, J. van de Crommenacker). Immature, Aldabra, 24 May 2015 (S. Decommarmond).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* (6, 3)
1cy, Bird, 22 November 2010 (N. J. Phillips, V. E. Phillips). 1cy, Aldabra, 26 October 2011 (C. Onezia, J. Souyave). One, Alphonse, 11 February 2013 (W. Haselau, R. Jeanne).

Acknowledgements

We thank all of the observers who submitted records to SBRC during the period, in particular the staff and volunteers of Denis, Island Conservation Society and Seychelles Islands Foundation. We also thank our consultants who contributed to assessments during the period covered by this paper, namely Dick Forsman (raptors), John Marchant (waders), Klaus Malling Olsen (gulls), Tony Palliser (seabirds) and Robert Prŷs-Jones (museums).

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Received 1 March 2016; revision accepted 29 April 2016.

Does Yellow-vented Eremomela *Eremomela flavicrissalis* occur sympatrically with Yellow-bellied Eremomela *E. icteropygialis* in Tanzania?

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L'Érémomèle à ventre jaune *Eremomela flavicrissalis* et l'Érémomèle à croupion jaune *E. icteropygialis* sont-elles sympatriques en Tanzanie ? Un couple d'Érémomèles à ventre jaune *Eremomela flavicrissalis* a été observé à Ndutu, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, au nord-ouest de la Tanzanie, en octobre 2015. Il n'y a pas de mentions confirmées de cette espèce en Tanzanie, ni de données à l'ouest de la vallée du Rift au sud du Kenya. Trois explications possibles pour cette observation sont examinées : (a) il s'agit d'occasionnels en dehors de leur aire normale de répartition, (b) l'Érémomèle à ventre jaune est passée inaperçue à cause de sa ressemblance avec certains individus de la sous-espèce *griseoflava* de l'Érémomèle à croupion jaune *E. icteropygialis* (décrits comme *crawfurdi*), ou (c) les oiseaux du sud-ouest du Kenya / nord-ouest de la Tanzanie (*crawfurdi*) ont été incorporés de façon erronnée dans *E. icteropygialis griseoflava* et appartiennent en fait à *E. flavicrissalis*. Nous présentons des photos d'Érémomèles à ventre jaune et à croupion jaune d'un même groupe en train de chasser au nord du Kenya. Les auteurs espèrent que cet article encouragera les observateurs à prêter attention aux érémomèles en Tanzanie et, si possible, à obtenir des photos et / ou des enregistrements des vocalisations et de les envoyer au Comité d'Homologation est africain.

Summary. A pair of Yellow-vented Eremomelas *Eremomela flavicrissalis* was observed at Ndutu, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, north-west Tanzania, in October 2015. There are no previous confirmed records of this species from Tanzania, and no records west of the Rift Valley in southern Kenya. Three possible explanations for this record are discussed, namely (a) it was an instance of vagrancy, (b) Yellow-vented Eremomela has been overlooked due to its similarity to some members of the *griseoflava* subspecies of Yellow-bellied Eremomela *E. icteropygialis* (described as *crawfurdi*), or (c) birds from south-west Kenya / north-west Tanzania (*crawfurdi*) have been incorrectly placed with *E. icteropygialis griseoflava* and actually belong with *E. flavicrissalis*. Photographs showing Yellow-vented and Yellow-bellied Eremomelas from the same feeding flock in northern Kenya are presented. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate others to pay close attention to eremomelas in Tanzania, and if possible to obtain photographs and / or audio-recordings that can be forwarded to the East African Rarities Committee.

Eremomelas are a genus of small warblers (Cisticolidae) confined to sub-Saharan Africa. There are three very similar, generally greyish species of *Eremomela* with yellow on the posterior underparts (Urban *et al.* 1997, Gill & Donsker 2016). The widespread Yellow-bellied Eremomela *E. icteropygialis* is quite variable in the amount and intensity of yellow on the underparts, ranging from bright yellow over the entire belly, vent, flanks and undertail-coverts (as in subspecies *polioxantha*) to pale yellow confined to the central lower belly (e.g. *E. i. icteropygialis*) (Urban *et al.* 1997, Chittenden *et al.* 2012). In East Africa, three subspecies (*per* Gill & Donsker 2016) of Yellow-bellied Eremomela have been recorded: *griseoflava* in northern Tanzania west of the Rift Valley (e.g. Serengeti National Park) through western Kenya and Ethiopia to Eritrea and Somaliland; *abdominalis* from northern Tanzania east of the Rift Valley (e.g. Tarangire National Park, Mkomazi Game Reserve) to north-central Kenya; and *polioxantha* from central Tanzania south to north-east South Africa (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996, Urban *et al.* 1997). Various other subspecies have been described in East Africa, including *karamojensis* from north-east Uganda, northern Kenya and southern Somalia, and *crawfurdi* in south-west Kenya, north-west Tanzania and adjacent Rwanda, both of which are typically now synonymised under *griseoflava* (Urban *et al.* 1997, Pearson 2006). Compared to the other two subspecies, *griseoflava* is more variable in the coloration of the underparts, the yellow in some individuals being paler and restricted to the lower belly (notably in *crawfurdi*).

The second member of the group, Salvadori's Eremomela *E. salvadorii*, occurs from southern Gabon to Angola and western Zambia. It has

Figures 1–2. Yellow-vented Eremomela *Eremomela flavicrissalis* appears all grey at first but on closer inspection, a pale yellow ventral area can be glimpsed as the bird forages in dense *Acacia* canopies; Samburu, Kenya, 24 April 2016 (Callan Cohen)

L'Érémomèle à ventre jaune *Eremomela flavicrissalis* apparaît initialement toute grise, mais lorsqu'on l'examine de plus près, la zone ventrale jaune pâle peut être entrevue quand l'oiseau cherche de la nourriture dans la canopée dense des acacias ; Samburu, Kenya, 24 avril 2016 (Callan Cohen)

Figures 3–4. Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis abdominalis* clearly shows a saturated yellow belly and flanks; Samburu, Kenya, 24 April 2016 (Callan Cohen)

L'Érémomèle à croupion jaune *Eremomela icteropygialis abdominalis* montre clairement un ventre et des flancs d'un jaune intense ; Samburu, Kenya, 24 avril 2016 (Callan Cohen)

extensive and bright yellow on the underparts and a song identical to that of Yellow-bellied Eremomela, and is often regarded as a subspecies of the latter. Finally, the monotypic Yellow-vented Eremomela *E. flavicrissalis* occurs from south-east Kenya to Somaliland, across much of eastern Ethiopia and eastern Kenya, and marginally into north-west Kenya. The yellow on its underparts is

paler and more restricted than that of most races of Yellow-bellied Eremomela, being confined to the central lower belly and vent, as it is in immature Yellow-bellied Eremomela (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002) and some *E. icteropygialis griseoflava* (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). It is most easily distinguished from any race of Yellow-bellied Eremomela by its distinctive song. At present, there are no confirmed records of Yellow-vented Eremomela from Tanzania, although the species is found close to the Tanzanian border in south-east Kenya and there are several unsubstantiated reports from Tanzania (N. Baker pers. comm.), including a sight record from Mkomazi Game Reserve in 1994 (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996).

On 3 October 2015, MSLM was with J. Francis & G. Tebb in arid *Acacia* bushveld less than 500 m from Ndutu Safari Lodge, on the border between Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Serengeti National Park, in northern Tanzania, at *c.*03°01'23.9"S 34°5'40.6"E. He whistled the call of Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* to attract birds, whereupon *c.*15 species approached to within 20 m of the vehicle. Among them was a pair of *Eremomela* with very limited yellow on the underparts. Knowing that Yellow-vented Eremomela was unrecorded in the area and not being familiar with the local subspecies of Yellow-bellied Eremomela, MSLM assumed it was a pale form of Yellow-bellied Eremomela and paid the birds little attention. However, *c.*10 minutes later he heard the distinctive song of Yellow-vented Eremomela, a species that we have seen, heard and sound-recorded the song of in Somaliland and Ethiopia, and subsequent to this record, in Kenya. MSLM followed the calls to relocate the two individuals *c.*50 m distant. This time the birds were further from the road (*c.*30 m), but the clear views confirmed that the yellow was confined to the central lower belly and vent (as would be expected in the local race of Yellow-bellied Eremomela). However, the song clearly identified them as Yellow-vented Eremomela. MSLM played his recordings of Yellow-vented Eremomela from Somaliland and Ethiopia while the birds were observed to be singing, to verify that the song was identical, and unlike the song of Yellow-bellied Eremomela with which he is very familiar. Conditions were quite windy so no sound-recordings were made.

This record is unexpected for several reasons. Firstly, it comes from an area that is relatively well visited by birdwatchers. Secondly, it comes from the west side of the Rift Valley, when all records from adjacent southern Kenya are from east of the Rift Valley. And, thirdly, there was a pair, rather than a single individual, as would be expected if this was an incidence of vagrancy.

Three interpretations of this observation are possible. Given the large number of birders to have visited this area, at least some of whom are familiar with the difference in vocalisations between Yellow-bellied and Yellow-vented Eremomelas, one would expect that a resident population of Yellow-vented Eremomela would have been reported before now. Thus, our record could simply be one of vagrancy.

The second possible explanation is that Yellow-vented Eremomela is more widespread than currently believed, and that both Yellow-bellied and Yellow-vented Eremomelas are resident in the area. The latter may have been overlooked within the range of *crawfurdi* Yellow-bellied Eremomela because of their similar plumages. The ranges of both species overlap but little, and they are thought to be ecologically separated (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). However, in April 2016, we observed these two species alongside one another in Samburu National Reserve, Kenya. We located a pair of both species that behaved as if they were part of the same mixed-species foraging flock, and at times observed them in adjacent *Acacia tortilis* trees, each giving their own song while we observed their respective plumage characters (Figs. 1–4). In this part of Kenya, the race of Yellow-bellied Eremomela is *abdominalis*, which has more extensive and brighter yellow on the underparts than *crawfurdi*, and thus unlike *crawfurdi* is easily separated from Yellow-vented Eremomela based on plumage. Thus, it is possible that Yellow-vented and Yellow-bellied Eremomelas co-exist in north-west Tanzania.

The final potential explanation is that *crawfurdi* has been incorrectly incorporated into *E. icteropygialis griseoflava*, and instead belongs with *E. flavicrissalis*. Perhaps without direct comparison to *flavicrissalis* and *griseoflava*, *crawfurdi* was incorrectly placed in Yellow-bellied Eremomela (D. A. Turner *in litt.* 2016).

The record was submitted to the East African Rarities Committee, but was not accepted as a

first record for Tanzania in the absence of any photographic or sound-recording evidence. We urge fellow birders visiting the range of *crawfurdi* to pay special attention to its songs and to send any recordings to us or to the East African Rarities Committee (ea.rarities@gmail.com). Examples of the songs of both Yellow-bellied and Yellow-vented Eremomelas are available on Stevenson *et al.* (2014).

Acknowledgements

Don Turner kindly shared his thoughts on the record, and commented on the manuscript. Julian Francis, Graham Tebb and Gus Mills are thanked for their patience in the field. Nik Borrow and Nigel Hunter kindly reviewed the manuscript.

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Received 10 August 2016; revision accepted 8 December 2016.

Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* rediscovered in Katanga, DR Congo

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L'Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata* redécouverte au Katanga, RD Congo. En 2016 plusieurs Alouettes éperonnées *Chersomanes albofasciata* ont été photographiées sur le plateau du Kundelungu. En RDC, l'espèce n'était connue que d'un unique spécimen, collecté sur ce même site en décembre 1966. Il s'agit probablement de la race *obscurata*, également présente en Angola.

In December 1966 Louis Poelman collected a specimen of Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* on the Kundelungu plateau, Katanga (Schouteden 1969, 1971; Fig. 1); this remarkable record, far from the species' known range, represented an addition to the DR Congo list. The record was considered to probably involve a vagrant by Lippens & Wille (1976) and it was listed as such by Dowsett *et al.* (2016), but omitted from Keith *et al.* (1992), whereas Dowsett *et al.* (2008) treated it, without justification, as 'undocumented and perhaps mislabelled'.

MH visited the inadequately explored Kundelungu plateau in August and October 2016, and observed several groups of Spike-heeled Larks while driving on the following roads and by stopping frequently, but the total number of birds seen is uncertain, as accurate counts were not attempted, although the species probably numbered some tens during each visit:

- 6 August: Lofoï road, 15 km in both directions (burnt grassland savannah, first 5 km still on fire);
- 7 August: from Masanza (miombo woodland) to the entry of the Lofoï road and the first 10 km on the latter in both directions;
- 13 August: from Masanza to the camp site on the Lofoï road (40 km in grassland savannah and 20 km in miombo woodland);
- 14 August: from the camp site on the Lofoï road towards Katwe (60 km);
- 7 October: Lofoï road, as on 6 August.

Only birds within *c.*30 m of the car were identified. On 6–7 August two groups were seen, one of which comprised six individuals (at 10°30'33.1"S 27°45'36.8"E; 1,685 m); one was carrying vegetable matter in its bill (Fig. 2). On 13–14 August, four groups were observed, among them one comprising three individuals (at 10°28'33.3"S 27°44'20.0"E; 1,670 m). The birds were not particularly shy, running among burnt grass stems, at times moving somewhat like small mammals, and occasionally perching atop grass mounds (Fig. 4). Although it is impossible to be certain, we presume that the individuals photographed on different dates on the same stretches of road were different birds.

In burnt grassland, Spike-heeled Lark is perhaps the commonest bird species in the area. Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea* (adult with young in August), Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana* and Angola Lark *M. angolensis* occurred in the same habitat, but were less common. Other species included Capped Wheatear *Oenanthe pileata* (adults in August, young in October), *Anthus* sp. (probably Buffy Pipit *A. vaalensis*), *Cisticola* sp. (probably Wing-snapping Cisticola *C. ayresii*) and, in wetter areas, Rosy-breasted Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae*. Flappet Lark *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* was encountered in miombo.

Discussion

The specimen from the Kundelungu plateau (RMCA 118564; Fig. 1), currently unassigned to subspecies (Schouteden 1969, Lippens & Wille 1976), was re-examined by ML & A. Reygel. The measurements—wing: 87 mm, tail: 40.5 mm, tarsus: 31 mm, culmen: 20.5 mm—are within the overall range of the species (Donald & Collar (2011) and the key features that identify the specimen as Spike-heeled Lark—the long, slightly decurved bill, scaly upperparts, rufous underparts and short tail—are visible in Fig. 1.

The birds observed in 2016 exhibited considerable variation in plumage tones to the underparts—a feature found throughout the species' range (Donald & Collar 2011): in some the underparts were deep russet, but were

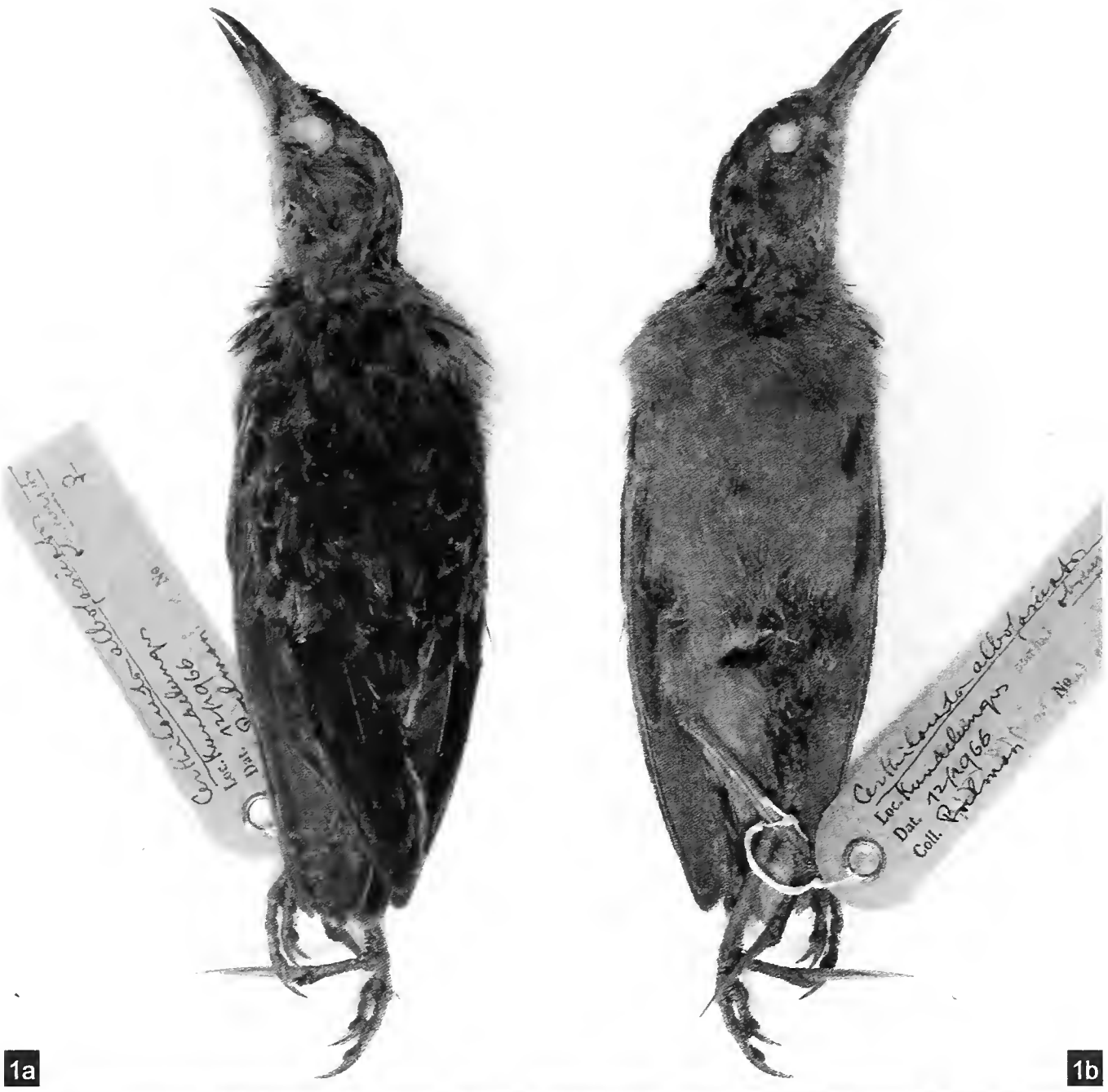

Figure 1. Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* collected on the Kundelungu plateau, Katanga, DR Congo, December 1966 (RMCA 118564) (Alain Reygel, © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium)

Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata* collectée sur le plateau du Kundelungu, Katanga, RD Congo, décembre 1966 (RMCA 118564) (Alain Reygel, © Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgique)

Figure 2. A Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* crushes a small bulb in its bill, Lofoï road, Kundelungu National Park, DRC, 13 August 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Une Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata* triture un petit bulbe séché avec son bec, Piste Lofoï, Parc National de Kundelungu, RDC, 13 août 2016 (Michel Hasson)

distinctly paler in others; some breast streaking was usually visible (Figs. 3–7).

