

African Bird Club



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 5 No 1 March 1998

Avifauna of
Usambara's
Brachylaena
woodlands

Avifauna of
Socotra and
Abd Al-Kuri

Seabirds off
Senegal

Red-shouldered
Vanga

Mayotte
Scops Owl

Brown Nightjar

Zombitse-
Vohibasia NP

Birding in Tanji
Bird Reserve

Mystery birds
from Djibouti





African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

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

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC Web site

<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

ABC Council

Gary Allport, Mark Andrews, Phil Atkinson, Keith Betton, Jacque Bridges (Membership Secretary), Mark Cocker, Stan Davies, John Fanshawe, Lincoln Fishpool, Jonathan Gibbons (Treasurer), Peter Headland, Peter Lack, Duncan Macdonald, Bill Quantrill (Secretary), Rowena Quantrill (Sales Officer), Geoff Randall, Tony Stones, Alan Wilkinson, Barbara Woodcock and Martin Woodcock (Chairman).

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Guy Kirwan (Managing Editor), Mark Andrews, Phil Atkinson, Mark Cocker, Ron Demey, Lincoln Fishpool, Peter Lack, Rob Lucking, Rodney Martins, Roger Safford, Tony Stones and Richard Webb.

Membership of the ABC

Membership of the ABC is open to all and costs, per annum, UK£15 *Individual (Africa & Europe)*, UK£17 *Individual (Rest of the World)*, UK£18 *Family (Africa & Europe)*, UK£20 *Family (Rest of the World)*, UK£8 *Student (Africa & Europe)*, UK£10 *Student (Rest of the World)*, UK£25 *Libraries/Institutions*, UK£25 minimum *Supporting Member*, or UK£300 *Life Member*. To join or for further details please write to the Membership Secretary, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The *Bulletin of the ABC* provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, preliminary expedition results, reviews and preliminary or interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim 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.

Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa. Africa is 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*, Part 1, Cambridge: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, eg Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, eg the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent referees, where appropriate. The material published is divided into *Papers*, *Short Notes*, *News & Comment*, *Discoveries*, *Reviews*, *Literature Gleanings*, *Recent Reports* and *Letters*. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Two copies of contributions should be submitted. Typewritten manuscripts should have double-spaced lines, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. Clear handwritten manuscripts are also acceptable. All submissions will be acknowledged.

Contributions will be accepted in English or French: French summaries, as well as table and figure captions, will be printed for all major papers published in English, and vice versa. Those

submitting major papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If possible, please submit your contribution on floppy disk and state computer (eg IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (eg Word, WordPerfect) used: please note that Amstrad PCW disks are not acceptable.

When you send your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (ie with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (eg 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Please always send two hard (printed) copies in addition.

Preferred names

With the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *Birds of Africa* Vols 1-5. For species not yet covered, please use appropriate regional handbooks and checklists eg Roberts for Southern Africa, Britton for East Africa. Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should, if possible, follow those on standard or readily available maps.

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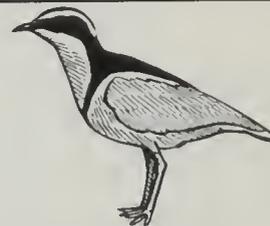
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Club News



ABC membership

By late December 1997, the Club had 1,207 paid-up members, including 244 new members recruited this year. The Club now has members in 62 different countries including 28 in Africa. If you have not already done so, please resubscribe for 1998 by completing and sending in the membership renewal form enclosed with the last bulletin. Please remember that you will receive no further bulletins until your renewal is received. Also, please note that to save postage costs, credit card subscription payments will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

New membership rates

ABC has introduced a concessionary subscription rate for students alongside the subscription increases for 1998 already announced. The new rate will apply to full-time students only—for Europe and Africa the cost will be £8 per year, for the rest of the world the cost is £10 per year. Full-time students who have already paid the full rate for 1998 can apply for a rebate, usually a credit against future subscriptions.

The current subscription rates for ABC are as follows:

- Individual Member, Africa and Europe, including UK: UK£15.
- Individual Member, Rest of the World: UK£17.
- Family Member, Africa and Europe, including UK: UK£18.
- Family Member, Rest of the World: UK£20.
- Student (full-time), Africa and Europe, including UK: UK£8.
- Student (full-time), Rest of the World: UK£10.
- Libraries/Institutions: UK£25.
- Supporting Member: UK£25 minimum.
- Life Member: UK£300.

Please send membership enquiries to Bill Quantrill at the Club's address or directly by E-mail: wquantrill@msn.com

Supported and affiliated membership categories

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.

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 any African country, with a genuine interest (not necessarily scientific or academic) in birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Our supported membership at present includes post-graduate students, teachers, national park guides and civil servants, but there is no reason why somebody from almost any background should not be considered. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a suitable letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an office-holder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme has now been widened to include Clubs who want 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 will be asked to provide a short annual report on their activities, which may be published in the Bulletin.

Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Council, giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of membership, and their activities to date.

The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£25 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund which is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may themselves have nominated, or

who have been nominated by other Club members. We hope that more members will continue to support this scheme. Although we have suggested a minimum figure of UK£25 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution would be welcome.

Register of Ornithological Volunteering Opportunities

The ABC is co-operating with NBC, OBC, OSME and the RSPB in producing an annual register of volunteering opportunities. The first edition is due to be published in spring 1998. Any member who is interested in consulting the register should write to the Secretary, ABC, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK. Any member who knows of a project which would welcome ornithological volunteers should send details to Richard Porter, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

ABC 1997 autumn meeting

A joint meeting of the African Bird Club and the Norfolk Bird Club was held on 27 September 1997 in Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk. An audience of around 50 people was treated to an absorbing presentation by Tony Marr on Senegal Seabirds: an account of spring and autumn visits, illustrated with excellent photographs. We are grateful to Norfolk Bird Club for their help in organising this successful meeting.

British Birdwatching Fair

The British Birdwatching Fair was held at Rutland Water in Leicestershire from 15–17 August 1997: 100s of exhibitors including conservation organisations, booksellers, optical equipment and bird tour companies, and 1,000s of visitors attended.

The Club again had a very attractive double stand at the fair which attracted many visitors: 29 new members were recruited and a significant volume of Club merchandise was sold realising UK£1,600 profit. A highlight was the raffle which realised UK£800 profit—the prizes included copies of the latest volume of *The Birds of Africa* signed by the authors Stuart Keith, Hilary Fry and Emil Urban (see photo on page 3).



The *Birds of Africa* team, from left to right: Stuart Keith, Martin Woodcock (standing), Hilary Fry and Emil Urban.

Many thanks to everyone who helped Council members on the ABC stand—especially to Club members Moira Hargreaves, Michael King and Geoffrey Field. ABC is also very grateful to Academic Press, A & C Black, New Holland, HarperCollins and Wildsounds for donating prizes for the raffle.

The 1998 British Birdwatching Fair is being held from 21–23 August 1998 at Rutland Water, Leicestershire and ABC will be represented with a stand. If you visit the fair, please do visit the ABC stand, which will have a full range of our Club merchandise and a selection of trip reports. As usual, we expect the autumn bulletin to be printed in time for the event and hope to be able to distribute these to visiting members to reduce postage costs.

International Ornithological Congress

The 22nd International Ornithological Congress is due to be held in the International Convention Centre, Durban, South Africa from 16–22 August 1998. The Club will be represented at this important event by several Council members and it is hoped to organise a gathering for ABC members. More details will be announced at the Congress.

Literature review Supplements

With this issue of the Bulletin comes the fourth annual supplement covering literature on African birds. This takes much work to compile but it is very unclear to the editorial team how useful it is to members. The little feedback we have had is favourable but this only represents a small number of people. Clearly it costs quite a lot of money to

produce and the Club has no wish to waste its money on unwanted material.

The time has come therefore to take stock. Do you find it useful? Do you think it a waste of time and money? How might it be improved and made more user-friendly? We do wish to know. Please write (or e-mail) to me at the address below with your views.

Assuming it continues in some form, I would be very grateful for some assistance with its compilation, in particular with some journals and magazines which I find it quite difficult to see on a regular basis. The most important of these are some of the southern African ones, notably *Honeyguide*, and some of the more general ecological, behavioural and general zoology and biology journals which have the odd relevant article. Also I do not personally read languages other than English and French, although Norbert Bahr very ably scans much of the German literature for me.

All help would be much appreciated. Again please volunteer and I can let you know more precisely what is wanted.

Peter Lack (British Trust for Ornithology, The Ammerry, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, UK; E-mail: peter.lack@bto.org)

ABC Corporate Sponsorship

Under the terms of the Corporate Sponsorship scheme, a minimum payment of UK£300 entitles a sponsor to benefits under the scheme for a five-year period. Corporate sponsors are entitled to a full page advertisement in two bulletins during the five years and can also use the Club's corporate sponsorship logo in adverts and stationery. Contributions under the scheme are allocated directly to the ABC

Conservation Fund. Any company or individual with enquiries or suggestions about the scheme should please write to Moira Hargreaves at the Club's address.

ABC Representative Scheme

The following is the current list of ABC Representatives:

Australia Alan McBride, PO Box 190, Newport Beach, NSW 2106. Fax: 2 997 32306. E-mail: mcbird@zip.com.au.

Belgium Paul van Daele, Kazemattenstraat 30, 9000 Gent. Tel Fax: 9 223 6948. E-mail: pvdaele@uia.ua.ac.be.

Botswana Chris Brewster, Matshekge Hill School, Private Bag 24, Bobonong. Tel: 819272. Fax: 819544.

Cameroon O'Kah Ebwekoh Monya, Mount Cameroon Project, PO Box 137, Limbe.

Denmark Lars Dinesen, Sjallandsgade 37, 3 tv., 2200 Copenhagen N. Tel Fax: 35 36 71 64. E-mail: regulus@inet.uni-c.dk.

Egypt Sherif and Mindy Baha El Din, 3 Abdalla El Katib St. Apt. 3, Dokki, Cairo. Tel Fax: 3608160. E-mail: 103257.1554@compuserve.com.

Ethiopia Ato Yilma Dellelegn and Ato Mengistu Wondafrash, Ethiopian IBA Programme, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, PO Box 60074, Addis Ababa.

France Bob and Francoise Dowsett, 12 rue des Lavandes, Ganges, F - 34190. E-mail: Dowsett@aol.com.

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Gabon Patrice Christy, BP 2240, Libreville, Gabon. Fax: c o ECOFAC, 775534.

Ghana Samuel Kofi Nyame, Ghana Wildlife Society, PO Box 13252, Accra.

Kenya Colin Jackson, c o Dept of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya, PO Box 40658, Nairobi.

Madagascar Frank Hawkins, World Wide Fund for Nature, BP 738, Antananarivo 101. Tel: 2 34885 (work), 2 31622 (home). E-mail: mesite@bow.dts.mg.

Namibia Chris Hines, PO Box 22527, Windhoek.

Seychelles Adrian Skerrett, Hazeley Brook, Keele Road, Keele, Staffs ST5 5AL, UK. Tel Fax: 01782 751605. E-mail: 106352.771@compuserve.com. In the Seychelles at: Shipping House, PO Box 336, Victoria, Mahé. Tel: 00248 322709. Fax: 00248 322978. E-mail: maheship@seychelles.net.

South Africa: Deon Coetzee, PO Box 782937, Sandton, 2146. Fax: 011 884 2739. Tel: 082 490 1212.