The Spike-heeled Lark population in Katanga is geographically situated between the range of the subspecies *C. a. obscurata*, known only from north-east, central and south-west Angola, and that of the very rare and declining *C. beesleyi* in northern Tanzania (Keith *et al.* 1992, Dean 2000, Ryan 2004; Fig. 8). The latter was previously considered to be a race of *C. albofasciata*, but molecular analyses by Alström *et al.* (2013), based on specimens from Tanzania, Namibia and an

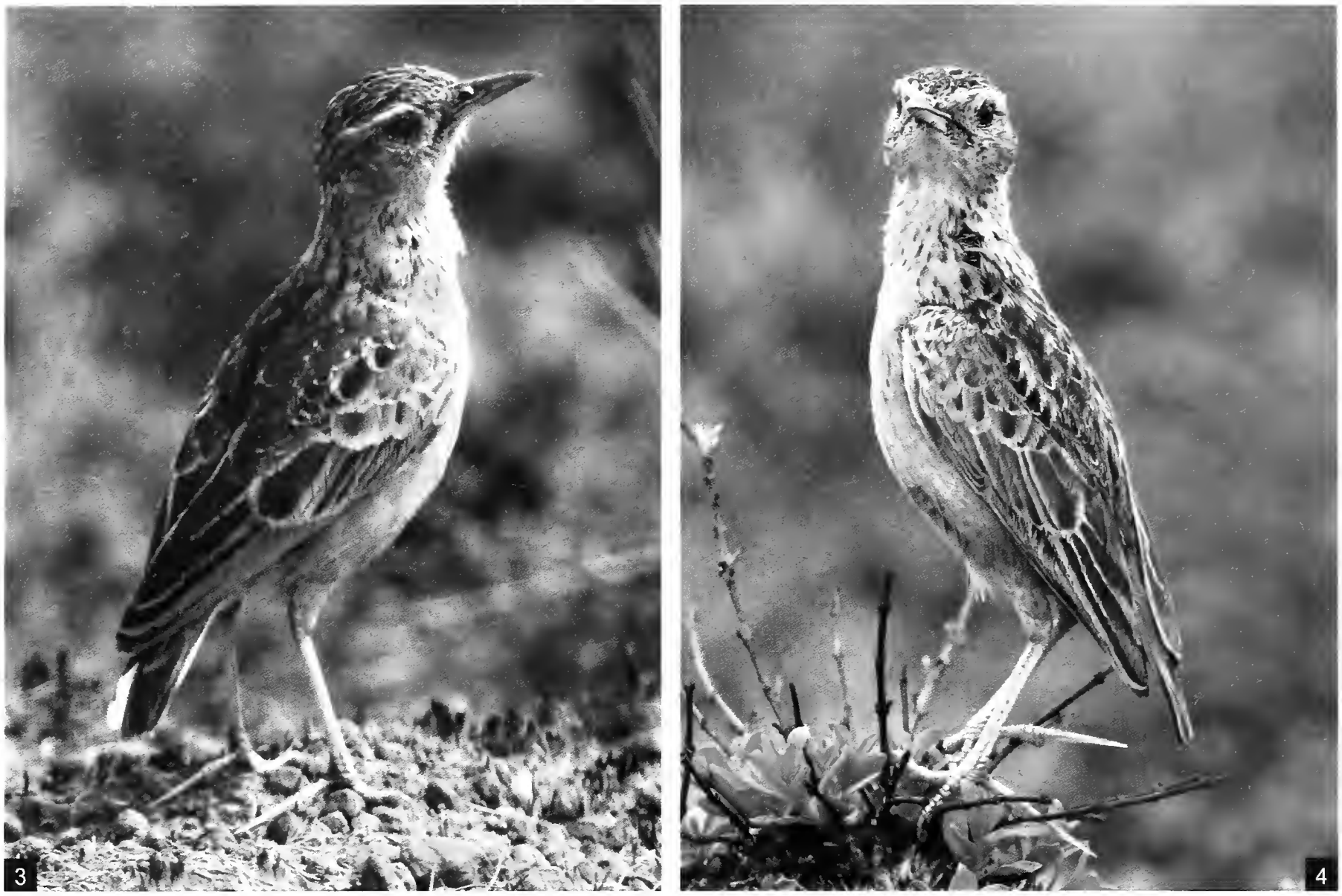

Figure 3. Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*, Lofoï road, Kundelungu National Park, DRC, 13 August 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata*, Piste Lofoï, Parc National de Kundelungu, RDC, 13 août 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Figure 4. Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*; a bird with a paler breast, Lofoï road, Kundelungu National Park, DRC, 13 August 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata* ; un oiseau à la poitrine pâle, Piste Lofoï, Parc National de Kundelungu, RDC, 7 October 2016 (Michel Hasson)

unknown locality, suggested *beesleyi* is a separate species, although Donald & Collar (2011) found that colour and breast streaking matched that of some Spike-heeled Lark taxa, and size was within the overall range of that species. The variation in plumage tones over the entire range, mainly linked to soil colour and vegetation density, appears to be broadly clinal and further study might reduce the number of currently recognised subspecies (Hockey *et al.* 2005). The populations from Angola, Katanga and Tanzania appear to be quite similar and are presumably conspecific.

Remarkably, Spike-heeled Lark has not been collected in the neighbouring, well-explored Upemba National Park (Verheyen 1953), so the species is presumably absent there, although habitats appear similar in certain areas. It may be worthy of note that Verheyen (1953) collected only two species of *Mirafra* in Upemba, Flappet and Angola Lark (specimens re-examined), but not Rufous-naped Lark.

It is as yet unproven that the Spike-heeled Larks in Katanga constitute a local breeding population, but all subspecies are considered resident (Keith *et al.* 1992). The habitat at Kundelungu appears suitable and the fact that the birds were in groups with differently coloured individuals (possibly including immatures; Fig. 7) suggests local breeding. On several occasions, song was heard. The breeding season for *obscurata* in Angola is unknown, but birds in breeding condition have been collected in July and December (Dean 2000). Laying dates for *beesleyi* in Tanzania are March–April and November (Keith *et al.* 1992).

Acknowledgements

We thank Alain Reygel for examining *Chersomanes* and *Mirafra* specimens in the Royal Museum for Central

Figure 5. Spike-heeled Larks *Chersomanes albofasciata*, Lofoï road, Kundelungu National Park, DRC, 7 August 2016 (Michel Hasson). The bird on the right has decidedly more reddish underparts.

Alouettes éperonnées *Chersomanes albofasciata*, piste Lofoï, Parc National de Kundelungu, RDC, 7 août 2016 (Michel Hasson). L'oiseau à droite arbore une poitrine nettement plus rousse que l'autre.

Figure 6. Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* showing well the pale russet belly and the streaking on the upper breast, Lofoï road, Kundelungu National Park, DRC, 6 August 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata* qui montre bien la couleur roux pâle de la poitrine et les stries, Piste Lofoï, Parc National de Kundelungu, RDC, 6 août 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, with ML, photographing the specimen and producing the map, and Tom Geerinckx for expediting a loan of *Mirafra* specimens held at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels.

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Figure 7. Spike-heeled Larks *Chersomanes albofasciata* showing some variation in plumage, Lofoï road, Kundelungu National Park, DRC, 7 August 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Alouettes éperonnées *Chersomanes albofasciata* présentant quelques variations dans la couleur du plumage, Piste Lofoï, Parc National de Kundelungu, RDC, 7 August 2016 (Michel Hasson)

Figure 8. Distribution of Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*. The Kundelungu population is indicated by the red dot.

Distribution de l'Alouette éperonnée *Chersomanes albofasciata*. La population du plateau du Kundelungu est indiquée par le point rouge.

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Received 12 October 2016; revision accepted 15 December 2016.

First record of American Wigeon *Mareca americana* in The Gambia, and associated records from Kartong Bird Observatory

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Première mention du Canard à front blanc *Mareca americana* pour la Gambie et autres observations de l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Kartong. Le 12–22 décembre 2015, une femelle du Canard à front blanc *Mareca americana* a été observée et photographiée à l'Observatoire d'oiseaux de Kartong (13°05'46.8"N 16°45'53.2"W), sur la côte de la Gambie. Il s'agit de la première mention documentée pour le pays. Une Sarcelle d'hiver *Anas crecca*, femelle, la première pour l'Observatoire, était présente pendant la même période.

On 12 December 2015, CJC observed a female duck on wetlands near Kartong Bird Observatory (13°05'46.8"N 16°45'53.2"W), on the Atlantic coast in south-west Gambia. Further observations and photographs made at the same site on 14 December revealed that it was an American Wigeon *Mareca americana*, a species previously unrecorded in the country (Barlow *et al.* 1997, Borrow & Demey 2011). The bird was last seen on 22 December at the same wetland (Fig. 1). The weather at this time was typical for mid December being dry with clear skies and temperatures reaching 32°C during the day. The Kartong wetlands form part of the Kartong to Allahein coast Important Bird Area (Robinson 2001), an area of contrasting habitats including open water, *Typha*-dominated reedbeds, cultivated rice fields and vegetable gardens, *Acacia* scrub and vegetated sand dunes.

The wigeon was first observed in an area of ephemeral pools and flooded wader scrapes that lie in a shallow depression between the sand dunes and gardens. It was feeding in the same shallow pools as several Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, a Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Common Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia*, Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* and a Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*. Also notable was the presence of a female Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* observed in the same area on 12 December 2015. Although irregularly encountered at freshwater wetlands in Senegambia, this is the first record of Eurasian Teal in the Kartong Bird Observatory recording area. When flushed, the wigeon and the teal flew off together before returning to the same wetland (Fig. 2).

Separation of juveniles or females of *M. americana* from those of Eurasian Wigeon *M. penelope* can be difficult. Compared to the normally grey-headed appearance of *americana*, the individual at Kartong was quite brown and, therefore, similar to juvenile / female-type *penelope*, although the obvious speckling on the head is not typical of *penelope* (Fig. 1). Confirmation as *americana* came when the bird was seen in flight, where the pure white axillaries and central underwing bar were particularly obvious (Fig.

Figure 1. Female American Wigeon *Mareca americana*, Kartong Bird Observatory, The Gambia, 22 December 2015 (Colin J. Cross)

Canard à front blanc *Mareca americana*, femelle, Observatoire d'oiseaux de Kartong, Gambie, 22 décembre 2015 (Colin J. Cross)

Figure 2. Female American Wigeon *Mareca americana* (top) and female Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*, Kartong Bird Observatory, The Gambia, 12 December 2015; the former has clean white axillaries and central underwing (Colin J. Cross)

Canard à front blanc *Mareca americana*, femelle (en haut) et Sarcelle d'hiver *Anas crecca*, femelle, Observatoire d'oiseaux de Kartong, Gambie, 12 décembre 2015 ; noter les axillaires et couvertures sous-alaires moyennes blanches du premier (Colin J. Cross)

Figure 3. Female American Wigeon *Mareca americana* (left) and female Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*, Kartong Bird Observatory, The Gambia, 17 December 2015 (Colin J. Cross)

Canard à front blanc *Mareca americana*, femelle (à gauche) et Sarcelle d'hiver *Anas crecca*, femelle, Observatoire d'oiseaux de Kartong, Gambie, 17 décembre 2015 (Colin J. Cross)

Figure 4. Female American Wigeon *Mareca americana* with Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*, Kartong Bird Observatory, The Gambia, 17 December 2015 (Colin J. Cross)

Canard à front blanc *Mareca americana*, femelle, avec *Échasse blanche Himantopus himantopus* et Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus*, Observatoire d'oiseaux de Kartong, Gambie, 17 décembre 2015 (Colin J. Cross)

2) and strikingly different to the often dusky underwing of *penelope*. Further support for identification as *americana* came from the long-tailed appearance, with the wingtip only just reaching the tip of the longest uppertail-covert, the grey-tinged outer web of the outermost tertial (white or pale in *penelope*) and the straight edge to the feathering from the gape at the base of the bill; this feathering curves along the bill base in *penelope*. The lack of a distinct white wingbar

on the upperwing (formed by black-tipped white greater coverts), the short and narrow tertials, dark forehead and crown, and plain scapulars and upperwing-coverts all point to this being a first-year bird.

The wigeon was observed again on 14 December at the same ephemeral wetland. Similarly, on 17 December both the American Wigeon and Eurasian Teal were photographed at the same site. It was noticeable that the two migrant ducks associated closely, with the teal often following the wigeon (Fig. 3). Following a prolonged rainy season in 2015, the main Kartong wetlands were full of deeper water, whereas these rapidly drying, ephemeral wetlands provided ideal alternative foraging habitat for migrant and resident waders, and other wetland-dependent species (Fig. 4). Both the American Wigeon and Eurasian Teal were last seen on 22 December, initially at the same shallow wetland and then in flight with White-faced Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna viduata*. Despite careful searches of the whole wetland complex neither bird was relocated again. The observations of American Wigeon and Eurasian Teal followed soon after the presence, on 5–11 December, of the second Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* for Kartong, the first being a Spanish-ringed bird, seen in October 2010.

Palearctic ducks are fairly uncommon within the Kartong Bird Observatory recording area as the wetlands are small and seasonal. The commonest migrants encountered are Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* and Garganey *Spatula querquedula*, which are recorded in small groups between early September and October but rarely stay long. With two or three records each winter Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* is even rarer and there has been just one record of Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* since 2010.

American Wigeon breeds across most of north-western North America and winters in lowland marshes south to Panama and northern Colombia (Madge & Burn 1988). Vagrants are regular in Western Europe, mainly along the Atlantic seaboard from Iceland to Morocco. There are three previous records of vagrancy in West Africa (Borrow & Demey 2014) and more numerous records from the Azores and Canaries (Clarke 2006). The first record for West Africa was a male at Djoudj National Park, Senegal, in February 1975 (Morel & Morel 1990) and the second a pair on Maio, Cape Verde Islands, between December 2004 and January 2005 (Hazevoet 2010). Most recently, a male was at Djoudj National Park between 20 December 2005 and at least mid-March 2006 (A. Flitti *in Bull. ABC* 13: 96 & 106; A. Flitti & P. Triplet *in Bull. ABC* 13: 228) where it was joined by another male on 19–20 January 2006 (N. Borrow *in Bull. ABC* 13: 228). The observations documented here represent the first published sighting for The Gambia.

Acknowledgements

We thank Nik Borrow and Ron Demey for discussion of the record and help with researching previous records. We also thank Lamin Gassama and Mawdo Jallow of the Gambian Department of Parks and Wildlife Management for supporting the survey and bird ringing work undertaken at Kartong Bird Observatory, and Sébastien Reeber for his valuable comments that improved the discussion.

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Received 28 March 2016; revision accepted 31 May 2016.

First record of Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara* for Senegal

Liliana Pacheco[a], Nerea Ruiz de Azua[b] and José María Fernández-García[b]

Première observation de la Bergeronnette à longue queue *Motacilla clara* au Sénégal. Le 6 mars 2015, une Bergeronette à longue queue *Motacilla clara* a été photographiée dans la Réserve Naturelle Communautaire de Dindéfello, au sud-est du Sénégal. Il s'agit de la première donnée de l'espèce pour le pays.

Dindéfello Nature Reserve, now covering *c.*14,045 ha, is located in Kedougou district, south-east Senegal. It is managed by the Commune Rurale de Dindéfello, targeting the conservation of natural resources and the socio-economic development of the local population on a sustainable basis. Several wildlife inventories have been carried out in the reserve and 221 bird species have been recorded to date, including six whose occurrence in Senegal is known only from this site, as well as Kulikoro (Mali) Firefinch *Lagonosticta virata*, an endemic to the upper Niger Valley (Fernández-García *et al.* 2013). The presence of a large number of species restricted to the Sudan-Guinea savanna biome has supported the recent classification of the reserve as an Important Bird Area (BirdLife International 2016).

On 6 March 2015, LP was conducting a routine field survey in one of the main ravines (12°21'N 12°19'W) near the village of Dindéfello, along a path leading to the highest waterfall in Senegal (125 m). This small, permanent river, a tributary of the Gambia, drains water from a lateritic plateau 400 m above sea level. The river is full of rocks, fallen from the surrounding cliffs, and is bordered by dense gallery forest (Fig. 1). A wagtail at the base of the waterfall attracted LP's attention because it did not match the features of White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* or African Pied Wagtail *M. aguimp*, the two black-and-white wagtails recorded in Senegal (Dowsett *et al.* 2016). The bird had mainly grey upperparts, a white supercilium contrasting with dark grey lores and ear-coverts, blackish wing feathers fringed white, and white underparts with a narrow, dark grey breast-band (Figs. 2–3). It was identified as an adult Mountain Wagtail *M. clara*; juveniles are browner above and lack a breast-band (Tyler 2004, Borrow & Demey 2011). The bird was not observed again, despite repeated visits during the following weeks.

Mountain Wagtail is widespread across central and eastern Africa, but in West Africa its range is more fragmented. The species is known from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast (Tyler 2004, Borrow & Demey 2014), while claims of its occurrence in south-west Mali have been rejected (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005). There appear to be no previous records for Senegal (Morel & Morel 1990, Barlow *et al.* 1997, Borrow & Demey 2011, Dowsett *et al.* 2016).

The presence of Mountain Wagtail in Dindéfello Nature Reserve is not entirely

Figure 1. View of the Dindéfello waterfall, Senegal, in the wet season, where the Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara* was recorded (N. Ruiz de Azua)

Vue de la cascade de Dindéfello, Sénégal, pendant la saison des pluies, où la Bergeronnette à longue queue *Motacilla clara* a été observée (N. Ruiz de Azua)

Figures 2–3. Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara*, Dindéfello Nature Reserve, Senegal, 6 March 2015 (L. Pacheco)
Bergeronnette à longue queue *Motacilla clara*, Réserve Naturelle de Dindéfello, Sénégal, 6 mars 2015 (L. Pacheco)

surprising, given its occurrence in the Fouta Djallon highlands of north-central Guinea, *c.*200 km away (Borrow & Demey 2014). Streams with steep gradients and exposed rocks, its preferred habitat (Tyler 2004), are relatively common in the reserve, unlike in the rest of Senegal. Despite the fact that the waterfall is frequently visited by naturalists and tourists, and that intense bird surveys were conducted in 2011 (Fernández-García *et al.* 2013), this rather conspicuous species had not been recorded previously, suggesting Mountain Wagtail is probably an irregular or seasonal visitor to the reserve.

Acknowledgements

The field team of the Jane Goodall Institute in Dindéfelo includes Diba Diallo, Dauda Diallo, Amadou Diallo, Ferran Guallar, Irene Gutiérrez, Manuel Llana and Samba Sylla. The Direction des Eaux et Forets, Chasses et de la Conservation des Sols of the Senegal government supports research in the reserve. Ron Demey commented on the submitted version of this note.

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Received 7 April 2016; revision accepted 3 June 2016.

First confirmed record of Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* for São Tomé and Príncipe

Simon Valle

Première observation confirmée du Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides* pour São Tomé et Príncipe. Le 2 juillet 2012, un Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides* a été photographié sur l'estuaire de la rivière Papagaio, à Santo Antonio, Príncipe. Il s'agit de la première mention confirmée de l'espèce pour São Tomé et Príncipe.

On 2 July 2012, I noticed a medium-sized heron on the mudflats of the Papagaio estuary, Santo Antonio, Príncipe (01°38'26"N 07°25'30"E). The bird remained not far from the shoreline for *c.*5 minutes before flying off east along the south side of Santo Antonio Bay. The head, hindneck, back, flanks and upper belly were streaked tawny. The throat was white, as were the wings, although partially concealed by the back plumes when perched. The relatively stout bill was pale green-yellow with a hint of a black tip (Fig. 1). The distance did not permit me to distinguish the colour of the eyes or the lores. In flight, the bird had a white rump and a relatively short white tail (Fig. 2). I identified it as a Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*. Owing to the poor quality of the images, its age can only be hypothesised as a first-year.

This is the first confirmed record of Squacco Heron for the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe. In January 1996 an immature was reported from the same area (Christy & Clarke 1998). However, due to the slight possibility of the occurrence of other *Ardeola* as vagrants, the record was considered as provisional (Jones & Tye 2006) and the species was not included in the most recent checklist of the island (Dowsett *et al.* 2016a). There are no records from São Tomé or Annobón (Jones & Tye 2006, Dowsett *et al.* 2016b), but it is possibly a vagrant to Bioko (Dowsett *et al.* 2016c).

Figures 1–2. Squacco Heron / Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides*, Papagaio estuary, Santo Antonio, Príncipe, 2 July 2012 (Simon Valle)

Squacco Heron is resident and reasonably common over most of sub-Saharan Africa, while in August–November there is an influx of birds from the Palearctic (Kushlan & Hancock 2005). It frequents a wide range of shallow freshwater habitats, although the species is known to visit brackish and coastal waters on migration or dispersal (Martínez-Vilalta & Motis 1992, Kushlan & Hancock 2005). Such movements produce frequent records of vagrants, e.g. in Seychelles (Tiatousse *et al.* 2005), on St. Helena (Hillman *et al.* 2014), the Cape Verdes, Azores, Madeira and the Canaries (Borrow & Demey 2001, Kushlan & Hancock 2005). The most striking instance involves repeated recent sightings on the Fernando de Noronha archipelago, just *c.*350 km off the Brazilian coast, which are thought to be a possible prelude to the foundation of a local population (Silva e Silva & Olmos 2006, Davis 2010). The island of Príncipe is separated from the African mainland by *c.*220 km. This is a relatively small distance compared to other vagrancy records.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mariane Delaunay for helping translate the summary into French, and to Nikki Wolf and Alan Tye for their valuable comments on the manuscript.