Steve Evans, PO Box 505, Ngodwana, 1209. Tel: 734 4973.

Tanzania: Maurus Msuha, PO Box 70919, Dar es Salaam.

The Gambia: Clive Barlow, The Atlantic Hotel, PO Box 296, Banjul. Fax: 227861.

Uganda: Prof. Derek Pomeroy, Makerere University Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources, PO Box 7298, Kampala.

USA (West coast): Joe Thompson, 4070 Sea View Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90065. E-mail: Jcthom1956@aol.com.

Zambia: Pete Leonard, Kafue Fisheries, Box 31522, Lusaka. Fax: 1 30128.

The ABC Representative scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the Bulletin, and possibly to arrange meetings for local members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representatives in the first instance with queries relating to the Club.

ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing ABC posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities for ABC Conservation Fund support and nominate candidates for the supported membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting ABC in your region please contact the Club at our postal address or contact our newly appointed Representative scheme coordinator Stan Davies directly by e-mail: StanDavies@compuserve.com.

ABC sales items

The following items are currently available from ABC Sales.

1. ABC Polo shirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club. Working for Birds in Africa', forest green. Sizes: small, medium, large and extra-large: UK£12.50.
2. ABC T-shirt featuring African Rollers by Mark Andrews, white. Sizes: medium, large, extra large and extra-extra large: UK£11.
3. ABC T-shirt featuring Turacos, white. Sizes: extra large only: UK£9.

4. ABC T-shirt featuring an Egyptian Plover by Martin Woodcock, white. Sizes: medium only: UK£10.
5. ABC caps featuring an embroidered ABC logo, black, bottle green, red, maroon, navy and grey: UK£7.
6. ABC enamel badge featuring a Slender-billed Curlew design: UK£1.
7. ABC car and telescope stickers: UK£1.
8. ABC mug featuring Carmine Bee-eater design by Martin Woodcock: UK£6.
9. Embroidered sew-on badge, featuring ABC logo: UK£4.
10. White-winged Apalis A4 colour print by Nik Borrow from *Bull. ABC* 2.2: signed and numbered limited edition of 50 at UK£10; also available unsigned at UK£5.
11. Nightjar A4 colour prints by Martin Woodcock from *Bull. ABC* 2.2: one print illustrates Mountain and Rwenzori Nightjars, the second depicts Black-shouldered and Fiery-necked Nightjars: UK£3.50 each.
12. Pair of Nightjar A4 colour prints by Martin Woodcock, mounted: UK£15 each.
13. Locally designed cards on hand-made paper, produced by the paper making co-operative of the BirdLife International-supported Kilum Mountain Forest Project in Cameroon. A selection of 5 cards in a hand-woven wallet: UK£5.
14. *Bull. ABC*, volume 1, 1994, numbers 1 and 2: UK£5 each.
15. *Bull. ABC*, volume 2, 1995, numbers 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
16. *Bull. ABC*, volume 3, 1996, numbers 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
17. *Bull. ABC*, volume 4, 1997, numbers 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
18. Cameroon Trip Report. Dec 1994–Jan 1995 by Richard Webb: £6.
19. Cape Verde Trip Report. March 1996 by Theo Bakker and Klaas van Dijk: £6.50.
20. Ethiopia Trip Report. Dec 1995–Jan 1996 by Richard Webb: £7.50.
21. Birding Ghana. Feb 1996 by Mindy and Sherif El Din: £6.50.
22. Ghana Trip Report. Jan–Feb 1997 by Simon Platt. 35 pages: £1.
23. Kenya Trip Report. Feb–Mar 1995 by Mike Hunter and Graham Speight: £8.
24. Voyage Naturaliste au Cape Provinces d'Afrique du Sud. Sep–Oct 1997 par Georges et Mireille Oliosio: £6.

25. Usambara Mountains, Tanzania. Jan–Feb 1996 by Eddie Williams: £4.50.
26. Uganda Trip Report. Jun–Aug 1995 by Henk Hendriks: £6.50.
27. Wakkerstroom (South Africa) Bird and Nature Guide. By Warwick and Michèle Tarboton: £6.
28. Birdwatch Zimbabwe. 1991 by Derek Solomon and Jacko Williams: £7.

Postage and packing: please send UK£1 for each UK order, and UK£2 for each overseas surface mail order. For overseas airmail please add UK£1 for each item ordered.

Orders: payments should be made in pounds sterling by cheque, postal order (payable to African Bird Club) or credit card. Full credit card details are required, please specify: Visa, Access, Mastercard or Eurocard; card number; cardholder's name (as it appears on card); cardholder's address; expiry date; cardholder's signature; and amount payable. Please be sure to specify your name and address and the full details of your order including quantity, with size and colour where applicable.

Please send your order to African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

Trip reports needed

We would like to remind members that we are keen to collect and distribute African trip reports on your behalf as part of our information service. Comprehensive reports on Cameroon, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe plus regional guides to Usambara Mountains, Tanzania and Wakkerstroom, South Africa are already available through ABC sales (see above). We are keen to offer similar reports for the other African countries. Information for Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania is currently most frequently requested. For details of distribution arrangements please write to ABC sales officer, Rowena Quantrill, at the Club's address or E-mail: wquantrill@msn.com.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to BirdLife International for the use of their offices as a mailing address, the British Trust of Ornithology for use of their offices for editorial meetings, and Alcedo Publishing of Colorado Springs, USA, and Crowes of Norfolk, UK, for their assistance in producing the bulletin. ♪

Africa Round-up



General

Third International Raptor Biomedical Conference—call for papers

Following previous conferences in London (1980) and Minnesota (1988), this conference will be held, in conjunction with the Fifth World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls and as planned close to the International Ornithological Conference (IOC), at the ESKOM Training and Exhibition Centre, Midrand, South Africa on 9–11 August 1998. The main sessions are: i) pathology and microbiology, ii) environmental disease and mortality factors, iii) management of captive raptors and falconry birds, iv) medicine and therapeutics, v) surgery and anaesthesia, vi) breeding and genetics, vii) rehabilitation and post-release monitoring and survival, and viii) legal aspects. A book of abstracts will be published and full length papers will be refereed and published in book format following the conference. Suggestions for papers and practical training sessions, including a 100-word abstract and presentation time, should be submitted to the Chairman of the Scientific Committee, Third International Raptor Biomedical Conference, J. T. Lumeij, Department of Avian and Exotic Animal Medicine, Utrecht University, Yalelan 8, 3584 CM Utrecht, The Netherlands (Fax: + 30 2518126; E-mail: J.T.Lumeij@ukg.dgk.ruu.nl). Those who require further information on registration, hotel accommodation, social programme and field trips, contact Dr Gerhard H. Verdoorn, P O Box 72155, Parkview 2122, South Africa (Tel: + 27 11 646 4629 8617; Fax: + 27 11 646 4631; E-mail: neshier@global.co.za). For information on the IOC (16–22 August 1998), contact Dr Aldo Berutti at BirdLife South Africa in Durban (E-mail: aldo@birdlife.org.za).

Contributed by J. T. Lumeij

Resource guide to travel in sub-Saharan Africa, volume 2: central and southern Africa (and western Indian Ocean islands)

The first volume of this multi-resource travel reference guide has been an-

nounced previously (see *Bull. ABC* 2: 5), and the second volume is now available. For further information, contact Louis Taussig, Travel Resource Guides Series Editor, 24 Lansdown Drive, Westone, Northampton NN3 3ED, UK, or to order contact the Bowker-Saw Customer Services Department: Tel: 01342 330100; Fax: 01342 330198; E-mail: custserv@bowker-saw.co.uk.

GEF supports BirdLife project in ten African countries

Ten African NGOs are set to receive a total of US\$1.52 million provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to the BirdLife International Partnership. Money is to be made available to NGOs in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. The project will encourage the conservation of these countries' most important wildlife sites as identified through the NGO BirdLife's Important Bird Area (IBA) programme. Conservation plans will be drawn up by the individual NGOs. The total programme will cost US\$11.47 million, the remaining funds will be raised from within the BirdLife International partnership, the European Union and the UK government's Department for International Development.

Southern Africa

Seabird cruise supports White-winged Flufftails

A four-day Indian Ocean seabird and cetacean cruise was made out of Durban in late February 1997 to raise funds for rehabilitation of the Middelpunt wetland, a breeding area for White-winged Flufftails *Sarothamnus ayresi*. The destination was Bassas da India and Europa Island in the Mozambique Channel, 300 km east of Bazaruto. The 480 birders on board, representing all the major bird clubs in the country, recorded flocks of Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, and individuals of Flesh-footed Puffinus *carolinensis* and Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* and Subantarctic Skua *Catbaracta (skua) antarctica*,

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchus*, White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*, Leach's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, and the prize sighting of two Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*. Cetaceans included two Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus*, Amoux's Beaked Whale *Berardius armuxii*, Southern Bottlenose Whale *Hyperoodon planifrons*, and Striped *Stenella coeruleoalba*, Spotted *S. attenuata* and Common Dolphins *Delphinus delphis*. A total of R160,000 was raised for the flufftail project.

Source: Promerops 229, p 21

African Black Oystercatchers in trouble

More than half of the world population of African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* occurs between the Olifants River and Mossel Bay in the Western Cape. This species is one of the most range-restricted oystercatchers in the world and has a total population of less than 5,000 individuals. The OCP (Oystercatcher Conservation Programme), coordinated by the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, in collaboration with Cape Nature Conservation, the National Parks Board and regional bird clubs, is being established to monitor population trends, research their causes, develop a model of oystercatcher population dynamics to predict future changes and produce a conservation plan to secure the future of the species.

During summer 1996–97, the Percy FitzPatrick Institute and Cape Nature Conservation, with help from bird club members, undertook a survey of oystercatcher breeding success. Between St Helena Bay and Elands Bay, it appears that the breeding success of oystercatchers on the mainland was only 15% of that required to maintain a stable population. In the eastern Cape, the situation appears to offer even graver cause for concern: on 60 km of shore surveyed between Jeffrey's Bay and the Sunday's River, not one young oystercatcher was seen, nor was there any evidence of breeding activity.

The oystercatchers breed during the summer months, from November–March, at exactly the time of year when

human pressure on the South African coast is at its peak. Breeding success can be reduced by coastal development and associated disturbance, especially off-road vehicles, as well as shellfish collecting and the introduction of predators to offshore islands.

Public participation in the OCP is crucial to its success and it is hoped that birdwatchers will contribute breeding and non-breeding records. For more information please contact Prof Phil Hockey, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa. Tel. 021 650-3293; fax 021 650-3295; e-mail ocp@botzoo.uct.ac.za

Several sponsors have thus far stepped forward to assist the project, namely the Cape Bird Club, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Mazda Wildlife Fund and the Tony and Lisette Lewis Foundation. Any other assistance is welcomed.

Source: *Promerops* 229, pp 7-8; 230, pp 8-9

Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS)

The ZOS have recently restructured their publications output and there will now be a monthly newsletter for all members as well as an annual *Zambian Bird Report*, which will also be available separately. The report will contain annotated species records for the previous year, as well as notes and papers on all aspects of ornithology in Zambia. ZOS have also recently published a small booklet, entitled *Names & Numbers*, designed to help all resident and visiting birders with the perennial problem of alternative names. Finally, by the time this bulletin is published, the long-awaited *Zambian field guide* should be available. For information on any of these publications, ZOS membership or birding in Zambia, contact ZOS at Box 33941, Lusaka (E-mail: pleonard@zamnet.zm).

Contributed by Stephanie Tyler

Black-cheeked Lovebird conservation project

As part of efforts to raise UK£30,000 for a conservation project on the endangered Black-cheeked Lovebird *Agapornis nigrigenis* of Zambia, a donation of £11 is being made for every set of *Endangered Birds of Southern Africa* limited edition prints sold.

The set of four prints, priced at £54 and limited to an edition of 500 (100 already sold), are by the renowned ornithological scientist and artist Dr Phillip Clancey. The prints are of four



Black-cheeked Lovebird *Agapornis nigrigenis* by Martin Woodcock

endangered African species: Black-cheeked Lovebird, Pygmy Falcon *Polibierax semitorquatus*, Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli* and Palm-nut Vulture *Gypobierax angolensis*. Print size is: 275 x 355 mm, each set complete with a numbered certificate signed by the artist. They will be sent to you directly from South Africa, all carefully packed.

Clancey, who emigrated to South Africa from Scotland to assume curatorship of the Natal Science Museum, became one of the fathers of African ornithology. A great field enthusiast he has travelled to many remote areas, discovered several species new to science, published over 400 scientific papers and 10 major books, and has illustrated numerous others (the Black-cheeked Lovebirds grace the cover of *The rare birds of southern Africa*). In March, his paintings formed an exhibition held in his honour at the Natural Science Museum in Durban.

The Black-cheeked Lovebird project is to be conducted by British student Louise Warburton, from the Research Centre for African Parrot Conservation, at the University of Natal, South Africa. The project, to be run over a four year period, aims to ascertain the present distribution of the species; to identify and evaluate all threats limiting the populations recovery; maintain the lovebirds habitat; encourage the local human population in its recovery; and to prepare a conservation strategy. The project has field support from Zambian wildlife societies, with local involvement being an integral part of the project vital to long-term success and the conservation of the Black-cheeked Lovebird in the wild.

If you would like a picture set, please send a cheque for £54 made payable to: G. R. & J. M. King, and send it to: Louise Warburton, Chobe House, Stonor, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon. RG9 6HE, England (Tel: 01491 638 501 (evenings); E-mail: lwarburton@transcom.com)

Contributed by Louise Warburton

Okavango Delta water update

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed water transfer scheme (from the Okavango to Windhoek) prepared by the Namibian government has now been distributed. The Botswana government and NGOs are undertaking an independent appraisal of the EIA. Meanwhile the intergovernmental OKACOM study into the Okavango has begun. This three year study will look into the possibilities of taking water from the Delta and likely impacts on the system and its flora and fauna.

Contributed by Stephanie Tyler

Veterinary fences in Botswana—the cattle versus wildlife saga

For the past 25 years, veterinary fences have killed numerous wild mammals and birds as well as cut off the migration routes of wildebeest and other species. These fences, erected by the Department of Animal Health and Production (DAHP), a part of the Ministry of Agriculture, control cattle movements and the spread of disease. The Buffalo fence around the Okavango Delta prevents Buffalo coming into contact with cattle and spreading foot-and-mouth disease; it also helps reduce the number of cattle in the Delta. During the last year the northern section of the buffalo fence has been completed, severing wetland habitats in the northern part of the Delta. A new double fence has also been erected along the border with Namibia and part of this fence is to be electrified. Whilst the major impacts of these fences are on mammals such as Elephant and Buffalo, and many other species which formerly made seasonal movements between Namibia and Botswana, or between northern and southern parts of the Delta, there will be impacts on birds too. It is likely that the area, now cut off by the fence in the north of the Delta, will be increasingly used by cattle. This may lead to changes in vegetation and could, for example, adversely affect the Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* population which uses this part of the Delta.

There have been two recent encouraging signs. Firstly, following pressure from Namibia and wildlife organisations within Botswana, the Ministry of Agriculture agreed to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the border fences and the northern Buffalo fence (although these were already in place!). DIFID, formerly the Overseas Development Administration, in Britain has funded the Scoping Exercise which

precedes the EIA. This was undertaken in July and August with a draft report expected to be passed to the Minister of Agriculture by the end of August. This report will recommend various studies and make initial recommendations over more wildlife-friendly fence designs and over possible realignment of fences.

Secondly, the DAHP which hitherto has run roughshod over the wishes of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), has set up a fencing committee. This includes representatives from DAHP and DWNP, the National Conservation Strategy and NGOs. The committee is to look at possible changes in design, realignment or even removal of controversial fences.

One such controversial fence runs across Sua Pan, part of the huge Makgadikgadi Pans Important Bird Area (IBA), where thousands of Lesser *Phoenicopterus minor* and Greater Flamingos *P. ruber* breed. Young flamingos, en masse, try to walk through the fence, only to become entangled and fall easy prey to predators. The Botswana Bird Club has been urging DWNP and the Fencing Committee to examine this issue. At the July meeting of the Fencing Committee, it was agreed that the mesh and bottom wire of the fence would be removed. This should greatly reduce young flamingo losses.

Contributed by Stephanie Tyler



Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*
by Craig Robson

Botswana Bird Club

The Botswana Bird Club has been active during 1997 in trying to ensure better conservation of all species of sandgrouse, by working closely with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks to introduce a close season for sandgrouse from hunting in the winter months (April–October) when they are breeding. The Club has also been trying



Thick-billed Cuckoo
Pachyococcyx audeberti by Mark Andrews

to obtain a longer close season and smaller bag limits for wildfowl and better protection for some other species of bird. It has also completed drafts of the identified 'Important Bird Areas of Botswana' and is now tackling some of the conservation issues raised by this exercise.

In November 1997, the Club produced issue 32 of its journal, the *Babbler*, which gives an update of records of rarities or unusual species submitted between 1992 and July 1997. This update gives details of the first accepted records for the country of Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Spotted Creeper *Salpinctes obsoletus*, Natal Red-capped *Cossypha natalensis* and Cape Robin-chats *C. caffra*, and Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis*, and records of many other rarities eg Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Cuckoo Hawk *Arceca cuculoides*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, African Hobby *Falco cuculieri*, Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Thick-billed *Pachyococcyx audeberti* and Emerald Cuckoos *Chrysococcyx cupreus*, and Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. *Babbler* 32 also includes the third and final paper on breeding seasons of birds in Botswana by Dr Neville Skinner, as well as articles and notes on a range of other subjects, such as counts of heronries in the Okavango, an influx of Lark-like Bunting *Emberiza impetunani*, birds of Lake Ngami and flamingos breeding at Sua Pan. Copies of issue 32 (and back issues) are available, for £6 per issue inclusive of postage, from the Editor, Dr Stephanie Tyler, at the Club's address: P O Box 71, Gaborone, Botswana.

Contributed by Stephanie Tyler

Birds of Botswana: an annotated working bibliography

This book provides a comprehensive list of references which deal with Botswanan birds. There are 1,895

entries, not necessarily restricted to Botswana and many are pertinent to other southern African countries. The bibliography is arranged alphabetically and citations are indexed to author, place, broad species category and subject; a dictionary of subject keywords is included. Copies can be ordered from Russel Friedman Books, PO Box 73, Halfway House 1685, South Africa. Fax (011) 702 1403. The cost is 75 Rand (SA), or US\$20. See review on pages 66–67.

Contributed by Wendy Borello

Barn Swallows in Botswana

A recently published WWO report details a three-year study of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* wintering in Botswana. The study identified three important roost sites, although the numbers of Barn Swallows was very much dependent on rainfall. Approximately 19,000 swallows were caught, ringed and measured. Moulting and mass was correlated with rainfall which further shows the vulnerability, already demonstrated in Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* populations, of Palearctic–African migrants to drought. Copies of the report can be obtained by paying Dfl 20 (plus Dfl 15 post and packing) directly to giro account 2 66 009 or ABN-AMRO bank account 57 02 16 613 of Stichting WWO, Fetha 23, 3633 CT Vreeland, Netherlands or by sending cash or a Eurocheque to the above address.

Contributed by WWO

Changing bird numbers on fallow land in Botswana

Large areas of fallow land occur in eastern Botswana and attract a range of grassland species, many of which do not usually occur in woodland savanna, the predominant habitat in eastern Botswana. The loss of forest for the planting of sorghum and consequent time spent fallow after cropping has led to a diversification of the bird species found in the area. A paper by Chris Brewster notes that species numbers fluctuated from year-to-year. Some, such as Kurrichane Buttonquail *Turnix sylvatica*, Monotonous Lark *Mirafra passerina*, Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*, Desert Cisticola *C. aridulus* and Golden Bishop *Euplectes capensis* were more numerous in wet years than in dry years, but for other species, such as Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis* and Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark *E. verticalis* reasons for fluctuating numbers were unclear. Numbers of non-breeding visitors, such

as Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*, Grassveld Pipit *Anthus noraeaeelandiae cinnamomeus* and Plain-backed Pipit *A. leucophrys*, also varied for reasons unknown.

Source: *Babbler* 31, pp 17–20

Hunting Sandgrouse in Zimbabwe

Sandgrouse are a common quarry species and for effective management of quarry species it is important that hunting is not carried out in the breeding season. Opportunistic breeders such as the Double-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles bicinctus* have a wide range of laying dates and it is difficult to define a regular hunting season. Consequently, it is recommended that initially only ten birds are shot and hunting opportunities be dictated by condition of the testes, ovaries and state of moult. In this way it will be possible to determine the proportion of the population breeding. Other recommendations include that only 10% of the birds coming to a watering hole be shot as productivity of sandgrouse is generally low.

Source: *Honeyguide* 43(2), pp 80–82

Mass kill of Red-billed Hornbills in Zimbabwe

A remarkable event involving the deaths of 800–1,000 Red-billed Hornbills *Tockus erythrorhynchus* was recorded in the Nyatodza River estuary on Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe on 18 November 1986. A large number of birds were seen landing in the water at the point where the river enters the lake. The birds appeared healthy but, not surprisingly, got into trouble when they hit the water. Three boats in the area managed to rescue c200 birds which were placed on the shore and, after they had dried out and preened, flew away strongly. The next day many were found dead. Red-billed Hornbill is an intra-continental migrant and birds in the north of the range in West Africa regularly undergo migrations following the Intra Tropical Convergence Zone, but concentrations, such as this, in the southern part of its range are exceptional. This presumably unintentional, suicidal behaviour has not been recorded before.

Source: *Honeyguide* 43, p 107

When do birds breed in Botswana?

Breeding seasons in many tropical or subtropical bird species are notoriously erratic; for many species in Africa there are no records of nests or time of breeding. Studies such as that by Neville Skinner, and described in a recent

edition of *Babbler*, are useful in determining trends in when birds breed. The period of rains appears to control the breeding seasonality of both passerines and non-passerines. For example, aquatic kingfishers breed in the dry period between May–October and egg-laying coincides with periods of falling water levels, avoiding the danger their nest holes being flooded but allowing sufficient water to fish in. Terrestrial kingfishers, which are insectivorous, appear to breed in the wet season between October–February, presumably when invertebrate prey is abundant. Food seems to be important in determining general trends in breeding. Seed-eaters, such as sandgrouse and doves, breed throughout the year, whereas frugivores, eg parrots and louries, prefer the dry season. Many insectivores breed in the wet season, eg cuckoos, mousebirds, bee-eaters, rollers, hoopoes and wood-hoopoes, and hornbills.