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Received 4 April 2016; revision accepted 28 May 2016.

First record of Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* for Seychelles

Adrian Skerrett

Première mention de la Rynchée peinte *Rostratula benghalensis* pour les Seychelles. L'observation d'une femelle adulte de la Rynchée peinte *Rostratula benghalensis* sur l'Île Persévérance, Seychelles, le 30–31 janvier 2016, a été acceptée comme la première donnée pour le pays par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois.

In the afternoon of 30 January 2016, Catherina Onezia and Joel Souyave noted a waterbird they did not recognise at the margin of a track in an industrial area on Île Persévérance, a reclaimed island joined by a causeway to the main island of Mahé, near the capital of Seychelles, Victoria. The bird was feeding in small, shallow, muddy rainwater pools surrounded by low vegetation, mainly Beach Morning Glory *Ipomea pes-caprae*. Identification as an adult female Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* was made that evening through reference to guide books (Sinclair & Langrand 2013, Hawkins *et al.* 2015) and a record form was sent to me as Secretary of Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC). I visited the area the following day, joined by CO & JS. The bird was relocated at a nearby temporary rainwater pool, taking flight upon our approach for *c.*50 m and landing in the vicinity of the original observation, where it was photographed (Figs. 1–2). Searches of the area during the following days failed to relocate the bird.

Description

A medium-sized, dumpy, short-tailed wader. Plumage strongly patterned, head and neck mostly dark rufous with broad white patches around and behind the eye. Most of upperparts dark bronze-green, finely barred black; underparts white. Flight fairly slow, showing rounded wings and white underwing.

Status and distribution

Greater Painted-snipe breeds across most of sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar, the Nile Delta in Egypt, and in Asia from Pakistan to China, Japan, South-East Asia, Philippines and Indonesia (Kirwan 2016). Mainly sedentary in Asia and Egypt, within Africa it performs short-distance movements in response to feeding and breeding

Figures 1–2. Adult female Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*, Île Persévérance, Seychelles, 31 January 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

Rynchée peinte *Rostratula benghalensis*, femelle adulte, Île Persévérance, Seychelles, 31 janvier 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

habitat requirements, principally in the northern tropics, the species being largely nomadic in South Africa. Vagrant to Morocco, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Tibet, Middle East, Pemba and Zanzibar, it has bred in Israel and Saudi Arabia (Kirwan 2016). In the Malagasy region, the species is confined to Madagascar, where the population has been described as a separate race, *madagascariensis*, but no consistent differences have been noted in specimens at the Natural History Museum, UK (Safford & Hawkins 2013). It was formerly considered conspecific with Australian *R. australis* but is now generally considered monotypic (Kirwan 2016).

The record has been accepted by SBRC as an adult female Greater Painted-snipe, the first for Seychelles.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Catherina Onezia for locating the bird and for quickly alerting me to its presence.

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Received 16 April 2016; revision accepted 26 April 2016.

First records of Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* for Ghana

Phil Gregory[a], James Ntakor[b] and Andrew Amankwaa[c]

Premières mentions du Guêpier d'Orient *Merops orientalis* pour le Ghana. Le 15 avril 2016, deux Guêpiers d'Orient *Merops orientalis* adultes avec trois juvéniles ont été observés au barrage de Tono près de Bolgatanga, au nord du Ghana. Les oiseaux étaient apparemment présents depuis plusieurs mois, car un adulte a été photographié dans la même zone le 21 janvier 2016. Ces observations sont les premières pour le Ghana.

In the afternoon of 15 April 2016, we visited Tono Dam near Bolgatanga, Upper East Region, northern Ghana, as leaders of a Field Guides tour. AA alerted us that he had just seen three Little Green Bee-eaters *Merops orientalis*, and we quickly located three juveniles in light farmbush, with two adults nearby.

Identification of the small, all-green bee-eaters was straightforward. All exhibited a black eyestripe narrowly bordered pale bluish green below, pale greenish underparts with a slightly paler throat, and rufous flight feathers bordered dark on the trailing edge. The adults had a narrow black gorget and one possessed long, slender pointed tail-streamers (Fig. 1). The juveniles lacked any obvious gorget and tail-streamers. Little Bee-eater *M. pusillus* was in the same area for comparison.

AA had never seen the species before, while JN's only previous record in Ghana was at this site, at the same season, in 2014. PG observed it in northern Nigeria in 1979–80 and is familiar with the taxa *M. o. cyanophrys* in Oman and *M. o. ferrugeiceps* in Cambodia. The latter were recently split by del Hoyo & Collar (2014) as Arabian Bee-eater *M. cyanophrys* and Asian Green Bee-eater *M. orientalis*, respectively, with African birds named African Green Bee-eater *M. viridissimus*.

A photograph of the two adults has been archived in the Internet Bird Collection (http://ibc.lynxeds.com), which also contains a

Figure 1. Adult Little Green Bee-eaters *Merops orientalis viridissimus*, Tono Dam, Bolgatanga, Upper East Region, Ghana, 15 April 2016 (Phil Gregory)

Guêpiers d'Orient *Merops orientalis viridissimus* adultes, barrage de Tono, Bolgatanga, Upper East Region, Ghana, 15 avril 2016 (Phil Gregory)

photograph of an adult taken by M. Lilje in the same area on 21 January 2016 (ibc.lynxeds.com/node/332512), so the birds have apparently been present for some time. *M. o. viridissimus* is a resident and partial migrant over a broad band of Sahelian and Soudanian savannas from Senegambia to Eritrea (Fry *et al.* 1988, Fry 2001, Borrow & Demey 2014). Its occurrence in Ghana is not mentioned in the most recent publications on the country's avifauna (Borrow & Demey 2010, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014), nor is Little Green Bee-eater included in the ABC Ghana checklist (Dowsett *et al.* 2016). The records presented here appear to be the first for the country. The species is perhaps no more than an irregular visitor to this regularly visited area, but it is recorded to the north-west at Nazinga (11°10'N 01°25'W), in Burkina Faso (R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2016), and at a lower latitude in Comoé National Park, in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire (Salewski 2000, Borrow & Demey 2014). In Benin there is no acceptable record significantly south of 11°N, north of which it is locally quite common; the species is still unknown in Togo (R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2016).

Acknowledgements

We thank Bob Dowsett for information on distribution and Ron Demey for editing and greatly improving the note.

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Received 19 May 2016; revision accepted 22 September 2016.

First record of Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* for Djibouti and Africa, in 1987

Geoff and Hilary Welch

Première mention de la Bondrée orientale *Pernis ptilorhynchus* pour Djibouti et l'Afrique. Un rapace photographié sur le côté djiboutien du Bab-el-Mandeb en novembre 1987 a été récemment identifié comme une Bondrée orientale *Pernis ptilorhynchus* juvénile, la première mention pour Djibouti et l'Afrique.

Counts of migratory birds crossing the Bab-el-Mandeb strait into northern Djibouti in October 1985 and October–November 1987 recorded 80,732 and 246,478 soaring migrants, respectively, establishing the Bab-el-Mandeb as a major migratory bottleneck (Welch & Welch 1988). As would be expected with these numbers of birds, a proportion remained unidentified—972 in 1985 and 65,296 in 1987—usually because they were too distant for identification to species, but occasionally because their identity was not immediately obvious. Some of these unidentified birds were photographed. One was the raptor shown in Fig. 1, photographed sometime between 1 and 9 November 1987 (exact date unknown) and at the time recorded as 'honey buzzard?' due to its tail pattern. However, the bird otherwise lacked the characteristic features of European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, i.e. prominent dark carpal patches, sparsely barred inner primaries and secondaries (usually three bars) and five visible primaries. Early November is also rather late for a migrant of this species. Furthermore, at Bab-el-Mandeb the species is either uncommon (five in 1985; 17 in 1987) or migrates earlier in autumn. As the literature available at the time did not point to the possibility of any other species—and there was no internet—attempts to identify the bird on our return to the UK were unsuccessful. The image was consigned to the 'mystery birds' box in our slide collection and largely forgotten.

In early 2016, we were invited by A. Laurent to assist with the preparation of a book on development and biodiversity conservation in Djibouti, which necessitated the preparation of a definitive bird list for the country. As Alain was keen to illustrate the checklist with photographs of birds taken in Djibouti, we went through our slide collection to find suitable images and in the process came across the 'mystery birds' images.

Since 1987, knowledge of bird identification and distribution has increased dramatically and several species previously unknown or considered extreme vagrants are now recognised as regular if scarce visitors to Africa and the Middle East. One such is Oriental Honey Buzzard *P. ptilorhynchus*, which is now regularly recorded at migration hotspots such as Eilat in Israel (Shirihai *et al.* 2000, Harrison & Lamsdell 2015) and Batumi in Georgia (Harrison & Lamsdell 2013, 2015, 2016), and winters in small numbers in parts of the Arabian Peninsula, especially the United Arab Emirates (Babbington & Campbell 2016). It has even been recorded as far west as Italy (Scuderi & Corso 2011) and Sweden (Orta *et al.* 2016; record awaiting official acceptance). Thus, this time when we looked at our slide (Fig. 1) we immediately suspected it could be of an Oriental Honey Buzzard. Closer examination seemed to confirm this: the bird shows six visible primaries, densely barred secondaries and no dark carpal patches. Despite the fact that a similarly plumaged

Figure 1. Juvenile Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Djibouti, November 1987 (Geoff & Hilary Welch)

Bondrée orientale *Pernis ptilorhynchus* juvénile, Djibouti, novembre 1987 (Geoff & Hilary Welch)

bird, photographed at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on 30 November 2013, appears on the cover of *Sandgrouse* 36(2), it seemed wise to obtain expert confirmation of the identification considering its significance. The image was sent to D. Forsman who agreed that the bird was indeed a juvenile Oriental Honey Buzzard.

This represents not only the first, and so far only, record for Djibouti, but also the first for Africa, pre-dating the previous first record of a bird at Bir El Ambigi on 9 May 1996 (Baha El Din & Baha El Din 1997). In Africa, there are currently fewer than ten accepted records from Egypt (Babbington & Campbell 2016) and records of singles on Socotra (Qalansiyah lagoon, 28 February 2009: Balmer & Betton 2009), in Gabon (Monts de Crystal, 13 August 2004: Clark & Christy), Kenya (Meru National Park, September 2014: Kennedy & Marsh 2016) and in Sudan (Red Sea hills north of Port Sudan, 1 June 2011: T. Jenner in *Bull. ABC* 19: 108). Like the Djibouti bird, those in Kenya and Sudan were specifically identified only via subsequent examination of photographs.

The increase in records of Oriental Honey Buzzard in Europe, the Middle East and Africa almost certainly largely reflects increased awareness of the species among observers. It is also possibly the result of an as yet undocumented westward breeding range expansion or part of a migration route used to avoid the Himalayas (Schweizer & Mitropolskiy 2008, Babbington & Campbell 2016).

Acknowledgements

We thank our fellow migration counters in Djibouti: Mike Denton in 1985, and Dave Burges, Rudi van Diggelen, Bob Gomes, Hugh Thurgate and Jan Visser in 1987; Dick Forsman for confirming the identification and, especially, Alain Laurent for creating the need for us to look at our old slides.

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Received 30 August 2016; revision accepted 8 October 2016.

Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 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) 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 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) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Algeria

In January 2016, an exhausted **Demoiselle Crane** *Grus virgo* was found at Oran harbour; it was taken into care and released with a few wintering Common Cranes *G. grus* in mid February (*www.magornitho.org*). After the record of a flock on 4 March 1944 near Aïn Beida, the species became extinct as a breeding bird (in Morocco it persisted for *c.*40 more years, the last observations in the breeding area dating from the early 1980s, with a possible sighting on 10 May 1990: Thévenot *et al.* 2003. *The Birds of Morocco*).

Records from Krechba, Plateau du Tadmait, central Algeria, in 2016 include the following. **Egyptian Geese** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* were observed on 25 March (two flying north), 30 April (two on a pond) and 15 October (one); Isenmann & Moali (2000. *Oiseaux d'Algérie / Birds of Algeria*) mention just one record of two at El Goléa on 10–27 March 1973, apart from 'a few in the 19th century'. Sixteen **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* on a pond on 29 September were possibly migrants on passage to the Sahel. A **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* was found dead on 10 April. **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*, which was first reported in the country on the north-east coast in 1994, with breeding observed in June 1996, has spread widely. A few tens are now resident in the Krechba area, where a nest with two chicks was found on 31 August; after the young had succesfully fledged, the same pair appeared to be incubating again on 14 October. Two abandoned nests, both containing a single egg, were found on 13 and 19 October. A **Yellow-browed Wabler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was observed in a wadi on 20–23 October (Fig. 1); Isenmann & Moali (2000) mention just one sighting and two captures in October 1985, in the El Goléa–Ghardaïa area. A **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* was present on 7 January (with nine on 28 March–5 May and four on 15–20 October); there are relatively few winter records. A **Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* observed on 7 January may be the country's southernmost record; the southernmost localities mentioned in Isenmann & Moali (2000) are Ghardaïa and El Goléa (*RM*).

Figure 1. Yellow-browed Wabler / Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Krechba, Plateau du Tadmait, Algeria, 20 October 2016 (Rob Minshull)

Angola

Noteworthy records from September–October 2016 include a **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* 40 km west of Quitexe, Uíge province, where the species was discovered in October 2011 (*cf.* Mills *et al.* 2013. *Bull. ABC* 20: 200–203) on 26 September; a **Miombo Pied Barbet** *Tricholaema frontata* at Londiumbale, Huambo, on 18 September; an **Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* in Kumbira Forest on 4 October; and a **Black-chinned Weaver** *Ploceus nigrimentus* with young next to a nest at Mount Moco on 17 September—the first breeding record for the mountain (*MM*).

Azores

A juvenile **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*, photographed at Santa Cruz, Flores, from 13 October–4 November 2011, has recently been accepted as the first of this subspecies for the Azores (*www.hbw.com/node/1258938*).

The following records are from late June–November 2016, with one from April. One species was reported for the first time in the archipelago: **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, with singles on Corvo on 30 October, on São Miguel on 31 October and on Terceira on 6 November.

The long-staying **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* on São Miguel was still present in October. A **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* observed at Bank of Fortune, off Graciosa, on 31 August and 1 September, was the sixth for the Azores. The third **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* for the archipelago, reported from Terceira on 9 and 12 April (*cf. Bull.* ABC 23: 231) was found exhausted on 13 April and died two days later.

Vagrant waders included up to six **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* on Terceira throughout the period, with one on São Miguel on 24 October; a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* on Terceira on 21 October (third record for the Azores); single **Least Sandpipers** *Calidris minutilla* on Terceira from 17 August into September and on Faial on 13–17 September; a **Stilt Sandpiper** *C. himantopus* on Terceira on 11–14 November (third record); an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* on Corvo on 7–21 October; single **Hudsonian Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* on Terceira from August to early September, and on Faial on 19–20 August; up to eight **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago delicata* on Terceira on 17 August and 10 November, with singles on Faial on 12 October and Corvo on 27 October.

A **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* photographed off São Miguel on 30 September was the seventh for the archipelago, a first-winter **Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaetus audouinii* at Praia da Monte Verde, Ribeira Grande, São Miguel, was the second (the first was in 2005), whilst a **Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* photographed on São Miguel on 30 June was the fourth. A **Sandwich Tern** *T. sandvicensis* of the race *acuflavidus* (Cabot's Tern) was claimed from Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 29 August. A **Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* at Horta harbour, Faial, on 7 July was the fifth for the Azores.

On Corvo, a **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* was observed on 22 October and a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* on 10–19 October, with three there on 25 October. A **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* was photographed on Flores on 3 October, with a **Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* also there on 17–21 October, whilst a **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* was seen on Santa Maria on 8 November. The third **Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* for the Azores was photographed on Corvo on 19–20 October (the first was on Corvo in 2010 and the second on Faial in 2013–14).

The first **American Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus r. rubescens* of the season was found on Terceira on 9 November, with two there on 13 November. A **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* on Corvo on 28 October was the second for the Azores (the first was in 2014), whilst a **Garden Warbler** *S. borin* on the same island on 30 October was the fourth.

Nearctic species reported on Corvo included two **Philadelphia Vireos** *Vireo philadelphicus* on 20 October; *c.*11 **Red-eyed Vireos** *V. olivaceus* in late September–October; single **American Cliff Swallows** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* on 21 and 29 October (ninth and tenth records); a **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* on 23 October (fourth record); two **Scarlet Tanagers** *Piranga olivacea* on 5–11 and 27 October; a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* on 27 October; a **Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii* on 31 October (fourth record); a **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx orizivorus* on 11–20 October (with another on Flores on 17 October); a **Northern Waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis* on 2 November (sixth record); a first-winter male **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* on 5 October and females on 15 and 20 October (with a first-winter male on São Miguel on 12 October and an adult male also there on 13 October); and a first-winter male **Canada Warbler** *Cardellina canadensis* on 7 October (second for the Azores; the first was on Corvo in October 2009) (per *www.azoresbirdsightings.blogspot.com* and *Dutch Birding* 38: 328–330, 393–405, 452–471).

Benin

Four months of field work from early March to early August 2016 produced the following records of interest. Five species were recorded for the first time in the country: an **Arabian Bustard** *Ardeotis arabs* was photographed in Pendjari National Park (= NP) on 11 May (*MF* per *RD & FD-L*); a single **Kemp's Longbill** *Macrosphenus kempi* held a territory in secondary forest at Niaouli from at least 18 May to 3 July; at least one **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* (and perhaps two more distant individuals) was seen at close range and heard calling in riparian forest on the Oli River near Nikki on 1 May; several **Quailfinch Indigobirds** *Vidua nigeriae* in breeding plumage were singing (including imitations of calls and songs of nearby **Black-faced Quailfinches** *Ortygospiza atricollis*) on the edge of a floodplain in Pendjari NP on 16–17 July; and at least one **Cameroon Indigobird** *Vidua camerunensis* in breeding plumage was singing (with imitations of calls and songs of nearby **Blue-billed Firefinches** *Lagonosticta rubricata*) on the Ouémé River near Zangnanado on 3 August.

The mixed heron-stork colony at Avlo (*cf. Bull. ABC* 23: 210–211) was revisited on 7–8 July when several more species were found breeding: **Great Egret** *Ardea alba* (a first for Benin, with at least three nests at incubation stage), **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

(nestbuilding), **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* (large young) and almost certainly **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*; the last three species also breed at Cotonou.

The Kétou region in the south-east is largely deforested but for the large sacred forest at Adakplamé, which holds many forest birds, among which **Hairy-breasted Barbet** *Tricholaema hirsuta* (only the third locality in Benin, after Lokoli and Pobè). **African Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium capense*, only discovered in the country in 2015 (at Pénessoulou), was heard at two more sites, in dry forest near Konkondji on the Zou River and at Affon on the Ouémé Supérieur. The poorly known **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* was found at a further five localities: at Konkondji near the Zou in the south; Djègbé on the Ouémé; Agbassa; near Yarra on the Alibori Supérieur; and along the Irané in Sota Forest Reserve.

Exploration in the rains of dense riparian forest on various rivers in the north (Oli, Tassiné / Sota, Alibori, Mékrou, Pendjari) revealed the presence of several species unexpected this far north: **Green Turaco** *Tauraco persa* reaches the Alibori Supérieur (in the forest reserve of that name) and Pendjari NP (at Bondjagou, 11°06'N), **Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus* (*Phyllastrephus*) *scandens* and **Tropical Boubou** *Laniarius aethiopicus* both reach the Alibori Supérieur north to at least 10°40'N, **Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius* is widespread (north to Pendjari and 'W' NPs), as are **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus* and **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* (north to the Niger border in 'W' NP on the Mékrou River, 12°24'N). **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was recorded in Bondjagou forest in Pendjari NP, and even on the Mékrou in the far north of 'W' NP, where *Elaeis* palms still occur.

Streaky-breasted Flufftail *Sarothrura boehmi*, mostly restricted to the north-west, was discovered in 'W' NP, near Sapiengou, on 22 July (one singing)—a new record for the park. A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis*, a very local species, was at Ndali dam on 29 April. **Greater Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* was identified in Djona Hunting Reserve ('W' complex) on 26 April.