Source: *Babbler* 31, pp 6–13

Key species of Masoala peninsula, Madagascar

A recent paper in *Bird Conservation International* reports on a survey of sites on and adjoining the Masoala Peninsula, in south-west Madagascar in 1993–1994. Although not recent news, the paper is important in that it describes the avifauna of one of the least known, least studied and biologically poorly known areas of the country. The eastern rainforest region is known for the most diverse avifauna in Madagascar; 36 species are restricted to this region. The authors found 21 (58%) of these species in Masoala, greatly extending the known range of many threatened species and demonstrating the importance of the area. Two exciting discoveries were made. Madagascar Red Owl *Tyto soumagnei* was found at 5 m asl, roosting in a banana grove. All previous sightings of this threatened species had come from undisturbed forest between 800–1,200 m and this sighting greatly extends the eastern and altitudinal range of the species. Even more exciting was the first definite sighting of Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*, unrecorded since the 1930s. Several sightings were made and these suggest it is a forest species rarely venturing beyond the forest edge. Given that this may be the only area where viable populations of these species exist, the report recommends that the area be designated a National Park.

Source: *Bird Conservation International* 7, pp 99–115



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*
by Mark Andrews

East Africa

Uganda records its 1,000th species and prepares a bird atlas

In fact, the Uganda list has now reached c1,010 but because of the intricacies of the verification process, it has only recently become apparent that the 1,000 bird species mark was passed in March 1990, when a pair of Spot-breasted Ibis *Bostrychia rara* were seen in, what is now, Semliki National Park, in the west of the country. The observers included John Ash, Bob Dowsett and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire, who fully described this observation in *Scopus* (14: 73). Although the birds were not seen well, as they were flushed late in the evening, they luckily flew over the camp where several people heard them and, with great presence of mind, tape-recorded them. It was these recordings, when compared with others of the species, which allowed a positive identification of this little-known species to be made.

One might think that, with so many species already on the national list, adding new ones would be difficult. In fact, the average for the past ten years has exceeded one per year. Equally surprising is that new species are being added to the list of Queen Elizabeth National Park, which already claims an African park record with its total of over 550 species recorded. Recent additions, by the QENP Bird Observatory, include Scaly-breasted Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus* and Secretary Bird *Sagittarius serpentarius* (see *Bull. ABC* 1: 103–104).

Records are currently being collated for the planned *Bird Atlas of Uganda*, and need to be submitted promptly if they are to be included. However, even if too late for this publication, all interesting records are welcome. Please try to provide as accurate as possible localities and, of course, supporting

details where they may be needed. Please forward records to: National Biodiversity Data Bank (NBDB), PO Box 7298, Kampala, Uganda.

Contributed by Derek Pomeroy

Observations of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolti* is one of Ethiopia's threatened endemic birds and little is known of its ecology. Known only from southern highlands, its range probably occupies less than 5,000 km². A short paper by Luca Borghesio in *Scopus* summarises notes made during a three month visit between March–June 1995. These provide the best information available on this species. The turaco was found to prefer relatively dry forest margins and woodland, especially that dominated by two conifer species, *Podocarpus* and *Juniperus*. Its diet consists almost entirely of fruit, and birds were most active between 06.30–10.30 hr. There was some evidence to suggest that the birds undergo seasonal migrations of a few km between the wet and dry seasons.

Source: *Scopus* 19, pp 83–91



Turner's Eremomela *Eremomela turneri*
by Mark Andrews

Kakamega Forest is dying

Kakamega is famous, within Kenya, for its unique West African fauna and contains many species otherwise scarce in Kenya, including Ansorge's Greenbul *Andropadus ansorgei*, Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*, Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscicapalendu* and Turner's Eremomela *Eremomela turneri*. Although the forest is protected, forest clearance and degradation is continuing. Most clearance has taken place in the last 20 years and, in 1991, it was estimated that the forest had lost nearly 50% of its timber volume over the preceding 26 years. This has largely been caused by commercial logging but human pressure

on Kakamega is increasing. The population is growing at 2.8% pa and there is extensive extraction of wood for fuel, charcoal, gold, timber, grass for thatching, lianas for ropes and withies for baskets. These activities are widespread throughout the region and in 1991 were estimated to provide 100 million Kenyan shillings in revenue. In order to reduce the degradation, farmers have been allocated plots on clear-felled land and encouraged to grow crops in return for protecting young trees planted by the Forestry Department.

Source: EANHIS Bulletin 26 (3-4), pp 47–49

White-winged Flufftails in Ethiopia

Details of the discovery of a site holding over 200 pairs of the globally threatened White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* have recently been released. Further details of this project, which has been supported by the ABC Conservation Fund, are expected in a forthcoming issue of *Bull. ABC*.

Source: EWNHS Newsletter July–Sept 1997, p 4

Flamingo kill in Rift Valley lakes, Ethiopia

The populations of Greater *Phoenicopterus ruber* and Lesser Flamingo *P. minor* in 13 Ethiopia's Rift Lakes varies but in 1993, 300,000 were counted on Lake Abiata alone, and Ethiopia is vital for flamingo conservation. In October 1995, dead flamingos were found at a number of lakes in the Rift system. An investigation was launched and six lakes were visited by the representatives from the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organisation. In lakes where flamingos are common, large numbers of flamingos were found dying. The birds were weak, listless and unable to feed, and when chased they were unable to fly or run away, being easily caught by herdsman and dogs. Approximately 6,700 flamingos died at four lakes including 2,000 in Green Lake and 3,000 in Lake Chitu. The reasons for the mass fatality are unclear, but are probably associated with a bloom of the blue-green algae *Anacystis cyanea* which secretes toxins. The reasons for the blooming are unknown but it is probably a widespread factor as so many sites were affected.

Source: EWNHS Newsletter July–Sept 1997, p 4

Forum for the Environment

The first meeting of the Forum for Environment, organised by a group of

individuals concerned with Ethiopia's environment was held in Addis Ababa in June 1997. The forum aims to maintain a dialogue between government and business organisations, organise meetings to discuss current environmental issues, produce a magazine on the environment and its development, create a library and encourage the creation of similar groups in other major Ethiopian cities. Membership is open to individuals and non-governmental organisations, and further details can be obtained from Forum for Environment, PO Box 278, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Source: EWNHS Newsletter April–June, p 5

New bird records for Seychelles

In 1997, five bird species were formally admitted to the Seychelles list by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee. Siberian Gull *Larus bengalini*, (recently split from Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*) was accepted with a record of two first-winter birds on Mahé on 5 February 1992. An Intermediate or Yellow-billed Egret *Egretta intermedia*, (originally identified as Great White Egret *Egretta alba*), was present at the Plantation Club Hotel on Mahé from 22 March–7 April 1996. A Wattle Starling *Creatophora cinerea* on Bird Island from 13 July 1995–23 February 1996 has been accepted, although it is possible the bird may have been ship-assisted. An Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* found at Bassin Flament on Aldabra on 15 February 1995 has also been accepted. Finally, the identification of a Striped Crake *Porzana marginalis* collected on Aldabra in 1904 and held at the American Museum of Natural History has been confirmed and admitted to the Seychelles list. The Seychelles list now stands at 197 species.

Source: *Birdwatch* 23, p 19, *Birdwatch* 24, pp 17–19

Seychelles Magpie-Robin makes sea crossing

The Seychelles Magpie-Robin *Copsychus sechellarum* is typically a forest-dwelling species which usually avoids wide open spaces; it was therefore surprising when on the weekend of 22–23 November 1997, a young male magpie-robin flew at least 2 km over open sea from Cousin Island to neighbouring Praslin Island. The wandering bird was reported from two localities on Praslin where it survived for at least a week. Unfortunately it is highly likely that the bird died, probably due to predation by rats or cats which are abundant on Praslin. The circumstances that caused the bird

to leave Cousin are unclear although it is possible that overcrowding and a lack of potential mates (due to a heavily male-biased sex ratio) on Cousin may have been a factor. Although the loss of the bird is disappointing, the fact that a magpie-robin is capable of such a sea crossing is extremely interesting as it adds to the evidence suggesting that the species was historically present on many of the small satellite islands around Praslin and Mahé.

Contributed by Rob Lucking

Seychelles Magpie-Robins successfully breeding on Cousin Island

In November 1996, three pairs of Seychelles Magpie-Robin *Copsychus sebellarum* were moved to the 26 ha Cousin Island in order to establish a third population of this critically threatened species. Following an initial adjustment period and two unsuccessful nesting attempts, the first chick successfully fledged on Cousin in May 1997. Productivity thereafter was high and by September 1997, the Cousin population stood at 11 birds. This is the second Magpie-Robin population to be successfully established through the translocation programme operated as part of the RSPB Seychelles Magpie-Robin Recovery Programme.

Contributed by Rob Lucking

Are Black-crowned Night Herons breeding in Seychelles?

The first record of Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* in Seychelles was of an immature bird in October 1992. Since that first record, sightings have become increasingly regular with a maximum of 19 birds (12 juveniles, six sub-adults and one adult) in August 1996. Although no nests have been found, adults in full breeding plumage have been recorded and in April 1997, two juvenile Night Herons were seen with down on the head and neck, and fleshy gapes. Although not conclusive, this evidence strongly suggests that Black-crowned Night Heron is now breeding in Seychelles.

Contributed by Rob Lucking

Poor breeding season for Roseate Terns on Aride Island, Seychelles

The regionally important Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* colony on Aride Island, Seychelles experienced an almost complete failure in the 1997 breeding season. No more than ten chicks fledged from an estimated 1,119 breeding pairs. It was thought that an acute food

shortage in the second and third weeks of July was the main cause of the failure.

Source: Birdwatch 24, p 4

West Africa

Survey of Congo Peafowl in eastern Zaïre

The Congo Peafowl *Afropavo congensis* is one of the most mysterious and enigmatic of Africa's bird species, being the only pheasant in the African continent. Its distribution, however, is poorly known. Between 1993–1995 researchers, John Hart and Agenoga Upoki, assessed the occurrence and status of the Congo Peafowl at 89 sites in eastern Zaïre through interviews with local hunters and forest surveys. Of the 65 sites which were adequately covered, the occurrence of the species was confirmed or thought probable at 49 sites (of which it was considered to be locally common at 12). Peafowl had been extirpated or their presence was thought to be doubtful at 16 sites. Congo Peafowl was considered to be seriously threatened at 19 of the sites through trapping in snares set for small mammals and antelope, and through habitat loss.

Source: Bird Conservation International 7, pp 295–316

The Gambia: Tanji Birders win top environment award

In July 1997, the National Environment Agency, a department of the Gambian Government, awarded Tanji birders first prize in their National Environment Award Scheme. The award, in the category 'Sustainable Tourism', was presented to Clive Barlow (representing Tanji birders) on World Environment Day by the Secretary of State for Tourism and Culture, Mrs Susan Waffa-Ogoo. The award held pride of place at the Tanji Birders stand at the Rutland Bird Fair.

Source: Tanji Talk

Tanji Birders First General Meeting

The first General Meeting of the Tanji birders took place at Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve, Warwickshire on 17 May 1997. There are currently 100 individual members, 66 joint members and 12 honorary members. It was announced that as from November 1997 birders can gain admission to Abuko at dawn by prior arrangement with the Wildlife Department. Members of Tanji birders should call in at the Wildlife Department offices with their membership card to make arrangements.

Admission will be on a one day per week basis and will be strictly for members only.

Source: Tanji Talk

Gambia Ringing Project

The Gambia ringing project is gathering strength. Designed to complement previous work in Senegal, it also ties in with the European Science Migration Network. The BTO approved the use of British rings for this project and an area with good concentrations of migrants and local species has been selected in Niimi Sine-Saloum National Park. For more information about the project contact J M B King, Stonehaven, 16 Marsh Road, Rode, Bath, Somerset BA3 6PE, UK.

Source: Tanji Talk

Storms kill Sand Martins in Senegal

Palaearctic migrants undergo regular migrations and many birders will be acquainted with spectacular 'falls' of migrants associated with adverse weather conditions. Poor climatic conditions eg drought have been shown to have huge effects on Palaearctic migrants such as Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* but it is very rare to actually see, let alone measure, the effects of poor weather on migrants wintering in Africa.

Between 18–25 January 1990, strong winds (Force 5–6, 40–50 km per hour) in Djoudj National Park caused feeding problems for Sand Martins, which are in heavy moult at this time and as a result not as efficient in flight. During this period, Alain Sauvage and a French team mist-netted birds in the shelter of *Acacia* bushes. The team found that birds caught between 23–25 January weighed on average 9.9 g, 25% lower in weight than normal. Several dead birds were found, mostly weighing 8 g or less. Given that 9.9 g was the mean weight, many more must have been dangerously close to death. Over the next few days, weights increased as conditions improved, 11.5 g on the evening of 25th, 12.2 g on 27th and 28th and 13.3 g on 31st. Given the enormous population of the species which winters in Djoudj, any large storm event has the potential to have a significant effect on the population. Most of the Sand Martins wintering in Djoudj breed in western Europe (Ireland, UK, France etc), and interannual changes in breeding numbers may be related to such climatic factors. ♀

Source: Malimbus 19, pp 57–60

Requests for Information

Gambia nightjar coordination project

This project, commenced by Clive Barlow and Gordon Gale and run in conjunction with Research and Development of the Directorate of Parks & Wildlife Management in The Gambia, has the following immediate objectives: i) to create an information database covering all species of nightjar currently known from The Gambia and Senegal, based on photographs, road-kill specimens and sight records, ii) to establish and maintain a photographic library of nightjars in the two countries, and iii) to obtain information from major museums of relevant skins held throughout the world, in order that our knowledge of this group in the two countries can be made as complete as possible. The project coordinators would be extremely grateful for copies of relevant photographs, sight record details, including locality and date, and information on any skins. Full acknowledgement will be made of any assistance in the eventual publication. Contact: The Gambia Nightjar Coordination Project, Hindhead Chase, Crossways Road, Grayshott, Surrey GU26 6HF, England (Tel: Fax: +44 (0)1428 604711).

Request for slides and photographs

Ed Fletcher, a cultivator of temperate and tropical plants, requires assistance with a private research project into a complete ecological study of the African Baobab tree *Adansonia digitata*. The following species of bird are known to nest in baobabs: Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger*, Buffalo Weaver *B. albirostris*, Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubiceps*, Red-and-yellow Barbet *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus*, Red-fronted Barbet *Tricholaema diademata*, Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogonihus pusillus*, Black-collared Barbet *Iybis torquatus*, Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*, Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*, Black-throated Honeyguide *Indicator*

indicator, Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii*, Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* and Striped Kingfisher *H. chelicuti*. Photographs of any these species would be most welcome (all material will be returned) and should be sent to: Ed Fletcher, 17 Winton Road, Hatherley, Cheltenham, Glos GL51 5AX, England.

Morocco bird report

Porphyrio is a relatively new publication produced by Group d'Ornithologie du Maroc Central (GOMC) and edited by Professor J. Franchimont, Faculté de Sciences, Meknes, Morocco, and includes an annual report on Moroccan birds. The latest volume (8) was published in 1997 and includes the report for 1995. These reports rely to a significant extent on information supplied by visiting birdwatchers. Though many have submitted reports, it is thought that many others remain uncollated and thus all birders visiting Morocco are urged to submit their observations. Selected records, of more unusual or rare species, can also be sent to Dr M. Thevenot, Université Montpellier, France for inclusion in the European news section published bi-annually in *British Birds*. Anyone interested in purchasing *Porphyrio* are invited to become an associate member of GOMC (annual subscription £14) by writing to GOMC, Faculté de Sciences de Meknes, BP 4010-Beni M'hamed, 50003 Meknes, Morocco.

Queen Elizabeth National Park Bird Observatory (QENPBO), Uganda

In 1996, a feasibility study was undertaken in the Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda, to assess if a Bird Observatory and ringing station could be established there. The two week study was a success, and following on from this Malcolm Wilson, the project leader, has been ringing and bird recording in the park since February 1997. Attempts to acquire funding for the project have thus far proved difficult, but recent developments within Uganda appear favourable and the establishment of a centre may not be too far away. Contacts and the situation

in the park have developed well and Malcolm would welcome assistance from ringers or birdwatchers who are interested in mist-netting or general census work. Low cost or free accommodation can be arranged (depending on the number of people present) and flights to Kampala from Britain range from £450 to £750. It may be possible to arrange transportation from Kampala to the park. Anyone interested in assisting the project between early March and late April, and late September and late January should contact Paul Roper, 1 Dewhurst Old School, 94 Churchgate, Cheshunt, Herts EN8 9WB. Tel: +44 (0) 1992 640388.

Important Bird Areas in The Gambia

The IBA project for Africa, coordinated by BirdLife International, is running in The Gambia during 1997-1998. Its purpose is to select sites of international importance for bird conservation. Various criteria have been developed by BirdLife for selecting sites. For example, the Tanji Bird Reserve and Bijol Islands are candidate IBAs as the number of roosting Caspian *Sterna caspia* and Royal Terns *S. maxima* far exceed the threshold of 1% of the African population of these species (a site qualification). The Gambian IBA project is currently gathering data to select sites before a programme of surveys is undertaken.

All unpublished data which could help the project is needed. In particular, counts of >100 waterbirds, especially in non-coastal areas, are especially valuable as are all records of Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*. All assistance will be acknowledged in the report and details of IBA criteria can be obtained from the address below. If you think you may be able to help please contact: Paul Robinson, Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, Abuko Nature Reserve, PO Box 2164, Serekunda, The Gambia. Fax: 220 495546. ?

Société l'Etudes Ornithologiques de La Réunion (SEOR)

Une association d'ornithologie, la Société l'Etudes Ornithologiques de La Réunion (SEOR), a été créée à La Réunion en Juin 1997. Cette association a pour but de promouvoir l'étude, la conservation et la connaissance de l'avifaune de La Réunion et de l'Océan Indien occidental, et d'être l'interlocuteur privilégié des aménageurs et gestionnaires du milieu naturel dans le domaine des études ornithologiques. Nous souhaitons également favoriser et animer l'éducation à l'environnement insulaire en utilisant comme support privilégié l'avifaune locale, fédérer les initiatives locales et favoriser les échanges d'informations.

L'association organise des sorties d'initiation, des sorties concertées, et centralise les observations faites dans l'île. Les trois programmes dans lesquels la SEOR est impliquée sont le programme d'étude et de conservation des oiseaux marins de La Réunion (avec le CEBC et CNRS, Villiers en Bois, France), le programme d'étude et de conservation des oiseaux terrestres (avec le Laboratoire d'Ecologie de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris) et le programme d'étude du Bulbul Orphée *Pycnonotos jocosus*, espèce

introduite envahissante (avec la Chambre d'Agriculture de la Réunion et l'Université de Rennes, France).

Au 10 Août 1997, l'association regroupait 62 membres (la SEOR remplace le groupe ornithologique de la SRAM voir *Bull. ABC* 1: 43). Une revue trimestrielle, le *Taille-Vent* (nom Créole du Petrel de Barau) est publiée par l'association. Pour toute information, contacter Matthieu Le Corre, SEOR, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Rue Poivre 97400, Saint Denis, La Réunion. Tel: 0262 200219. Fax: 0262 213393. E-mail: lecorre@univ-reunion.fr.

A new society, the Société l'Etudes Ornithologiques de La Réunion (SEOR), was formed in Réunion last June. This society aims to promote the study, conservation and awareness of the avifauna of Réunion and the western region of the Indian Ocean. In addition, SEOR aims to develop a special relationship with planners and administrators dealing with the environment, through use of ornithological studies. Similarly, SEOR wishes to facilitate and encourage education on environmental issues. Also the SEOR wishes to encourage partnerships with other

regional organisations and favours the exchange of information.

The society organises introductory outings, organised trips and centrally records observations made on the island. The three programmes in which the SEOR is involved are the study and conservation of seabirds in Réunion (with the CEBC and CNRS at Villiers en Bois in France), the study and conservation of landbirds (with the Laboratoire d'Ecologie de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris) and the study of Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotos jocosus*, an introduced and expanding species (with the Agricultural Department in Réunion and Rennes University in France).

By 10 August 1997, the SEOR had 62 members (the SEOR has replaced the ornithological group of the Société Réunionnaise des Amis du Muséum [SRAM] mentioned in *Bull. ABC* 1: 43). A quarterly magazine, the *Taille-Vent* (the local creole name for Barau's Petrel) is published by the society. For more information on the SEOR, please contact Matthieu Le Corre, SEOR, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Rue Poivre 97400, Saint Denis, La Réunion. Tel: 0262 200219. Fax: 0262 213393. E-mail: lecorre@univ-reunion.fr.

African Bird Club Conservation Fund

The ABC Conservation Fund has been set up to support small conservation-based projects in Africa. The Club has allocated £2,000 (\$3,000) for 1998 and aims to encourage as wide a range of ideas as possible. Many different types of projects will be considered as long as there is a clear conservation benefit. These could include:

- survey and research into African birds
- production of guides to the common birds of a country in local languages
- educational materials
- leaflets / posters with conservation messages
- interpretation boards at nature reserves

- design and production of T-shirts with local / international conservation slogans
- other ideas will be considered

Applications can be made at any time to the Club address. The maximum grant in any one case will be £500 but it is likely to be smaller. Requests should be made by letter and should include the following details:

- plan of proposed project and why it is important
- budget
- amount requested from the fund
- details of how payment can be made

As the fund is small, restrictions will apply:

- applicants must be African nationals
- the requested grant from ABC should be a substantial part of the proposed budget ie contributions to very large projects will not be considered
- projects which reach a wide audience will be favoured

Applications should be sent to:

ABC Conservation Fund,
African Bird Club,
c/o BirdLife International,
Wellbrook Court,
Girton Road,
Cambridge CB3 0NA,
UK.



Avifauna of the *Brachylaena* woodlands in the Usambara lowlands

Norbert J. Cordeiro^a and Mwangi Githiru^b

Although the avifauna of the East Usambara submontane and lowland forests is well-known^{1,6,8,9,11}, relatively few forest patches in this range have received significant ornithological attention. Furthermore, the botanically important *Brachylaena* woodlands in and north of the Bombo Valley have not been investigated ornithologically. Given that two Endemic Bird Areas, the Tanganyika–Nyasa mountain range and Kenya–Tanzania Coastal Forests, converge in the East Usambaras^{7,10}, the priorities for conserving the known and potential biodiversity of this area are a high priority. Consequently, the authors together with Rhamadan Nzira, Ajibu Peter, Ernesti Tarimo set out to evaluate the ornithological importance of these little-known or unexplored forest patches. We investigated four lowland sites in August–October 1996: Mgambo Proposed Forest Reserve (hereafter PFR), Bombo East I & II PFR and Bombo West Forest Reserve (hereafter FR). Our prime objectives were to document the avifauna and search for globally threatened birds.