Maps of many species have been extensively updated, e.g. **White-throated Francolin** *Peliperdix albogularis* occurs continuously from Pendjari NP and Sota Forest Reserve south to Bassila and Ouaria, with an outpost near Savè (thus in 24 half-degree squares), and **Rufous Cisticola** *Cisticola rufus*, discovered in 2009, shows a continuous range from the far north (Niger border) south to Djidja and near Savè (in 38 squares) (*RD & FD-L*).

Botswana

The following were reported in July–December 2016. A **White-backed Duck** *Thalassornis leuconotus* and 37 **Maccoa Ducks** *Maccoa oxyura* were at Mahalapye Sewage Ponds on 16 August (*PD'A*). On 30 August, 24 **Maccoa Ducks** were counted at Sojwe and 27 at Shadishadi Pans (*CB*). In July, **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* were recorded at the following sewage ponds near Gaborone: Ramotswa on 20th (one), Broadhurst on 21st (181) and Phakalane on 27th (110) (per *ST & CB*). A **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* was at Gaghoo Diamond Mine, near the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, on 20 October, with a **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* also there on 17 November, outside their usual range (*BR*). A **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* was at a puddle near Sita Pan on 25 November (*CB*). **African Rail** *Rallus caerulescens*, **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* and **Purple-banded Sunbird** *Cinnyris bifasciatus* were observed at Shakawe, in the Okavango Panhandle, at the end of October (*NP*).

Waders of interest included two **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola* at Drotsky's Cabins, near Shakawe, on 8 December, with another two at a dam near Malotwana on 11 December (per *TH*); a **Sanderling** *Calidris alba* at Shakawe on 31 October (*NP*), with another at the Makgadikgadi Pans on 29 November (per *TH*); single **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata* at Drotsky's Cabins on 10 November (*JC*) and 8 December, with another on the Chobe River floodplain on 13 December; a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* at Xaro Lodge, Shakawe, on 25 November and another in the Makgadikgadi Pans on 29 November (per *TH*); and single **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* at Sojwe pans, *c.*180 km north-east of Gaborone, on 28 August (per *TH*), along the Chobe River near Kasane on 4 November (*JW*) and at Drotsky's Cabins, Shakawe, on 8 December (per *TH*).

An immature **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was on the Okavango River at Shakawe on 31 October (*NP*). A satellite-tagged female **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* that has spent the last few seasons in Reitz, in the Free State, South Africa, flew south-east over Botswana on 13 November, over the Okavango Delta and east of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Other **European Honey Buzzards** were reported from Chobe National Park on 1 December and Gaberone on 3 December (per *TH*). Ten **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotos*, an immature **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* and a pair of **Pearl-breasted Swallows** *Hirundo dimidiata* collecting mud were observed at Mpaathutlwa Pan, Mubuasehube, on 6 November (*IW*); the latter record is particularly noteworthy as the species is not known to breed in Botswana. A **Mountain Wagtail** *Motacilla clara* was in Moremi Gorge at Tswapong Hills, in the east, on 3–31 July; this individual may have been present here for about a year already and constitutes only the third record for the country, the previous two also being from this site (per *TH*).

Cameroon

Records from the period May–December 2016 include the following. A three-day visit to the Linte area, at the foot of the Adamawa Plateau, on 20–22

May produced a **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* (Fig. 2), several **White-rumped Swifts** *Apus caffer*, a breeding pair of **Blue-throated Rollers** *Eurystomus gularis*, a displaying **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis pulih*, many **Ethiopian Swallows** *Hirundo aethiopica*, **Blue-shouldered Robin Chats** *Cossypha cyanocampter*, **Blackcap Illadopsis** *Illadopsis cleaveri* and **Purple-headed Glossy Starlings** *Hylopsar purpureiceps*. Territorial **Rock-loving Cisticolas** *Cisticola aberrans* were found on the southern escarpment of the Adamawa, representing a 200 km southward extension of its known range in Cameroon (Fig. 3; *ML & MvB*).

In Yaoundé, a calling **Northern White-faced Owl** *Ptilopsis leucotis* was observed from 6 December until the end of the year, >200 km to the south-east of the nearest previously known record. Also in Yaoundé, several pairs of **Northern Double-collared Sunbirds** *Cinnyris reichenowi* were found breeding. A short stay at Petpenoun, near Foumbot, on 27–29 December yielded a pair of **African Cuckoo Hawks** *Aviceda cuculoides*, two **Ovambo Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter ovampensis*, territorial **Brown-chested Lapwings** *Vanellus superciliosus* (Fig. 4), **Barn Owls** *Tyto alba* (but no African Grass Owl *T. capensis*), a breeding pair of **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* (confirming the presence of a small population in this area south of the Adamawa), several displaying **Flappet Larks** *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* (apparently the first records in >60 years in or near the Bamenda Highlands), two pairs of **Blackcap Babblers** *Turdoides reinwardtii* (confirming the presence of this species in the eastern Bamenda Highlands; Fig. 5), and a vagrant **Lesser Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chloropterus* (*ML*). Continuing to extend their range, **Ethiopian Swallows** were recorded at Kribi and Campo on 28 December, at the border with Equatorial Guinea (*SD*).

Figure 2. Dwarf Bittern / Blongios de Sturm *Ixobrychus sturmii*, Linte, Cameroon, 22 May 2016 (Marc Languy)

Figure 3. Rock-loving Cisticola / Cisticole paresseuse *Cisticola aberrans*, near Linte, Cameroon, 21 May 2016 (Marc Languy)

Figure 4. Brown-chested Lapwing / Vanneau à poitrine châtaine *Vanellus superciliosus*, Petpenoun, Cameroon, 28 December 2016 (Marc Languy)

Figure 5. Blackcap Babbler / Cratérope à tête noire *Turdoides reinwardtii*, Petpenoun, Cameroon, 27 December 2016 (Marc Languy)

Canary Islands

In May–December 2016 the following were reported. The first **Sudan Golden Sparrow** *Passer luteus* for the Canary Islands was a male photographed at Pájara, Fuerteventura, on 27 December (per *www.hbw.com/news/first-country-reports*).

A group of 16 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* on El Río saltpans, Lanzarote, on 25 October was one of the largest flocks recorded on the island (*RB, JR & GT*). On Gran Canaria, **Pied-billed Grebes** *Podylimbus podiceps*, first reported here in November 2015, remained at Estanques de Aldea Blanca, San Bartolome de Tirajana, until early June (two), and for more than a year at Estanque del Matorral (one). In May, *c.*20–25 **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* were counted on Fuerteventura, with 8–9 pairs breeding; just two non-breeders were recorded in 2014–15 (elsewhere in the archipelago, single pairs breed occasionally on El Hierro and Lanzarote). The third **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* for the Canary Islands was photographed at Banco de la Concepción, off Lanzarote, on 4 September; previous records were also off Lanzarote, in 2011 and 2012. Three **Cape Verde Shearwaters** *Calonectris edwardsii* were recorded: on Gran Canaria (trapped) on 18 July; on Montaña Clara islet, off Lanzarote, in late July; and at Playa del Matorral, Fuerteventura, on 30 July (photographed). A subadult **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was photographed off Puerto Colón, Tenerife, on 4 August (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 394–398). On Tenerife, a female **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* was seen near Las Maretas de El Río, on 11 October (*RB & ES*). A **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* was reported off Tazacorte, La Palma, on 1 October (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 455).

During a census of the endemic subspecies of **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus majorensis*, 62 occupied territories were counted, of which 90% were on Fuerteventura, with the rest on Lanzarote and the Chinijo archipelago; there were just 21 territories in 1998 and in 2015 the total number of individuals was estimated at 277 (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 405). An immature **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* was observed near Ye, Lanzarote, on 25 October (*RB, JR & GT*) and a pale-morph adult **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* flew over Garajonay National Park, La Gomera, on 24 September (*RB*).

Three **Pied Crows** *Corvus albus* at Las Palmas harbour, Gran Canaria, on 26 October were presumably ship-assisted (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 462). Fields at Los Rodeos, Tenerife, held an adult **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* on 31 October, two **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* on 29 September (*RB & ES*), two **Meadow Pipits** *A. pratensis* on 17 November (*RB, BRo & JV*) and a **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* on 9 September (*RB & ES*). A male **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* was found in Garajonay National Park, La Gomera, on 23–24 September (*RB*) and a **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* at the Tejina-Bajamar ponds, Tenerife, on 29 September (*RB & ES*).

Cape Verde Islands

Records from September–November 2016 include the following. The first **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* for the Cape Verde Islands was photographed near Maio airport on 5 September (Fig. 6; *JP* per *KH*), with another three weeks later, at Sal cemetery, on 27–29 September (*JT* per *KH*). The fourth **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* for the archipelago

Figure 6. Common Cuckoo / Coucou gris *Cuculus canorus*, Maio, Cape Verde Islands, 5 September 2016 (José António Pereira)

Figure 7. Spotted Redshank / Chevalier arlequin *Tringa erythropus*, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, 6 November 2016 (Alain Reygel)

Figure 8. Wood Sandpiper / Chevalier sylvain *Tringa glareola*, Sal, Cape Verde Islands, 10 November 2016 (Alain Reygel)

was found on Maio on 14 October (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 465).

In November, the following were reported from Sal: a **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* off Santa Maria on 4th, with a first-winter **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* also there on 7th; seven **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* at Murdeira wetlands, on 6th–10th; a **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* at Pedra de Lume saltpans on 6th (Fig. 7; there is just one previous record for Sal, at the same site, in March 2003); two **Wood Sandpipers** *T. glareola* at Santa Maria saltpans on 9th–10th (Fig. 8; second record for Sal, after one at Ribeira da Madama in October 1998), with a **Common Redshank** *T. totanus* also there on 8th–10th and a **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* on 10th; and a **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* at Buracona on 6th (*AR*).

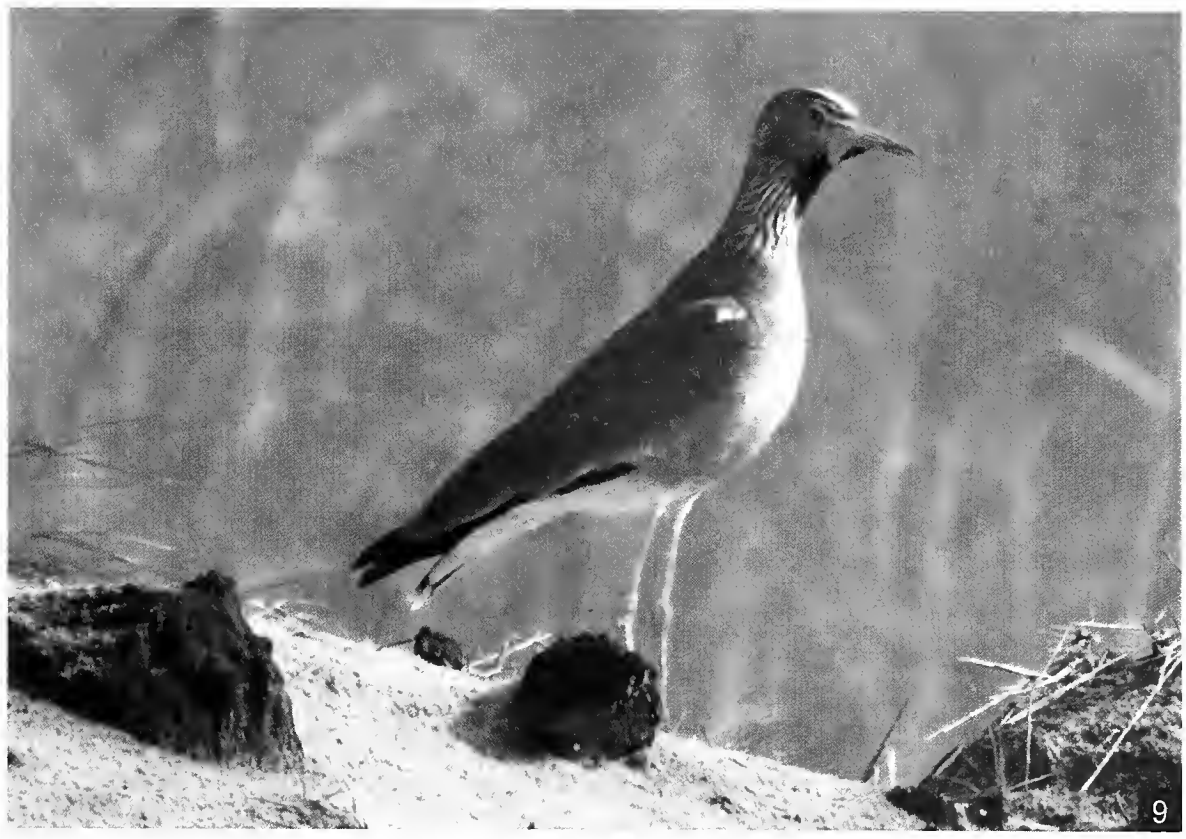

Figure 9. African Wattled Lapwing / Vanneau du Sénégal *Vanellus senegallus* N'Ganda N'Ganda Forest, Côte d'Ivoire, 31 October 2016 (Bruno Boedts)

Côte d'Ivoire

The following were reported in May–December 2016. A single **Eurasian Wigeon** *Mareca penelope* was observed at Assouinde marsh on 11 December; the only two previous records for the country, from January–February 2013 and January 2014, are also from this site (*LS*). In Bingerville Botanical Garden, a male **Diederik Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* was feeding a calling fledgling on 4 September (*BB*); this unexpected behaviour has been documented by Lovette *et al.* (2006), who suggest that the available evidence indicates that male provisioning, and hence potential parental care, is present in two brood-parasitic *Chrysococcyx* cuckoos at a higher frequency than currently recognised (*cf.* Provisioning of fledgling conspecifics by males of the brood-parasitic cuckoos *Chrysococcyx klaas* and *C. caprius*. *Wilson J. Ornithol.* 118: 99–101).

An immature **White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* was observed in the northern part of Comoé National Park (= NP) on 2 May (*ELe*) and at least three **White-backed Vultures** *Gyps africanus* flew over the savannah at Lamto on 20 November (*ELe & LS*). A **Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis* was seen well in an open area along the Banco River in the centre of Banco NP on 19 December; this is an unusual location, well south of the species' normal dry-season range, and appears to be the first record for the park (*ELe*). From early October until at least mid December, three **Blue-bellied Rollers** *Coracias cyanogaster* were present in an Abidjan schoolyard (*BJ* per *LS*); a pair was at the same location, *c.*150 km south the species' usual range, in November 2015. In N'Ganda N'Ganda Forest, near Assinie, at the coast, two **African Wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus senegallus* were photographed on 31 October (Fig. 9). On the same day, a pair of displaying **Double-toothed Barbets** *Pogonornis bidentatus*, initially found at this site in July 2014, was seen again, with two **Yellow-crowned Gonoleks** *Laniarius barbarus* and a pair of **Northern Puffbacks** *Dryoscopus gambensis* also there (*BB*). A **Lavender Waxbill** *Estrilda caerulescens* was photographed in the Lac Bakré environs, between Ebrié lagoon and the ocean, near Abidjan, on 29 December, well south of this northern species' normal range (*BJ*); previous southern records, of 1–2 individuals (escapes from captivity?), were made in cassava plantations near Abidjan Golf Course, in February, October and December 1987. In December, **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* was finally proved to breed at Abidjan Airport: two juveniles were seen being fed by an adult; the species has been present at this site since at least May 2013 (*LS*).

Egypt

An **Oriental Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* was photographed at Elba National Park on 11 May 2016 (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 330).

Ethiopia

The following records are from November 2016. A **Little Crake** *Zapornia parva* was seen well at Lake Awassa on 28th, with two present on 29th (*DE*). A flock of >100 **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* at Boyo Wetlands on 29th was notable for a species that is usually encountered singly or in small groups. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was found on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains, at the remarkable altitude of 3,900 m on 22nd, and was still present the following day. A male **Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga phoenicea* was observed in the British Embassy grounds in Addis Ababa at 2,500 m on 12th, extending its known altitudinal range by *c.*600 m (*NR*).

Gabon

A belated report was received of the first **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis* for Gabon, photographed at Lekoni on 13 August 2014 (*DH*).

The Gambia

An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was discovered at Tanji on 14 November 2016 and was still present on 24th (Fig. 10; *IE*); this is apparently the fifth record for the country (previous records, all from the Western Division, are from January 1984, November 1997, December 2005 and February 2013). A *Calidris* sp. photographed at Kartong on 11 November that was initially suspected to be a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii*, proved, after examination of the photographs, to be a first-winter **Little Stint** *C. minuta* (Figs. 11–12): the bird's structure—long primary projection and wingtips that extend far beyond the tail—superficially looked good for Baird's, but the longest tertial was missing, which produced the long primary projection. Little Stint, especially first-winters, can also have wingtips that extend far beyond the tail. Additionally, the head pattern was wrong for Baird's (but fine for Little Stint), the overall colour was pure grey (there is always at least some brown wash in Baird's) and the legs were too long for Baird's (but fine again for Little Stint). The bird was a first-winter in active moult, with just a limited number of juvenile-type coverts remaining; this would be odd for Baird's as its post-juvenile moult is very late and the birds migrate to their wintering grounds in juvenile plumage (*CC; NvD*). Baird's Sandpiper is a very rare vagrant to West Africa, with just a single report from The Gambia, in November 1976, and additional reports from Mauritania (November 1987), northern Senegal (December 1985) and São Vicente, Cape Verde (November 2012).

Ghana

The first **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* for Ghana was photographed at Sakumono lagoon on 28 February 2016 (*SF & JB* per *www.hbw.com/news/first-country-reports*). A pair of **Singing Bush Larks** *Mirafra cantillans* was observed at Tono Dam on 3 December (Fig. 13); there is just a single previous record, from April 2013, also at this site (*cf.* Dowsett-Lemaire, F. & Dowsett, R. J. 2014. *The Birds of Ghana: An Atlas and Handbook*). Also worthy of note were two **Rufous-rumped Larks** *Pinarocorys erythropygia* in Mole National Park on 30 November and 1 December, a **Rufous Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* near Sapeliga on 3 December, and a **Black-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola eximius* at Tono Dam on the same date (*NB*).

Guinea

Records from Boffa Préfecture, in September–November 2016, included three new species for Guinea: **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* (one flying south off Foulaya on 4 November), **Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaetus audouinii* (a first-winter near Cap Verga on 28 October)

Figure 10. American Golden Plover / Pluvier bronzé *Pluvialis dominica*, Tanji, The Gambia, 14 November 2016 (Henry Cook)

Figures 11–12. Little Stint / Bécasseau minute *Calidris minuta*, Kartong, The Gambia, 11 November 2016 (Colin Cross)

Figure 13. Singing Bush Lark / Alouette chanteuse *Mirafra cantillans*, Tono Dam, Ghana, 3 December 2016 (Nik Borrow)

and **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* (an adult photographed near Foulaya on 11 November). The following were also observed in the Cap Verga area: 20 **Northern Pintails** *Anas acuta* flying south on 4 November (uncommon to scarce south of its main wintering areas in the Sahel belt), three adult **White-backed Night Herons** *Gorsachius leuconotus* on 5 November (this discreet species is seldom reported), up to two **Kelp Gulls** *Larus dominicanus* and up to four adult **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* on 6–12 November, four **Mottled Swifts** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* on 5 November (Fig. 14) and two **White-rumped Swifts** *Apus caffer* on 6 September (*PA*).

In Dixinn commune of Conakry, two **Timneh Parrots** *Psittacus* (*erithacus*) *timneh* were seen on 4 September, with 12 there on 7th, and a, probable immature, **Long-tailed Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis caudatus* on 4 December—although these may be escapes (there are many bird traders in the city), a wild origin cannot be eliminated. In the hills north-east of Coyah, 40–50 **Mottled Swifts** and a **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* were observed on 3–4 September, whilst a **White-throated Blue Swallow** *Hirundo nigrita* was present on a small river between Coyah and Maneah (*BP*). A **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* was photographed in Conakry on 11 December (Fig. 15; *CA* per *HR*).