Bombo East II and Mount Nilo (N. Cordeiro)

Mgambo PFR

This site, just north of Mtai Forest Reserve, Maramba (see map in Evans *et al.*) consists of riverine forest, *Acacia* woodland and a small patch of *Brachystegia* woodland on the easternmost hill. We were cordially received there by the village chairperson, the local foresters and many of the villagers. Due to the scarcity of water in the area, we had to camp close to a small spring (the major water source for the nearby villages of Mgambo and Kibaoni). The avifauna of this proposed forest reserve was not particularly rich, although we did find the three near-threatened species known from the Usambaras². **Southern Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus fasciolatus* was occasionally sighted or heard, as were at least 2–3 pairs of **Fischer's**



Male Plain-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes reichenowi*, Bombo East I PFR, Tanzania (N. Cordeiro)

Turaco *Tauraco fischeri*, which together with **Black-and-white Colobus** *Colobus polycomus* and **Trumpeter Hornbill** *Ceratogynna bucuator*, added flashes of splendour in riparian habitats. **Plain-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes reichenowi* was abundant, feeding alone, in pairs or with mixed-species flocks. Although riverine forest appeared to be the main haunt for these and several other lowland forest birds, including the endemic race of **Red-headed Bluebill** *Spermophaga ruficapilla*, the *Brachystegia* forest on the easternmost hill proved interesting too. At least four lengthy excursions in and around this densely vegetated hill brought records of **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* (first record for the Usambaras), **Striped Pipit** *Anthus lineiventris* (at 550 m, the lowest recorded altitude), **East Coast Batis** *Batis soror* and **'Mombasa' Woodpecker** *Caupetheres abiugouti mouhassica*. Other interesting records included: a tame pair of **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator ueliphilus*, **African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ceyx picta* and a small population of **Grey-olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris*, a poorly

known pyconontid, **Blue-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur afer*, apparently once common but now reportedly scarce in the East Usambaras¹⁴, was observed near Bwiti, just inside the eastern boundary of the reserve and along the road bordered by dense stands of mango trees. At night, playback and vocal imitations of the enigmatic **Sokoke Scops Owl** *Otus ireneae* yielded **African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii* and the numerous **Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium capense* but no evidence of the scops owl's presence.



View of Bombo West PFR and rice paddies from Bombo East I PFR (N. Cordeiro)

Bombo East I PFR

Situated within a short walk of Makorokoro village along the road leading to the Kilangangua Forest Station. Again, we were warmly welcomed by the village chairman and village members, and were able to establish a camp just inside the thickly wooded reserve. The area definitely left its mark in terms of snakes and especially mosquitoes; two members of the team were struck with malaria c2 weeks later. This lowland site proved the most interesting of the four visited, as the mosaic of *Brachylaena* woodland and Coastal Forest enveloping two hills revealed a particularly rich avifauna. We recorded one individual of the threatened **Amani Sunbird** *Aubreptes pallidigaster* and several of the near-threatened birds already mentioned. A pair of **Southern Banded Snake Eagle** nesting near our camp was exciting and whilst observing the nest a **Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens* was seen on one occasion, gliding over. This is unusual as the two are generally considered allopatric¹ and finding this eagle close to the coast is equally intriguing. Other species included **Black-fronted Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus multicolor*, **White-starred Robin** *Pogonocichla stellata* and **White-chested Alethe** *Alethe fielleborni*, all of which were either cool season visitors to the lowlands from more montane areas or possibly resident. Nevertheless, two globally threatened East Usambara lowland forest species (**Swynnerton's Robin** *Swynnertonia swynnertonii* and **East Coast Akalat**



White-starred Robin *Pogonocichla stellata*
by Martin Woodcock

Sheppardia gunningi)²⁻¹, went unrecorded at this potentially favourable site despite considerable effort to search for them. Their apparent absence here may be real given that the habitat (and elevation in the case of the akalat) differs from that known elsewhere (see Evans³), but the possibility that they were overlooked in poorly explored parts of the site cannot be ruled out.

Our early morning and late evening birdwalks provided glimpses of the very secretive **African Broadbill** *Smithornis capensis*, crepuscular **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* and small parties of nervous **Crested Guinea fowl** *Guttera pucherani*. Noisy flocks of **Retz's Prionops** *retzii* and **Chestnut-fronted Helmet Shrikes** *P. scopifrons* and **Black-breasted Starling** *Lamprolornis coruscus* were often seen in the canopy, occasionally joining mixed-species flocks. These flocks consisted of **Tiny Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus debilis*, **Black-headed Apalis** *Apalis melanocephala*, **Eastern Nicator** *Nicatorgularis*, **Forest Batis** *Batis mixta*, **Blue-mantled Crested** *Trochocercus cyanomelas*, **African Paradise** *Terpsiphone viridis* and **Little Yellow Flycatchers** *Erythrocerus holochlorus*, **Dark-backed Weaver** *Ploceneus bicolor*, **Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina*, **Plain-backed** and **Collared Sunbirds** *Aubreptes collaris* and, depending on the habitat, other species of greenbul. **Fischer's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus fischeri* and **Terrestrial** *P. terrestris* and **Northern Brownbuls** *P. strepitans* were occasionally encountered in the thickets but the most obvious understorey species was **Red-tailed Ant Thrush** *Neocossyphus rufus*, which often alarm-called loudly when disturbed at safari ant swarms.

In areas bordering the forest, such as the river and rice paddies below the hills, or in surrounding drier *Acacia* woodland, several additional species were observed. A pair of **Black-and-white Flycatcher** *Bias musicus* performed extraordinary displays and sang from tall fig trees along the river. Also in woodland near the river, **Hunter's Sunbird** *Nectarinia hunteri* and a pair of **Pygmy Batis** *Batis perkeo*, both dry country

species, were encountered. The burnt southern section of the reserve also produced several dry habitat species, including **Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps*, **White-crested Helmet-shrike** *Priouops plumatus* and **Bearded Woodpecker** *Dendropicos uamaquus*. On one wet morning, we luckily saw a pair of dancing **Cabanis Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi* flirting their bright yellow, black and white colours atop the summit.



African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*
by Martin Woodcock

Bombo East II PFR and Bombo West FR

By late September, with small showers announcing the arrival of the short rainy season, we made our final reconnaissance of Bombo West FR. The hill adjacent to this large reserve, comprises Bombo East II PFR, a small patch of mixed forest not unlike Bombo East I. The avifauna, although surveyed briefly, also appeared similar. Bombo West, however, consisted of extensive and dense *Brachylaena* woodland with scattered patches of *Acacia* woodland in parts of the reserve. We camped close to the Makorokoro to Kwetonge road, which was advantageous, as we were frequently able to stop bicyclists carrying fresh fish and vegetables from Kwetonge to sell in the Bombo Valley villages. The avifauna of this reserve was rather impoverished with only a few Coastal Forest species eg **Fischer's Greenbul**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Four-coloured Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus quadricolor*, **Little Yellow Flycatcher**, **Plain-backed Sunbird**, **'Mombasa' Woodpecker** and **Chestnut-fronted Helmet-shrike** all principally found in *Brachylaena* stands. Although **Southern Banded Snake Eagle** flew overhead sporadically, there was little evidence that it foraged here. Other *Brachylaena* inhabitants included a possible breeding pair of **Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus*, **Grey-headed Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* and **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor*. Nocturnal searches for **Sokoke Scops Owl** again proved futile and only **Barred Owllet**,

African Wood Owl and the **Fiery-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus pectoralis* were seen or heard.

The *Acacia* woodland was much more species-rich and provided us with views of **African Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus caroli*, a juvenile **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila (rapax) nipaleusis*, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus*, **Yellow-spotted Petronia** *Petronia pyrgita*, **Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike** *Malaconotus sulfureopectus* and **Black collared** *Lybius torquatus*, **Brown-breasted** *L. melanopterus* and **d'Arnaud's Barbets** *Trachyphonus darnaudii*. **Crested Francolin** *Francolinus sephaena* called in both habitats but **Crested Guinea fowl** appeared to be restricted to the *Brachylaena*-dominated woodland. **Mottled Swift** *Apus aequatorialis*, also observed at the other sites, routinely soared overhead and was sometimes joined by several Palearctic migrant swifts and swallows, and **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*. Only one pair of **Pygmy Batis** was observed here, at the ecotone between the *Acacia* and *Brachylaena* woodland in the centre of the reserve.

Conclusions

The sites described here may qualify for Important Bird Area (IBA) status, either as part of or in addition to the East Usambara IBA, but this will depend upon recommendations made by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania who are responsible for the IBA programme in Tanzania. Possible IBA status notwithstanding, these data enable comparisons to be made with other lowland forest sites in the area. All four sites share bird species with other East Usambara lowland forests, but the overall diversity was relatively low. Only Bombo East I PFR, comprising a unique forest-woodland mosaic, supported a somewhat richer avifauna with several species of conservation concern. The mix of woodland and Coastal Forest specialists, along with the possibility that the area serves as a cool season refuge for montane species, sets this reserve



Four-coloured Bush-shrike *Malaconotus quadricolor*
by Mark Andrews

apart from other lowland forest patches in the Usambaras.

With regard to the conservation of these sites, the participation of local communities to conserve their forest patches for catchment purposes, has worked wonders. These proposed reserves were jointly established and demarcated through the cooperation of the local communities and the East Usambara Catchment Forest Project (hereafter EUCFP) office; the latter has made remarkable progress in conserving the area's forests. Nevertheless, severe exploitation of buffer zones which still hold some forest will eventually lead to pressure on these reserves. Additionally, the collection of firewood in Bombo West was rampant and requires control. There is urgent need to restrict the exploitation of buffer zones to those uses which combine ecological sensitivity and economic benefits for local people.

It was noted, in the course of our survey, that *Brachylaena* trees are in high demand for charcoal production in Tanga Region and numerous charcoal-related fires in unprotected woodlands north of the study sites were observed. Given that *Brachylaena* has a unique distribution in East Africa and that several important bird species inhabit this woodland, it is vital to conserve larger such tracts north of the Bombo Valley. The EUCFP has already conserved two extensive patches (Bombo East and West FRs) and the future of the other *Brachylaena* woodland patches could be modeled along the lines of EUCFP's initiatives.

Finally, our survey work failed to locate some of the threatened species known from the Usambara lowlands²⁻⁶, particularly Sokoke Scops Owl. Although most parts of the four reserves were intensively surveyed, it is possible that more can be learned of their avifaunas. Given the scops owl's preference for *Brachylaena* woodland in the Sokoke-Arabuko Forest, Kenya¹², the possibility remains that populations of this and other threatened birds (eg Sokoke Pipit *Aythya sokokensis*) may inhabit these reserves and larger patches of *Brachylaena* woodland to the north.