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Figure 14. Mottled Swift / Martinet marbré *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*, south of Foulaya, Guinea, 5 November 2016 (Peter Adriaens)

Figure 15. Peregrine Falcon / Faucon pèlerin *Falco peregrinus*, Conakry, Guinea, December 2016 (Catherine André)

Kenya

The following reports are from the period June–December 2016. A **Eurasian Wigeon** *Mareca penelope*, an increasingly rare Palearctic migrant, was reported from Lake Ol Bolossat on 8 December (*DF*). A **Purple-crested Turaco** *Gallirex porphyreolophus* was at Ngong Racecourse, Nairobi, on 13 July; the species is very rare around the city (*FN*). A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* in Lake Nakuru National Park (= NP) on 14 October is an unusual record away from the coast. The third **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* for Nairobi NP was observed on 15–18 September (*JKs*). An adult female **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* crash-landed in a Kilifi garden after being attacked by House Crows *Corvus splendens* and was taken into care, but died the next day due to internal problems; it has been accepted by the East African Rarities Committee as the fourth record for Kenya (*SA & LK*). A **Great Frigatebird** *F. minor* was photographed on 15 November along the beach at Jumba Ruins (*DS*). A **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*, a rare species along the Kenyan coast, was at saltpans north of Gongoni on 2 November (*CN*). A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* in Amboseli NP on 27 November would be just the second record for Kenya (Fig. 16; *WK*).

Records of **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*, an uncommon and declining species, include an adult in Samburu National Reserve on 7 September (*JCr*), a pair at Kalama Conservancy on 30 September (*JKl*), an adult in Maasai Mara National Reserve on 2 December (*SH & SK*) and an adult at Marsabit on 9 December (*STh*). An adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* was observed in the Mara Triangle on 1 & 18 October and 7 December; the species is rare but regular in western Kenya, where it may breed (*TD, SK & SH*). **Eurasian Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter nisus* were recorded in November at Ngulia Lodge, with two on 24th, one on 26th and one ringed on 28th (*DP*). A near-adult **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga* was seen in Nairobi NP on 10 November and again on 13 December, having returned for its third consecutive year; the species is a very rare migrant

in the country (*BF*). A **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* was at Langata on 4 November (*BF & JBr*).

A **Hemprich's Hornbill** *Lophoceros hemprichii* was noted at Lake Nakuru Sopa Lodge on 14 August (*CK*). A **Green-backed** (Eastern) **Honeybird** *Prodotiscus zambesiae* found at Namanga on 15 August was outside its previously known range (*BF*). In Nairobi, a **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla,* an uncommon migrant, was ringed at the National Museums of Kenya on 18 October (*JG*), whilst a pair of **Golden-tailed Woodpeckers** *Campethera abingoni* was reported at Ngong Racecourse on 12 October; the latter species appears to be a fairly recent arrival to the Nairobi area (*FN*).

Zanzibar Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunus* discovered at Namanga on 15 August represents a range extension for this species, which is expanding westwards (*BF*). A juvenile **Hinde's Pied Babbler** *Turdoides hindei* was reported from Paradise Lost, in Kiambu, on 20 July; this endemic seems to be spreading towards Nairobi (*FN*). Single **Spotted Ground Thrushes** *Geocichla guttata* were observed in Arabuko Sokoke Forest on 15 & 26 September and 25 October (*JK, JM & WW*), and at Bamburi Forest Trails, north of Mombasa, on 27 October (Fig. 17; *DS*); this declining species is now rarely recorded in the country. A **Rufous Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* was mist-netted at the National Museums of Kenya on 8 November (*JG*). Records of **Ashy Flycatcher** *Muscicapa caerulescens* and **Southern Citril** *Crithagra hyposticta* at Namanga River Lodge on 15 August represent range extensions for both species and just the third site in Kenya for the latter. An adult male **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* in Nairobi NP on 3 November would constitute the third Kenyan record, if accepted (*BF*).

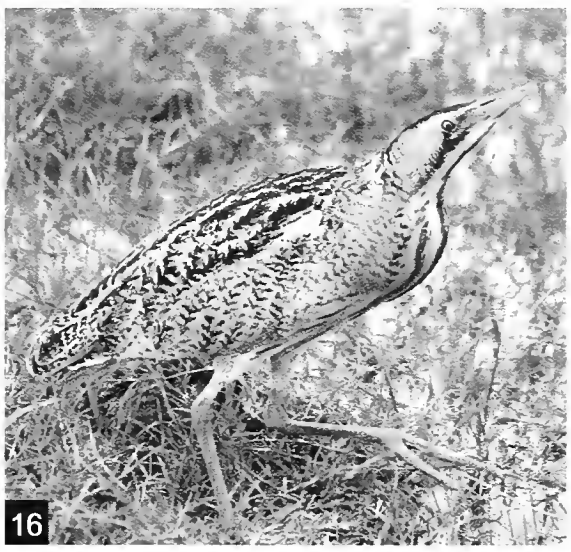
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Figure 16. Great Bittern / Butor étoilé *Botaurus stellaris,* Amboseli National Park, Kenya, 27 November 2016 (Wilson ole Kasaine)

Figure 17. Spotted Ground Thrush / Grive tachetée *Geocichla guttata,* Bamburi Forest Trails, Kenya, 27 October 2016 (Doris Schaule)

Madagascar

A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* photographed at a lake *c.*6 km north of Toliara on 16 November 2016 (Fig. 18) was


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Figure 18. Pectoral Sandpiper / Bécasseau tacheté *Calidris melanotos*, Toliara, Madagascar, 16 November 2016 (Rob Gordijn)

apparently just the second for Madagascar, the first having been reported in September 2008, also from the Toliara area (*cf.* Safford, R. J. & Hawkins, A. F. A. eds. 2013. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 8). At least two **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* were also there on the same date (*RG*); the species is less scarce than thought until quite recently and appears to be a regular, if highly localised, Palearctic migrant concentrated around wetlands in the south-west (*cf.* Gardner & Jasper 2011. *Bull. ABC* 18: 207–210).

Madeira

The following were reported during the period June–December 2016. Vagrant ducks included **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* (singles at Machico on 15–27 July and 17–27 December), **Eurasian Wigeon** *Mareca penelope* (one at Lugar de Baixo on 5 November), **American Wigeon** *M. americana* (one at Machico on 17–27 December), **Gadwall** *M. strepera* (singles at Ribeira Brava on 12 November and at Machico on 17 December), and **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* (one at Machico on 8–12 November, with two there on 17–20 December; one at Lugar de Baixo on 23 December).

Alpine Swifts *Tachymarptis melba* were noted at Pico do Ruivo (one on 24 June), Ponta do Pargo (one on 1 July) and Pico Ana Ferreira, Porto Santo (three on 3 July). Up to seven **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were present at Paúl da Serra on 22 June–1 August,

whilst five passed north on 2 July. A **Balearic Shearwater** *Puffinus mauretanicus* was observed on a pelagic on 7 June; there are relatively few records in Madeiran waters. Vagrant waders included a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Machico on 15 September–6 October, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* at Fanal on 2 November, and single **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* at Machico on 10–19 August and 6 October, at Ribeira da Janela on 30 September–8 October, and at Lugar de Baixo on 5 November. A **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* was at Lugar de Baixo on 24 June and two **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Palheiro Gardens, Funchal, on 20 November. **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were recorded at Porto Santo Golf Course (two on 1 July), Porto Moniz (four on 18 October) and Ribeira Brava (three on 19 October). A **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* was observed at Ponta do Pargo on 12 November and two **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* at Cabo Girão on 28 August.

A **Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* was discovered at Deserta Grande on 2 September. **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were reported from Paúl da Serra (one on 23 September), Ponta Pargo (two on 29 October; one on 2–12 November), Ponta de São Lourenço (three on 30 October) and Ponta de São Lourenço (one on 19 December). Two **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis* were seen at Fanal on 1 November, whilst two first-winter **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava flava* stayed at São Vicente on 1–5 November (per *www.madeirabirds.com*).

Mali

A probable **Wahlberg's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* was observed at Narina farms, Koulikoro, north-east of Bamako, on 25 October 2016; the species was photographed in the same area in January 2010 (*MCr*).

Mauritania

On 13 November 2016, two species were recorded for the first time in Mauritania, both at Nouadhibou, on the coast, in the extreme north-west: **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* (two; Figs. 19–20) and **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* (also two; Fig. 21; *RvB*); in West Africa, Yellow-browed Warbler has been reported previously only from Senegambia and the Cape Verde Islands, and Olive-backed Pipit is a first for the region.


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Mauritius

An **Intermediate Egret** *Ardea intermedia* near Port Louise on 28 December 2016 would be the first record for Mauritius (per *www.hbw.com/news/first-country-reports*); the only other records for the Malagasy region mentioned by Safford & Hawkins (2013. *The Birds of Africa.* Vol. 8) are two from Seychelles.


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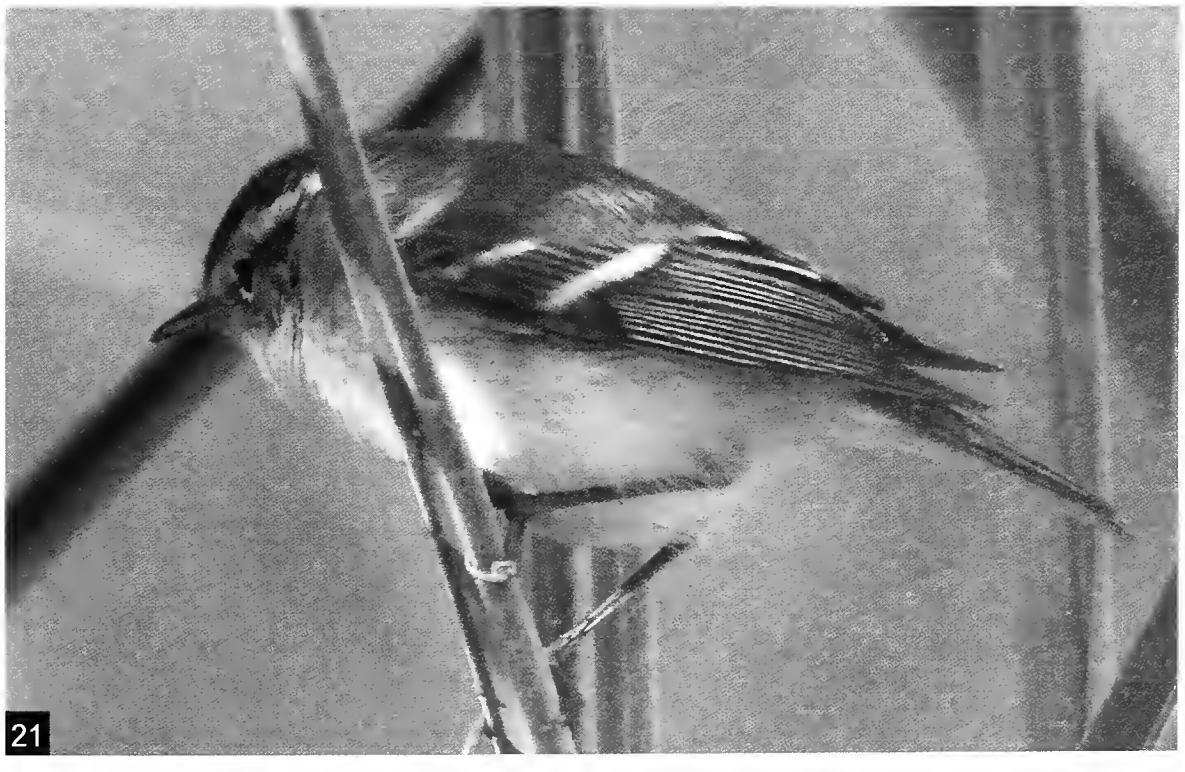
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Figures 19–20. Olive-backed Pipit / Pipit à dos olive *Anthus hodgsoni*, Nouadhibou, Mauritania, 13 November 2016 (Rob van Bemmelen)

Figure 21. Yellow-browed Warbler / Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus,* Nouadhibou, Mauritania, 13 November 2016 (Rob van Bemmelen)

Figure 22. Long-billed Tailorbird / Couturière de Moreau *Artisornis moreaui*, Njesi Plateau, Mozambique, 24 November 2016 (Sam Jones)

Figure 23. Dapple-throat / Modulatrice grivelée *Arcanator orostruthus*, Mount Chitagal, Mozambique, 8 November 2016 (Sam Jones)

Morocco

A **Cinnamon Teal** *Anas cyanoptera* photographed at Oualidia on 8 October 2016 may be the first for Morocco if accepted (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 452). The family of **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* was still present at Mijk, near Dakhla, Western Sahara, on 4–12 August; breeding was confirmed in May (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 394). A **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* photographed at Khemis Zemamra on 28 October will be the first for Morocco, if accepted (*BM* per *www.go-south.org*); a previous claim, from Merzouga on 17 May 1996, was rejected. A **Rüppell's Vulture** *Gyps rueppelli* in a flock of Griffon Vultures *G. fulvus* was photographed south of Jbel Moussa on 28 July (*RE & FC* per *MaghrebOrnitho*). A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* flying over Tanger-Med port on 1 October was the fifth for Morocco (and the second in 2016). A **Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* was photographed at M'hamid on 1 November; it was seen here for the first time in November 2015 (per *Dutch Birding* 38: 455–462).

Mozambique

In August–December 2016 the following were reported. A pelagic trip off the Barra Peninsula on 29 August yielded four **Great Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor* and up to 40 **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus*, with the highlight being a **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina*, only the 21st to be recorded in southern Africa. A cruise in the Mozambique Channel in mid November produced several interesting sightings, including three **Great Frigatebirds**, three **Red-footed Boobies** *Sula sula*, many **Sooty Terns**, a small group of **Brown Noddies** *Anous stolidus*, a **Tropical Shearwater** *Puffinus bailloni* and two distant **tropicbirds** *Phaethon* sp. Single **Great Frigatebirds** were reported at Inhambane on 9 September and 23 October, and a **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* at the San Sebastian Peninsula on 7 December. A rather surprising find was that of an **African Penguin** *Spheniscus demersus* on the beach in front of Inhaca Island in early December; unfortunately, the bird was injured and subsequently died. A flock of 36 **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* was present on the San Sebastian Peninsula on 4 December, whilst a single **Crab-plover** and a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* were at the Rio Maria estuary on 10th. Two **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* were noted at Coutada 11 on 6 December. An immature **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* of the nominate race was observed in central Maputo on 6 November.

European Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Mount Sanga on 19 November; Gorongosa Camp on 25 November; Triunfo, Maputo, on 28 November (two); Unguana on 4 December; Coutada 11 on 7 December (two); the Zambezi River at Sena on 11 December; and Mungari Camp in Coutada 11 on 12 December. Southern Africa's second **Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis* was discovered on the floodplain at Coutada 11 near Mungari Camp on 9 December. A **Black Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* of the race *orientalis*, sometimes treated as a separate species, Eastern Saw-wing, was identified in Maputo on 5

Figure 24. Vincent's Bunting / Bruant de Vincent *Emberiza vincenti*, Mount Sanga, Mozambique, 14 November 2016 (Sam Jones)

Figure 25. Isabelline Wheatear / Traquet isabelle *Oenanthe isabellina*, near Mbamba village, Niassa National Park, Mozambique, December 2016 (Claire Spottiswoode)

Figure 26. Taita Falcon / Faucon taita *Falco fasciinucha*, Niassa Province, Mozambique, December 2016 (Claire Spottiswoode)

November, well south of its normal range. Two out-of-range **Red-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* were located on the San Sebastian Peninsula on 4 December (per *TH & GA*).

Noteworthy records from surveys conducted as part of a biological assessment of Mount Sanga, Mount Chitagal and the Njesi Plateau, Niassa Province, on 5–23 November, included two species new to Mozambique, both found on Mount Chitagal: **Dark Batis** *Batis crypta* and **Rwenzori Nightjar** *Caprimulgus rwenzorii guttifer* (sometimes split as Usambara Nightjar). **Long-billed Tailorbirds** *Artisornis moreaui* were common on all three mountains (representing extensions to their known range; Fig. 22), with **African Tailorbirds** *A. metopias* also common on Mount Chitagal and the Njesi Plateau (but absent from Mount Sanga). Records of **Dapple-throat** *Arcanator orostruthus* (Mount Chitagal; Fig. 23) and **Vincent's Bunting** *Emberiza* (*capensis*) *vincenti* (Mount Chitagal and Mount Sanga; Fig. 24) represent important range extensions for these taxa, whereas minor range extensions were noted for **Green Twinspot** *Mandingoa nitidula*, **Mountain Bulbul** *Arizelocichla nigriceps* and **Southern Citril** *Crithagra hyposticta*. Several sightings of **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* on the Njesi Plateau represent the third record for Mozambique. **Bertram's Weaver** *Ploceus bertrandi* was also recorded (*SJ & GJ* per *GA*).

Also in Niassa Province were the third **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* for Mozambique (Fig. 25) and **Vincent's Bunting** at Mount Mariti, a minor range extension. Of note were **Taita Falcons** *Falco fasciinucha* in Niassa Reserve and on Mount Mbatamila, south-west of Mecula (Fig. 26) (*CSp*).

Concerted searches for **Steppe Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris* resulted in sightings of possibly up to seven individuals exhibiting the characters of this form in Inhambane Bay, plus at least one in Maputo Bay, in the period August–October (for a full account of the discovery of this taxon in Mozambique, see pp. 26–37) (*GA, GR, NP, MBy, MW*).

Namibia

Records from July–December 2016 include the following. An **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was found at Camp Syncro, in the Kunene region, on 2 July; the bird was in a bad condition and died at the site. A juvenile **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was apparently present at Rossmund Desert Golf Course, Swakopmund, on 5 July, but could not be relocated; this is far out of range for the species and also the wrong time of year (per *TH*). A flock of *c.*35 **Ludwigs Bustard's** *Neotis ludwigii* in Namib-Naukluft National Park (= NP) on 13 September was a remarkably large group (*MBo & TT*).

Caspian Plovers *Charadrius asiaticus* were reported at Onesi Dam, 40 km east of Ruacana, on 22 September (five); at the hot springs *c.*10 km north of King Nehale gate in Etosha NP on 23 September (three), with at least another 50 just outside the park at the same gate (where a few were still present on 30 September); in Mahango Game Reserve on 5 October (one); and at Andoni, Etosha NP, on 15 November (11). A **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* at President's Waterhole on the Hoanib River in mid July was an unusual record for this site, as was an **African Jacana** *Actophilornis africana* in Fish River Canyon, also in mid July. A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was present again at Mile 4 Salt Works, near Swakopmund, until at least 6 September, whilst a **Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus* was at Mahango Game Reserve on 5 October. At least three **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were still present at Walvis Bay on 8 July and up to *c.*40 in September–

December, with a **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* also there on 15 December. Single **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* were reported from Klein Namutoni waterhole, Etosha NP, on 12 October; downstream of Shamvura Camp, western Caprivi, on 15 October; and Katima Mulilo Sewage Works on 23 November. A **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was at Swakopmund on 3–12 November, with another *c.*1 km south of Henties Bay on 4 November. A **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* was located at Walvis Bay Lagoon on 17 November and a **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* on a sandbank along the Okavango River at Nunda River Lodge, Bagani, on 26 November.

A **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* was observed at Rossmund Golf Course, Swakopmund, on 18 July, whilst two **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* were at Gammams Waste Water Treatment Works, Windhoek, on 13 November. A surprising discovery was that of a juvenile **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* at Fischer Pan, Etosha NP, on 8 December, well away from where this species is known to occur. Other noteworthy Ardeidae include a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* at Rossmund Golf Course, Swakopmund, on 18 July; two **Dwarf Bitterns** *I. sturmii* at Namutoni waterhole, Etosha NP, on 15 November; and a **Rufous-bellied Heron** *Ardeola rufiventris* at Onesi Dam, east of Ruacana, on 22 September.

Single **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were recorded at Brakwater, *c.*20 km north of Windhoek, on 20 November; Olympia, Windhoek, on 23 November; Monte Christo farm, *c.*30 km north of Windhoek, on 27 November; and Klein Windhoek on 4 and 15 December. Quite unusual was an **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Avecida cuculoides* at Waterberg Wilderness Lodge on 10 October. A **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* at Gammams Waste Water Treatment Works, Windhoek, on 11 September, was well outside its usual range, although there have been previous claims from the Windhoek area. Also out of range was a **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* along the Hoanib River on 28 October. A **Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* remained in the Swakopmund area from 19 July until at least 27 August and an **African Scops Owl** *Otus senegalensis* was discovered at Rossmund Golf Course, Swakopmund, on 20 July.

A **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* was reported from Monte Christo farm, *c.*30 km north of Windhoek, on 27 November; this is at least the eighth consecutive season that it has returned to this site, well outside its normal range. An **African Grey Hornbill** *Lophoceros nasutus* was located at the NamibRand Nature Reserve on 6 August.

An **African Golden Oriole** *Oriolus auratus* at the Protea Hotel, Walvis Bay, on 30 October was an unexpected find. A **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* in Swakopmund on 16 September was possibly the same individual that has been reported from Walvis Bay in recent times. The first **Yellow-throated Leafloves** *Atimastillas flavicollis* for Namibia and the southern African subregion remained intermittently in the gardens of Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge at Katima Mulilo until at least November; the birds were first noted here in December 2015 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 23: 240). Out-of-range warblers included an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* at Amanzi campsite, west of Noordoewer in the extreme south of the country, on 25 September, and a **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* at Erongo Wilderness Lodge, Omaruru, on 8 December. Female **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were found in Okaukeujo camp, Etosha NP, on 30 September; near Katima Mulilo on 2 October; and at the old campsite at Namibgrens on 5 November. A **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* remained on the lawns in front of the restaurant at Waterberg Plateau Park from 10 October until at least 5 November; another was found at the campsite at Camp Kwando, Caprivi, on 19 November. A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* was at Andoni, Etosha NP, on 15 November (per *TH*).

Niger

Visits to the Mékrou River in 'W' National Park (= NP), south of La Tapoa, on 22 April, and to the lower Mékrou by boat on 28–30 July 2016, produced several records of interest. Five species appear to be new for Niger (*cf.* Giraudoux *et al.* 1988. *Malimbus* 10: 1–140; Niger Atlas database www.nibdab.org/db/viewspecies, accessed 9 November 2016; and J. Brouwer *in litt.* 2016): **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* (seen in tall riparian forest on the lower Mékrou on 30 July—common in 'W' NP in Benin); **African Moustached Warbler** *Melocichla mentalis* (very vocal in July—common in the park on the Benin side, reaches the Niger border on the lower Mékrou); **Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* (common in riparian forest all along the Mékrou, recorded in both April and July); **Splendid Sunbird** *Cinnyris coccinigastrus* (a few holding territory in tall *Khaya senegalensis* in July—a rains visitor to the extreme north of Benin); and **Black-winged Bishop** *Euplectes hordeaceus* (a male in breeding plumage flying across the border on 30 July).

Other noteworthy records include the following. An **Arabian Bustard** *Ardeotis arabs* was seen 5 km from the Benin border (at Point Triple) on 22 April. **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus* proved to be common in thickets all along the lower Mékrou, being highly vocal in July. The season's last flock of **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* was noted on 22 April and is a new record for 'W' NP Niger. **Short-winged Cisticola** *Cisticola brachypterus* is largely absent from 'W' NP, but several were singing in marshy vegetation at the mouth of the Mékrou, which could represent its northern range limit. **Winding Cisticola** *C. galactotes* was singing at the Mékrou mouth—a new record for 'W' NP Niger. **Blackcap Babbler** *Turdoides reinwardtii*, previously unrecorded from 'W' NP in Niger,

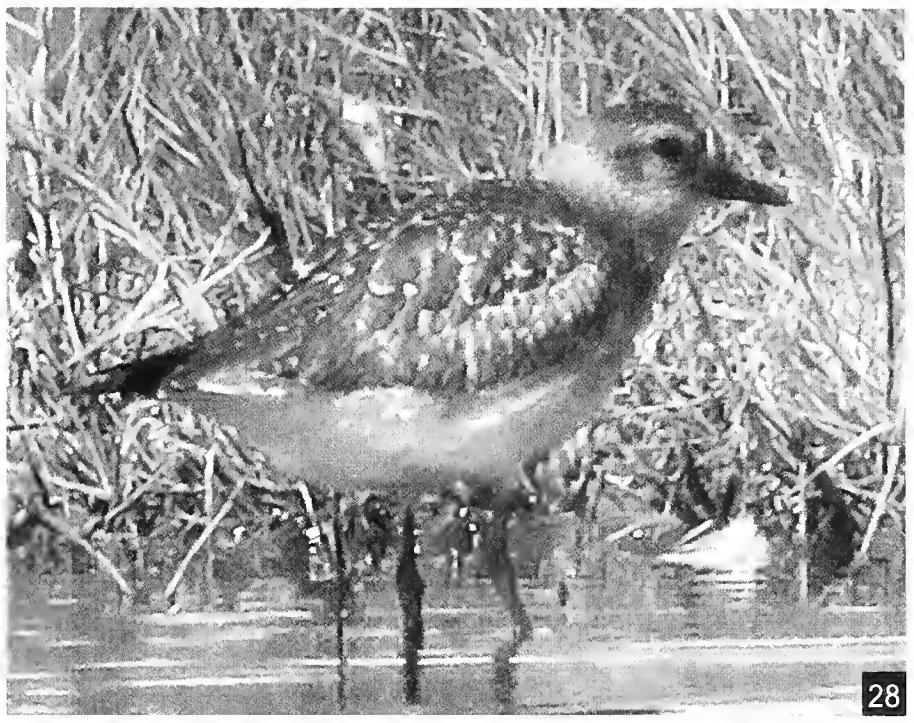

Figure 27. Brown Booby / Fou brun *Sula leucogaster*, Îles de la Madeleine, Senegal, 27 November 2016 (Bram Piot)

Figure 28. American Golden Plover / Pluvier bronzé *Pluvialis dominica*, Dakar Technopôle, Senegal, 18 December 2016 (Bram Piot)

Figure 29–30. Buff-breasted Sandpipers / Bécasseaux roussets *Calidris subruficollis*, Lac Rose, Senegal, 18 December 2016 (Bram Piot)

was common along the Mékrou (this confirms a single previous record for Niger claimed from dry country to the north, *cf. Bull. ABC* 23: 240). A flock of **Lesser Blue-eared Starlings** *Lamprotornis chloropterus* with several immatures was seen on the river on 29–30 July and is also a new record for 'W' NP Niger (*FD-L & RD*).

In October **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* was found to be common at Diffa and its environs; it concerns a subspecies with grey rather than white underparts (*EL* per *www.wabdab.org*).

Rwanda

A **Secretary-bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* remained on the Kilala Plain, Akagera National Park, from 22 October until at least 13 November 2016; according to Vande weghe & Vande weghe (2011. *Birds in Rwanda—An Atlas and Handbook*) the species is an irregular visitor, with only five previous records, the last being from 1990 to the south of the park. In August, a **Shoebill** *Balaeniceps rex* was showing well on the Kilala Plain; this scarce resident breeds in the large swamps of Akagera, but sightings are rare. A **Southern Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* was observed near rice paddies in Rusumo District, south-east Rwanda, on 13 November; this uncommon and irregular visitor was probably a wanderer from Burundi or Tanzania (*JH*).

Senegal

The following records are from July–December 2016. A new species for Senegal was observed during the period: **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*, with a juvenile seen on a pelagic trip off Dakar on 19 October, during the Pan-African Ornithological Congress (*NM* et al.). Off Ngor, Dakar, six **Great Shearwaters** *Ardenna gravis* were counted on 12 November, with another six on 19 November, whilst strong passage of **Scopoli's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* was noted on 2–19 November, with several thousand on 12th (*AB, MB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP & CS*). A **Boyd's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri boydi* flew past Ngor on 24 October (*BP*). **Brown Boobies**

Figure 31. Golden Nightjar / Engoulevent doré *Caprimulgus eximius*, Dikoul, Senegal, 12 November 2016 (Bram Piot)

Figure 32. Greater Short-toed Larks / Alouette calandrelle *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Palmarin, Senegal, 25 November 2016 (Bram Piot)

Sula leucogaster flew past Ngor on 25 October (one), 3 November (one) and 15 November (two) (*BP*), whilst up to four, including two adults, were present at Îles de la Madeleine on 20 and 27 November (Fig. 27; *AB, MB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP & CS*); the occurrence of the species off the Cap Vert Peninsula seems to be increasing and the presence of a (presumed) pair of adults and two young is intriguing.

Eleven **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor* were at Dakar Technopôle on 28 August (*BP & MLe*); the species is locally common in the north, but is a vagrant elsewhere in the country. A **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*, rare outside the Senegal Delta area, was observed at Diofior, in the Saloum Delta, on 24 November (*AB, GD, BG, CH, CP & CS*). A **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolopha* was heard at Toubacouta, in the Saloum Delta, on 23 November, near the site where the species was reported in January and where, according to a local guide, it is regular (*AB, GD, BG, CH, CP & CS*). A Hungarian-ringed **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* was found at Ndiaffate, near Kaolack, on 20 December (*SC*). A **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* was at Trois-Marigots, near Saint-Louis, on 9 July (*FB*), whilst a large group of up to at least 73 **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* remained near Kaolack throughout December (*SC*). Three **Woolly-necked Storks** *C. episcopus* at Lac Tanma, north-east of Dakar, on 16 October were the first at this site (*BP, J-MT, EB*), as was one at Touba Sanokho, near Kaolack, on 4 December (*SC*). In the Saloum Delta, an adult **Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* was observed at Palmarin on 24–26 November (*AB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP & CS*).

A **Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* was at Dakar Technopôle on 16–29 October (*MI, CW, BP* et al.). A **Eurasian Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* was observed at Lac Tanma on 12 November (*MB, GD, BG, CH & CS*) and an **American Golden Plover** *P. dominica* at Dakar Technopôle on 18 December (Fig. 28; *BP*). No fewer than five **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Calidris subruficollis* were recorded in the space of one month: one at Palmarin, Saloum Delta, on 24–26 November (*AB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP & CS*), three near Lac Rose on 18 December (Figs. 29–30; *BP*) and one near Saint-Louis on 8 December and 21 December (*FB*); there are just two previous records for Senegal: one at Lac Retba (= Rose) on 22 April 1985 and five at Palmarin on 2 December 1994. A first calendar-year **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* was at Ngor on 19 November (*AB, MB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP & CS*) and an adult **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* at Dakar Technopôle on 13 July (*WH & MvL*). A male **Golden Nightjar** *Caprimulgus eximius* was found dead on the road near Dikoul, 7 km east of Kébémer, on 12 November (Fig. 31; *MB, GD, BG, CH, BP & CS*). A pair of **Blue-bellied Rollers** *Coracias cyanogaster* was noted near Kayar, north-east of Dakar, on 11 December; the species is rare in central Senegal (*BP*).

In September–December, several **Barbary Falcons** *Falco* (*peregrinus*) *peregrinoides* were reported: a first calendar-year at Ngor on 18 September and 10 October, with singles at Kaolack, Palmarin, Popenguine, Somone and Îles de la Madeleine (*AB, MB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP, SC & CS*); the taxon appears to be more widespread than previously thought.

Two **Greater Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were observed at Palmarin, Saloum Delta, far from their regular wintering grounds in the north, on 25 November (Fig. 32; *AB, GD, BG, CH, BP, CP & CS*), with six at Kousmar, Kaolack, on 12 December (*SC*). Breeding of **Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida* was confirmed at Gandiol, south of Saint-Louis, in addition to the Djoudj area (*BP & FB*); it probably extends all along the coast from Dakar to Saint-Louis and Djoudj. At least one **Moltoni's Warbler** *Sylvia subalpina* was observed and sound-recorded near Gandiol on 11 September; this appears to be the fourth definite record for Senegal, after at least one

Figure 33. African Spoonbill / Spatule d'Afrique *Platalea alba*, Roche Caiman, Mahé, Seychelles, 3 November 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 34. Black-tailed Godwit / Barge à queue noire *Limosa limosa*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 11 November 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 35. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater / Guêpier de Perse *Merops persicus*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 12 November 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

individual at Richard Toll on 2 or 3 December 2013, possibly two different males in Djoudj National Park on 22 March 2014, and a male south of Djoudj on 7 April 2015 (cf. *https://senegalwildlife.wordpress.com/2016/09/24/where-does-moltonis-warbler-overwinter/*). The sighting of at least one male **Blue-billed** (African) **Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rubricata* at Diembéring, near Cap Skirring, on 13 October, appears to confirm the species' presence in Casamance. A **Black-faced Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza atricollis* was near Kayar, north-east of Dakar, on 11 December (*BP*).

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period June–December 2016 include the first country record of **African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba*—one at various localities on the east coast of Mahé from 5 October until at least 30 November (Fig. 33).

A first-calendar-year **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* on Bird Island on 12–17 November was the second record for Seychelles, whilst a first-calendar-year **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* on Bird Island from 30 or 31 October–9 November and a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* on Aride on 7 December were third records. A **Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* on Bird Island on 16 November was the fourth for the archipelago, with another on North Island on 8 December being the fifth. Other fifth records include an adult **Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* on Mahé on 4 October and a **Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* on Alphonse on 28 October.

Single **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* were reported from Frégate on 26 October–18 November and Bird Island on 7–14 November (an adult in breeding plumage), 10–14 November (an adult non-breeding) and 16 November (an adult in partial breeding plumage). **Black-winged Pratincoles** *G. nordmanni* were on D'Arros on 31 October–1 November (one), North Island on 1 November (one) and Bird Island on 6–9 November (an adult and a juvenile; the latter remaining until 13 November). An **Oriental Pratincole** *G. maldivarum* was on Poivre on 17 November. A first-calendar-year **Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* on Bird Island on 6–14 November was the first accepted by SBRC since the status of this formerly annual species was changed to vagrant in December 2015. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* was also on Bird Island, on 11–14 November (Fig. 34; eight records), whilst a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* was seen on Grande Sœur on 23–25 November.

A **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* was on Bird Island on 6–11 November (nine records) and a **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus* on Desroches on 2–5 December (12 records). On Bird Island, a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* was present at two

widely separated localities on 10–12 November, with two at a third site on 13 November (the latter possibly involving one of the earlier birds). On the same island, up to eight **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus* were observed on 10–17 November (Fig. 35), with two on Desroches on 2 December. Four **Eurasian Hobbies** *Falco subbuteo* were recorded: a first-calendar-year on Denis on 12 November, an adult on Bird Island on 12–14 November and two juveniles on Bird Island on 13–17 November.

Bird Island also yielded a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* on 10–11 November, with a different individual on 13–17 November (seven records), three **Common Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* on 13–14 November (and one on Poivre on 17 November) and a **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* on 7–16 November, with another on 11 November.

Other noteworthy records include a **Madagascar Pond Heron** *Ardeola idae* on Alphonse on 15 November (six records east of the Aldabra Group, where it breeds), a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* on Curieuse on 7 October 2015, a **Great Egret** *Ardea alba* on Bird Island on 15–17 November, a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on Desroches on 2–5 December (Fig. 36; 26 records east of the Aldabra Group, where it is an annual visitor), an adult male **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on Bird Island on 10–16 November (Fig. 37), a **Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea* on Alphonse on 8 October (nine records), a **White Wagtail** *M. alba* on Bird Island on 6–16 November, a **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on Bird Island on 13 November, with another on Desroches on the same date, and a **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* on Bird Island on 7–12 November. A **Red-headed** or **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps / melanocephala* was present at various localities on Bird Island on 22 October–10 November; the record remains under review by SBRC (per *AS*).


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Figure 36. Broad-billed Roller / Rolle violet *Eurystomus glaucurus*, Desroches, Seychelles, 2 December 2016 (Peter Holden)

Figure 37. Yellow Wagtail / Bergeronnette printanière *Motacilla flava*, Bird Island, Seychelles, 12 November 2016 (Adrian Skerrett)

South Africa

The following records are from July–December 2016. Highlights from the period, all recorded in Western Cape, include the following. Two species were firsts for the southern Africa subregion: **Rufous Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* (Zeekoeivlei, 17 July–22 September; Fig. 38) and **European Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* (Bushmanskloof Wilderness Reserve, near Clanwilliam, 18–26 December; Fig. 39). South Africa's second **Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* remained at Still Bay, from mid December (Fig. 40), whilst the country's third **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* was at Strandfontein Sewage Works, from 26 November (Fig. 41); both were still present in January. South Africa's third **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was in Kruger National Park (= NP), Mpumalanga, from 26 November until 13 December (per *TH*). Concerted searches for **Steppe Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus alboaxillaris* resulted in the finding of at least three birds showing the characters of this form in Richards Bay, in October–December (Figs. 42–43; *PR, DR, KWe*); there is just one previous record of Steppe Whimbrel in South Africa, of two birds shot in Durban Bay in December 1961 (per *GA*).

Noteworthy species seen in waters south and west of Cape Point include **Northern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea sanfordi* (two on 2 & 31 July; one on 17 July; several on 20 August; singles on 4 September and 7, 8 & 22 October), **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora* (one on 20 August; two on 4 & 18 September; singles on 1, 9, 15 & 30 October and 5–6 November), **Wandering Albatross** *D. exulans* (three on 16 July; one on 18 September; seven on 9 October; four on 12 October; five on 15 October; one on 25 October; two on 5–6 November), **Tristan Albatross**

Figure 38. Rufous Scrub Robin / Agrobate roux *Cercotrichas galactotes*, Zeekoeivlei, Western Cape, South Africa, 19 July 2016 (Ian Grant)

Figure 39. European Pied Flycatcher / Gobemouche noir *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Bushmanskloof Wilderness Reserve, Western Cape, South Africa, 19 December 2016 (John Graham)

Figure 40. Red-necked Buzzard / Buse d'Afrique *Buteo auguralis*, Still Bay, Western Cape, South Africa, December 2016 (Dennis Cope)

Figure 41. Temminck's Stint / Bécasseau de Temminck *Calidris temminckii* Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, South Africa, 26 November 2016 (Glynis Bowie)

D. dabbenena (possibly two on 1, 8 & 9 October), **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria fusca* (one on 16 July), **Grey-headed Albatross** *Thalassarche chrysostoma* (singles on 2 & 27 July), white-morph **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* (singles on 2 July and 27 October), **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialoides* (singles on 31 July and 8 October), **Kerguelen Petrel** *Aphrodroma brevirostris* (one on 16 July), **Atlantic Petrel** *Pterodroma incerta* (one on 16 July), **White-headed Petrel** *P. lessoni* (two on 16 July; one on 27 July), **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea* (one on 20 August), **Spectacled Petrel** *P. conspicillata* (one on 6 August; two on 24 September; singles on 12 October and 15 December), **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardenna carneipes* (one on 18 September) and **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* (one on 4 September).

Approximately 170 nautical miles south-east of Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, an adult **Sooty Albatross** was seen on 11 July. A **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna pacifica* flew around Bird Island, in Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, on 31 August–1 September; what is assumed to be the same individual has been returning annually to the island since 2005.

Species observed in the waters south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, include **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** *Thalassarche chlororhynchus* (one on 26 November), **Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* (one on 27 November), **Barau's Petrel** *Pterodroma baraui* (one on 16 October; four on 30 October; two on 27 November), **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* (at least two on 16 October; one on 25 November), **European Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* (one on 25 November), **Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* (at least three on 13 July; two on 17 July) and **Antarctic Tern** *Sterna vittata* (one on 13 July; two on 17 July).

A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* flew west at Buffel's Bay near Knysna, Western Cape, on 16 December. Two **Australian Gannets** *Morus serrator* remained on Malgas Island, in Saldahna Bay, Western Cape, from 10 August until at least early December, whilst one was at Bird Island, in Algoa Bay, Eastern

Cape, until at least 8 November. A **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* was reported from Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 24 December.

Out-of-range ducks included several **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna bicolor* at Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Western Cape, on 16 August–17 December, with one near East London Airport, Eastern Cape, on 24 September; a pair of **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus* at Ottersvlei, Eastern Cape, on 1 August–10 September (with the male still present on 8 October); and a **Knob-billed Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* at temporary wetlands at Philippi, Western Cape, on 14 August, with another near Bainskloof Pass on 29 September–23 October.

Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus*, all immatures, were observed at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 22 October; at Breede River mouth, Western Cape, on 5 November (it flew into a window and died); and in Bushmanskloof Game Reserve, near Clanwilliam, Western Cape, from 3 December until at least 14 December. A **Grey Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides concolor* south of Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 12 November was an unusual record for the area.