Acknowledgements

Clearance for this research came from COSTECH and EUCFP permitted and encouraged us to work in the East Usambara lowlands. Fauna and Flora International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and World Nature Association funded the project. We thank the following who greatly assisted our fieldwork: N E & E M Baker, L Bennun, N D Burgess, L D C Fishpool, K M Howell, S Johansson, M I L Katigula, M Mmasi, R Sandy, J Stevenson and A Tye. Rhamadan Nzira, Ernesti Tarimo and Ajibu Peter were valuable

team members while forest officers at Maramba and Kilangangua Forest Stations supported all our efforts. Finally, we thank the villagers of Mgambo, Kibaoni, Makorokoro and Bombo Maji Moto for welcoming us to their lands. ♀

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Additions to the avifauna of Socotra and Abd Al-Kuri, with notes on the occurrence of some resident and migrant species

Guy M. Kirwan

Des données nouvelles ou passées inaperçues concernant l'archipel de Socotra sont présentées dans une des trois catégories suivantes: (i) espèces 'nouvelles', ne figurant pas sur la liste présentée par Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire¹ ou Kirwan *et al* (14 espèces, en majorité des oiseaux de mer ou des oiseaux terrestres observés en mer); (ii) espèces, enregistrées sous "other records", pour lesquelles des données nouvelles ou jusqu'alors ignorées qui contribuent de façon significative à notre connaissance de la distribution de l'espèce ou de sa présence à Socotra (12 espèces); (iii) espèces rejetées de la liste des oiseaux considérés avoir été observés de façon sûre dans l'archipel (4 espèces).

Introduction

The most recent review of the Socotran avifauna is Kirwan *et al*. Since publication, it has become apparent that a number of records, particularly from the surrounding seas, were omitted from both this and previous publications^{1,18}. In addition, further short ornithological visits to Socotra in March 1996 (Omar al-Saghier & R. F. Porter), December 1996 (David Stanton), March 1997 (Sana'a International School) and November 1997 (Omar al-Saghier) have added five new species to the island's list. With the discovery, in the Smithsonian Institution vaults in early 1997, of the long-lost Forbes-Watson manuscript describing his 1964 expedition to the island⁵, it is now considered appropriate to present an update to the avifauna of the Socotra archipelago.

Records below are in one of three categories: (i) 'new' species, not previously listed by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire¹ or Kirwan *et al* (14 species); with the exception of the five new species recorded in 1996 and 1997 (see above), all of these are of seabirds or birds 'at sea'; (ii) species, listed under 'other records', for which new or previously overlooked records add significantly to our knowledge of the species' distribution or occurrence in Socotra (12 species); and (iii) species rejected from the list of birds considered to have been reliably recorded in the archipelago (four species). Lastly, a full current species list is appended (see Appendix).

The first paragraph of each species account notes the status as given in Kirwan *et al*. The second paragraph presents all new information collected as a result of this review. For species listed under 'other records', observations listed in the second paragraph are always additional to the number of occurrences listed in the first paragraph of the species account.

New species

None previously listed by Kirwan *et al*.

Fregetta sp.

One c100 miles south of Socotra in May 1958; two records (11 and 12 August 1964) from Somali waters identifiable to species are both referable to Black-bellied Storm-petrel *F. tropica*³.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

Norris¹⁰ recorded large numbers in close proximity to Socotra on 4 August 1951, whilst Phillips^{13,14} recorded at least 3–4 birds on 3 July 1945 and two probables on 15 January 1950, but subsequently reported a dark brown shearwater "which looks very like the Wedge-tailed" in some numbers in Socotran waters on 10–11 February 1953¹⁵. In the same area, on 5 August 1953, the same author reported two Wedge-tailed Shearwater among many smaller, blackish shearwaters, all of which were presumably—the then undescribed—Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*, but identified by Phillips as probably Mascarene Black Petrel *Pterodroma aterrima*¹⁵. Given the difficulties in separating *P. pacificus* from *Bulweria fallax*, it seems possible that Norris' observation may be referable to the latter species.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

Norris¹⁰ recorded large numbers, although fewer than the previous species, in Socotran waters on 4 August 1951.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Considerable numbers in the seas around Socotra on 5 August 1953, including rafts of several hundreds north and west of the island in the early morning¹⁵, and a few north of the island on 30 September 1960¹⁷.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

A juvenile was at Wadi Mutrih on 21–22 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Four at Hadibu marsh on 28 March 1996 (Omar al-Saghier & R F Porter) and two in Wadi Di-Farhoh on 15–18 March 1997 (Sana'a International School, *The Lammergeier* 12: 9).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One in Wadi Mutrih on 22 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 10: 6).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Phillips¹⁵ recorded a group of four *Phalaropus* sp. c50 km south of Socotra on 10 February 1953, and reported that "phalaropes are always present around Socotra and in the Gulf of Aden during the winter months". Most, he believed, were referable to *P. lobatus*, but some may have been Grey Phalarope *P. fulicarius*. The latter species is, however, a vagrant in Arabian waters¹⁶. In addition, several thousand *Phalaropus* sp. including flocks of 200–300 birds (of which two birds came on deck and were *P. lobatus*) in the seas north of the island on 30 September 1960¹⁷.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

Norris¹⁰ recorded this species in Socotran waters on 4 August 1951 and Phillips¹⁵ noted two singles on 5 August 1953.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscatus*

Norris¹⁰ recorded this species, in greater numbers than the previous species, in Socotran waters on 4 August 1951.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Recorded off Abd Al-Kuri on 21 October 1930¹ and there are a number of other records from Somalian or Gulf of Aden waters^{2,9}. Forbes-Watson⁵ reported seeing a nightjar, which he presumed to be Nubian *C. nubicus*, south of Suk on the north coast of Socotra in late March 1964. G Popov recorded a nightjar sp. on 3–4 occasions at the south edge of the Hadibu plain in 1953. A male, the type-specimen of the endemic subspecies *jonesi*, is the only previous record of Nubian Nightjar from the island¹².

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A female was present at Ras Momi, at the extreme eastern end of Socotra, on 23 and 25 December 1996. It was photographed on the latter date (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Two aboard ship north of Abd Al-Kuri on 21 October 1930¹.

Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Six around Hadibu on 3–14 November 1997 (Omar al-Saghier per R F Porter *in litt.* 1997) had increased from

two ship-assisted birds which apparently arrived in 1996. It is intended to cull these birds.

Other records**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Listed as a scarce passage migrant⁷ or vagrant¹.

One winter record: two near Hadibu on 26 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Scarce passage migrant, known from three records⁷.

Two winter records: immature in Wadi Mutrih on 22 December and an adult in Wadi Ma'abeth on 26 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Passage migrant, occasionally recorded in considerable numbers⁷.

One winter record: 25 (four adults and 21 immatures) at Qariyah lagoons on 23 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

One collected by Bennett in 1888 during the Bent archaeological expedition, no locality or exact date available^{7,12}.

An unidentified immature crake species was seen in a marsh near Hadibu in December 1982¹⁹.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Passage migrant, recorded at Erhina lagoon in spring 1993⁷.

Archer & Godman (in Forbes-Watson⁵) probably saw an individual of this species at Hadibu in the early 1920s. Fairly common on rivers in the Hadibu Plain in December 1982¹⁹ and David Stanton (*The Lammergeier* 9: 7) recorded two near Hadibu on 20 December 1996: the first winter records.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Listed as a passage migrant, probably regular⁷.

One winter record: one at Wadi Mutrih on 22 December 1996 (David Stanton, *The Lammergeier* 9: 7).

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

A passage migrant which may winter⁷.

A female was collected by G Popov at Hadibu on 30 January 1953 and David Stanton (*The Lammergeier* 9: 7) observed three in Wadi Mutrih on 22 December 1996, confirming its presence in winter.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* complex

In reviewing photographs of birds of this complex recorded by the 1993 OSME expedition, R F Porter (*in litt.* 1997) reports that most large black-backed gulls were *benglini* but birds previously identified as *cachimans* are considered to belong to *barabensis*, and birds pre-

viously thought to be *taiinyrensis* are almost certainly all *beugliui* or *barabensis*. All *fuscus fuscus* were correctly identified.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus sokotrae*

Resident. Apparently never common, the species was not recorded in December 1982¹⁹, in spring 1993⁷, or by David Stanton in December 1996.

One additional record, a male collected by G Popov at Hanifa, near Suk at the east end of the Hadibu plain, on 12 March 1953.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

The race *oreophila* is a winter visitor to Socotra⁷.

G Popov took three specimens, also all *oreophila*, from around Hadibu in early February 1953.

Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*

Endemic resident known from 22 specimens and a single sight record, involving two birds, in spring 1993⁷.

There is a further specimen record, a male taken by G Popov at Adala below Adho Dimelho, probably in March 1953. The species was not recorded in March 1996, December 1996 or March 1997.

Rejected species

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

Status uncertain⁷.

Forbes-Watson⁵ presents cogent reasons for considering the records of Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes¹² as being a misidentification for Masked Booby *S. dactylatra*. There are three records of Red-footed Booby at c02°N off the Somali coast (J Ash *in litt.* 1997).

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Not listed for Socotra or Abd Al-Kuri⁷.

Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes¹² recorded a flock of geese, probably of this species, near Wadi Dimichiro. Although Forbes-Watson⁵ discounted the observation, the possibility of this species' occurrence should not be discounted.

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Not previously listed for Socotra or Abd Al-Kuri⁷.

Forbes-Watson⁵ regards an old and undated record by Hunter¹² as being probably in error, but the species has been recorded in Yemen⁶ and from Masirah Island and Omani Dhofar¹¹, and could conceivably occur on Socotra.

Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri*

Not listed for Socotra or Abd Al-Kuri⁷.

Ogilvie-Grant & Forbes¹² mention the presence of a large owl on Socotra, with a call most closely approaching Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*. Presumably the species involved was *S. butleri*, but subsequent ornithological

visits to the island have failed to locate this or any other large owl species.

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Appendix: List of birds reliably recorded from Socotra and Abd Al-Kuri. Details of species' status, where not updated here is available in Kirwan *et al*¹ and Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire⁴.