In Free State, two **African Finfoots** *Podica senegalensis*, a female and a juvenile, were at President Brandt Park, on 25–30 September; this is the first record for the province in the SABAP2 (= Second Southern African Bird Atlas Project) database (cf. *http://sabap2.adu.org.za/*) and possibly only the third record for the Free State. One was seen intermittently in Rietvlei Nature Reserve, Gauteng, from mid October to early November. A **Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla* was at Strandfontein, Western Cape, on 6 December, with another at Sappi Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, later that month. From mid to late December, **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* were reported from Kruger NP, Mpumalanga; Sappi Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal; Ngciyo Pan, Eastern Cape; and Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape.

Out-of-range **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* were found in Tanqua Karoo NP, Western Cape, on 12 September, and near Molteno, Eastern Cape, on 22 December. In Eastern Cape, up to 11 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were still present at Diaz Dam in July–October (with one still there on 17 December); others were noted throughout the period at several locations in the province, the largest number being eight at Ngciyo Pans on 10 July; one was also observed at Bethlehem, Free State, on 11 December. Single **African Openbills** *Anastomus lamelligerus* were reported from KwaZulu-Natal (Darvill Bird Sanctuary, until at least 13 August; Mount Edgecombe Estate, 30 December); Eastern Cape (Maclear, 7 September); and Mpumalanga (Mkhombo Dam, 20 November). In Eastern Cape, a **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* was located between Nieu-Bethesda and Graaf-Reinet, on 16 December—an excellent record for the province. **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* at unusual locations included one at Rockwall Dam, near Rustenburg, North West Province, on 27 November, and an immature at Diaz Dam, near Boknes, Eastern Cape, from 3 December until at least 17th. **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* were reported from Mpumalanga (one between Delmas and Benoni on 13 July; three near Malelane in mid August) and Gauteng (singles at Roodeplaat Dam on 14 October and at Bronkhorstspruit Dam in December).

A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was booming at Sappi Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 3 July. In Free State, a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* in Harrismith on 25 August was apparently a first record for the area. Single **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* were recorded near Maclear, Eastern Cape, on 23–24 July; at the Sappi wetlands in Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 10–23 October; at Eshlazi Dam, Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal, on 1 November–1 December; in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, on 20 November; and *c.*35 km north-east of Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape, on 10 December. In Western Cape, single **Squacco Herons** *A. ralloides* were at Paarl Bird Sanctuary on 4 September and at Bloubergstrand on 21 October–5 November, whilst **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were observed at Paardevlei near Strand, on 1 August (one); at Verlorenvlei near Eland's Bay until at least 18 September (up to two); and at Paarl Bird Sanctuary on 24 September (one). A **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* was noted near Dullstroom, Mpumalanga, on 20 October.

Lesser Jacanas *Microparra capensis* were reported from Mpumalanga (Skukuza Golf Course, Kruger NP, 2 July–18 September), Limpopo (Goose Dam, near Vuwani, 7 August); Gauteng (Dinokeng Game Reserve, 27 December) and KwaZulu-Natal (Northern Waste Water Treatment Works, Durban, from 27 June until at least 6 July; Darvill Bird Sanctuary, Pietermaritzburg, July–December; Sappi Stanger, 26–27 July; and Eshowe Dam, from 31 October until at least 26 November). A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was at St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7–16 November. **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were found north-west of Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal, on 26–27 September; at Mooiplaas waterhole, Kruger NP, on 9 October–16 November (two); at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 12 October and 21–26 November; at Rietvlei Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 2 December; at Borakalalo Nature Reserve, North West Province, on 3 December (two); and at Kliphoek Salt Pans, Western Cape, on 30 December. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus* stayed in West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 7 August–18 September, with a **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* also there on 22 September–26 October; two other Greater Sand Plovers were at Fish River mouth, Eastern Cape, in late December. Vagrant inland **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola* were noted in Limpopo (one in Olifants River Game Reserve on

Figures 42–43. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* showing the characters of Steppe Whimbrel *N. p. alboaxillaris*, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 31 December 2016 (Kevin Westermann)

Courlis corlieu *Numenius phaeopus* ayant les caractéristiques de la sous-espèce *alboaxillaris*, Richards Bay, Afrique du Sud, 31 décembre 2016 (Kevin Westermann)

3–14 December); Mpumalanga (up to three at Mkhombo Dam from 22 October until the end of December); KwaZulu-Natal (three at Darvill Bird Sanctuary on 20 November); North West Province (singles Borakalalo Nature Reserve on 27 November and 3 December; Rockwall Dam, near Rustenburg, on 26 November; and Koster Sewage Works on 3–10 December); and Free State (one at Sterkfontein Dam on 8 December). In Western Cape, an **American Golden Plover** *P. dominica* remained at Strandfontein Sewage Works from late November until late December; another was reported from de Mond Nature Reserve on 21 December.

In Northern Cape, a **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* discovered near Hanover in late October was an interesting find for the central Karoo; another was in Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 19 December. Inland records of vagrant **Whimbrels** *N. phaeopus* were reported from Gauteng (Roodeplaat Dam, 14–23 October), Mpumalanga (Mkhombo Dam, 16–22 October), Free State (near Harrismith, 8 November), and North West Province (Borakalalo Nature Reserve, 24 November). **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica*—very rare inland—were noted in Mpumalanga (up to two at Mkhombo Dam on 2–8 October; one near Standerton on 7 November) and Gauteng (up to two at Blesbokspruit on 14–30 October; one at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 22 October). A **Black-tailed Godwit** *L. limosa* was discovered at the Sappi wetlands in Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 27–29 October, with another in Pilanesburg NP, North West Province, from 24 November to at least 4 December. Up to two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, from late November until at least the end of December, with another at Sappi Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, from 18 December onwards. At Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* returned to the Swartkops estuary on 19 July after having disappeared for several months, and along the Chatty River on 16 October–20 November; one also stayed in West Coast NP, Western Cape, from 16 October to at least 5 November. The season's first **Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus* was noted in Mkuze Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14 August and was still present in early December; several (with some remaining at the same location for several weeks or even months) were subsequently reported from Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and North West Province, with one also in Northern Cape (although the species is annual in small numbers in the eastern part of the country, it is very rare in the west). **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* were found inland in Gauteng (Roodeplaat Dam, 9 October), Mpumalanga (Mkhombo Dam, 16 October and 17–21 November) and North West Province (Borakalalo Nature Reserve, 2 December). The long-staying **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Velddrif, Western Cape, remained there throughout the period, with a second on 16 December. Another stayed at Strandfontein Sewage Works from 26 November until the end of the year and was joined by a second individual on 1 December.

Two **Burchell's Coursers** *Cursorius rufus* were still near Heilbron, Free State, on 3–18 July. In Eastern Cape, up to at least four **Temminck's Coursers** *C. temminckii* were still present between Humansdorp and Kareedouw on 19 July; two were noted in Mountain Zebra NP on 5–6 November. **Collared**

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Figure 44. Gull-billed Tern / Sterne hansel *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Borakalalo Nature Reserve, North West Province, South Africa, 24 November 2016 (Ian Grant)

Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola* were found in Limpopo (five at Makuleke Dam until at least 8 August), Mpumalanga (one at Mkhombo Dam on 16 October and at least three in Timbavati Private Game Reserve on 23 October) and KwaZulu-Natal (one in Darvill Bird Sanctuary on 16 November).

Two **Franklin's Gulls** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* were at the Umgeni River mouth in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 3 July; in late December, a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was also there, with another at Chrissiesmeer, Mpumalanga. A **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* remained at Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, from 5 August until at least 11 September; first discovered here on 6 April 2001, it has been returning to this site for the past 15 years. **Sooty Terns** were reported from Eastern Cape (Bird Island, Algoa Bay, 30 August–1 September; Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, 4–14 September), Mpumalanga (an exhausted juvenile, Sabi Sands Game Reserve, 2 November; the nearest coast is at least 150 km distant) and KwaZulu-Natal (St. Lucia, from 5 September until at least mid December). Single **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were located in Mpumalanga (Mkhombo Dam, 20–27 November), North West Province (Borakalalo Nature Reserve, 23 November–31 December; Fig. 44) and KwaZulu-Natal (St. Lucia estuary, 19–22 December). In Western Cape, an **Elegant Tern** *Thalasseus elegans* was discovered in a tern roost at Buffels Bay near Cape Point, on 26 November, and (the same?) subsequently in Hermanus on 13–17 December. Two **Roseate Terns** *Sterna dougallii*, an adult and a first-year, were at Strand beach, Western Cape, on 25–27 July; the immature was ringed as a chick on Bird Island, Eastern Cape, in 2015. In Limpopo, two **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris*, reported from Makuleke Dam on 8 July–4 August, had apparently been present at the site for some time; two (the same?) were at Albasini Dam, *c.*100 km to the west, from 20 August until at least 20 November, with one at Vaalkop Dam, North West Province, on 1 November.

The first **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* of the season was reported in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, on 26 August; subsequently individuals were reported throughout the period from Limpopo (six), North West Province (three), Gauteng (*c.*15), Mpumalanga (four), KwaZulu-Natal (>20), Free State (six), Eastern Cape (13) and Western Cape (eight). In Eastern Cape, an **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Avecida cuculoides* was at Nahoon Estuary Nature Reserve, East London, on 11–14 September, whilst a **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* soared over the Shaw Park / Fish River Lighthouse area on 12 November and 14 December. A **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* flew over Somerset West, Western Cape, on 20 November, with another in Willem Pretorius Game Reserve, Free State, on 25 November. An adult **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* at Loch Athlone Bird Reserve in Bethlehem, Free State, on 9 July, may represent the first record for the province. Other **Palm-nut Vultures** were seen in Limpopo (one at the vulture restaurant near Polokwane until at least 9 July); North West Province (a juvenile at VulPro on 18 November) and KwaZulu-Natal (an immature near San Lameer on 13 July), whilst the adult that has been at Swellendam, Western Cape, since at least August 2015, was again present in the area on 23 July–1 August. At least two **Hooded Vultures** *Necrosyrtes monachus* were seen in Zululand Rhino Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 3–4 September. The second **White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* for Western Cape, a juvenile, was photographed south of Eland's Bay on 18 August; what appears to be the same individual roamed widely and was last reported near Clanwilliam on 16 September. Another juvenile was at Waterfall Estate in Midrand, Gauteng, on 19 December. In Limpopo, a **Rüppell's Vulture** *G. rueppelli* remained at the Cape Vulture *G. coprotheres* breeding cliffs in Blouberg Nature Reserve, near Vivo, from 13 August until at least late November. In Gauteng, a subadult **Bat Hawk** *Macheirhamphus alcinus* flew over Delta Park, Johannesburg, on 23–25 October, whilst a **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* was observed in Wilge River Valley, on 20 August—possibly the first record for the province. A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* was near Caledon, Western Cape, on 30 December. **Ayres's Eagles** *Hieraaetus ayresii* were reported from North West Province (Rustenburg, 17 September) and KwaZulu-Natal (Teza, 29 July; Kwambonambi Golf Course, 30 July; Richards Bay, 7 August; Empangeni, 24 September, with a pair there on 28 October). A pair of **Wahlberg's Eagles** *H. wahlbergi* was present again near Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, from 22 August until at least late November; another pair nested near Oudtshoorn, Western Cape, and had a chick in early December—probably the first breeding record for the province. A female **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was at Franklin Marsh, KwaZulu-Natal, on 5 December and a juvenile **Pallid Harrier** *C. macrourus* near Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 2 December. **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus* were seen at

Matjiesfontein, Western Cape, on 4 December (two females) and near Humansdorp, Eastern Cape, on 14 December (a male). A juvenile **Augur Buzzard** *Buteo augur* was observed in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, on 11 December. A female **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was near Verlorenkloof, Mpumalanga, on 4 November, whilst up to two **Sooty Falcons** *F. concolor* were at Mbazwana, KwaZulu-Natal, from 19 November until the end of the year, with seven there on 29 December.

In Eastern Cape, an **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis* was seen east of Caledon on 20 December and a **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* at Kleinemonde on 26 November. A **Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum* reappeared at Beaufort West, Western Cape, on 18 August after months of absence. **African Palm Swifts** *Cypsiurus parvus* were reported from Western Cape, over Table View on 1 October and at Nuwerus on 13 November. Six **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus* were at Ingula, Free State, on 26 November. A **Crowned Hornbill** *Lophoceros alboterminatus* was *c.*50 km north of Klaarstroom in the Little Karoo, Western Cape, from June until at least 1 September; this species normally only ranges as far west along the coast as Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape. In Gauteng, a **Southern Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus erythrorhynchus rufirostris* was reported from Johannesburg on 1 August. What may be the first **White-eared Barbet** *Stactolaema leucotis* for Mpumalanga was reported from Tomahawk farm, between Malelane and Jeppe's Reef, on 14–17 October. Another potential provincial first was an **Olive Woodpecker** *Dendropicos griseocephalus* in Wilge River Valley, Gauteng, on 2–25 July.

In Eastern Cape, **Crimson-breasted Shrikes** *Laniarius atrococcineus*, of which there are just a few records in the province, were located in Kariega Private Game Reserve on 16–17 July and at Kuzuko Lodge, Addo NP, on 17 November. A **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* was seen between Cannon Rocks and Alexandria, Eastern Cape, on 20 December. **Monotonous Larks** *Mirafra passerina* were in Manyoni Private Game Reserve (former Zululand Rhino Reserve) in mid December; there are only a few previous records for KwaZulu-Natal. A small group of **Sclater's Larks** *Spizocorys sclateri* in the Vaalvlei / Oorlogspoort area, Eastern Cape, from 4 December until at least 11th, may represent just the second record for the province. Also unusual was a **Dusky Lark** *Pinarocorys nigricans* in Rietvlei Nature Reserve, Gauteng, on 21 December. Noteworthy warblers included a **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* just west of Loskop Dam, Mpumalanga, on 23 December; a **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* mist-netted at Barberspan Nature Reserve, North West Province, on 14 December (a very rare visitor to the subregion); and a **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* in Karoo NP, Western Cape, on 15 December.

A **Black Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne holomelas* south of Richmond, Northern Cape, on 28 September, was well out of range. One of the race *orientalis*, previously treated as a separate species, was photographed in Phinda Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 8 October, with a **Mascarene Martin** *Phedina borbonica* also there on the same day. A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* was at Sebayeng Wetland near Polokwane, Limpopo, on 26 December. A **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* discovered at Cebe, on the Wild Coast, on 23 October was probably only the 11th record for South Africa and the first for Eastern Cape. In Gauteng, a **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* was once again reported at Rietvlei Nature Reserve on 19 July. **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* appears to be spreading west: one stayed in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, from 26 October until at least late December. In Eastern Cape, a male **Green-winged Pytlia** *Pytilia melba* located in Camdeboo Conservancy near Graaff-Reinet on 18 September was well out of range and only the second record for the province.

An **African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* frequented Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 3–26 August, with another in Plettenberg Bay on 11 October–1 November. A **Yellow Wagtail** *M. flava* remained at Sappi Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, until at least 16 July; one was at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, from 1 December until at least 18th. In Limpopo, a **Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea* stayed in Magoebaskloof from 23 November until at least late December, with a second also there from 6 December. **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis* were reported from Gauteng (Blue Hills Country Estate, Midrand, 23 October) and Limpopo (Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, 6 November). Southern Africa's 16th **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus*, a male, was in Ithala Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 26 November–1 December (per *TH*).

South Sudan

Noteworthy records from 2016 in the Nyamlell area, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, at the border with Sudan,

Figure 45. Chestnut-bellied Starling / Choucador à ventre roux *Lamprotornis pulcher*, Nyamlell, South Sudan, 26 April 2016 (Federico Rossi)

Figure 46. Eurasian Spoonbills / Spatules blanches *Platalea leucorodia*, Lol River, South Sudan, 30 November 2016 (Federico Rossi)

Figure 47. White-headed Lapwing / Vanneau à tête blanche *Vanellus albiceps*, Majak Bai, Lol River, South Sudan, 17 May 2016 (Federico Rossi)

include the following. A **Chestnut-bellied Starling** *Lamprotornis pulcher* photographed at Nyamlell in April (Fig. 45) is apparently the first record for South Sudan (*cf.* the ABC checklist for the country and Nikolaus' 1987 *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds*); the species is common further north, in Sudan. Fifty **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia*, of which six had been ringed in the Camargue, France, were counted on the Lol River in November (Fig. 46). Several **White-headed Lapwings** *Vanellus albiceps* remained at Majak Bai, Lol River, in May, September and October (Fig. 47); the presence of this species, considered to be rare in the country, is marked in just three one-degree squares, all further south, by Nikolaus (1987) (*FR*).

Swaziland

Noteworthy records from Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary include a group of at least five **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** *Merops hirundineus* on 9–10 August 2016—possibly only the second record for Swaziland, following the sighting of a single in the same reserve—and several **White-eared Barbets** *Stactolaema leucotis* on 4 September—all previous records are from the east of the country (per *TH*).

Tanzania

A **Red-throated Bee-eater** *Merops bulocki* photographed in Grumeti Game Reserve on 7 August 2016 appears to be the first for Tanzania (per *www.hbw.com/report/red-throated-bee-eater-tanzania*). On 14–15 December, a high-tide roost on the beach of Rasamvi Beach resort, at the east end of Zanzibar, held several thousand waders and terns, including up to 1,000 **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola*, with equal numbers of **Curlew Sandpipers** *Calidris ferruginea* and **Saunders's Terns** *Sternula saundersi*, up to 100 individuals each of **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*, **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*, **Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*, **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii*, **Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus*, **Sanderling** *Calidris alba*, **Little Stint** *C. minuta* and **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*, with several **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata*, **Whimbrels** *N. phaeopus*, **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica*, **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus*, **Common Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia* and **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* (*KWh & DWh*).

Togo

Field work carried out in March–April and July 2016, produced the following records of interest. Two new species for Togo were found: **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* (in Togodo Faunal Reserve, in the south-east, on 28 March) and **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* (singing at Yikpa-Djigbé on the Danyi Plateau).

On the Amou River near Atakpamé, at Koutchatcha, a **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* was singing in a *Ceiba* tree and a **Cameroon Indigobird** *Vidua camerunensis,* still in non-breeding plumage, next to others in partial dress, was imitating the songs and calls of **Blue-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rubricata* (30 March). At the edge of Lac Nangbéto, **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*, **Black-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda troglodytes*, **Zebra Waxbill** *Amandava subflava* and **Black-faced Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza atricollis* were all new records for the area.

The dry forests of Kpessi and Samaï in the east produced new records of **African Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium capense*, **Puvel's Illadopsis** *Illadopsis puveli* and **Forest Robin** *Stiphrornis erythrothorax.* Also there were a **Willcocks's Honeyguide** and a **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* (at Kpessi) and a family of **Black Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter melanoleucus* (at Samaï), while **Brown-backed Woodpecker** *Ipophilus obsoletus* and **White-fronted Black Chat** *Myrmecocichla albifrons* appear to reach their southern range limits at Samaï. To the north, **Blue-throated Roller** *Eurystomus gularis* and **Puvel's Illadopsis** were among the species added to the list of Abdoulaye Faunal Reserve. Still at Kpessi, **Brown Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus* was

recorded on the Mono River on 31 March (and also on the lower Mono opposite Monoto in March 2015)—the first record of this species in Togo involved one photographed (by *MC*) in mangrove near Aného in October 2014.

While revisiting parts of the high plateau of western Togo, the second record of **Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcys olivinus* for the country was obtained (*cf. Bull. ABC* 18: 241) in Assoukoko forest west of Diguengué. A **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* and a **Least Honeyguide** *Indicator exilis*, two very local species, were singing at Aka, while at least two **Blue-shouldered Robin Chats** *Cossypha cyanocampter* singing at Diguengué represent a slight northward range extension.

Fazao-Malfakassa National Park was closed following a poaching scandal (involving officials), but a five-day visit to the edges at Malfakassa (north), Kouidah (south-west) and Fazao (east), produced *c.*50 additions to the list published in *Bull. ABC* 15: 203–213. Additions include many forest birds, such as **White-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura pulchra*, **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*, **Blue-throated Roller**, **Cassin's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus insignis*, **Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera nivosa*, **Purple-throated Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga quiscalina*, **Little Grey Greenbul** *Eurillas gracilis*, **Cameroon Sombre Greenbul** *E. curvirostris*, **Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** *E. latirostris*, **Slender-billed Greenbul** *Stelgidillas gracilirostris*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, **White-throated Greenbul** *P. albigularis*, **Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapillus*, **Forest Robin**, **Green Hylia** *Hylia prasina*, **Red-cheeked Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophyia blissetti* and **Puvel's Illadopsis**. **Brown-headed Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* and **Blue-billed Firefinch** were common in second growth. Of woodland species, the very local **Spotted Creeper** *Salpornis spilonotus* was found inside the park (Fazao gate) as well as near Fazao village, and two families of the rare **Gambaga Flycatcher** *Muscicapa gambagae* had near- or recently independent young at Fazao on 9 April. The future of the park is uncertain, as the Weber Foundation that managed it for 25 years was asked to leave in December 2015 and a tarmac road is planned to bisect the park from Fazao to the west.

In the north, the first **Streaky-breasted Flufftail** *Sarothrura boehmi* of the season was heard near Naboulgou on 13 July, and a substantial population of **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* was discovered in the *Typha* reedbeds of the large Talwag dam near Dapaong. **White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis* was still common, even in woodland regrowth near villages (e.g. Tami). Near Natchitikpi, dense riparian forest on the Niantin, a tributary of the Kara River, was being cut but still held some **African Goshawks** *Accipiter tachiro*, **Leafloves** *Pyrrhurus* (*Phyllastrephus*) *scandens*, **Tropical Boubous** *Laniarius aethiopicus* and, more surprisingly, a pair of **Marsh Tchagras** *Bocagia minuta* in thickets on the edges, at 09°42'N. **Leaflove** was also confirmed from rank riparian forest on the Koumongou River at Naboulgou (in the former Kéran National Park), its northern limit in Togo (*RD & FD-L*).

Speckle-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes frontalis*, of which two were observed several times near Tami, Savanes, in the extreme north-east, between 29 September and 9 October 2016, was another addition to the Togo list (*IO, www.hbw.com/node/1291567*).

Uganda

A visit to Kidepo Valley National Park (= NP), an Important Bird Area in the extreme north-east, on 11–12 July 2016 yielded the following: five groups of **Stone Partridges** *Ptilopachus petrosus*, at least seven **Ring-necked Francolins** *Scleroptila levaillantii* (there are few recent records from the north), **Orange River** (Archer's) **Francolin** *S. gutturalis lorti*, three **Black-breasted Barbets** *Pogonornis rolleti* (in Uganda, known only from Kidepo), two sightings of **Fox Kestrel** *Falco alopex* (a scarce species confined to the north), numerous **Boran Cisticolas** *Cisticola bodessa* (not on the ABC checklist of the country; Carswell *et al.* 2005 *The Bird Atlas of Uganda* preferred to exclude the species from the Uganda list as it is very difficult to separate from Rattling Cisticola *C. chiniana* unless the song is heard), a pair of the very localised **Karamoja Apalis** *Apalis karamojae*, three sightings of **Cuckoo Finch** *Anomalospiza imberbis*, and a male **Steel-blue Whydah** *Vidua hypocherina* in full breeding plumage (*MM*).

A **Red-winged Francolin** *S. streptophora* was observed at Kihihi, in the south-west, on 24 July (*MM*), with three at Saka Lake on 16 December (*RS*); the species is distinctly uncommon with few recent records. At least eight **Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* and six **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were observed at Mabamba Swamp on 30 December (*RS*). A **Brown-chested Lapwing** *Vanellus superciliosus* was in Murchison Falls NP on 3 August, with a **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* also there, along the Nile River (*MM*). Three singing male **Variable Indigobirds** *Vidua funerea* and a female were photographed and sound-recorded at Kihihi on 21 December; a full description has been forwarded to the East African Rarities Committee—the species does not figure in *The Bird Atlas of Uganda* (Carswell *et al.* 2005), nor on the ABC checklist of Uganda (*RS*).

Zimbabwe

The following records are from the period July–December 2016. A male **Common Ostrich** *Struthio camelus* with 15 chicks was photographed at Wilderness Safaris, Hwange National Park (= NP) in August; very few Ostriches now survive in the country (per *DR-G*). Three **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola* were in the Chikwenya Island / Sapi River area on 29 November (*DK*), with one at Manyame Lake, Makonde District, on 11 December (*FCo*). A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was located

at Chisasiko Pool in Mana Pools NP on 31 October (*SFe & JBl*); there are possibly only *c.*15 previous records. A **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* was on the gull breeding island opposite Rhino Safari Camp at Lake Kariba on 27 August. Two **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* that have apparently been at Nottingham Estate, near Beitbridge, for 3–4 years, were observed again in July and subsequently bred (chicks were seen in October); one was located at Masasanya Dam, in Gonarezhou NP, on 13 July. An immature **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was noted at Kazangula on 6 November (per *TH*).

Four **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were seen at Nyamandhlovu Pan, Hwange NP, on 11 December, with a remarkable flock of no fewer than 320 **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilus crumenifer* (*FW*). Three, apparently overwintering, **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were observed near Pomona Barracks, Harare, on 21 August (*CSh*), whilst a huge flock of *c.*1,350 was seen 22 km south of Mbalabala on 15 December (*HL*). The first **Abdim's Stork** *C. abdimii* of the season was reported on 3 November at St. Michael's School, Harare (*CSh*); numbers visiting Zimbabwe have been greatly reduced recently. A **Black Stork** *C. nigra* was seen at the Turgwe River, Humani Ranch, on 18 November (*DR-G*) and a **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* at Imbabala on 17 December (*SCh*).

A **Secretary-bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* near the Harare–Chinhoyi road bridge across the Gwebi River on 2 December was unusual in this area (*ND*). A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was in the Burma Valley, in the east, on 23 December (per *TH*), whilst a **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was at Kanga Pan, Zambezi Valley, on 22 October (*JPo*). **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* were recorded in the Zambezi Valley on 22 October (an immature); in Mana Pools NP on 18 November (an immature); and in Hwange NP on 12 November and 11 & 26 December (per *TH*). A **Cape Vulture** *Gyps coprotheres*, 42 **White-backed Vultures** *G. africanus*, three **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotos* and a **White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* were at a dead Wildebeest *Connochaetes taurinus* at Cawston Block, Bulawayo, on 11 October (*SN*). A **Southern Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus fasciolatus* that stayed in a Harare garden for a week in December was a rather odd record (per *TH*). A satellite-tagged **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* from Estonia remained 15 km south-west of Kadoma from 28 October to at least 21 November (per *DR-G*); *c.*30 were feeding on flying ants near Wigeon Pan, Gutu District, on 21 November (*DR-G & PR-G*).

An unusually large group of 150–200 **Silvery-cheeked Hornbills** *Bycanistes brevis* flew over Aberfoyle Tea Estate on 22 May (*MS*). Five **Southern Ground Hornbills** *Bucorvus leadbeateri* were at Hippo Pools, Shamva, on 19 November (*TN*), with another five at Pungwe Gorge, Honde Valley, on 28 November (*MS*). A male **Pygmy Falcon** *Polihierax semitorquatus* was reported from Tamba farm, *c.*130 km north of Beitbridge on the road to Bulawayo, on 26 July (per *TH*); this is far out of the species' range and would represent the first record for Zimbabwe, if accepted.

A leucistic **Long-billed Crombec** *Sylvietta rufescens* was photographed at Chirundu Safari Lodge on 29 October (*SHe*); remarkably, leucistic birds are regularly recorded in this area. A female **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was reported from Cecil Kop Nature Reserve on 11 July; whilst the species is probably annual in small numbers in Zimbabwe during the austral summer, this winter record is highly unusual and may be the first for the southern African subregion (per *TH*). A female **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* was photographed at Bvumba Heights, in the eastern highlands, on 5 December (*NP & KW*). A **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was in Matetsi Game Reserve, in the south-west, on 3–7 November (per *TH; DD*). **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* continues to spread: one was noted between Matusadona Range and Fothergill Island, Kariba, on 26 December (*CM*). **Plain-backed Sunbirds** *Anthreptes reichenowi* were observed in Burma Valley on 21 December (*KW*); the species is rarely reported from this area, which is at the very edge its range. A pair of **Lesser Seedcrackers** *Pyrenestes minor*, a very local and uncommon species, was photographed at Aberfoyle Golf Club, Honde Valley, on 1 October (*MS*). A **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*, an uncommon Palearctic visitor, was in Bvumba Botanic Gardens on 28 November (per *DR-G*).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Peter Adriaens (PA), Sue Alleyne (SA), Gary Allport (GA), Catherine André (CA), Frédéric Bacuez (FB), Alain Barbalat (AB), Rubén Barone (RB), Rob van Bemmelen (RvB), Jean Blake (JBl), Mark van Boekel (MvB), Bruno Boedts (BB), Mark Boorman (MBo), Maans Booysen (MBy), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), James Bradley (JBr), Chris Brewster (CB), Evan Buechley (EB), Manuel Bueno (MB), Josep Bujons (JB), Simon Cavaillès (SC), Stan Chizipi (SCh), Japie Claassen (JC), Mich Coker (MC), Ferdi Couto (FCo), Mary Crickmore (MCr), James Christian (JCr), Colin Cross (CC), Fabrice Cuzin (FC), Gottlieb Dandliker (GD), Peter D'Arcy (PD'A), Tyler Davis (TD), Neal Deacon (ND), Dayl Dell (DD), Stéphane Doppagne (SD), Robert J. Dowsett (RD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Nils van Duivendijk (NvD), Rachid El Khamlichi (RE), Ian Enlander (IE), David Erterius / Rockjumper (DE), Sergi Fernández (SF), Stretch Ferreira (SFe), Marie-Hélène Filippi (MF), Brian Finch (BF) David Fox (DF), John Gitiri (JG), Rob Gordijn (RG), Bastien Guibert (BG), Ward Hagemeijer (WH), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Stratton Hatfield (SH), Kees Hazevoet (KH), Sheri-Lyn Hensman (SHe), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper (DH), James Hogg (JH), Christian Huber (CH), Marshall Iliff (MI), Gabriel Jamie (GJ), Benoît Janssens (BJ), Sam Jones (SJ), Johnson Kafulo

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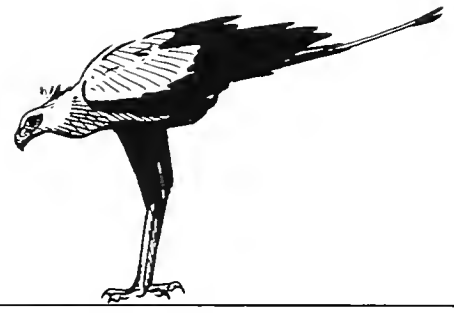
Corrigendum Recent Reports *Bull. ABC* 23(2)

Fig. 5, p. 235, is a subadult African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*, not a Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*, as erroneously stated.

Letters to the Editor



An appropriate English name for *Laniarius nigerrimus*

In the last Recent Reports (*Bull. ABC* 23: 238), a record on Manda Island, Kenya, of so-called 'Somali (Black) Boubous' *Laniarius nigerrimus* is mentioned. We wonder where the name 'Somali' originated, as we consider it to be a poor choice. The type specimen of *L. nigerrinus* was not collected in Somalia but in Kenya, in 1878 near the Tana River. Secondly, the name '*somaliensis*' has been used to describe a black-and-white boubou taxon found in the Juba Valley, and may remain valid. Thirdly, we have demonstrated through our field work and supporting molecular analysis that *L. nigerrimus* is a valid species and that the name *erlangeri* is a junior synonym (Finch *et al.* 2016). As no valid English name exists—'Erlanger's Boubou' no longer being appropriate—we suggested Manda Boubou because our work on Manda Island was critical to unravelling this conundrum. In addition, this boubou is currently known only from Manda Island and just inland of Ras Tenewi (on the mainland coast 25–30 km south-west of Manda) in Kenya, and the valleys of Juba and Shabeelle in Somalia. Given the military conflict in Somalia and the widespread use of illegal charcoal to fund it, *L. nigerrimus* may be threatened by habitat loss. In Kenya, Manda forms part of the Lamu archipelago, the location for a new commercial port development. Currently, Manda still supports good habitat for the boubou, but it is largely unprotected. There is therefore an urgent need to establish a conservation area there. Naming the species for Manda should hopefully give impetus to establishing such a reserve, which is likely to prove easier than at Ras Tenewi. Although Manda Boubou appeared to be the most appropriate name, given that two species of boubou occur on Manda Island, we now propose that *L. nigerrimus* be known as Manda Black Boubou.

Reference

Finch, B. W., Hunter, N. D., Winkelmann, I., Manzano-Vargas, K., Njoroge, P., Fjeldså, J. & Gilbert, M. T. P. 2016. Redefining the taxonomy of the all-black and pied boubous (*Laniarius* spp.) in coastal Kenya and Somalia. 2016, *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 136: 74–85.

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Does Black-shouldered Nightjar occur in Rwanda?

The East African Rarities Committee's (EARC) mandate is to consider records of new and very rare birds in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. This includes the first five records of any species from each of these five countries. Recently, the EARC has been considering a record of Black-shouldered Nightjar *C. pectoralis nigriscapularis* from Rwanda. In undertaking this evaluation, the Committee has discovered that, despite this form being included on the Rwanda bird list, there does not appear to be any confirmed record of it. For our purposes, we follow the taxonomic viewpoint that *nigriscapularis* is a race of Fiery-necked Nightjar *C. pectoralis*. However, we fully recognise that the two forms may become widely accepted as separate species as more information comes to light. The EARC therefore feels it is important to acquire data on both forms that will stand up to scrutiny over time, in light of the context that we now outline.

Using Anderson (2012) as our starting point, *C. pectoralis* features on the Rwanda checklist, based on a specimen collected in 1949 at Rugege Forest, Kamobuga, and held in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. Originally labelled as *C. nigriscapularis*, it is thought to be *C. p. fervidus* or an intermediate between *C. p. pectoralis* and *C. p. nigriscapularis*, but merits further study. So, as Anderson states: 'My sighting of *C. pectoralis* documented here confirms this species for the first time from Rwanda, although its presence as a resident or breeding species remains to be elucidated.' Turning to *C. p. nigriscapularis*, Anderson shows that there is no confirmed record in Rwanda, including his own 2009 sighting, which he describes as 'probable'. It would also appear that nightjars heard in Akagera have never been audio-recorded. Consequently, it appears that there are no confirmed records of *C. p. nigriscapularis* for Rwanda.

We therefore encourage anyone visiting Rwanda, especially Akagera, to document any observations of these two nightjars, by way of audio-recordings and photographs if possible. Any information should be submitted to the EARC Secretary, at the address below.

Reference

Anderson, J. 2012. Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis* and Black-shouldered Nightjar *C. nigriscapularis* in Rwanda. *Bull. ABC* 19: 194–199.

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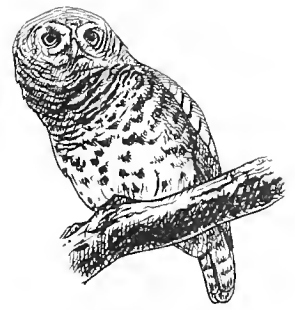
Review



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 relevant book to check the latest price, purchase the item and help us to protect Africa's birds.

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Plusieurs livres analysés dans le 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.

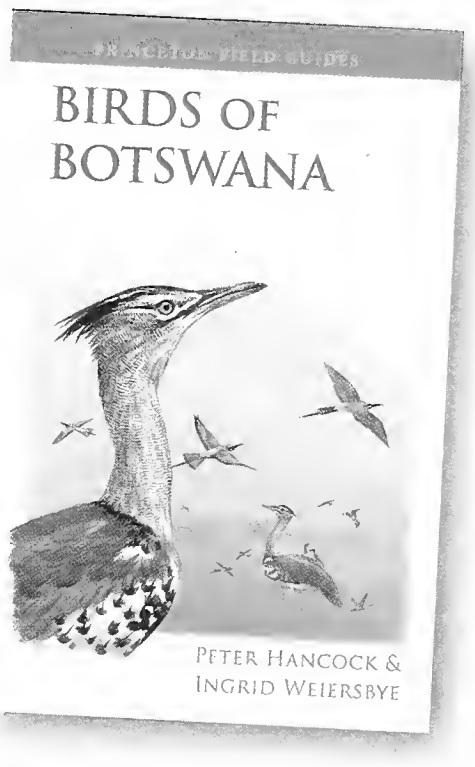
Birds of Botswana

Peter Hancock and Ingrid Weiersbye, 2016. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, and Oxford. 400 pp, 178 colour plates, 597 colour distribution maps. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-691-15717-7. US$29.95.

This book, covering the 597 species recorded within the country to date, claims to be the 'ultimate' guide to the birdlife of Botswana and fulfills the title admirably. A well-produced work, it is firmly in the style of what has come to be the 'classic' field guide.

The smooth, soft, flexible cover has a useful alphabetical quick index on the inside front page. This is followed by a Contents listing, Foreword, Acknowledgements, Introduction and Glossary prior to the bulk of the book, the 356 pages of the illustrated species accounts. Perhaps a map of the country inside the back cover would have been a useful addition?

The introduction includes small but clear, general maps of the country itself, and vegetation and habitat types. Small but attractive photographs that provide an idea of the various habitats within the country are included, and there is also an approximate guide as to which species are associated with them, followed by a brief 'where to see birds' section.



It is, however, the main section of the work that this book will be judged by, and with any field guide the eye is at least initially drawn to the plates. Ingrid Weiersbye is the sole artist and has admirably illustrated the avifauna of the country. It is immediately obvious that she is very familiar with the birds that she has painted. The illustrations are clean, clear and precise, on a white background, with the species separated from each other by thin, straight black lines. All of the species are depicted by one or more illustrations that cover significant differences in plumage due to age, sex or regional variation specific to Botswana. Species sharing the same page are drawn to the same scale and are in general pleasingly accurate. Occasionally, diagnostic behavioural traits are illustrated. Although some groups (e.g. gulls) may have benefited from having a few more figures, other groups such as nightjars display an impressive thoroughness and attention to detail, with feather-by-feather maps of the relevant parts of the wings and tails. On the whole, the illustrations perform their job as identification aids extremely well, but some of the more difficult larks and warblers do not quite hit the mark, and perhaps would have benefited from being treated with the same apparent care as the nightjars. However, the cisticolas (a much-maligned group) are rather good and the sunbirds, weavers and widowbirds are also depicted extremely well to help identify the difficult female and transitional plumages.

Opposite the plates lie the species accounts, with large, clear distribution maps and, for species other than erratic visitors, a bar graphic that shows at a glance if the bird is present or absent, breeding or non-breeding for each month of the year. An overview of each family precedes the individual species accounts, and English, scientific and Setswana names headline each account. The main body of each species entry is broken into subsections covering identification, call, status, abundance, habitat, habits and conservation status. The

text, written by Peter Hancock, is thorough and informative, with a great deal of information provided in the relatively small space available. There are generally three or four species per page, occasionally two or five, and at no time does the book feel 'crowded' or pressed for space.

Perhaps the main question is why buy *Birds of Botswana* rather than, for example, SASOL's *Birds of Southern Africa*, Newman's *Birds of Southern Africa* or the *Roberts Bird Guide*? Each of these highly regarded works covers Botswana and the larger geographical area of southern Africa, which would appeal to the birder wanting to travel in other countries in the region. All of these books are of roughly similar size and weight, contrary to the expectation that *Birds of Botswana* would be a more lightweight and portable field guide. Each book is unarguably a quality field guide, but for a resident birder or visitor to the country the benefits of using *Birds of Botswana* are that it is a dedicated country guide with larger and far more detailed maps, and because it obviously excludes extralimital species from the equation, this should make identification problems clearer. There is also no doubt that the text of this new book is more thorough than both the SASOL and Newman guides, thus making the main competition, in my view, the Roberts guide. In the end personal preference will probably win the day.

Nik Borrow

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Sinclair, I., Hockey, P. A. R. & Tarboton, W. R. 2002. *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik Publishers.

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.

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Typesetting and layout by Alcedo Publishing, New Mexico, USA • e-mail engli@sufficio.org
Colour repro & print production by Swallowtail Print of Norwich, UK • FSC accredited • tel +44 (0)1603 868-862 • e-mail info@swallowtailprint.co.uk

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Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

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

ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Phil Hyde. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

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

The Club also maintains a list of 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.