Jouanin's Petrel <i>Bulweria fallax</i>	Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
Wedge-tailed Shearwater <i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Flesh-footed Shearwater <i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>
Audubon's Shearwater <i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	Lanner Falcon <i>Falco biarmicus</i>
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra</i>	Saker Falcon <i>Falco cherrug</i>
Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Socotra Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	Barbary Falcon <i>Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides</i>
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Common Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Harlequin Quail <i>Coturnix delegorguei</i>
Striated Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numida meleagris</i>
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Western Reef Heron <i>Egretta gularis</i>	Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Crab Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Pacific Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis (dominica) fulva</i>
Common Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>
Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>
	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
	Pintail Snipe <i>Gallinago stenura</i>
	Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>
	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
	Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>
	Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>
	Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
	Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>
	Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>
	Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>
	Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
	Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>
	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
	Sooty Gull <i>Larus hemprichii</i>
	White-eyed Gull <i>Larus leucophthalmus</i>
	Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>
	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>
	Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>
	Swift Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>
	Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>
	Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>
	Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougalli</i>
	White-cheeked Tern <i>Sterna repressa</i>
	Bridled Tern <i>Sterna anaethetus</i>
	Sooty Tern <i>Sterna fuscata</i>
	Saunders's Tern <i>Sterna albifrons saundersi</i>

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*
 Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*
 Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*
 Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*
 Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*
 White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*
 African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*
 Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*
 European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*
 Forbes-Watson's Swift *Apus berliozi*
 Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*
 European Roller *Coracias garrulus*
 Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*
 Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
 Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*
 Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
 Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*
 Rock Martin *Hirundo fuligula*
 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
 House Martin *Delichon urbica*
 Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
 Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
 Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
 Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
 Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
 Socotra Warbler *Incana incana*
 Socotra Cisticola *Cisticola haesitata*
 Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
 Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
 Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
 Socotra Sunbird *Nectarinia balfouri*
 White-breasted White-eye *Zosterops abyssinicus*
 Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*
 Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*
 Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*
 Socotra Starling *Onychognathus frater*
 Somali Starling *Onychognathus blythii*
 Socotra Sparrow *Passer insularis*
 Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*
 Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*
 Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*

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Seabirds off Senegal, West Africa

Tony Marr^a, Dick Newell^b and Richard Porter^c

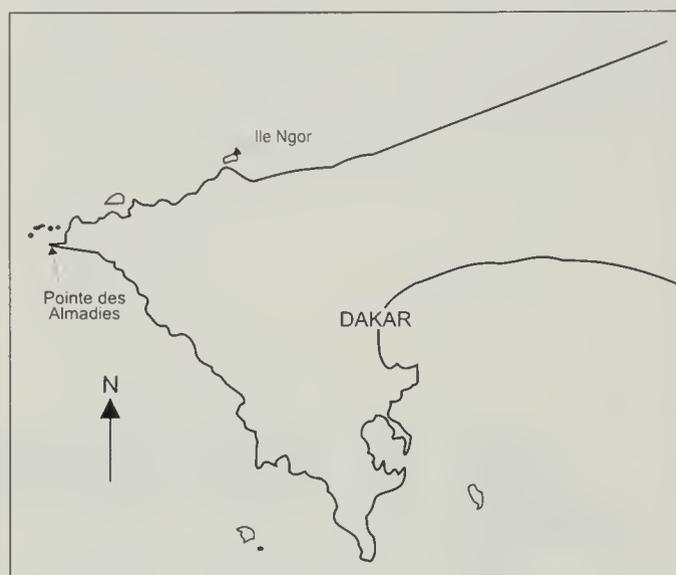
Les mouvements des oiseaux de mer à Dakar (Sénégal), la pointe occidentale de l'Afrique, ont fait l'objet de peu d'observations systématiques. Les premières de ce genre, faites par des observateurs français en automne 1990 et 1991, ainsi que celles d'un observateur britannique en octobre 1994, furent une révélation. Entre avril 1992 et novembre 1997, les auteurs ont effectué cinq visites à Dakar, dont une au printemps et quatre en automne. Ces visites ont révélé un passage printanier substantiel d'océanites, labbes, mouettes et sternes vers le nord, et un passage automnal très important d'une grande variété d'oiseaux de mer vers le sud. Ceux-ci furent observés de façon quotidienne à partir du littoral et à l'occasion de sorties en mer jusqu'à 25 km de la côte. Les observations les plus intéressantes furent sans doute celles de nombres importants de *Calonectris edwardsi* et de labbes du genre *Catharacta* considérés être *C. maccormicki*, dont la présence n'avait pas été détectée jusqu'alors. Des observations supplémentaires pourraient fournir des informations intéressantes concernant le statut, la répartition et les types de migration de maints autres oiseaux de mer.

Despite its location on the extreme western coast of Africa, Senegal has attracted attention from only a few intrepid seabird observers. This is surprising given the unique location of the capital, Dakar, on a low-lying peninsula, the tip of which projects 50 km out to sea from the main north-south line of the coast, offering exceptional opportunities for observations, especially in autumn. The results of our seawatching efforts, presented here, are relatively modest, yet significant. The potential is enormous, and one of the purposes of this paper is to stimulate more interest and observation. Dakar may prove to be one of the best seawatching locations on the eastern Atlantic seaboard. Prolonged observations from Cap Vert, at the western tip of the peninsula, could provide much valuable new information on the status and distribution of many seabirds where much remains to be learnt about their migration patterns.

Early observations

With the assistance of Dr W.R.P. Bourne, we have been able to trace a few accounts of observations prior to our first visit in April 1992. The earliest is an account of 25 hours seawatching in April 1968 by Gaston⁵, who recorded small numbers of unidentified shearwaters *Calonectris* spp. or *Puffinus* spp., skuas *Stercorarius* spp. (mostly Arctic *S. parasiticus*) and terns *Sterna* spp. (including some Roseate *S. dougallii*, 53 Royal *S. maxima* and 2,042 Black Tern *Cblidonias uiger*).

In February and March 1976, Brown⁴ made observations on seabird distribution off Senegal in the course of a hydrographic survey between there and the Cape Verde Islands, the nearest of which lies 460 km west of Senegal. The dominant species he observed offshore over the continental shelf included Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Great Skua *Catharacta skua*



The westernmost point of Senegal to show Pointe Des Almadies and Ile Ngor where spring and autumn seawatches were performed respectively

and Royal Tern, with Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and Madeiran Storm-petrel *O. castro*. Brown provides a useful list of 16 references from other observers who, as he puts it, 'have passed through the area, usually briefly' and which appear mostly to be of observations from boats. He also states that there have been brief notices in the journal *Sea Swallow*.

In 1990, French observers seawatched from Cap Vert for 40 hours between 28 August–9 December and in 1991 for 145 hours between 30 July–5 September². These appear to have been the first concerted autumn seawatches, and the results were a revelation.

The 1990 records included the first Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* for Senegal (seven on one day) and the first records from land of Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (three on one day); the first and second

records of Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus (puffinus) mauretanicus*; 1,582 Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* which had previously been known as 'rather rare' off Senegal; 452 Grey Phalarope, 'the first time that such a passage has been noted in Senegal'; 104 Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* which had been recorded only three or four times previously; 734 Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* where 'previously only seen in very small numbers', in May; 100s of other *Stercorarius* skuas; 1,000s of terns of various *Sterna* species and 1,300 Black Tern; regular small flocks of Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*; and one Great Skua.

The 1991 French team recorded totals of ten Mediterranean Shearwater, 756 Grey Phalarope, 24 Long-tailed Skua, four Great Skua, 3,500 Royal Tern, 17 Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, 15,300 Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* and 15,800 Black Tern.

Between 9–23 October 1991, G. Allport seawatched on five occasions on three days off Point des Almadies¹. In light north-westerly winds, he counted 1,000s of Sooty Shearwater, Pomarine Skua and terns passing; 100s of Cory's Shearwater and Arctic Skua; and smaller numbers of Grey Phalarope, Long-tailed Skua and Sabine's Gull. He also recorded one Bulwer's Petrel, four Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and one Little Shearwater, five Gannet *Sula bassana*, three Great Skua and one Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*.

The authors' observations

We have made one spring and four autumn visits to Senegal between April 1992 and November 1997, combining seawatching from Cap Vert with pelagic trips in a game-fishing boat chartered from the Centre de Pêche Sportive in Dakar. These visits stemmed from a one-day flying visit from The Gambia which DN, Frank Hamilton and Robin Jolliffe made on 23 November 1988 with Air Afrique, who run this game-fishing operation out of Dakar. The birds seen during a pelagic trip of just a few hours included 64 Cory's Shearwater, 21 Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, 15 Pomarine Skua, one Long-tailed Skua and two Sabine's Gull, and were sufficient to convince them of the potential. In subsequent visits, we have also seawatched from Pointes des Almadies in spring, and from Isle Ngor in autumn (Figure 1 and see Appendix for access details).

Our pelagic trips have principally concentrated on an area south of Pointes des Almadies in spring and another north-west of Isle Ngor in autumn. During autumn visits, we encountered fishing trawlers on most trips with impressive concentrations of birds around them. All our pelagic observations were conducted within 25 km of land.

Table 1. Observer coverage

Year	Observers
21–28 April 1992	Robin Jolliffe, Tony Marr, Dick Newell, Sean Newell and Richard Porter
12–25 October 1995	Duncan Brooks, Dick Newell and Richard Porter
6–16 October 1996	Robin Jolliffe, Tony Marr, Dick Newell and Richard Porter
4–11 October 1997	Tony Marr and a Wildwings tour group
28 October– 4 November 1997	Robin Jolliffe and Richard Porter

Table 2. Spring totals: 21–28 April 1992 (observer coverage given in parentheses)

Species	^a From land	^b At sea
Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	100	241
Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	0	2
Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	0	1,259
European Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	0	276
Maderian Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma castro</i>	0	1
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	0	6
Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	0	2
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	29	31
Grey Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	0	1
Pomarine Skua <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	23	746
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	88	12
Long-tailed Skua <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	3	24
<i>Catharacta</i> skua sp.	1	2
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	22	220
Audouin's Gull <i>Larus audouinii</i>	1	0
Royal Tern <i>Sterna maxima</i>	421	5
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	8	4
Royal/Lesser Crested Tern	267	0
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	272	43
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	87	9
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	1,580	301
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	246	23
Common/Arctic Tern	762	84
Bridled Tern <i>Sterna anaethetus</i>	1	0
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	146	0
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	6,181	4,129

^a26 hrs on 8 days ^b33 hrs on 4 days

Table 1 shows the coverage and observers during our five visits; Table 2 the totals for the spring visit in April 1992; Table 3 the totals from land during the autumn visits; and Table 4 the totals at sea during the autumn visits.

Spring results

The April observations were notable for a northward passage of Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*,



Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*
by Craig Robson

European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, one Madeiran Storm-petrel, 100s of *Stercorarius* skuas and Sabine's Gull, and 1,000s of terns, including 96 Roseate and over 10,000 Black Tern. A full account can be found in Marr & Porter⁷.

Autumn results

Autumn visits were made in October 1995, October 1996 and two in October and November 1997, and revealed a heavy southward passage of seabirds close inshore at Isle Ngor, principally comprising Sooty Shearwater, Pomarine Skua, Sabine's Gull and Black Tern, with well over 1,000 in a day on some occasions for each of these species. Additional species recorded included Wilson's and Leach's Storm-petrels, Bulwer's Petrel, Little and Great Shearwaters, Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* and many 1,000s of *Sterna* terns of nine species. Perhaps the most interesting observations were of Cape Verde Shearwater and *Catharacta* skuas considered to be South Polar Skua, the presence of which had previously gone undetected. Both were recorded in significant numbers.

Comments on the most significant species

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

All records were made between 5–17 October: one in 1995, six in 1996, and 12 in 1997. The first records were in 1990 and 1994 (see above). The species breeds on the Cape Verde Islands, with a population of probably not more than 100 pairs⁶.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

In April 1992, 100 *Calonectris* shearwaters seen from the land and 241 at sea were identified as this species. Early to mid-October observations have revealed that Cory's are much scarcer than Cape Verde Shearwaters at this time, with positive identifications of only 38 in

1995, and singles in 1996 and 1997. However, in late October and early November, Cory's were commencing southward migration. No fewer than 1,500 were counted on 3 November 1997, with 4,500 Cape Verde Shearwater, around a fishing trawler at sea. Positive identification from the shore has not always been possible, but most of the 4,585 *Calonectris* shearwaters seen passing south between 29 October–4 November 1997 were identified as this species. DN *et al* recorded 64 at sea on their exploratory trip on 23 November 1988.

Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii*

This has traditionally been treated as a subspecies of Cory's Shearwater although it was originally described as a distinct species. Recently Hazevoet⁶ afforded it full species status based on the Phylogenetic Species Concept. We concur with this view, and have found from our 1995–1997 observations that it is quite distinctive, and relatively easily separated from Cory's at close to medium range. A full account of the field characters and a number of photographs, can be found in Porter *et al*⁹. *Calonectris* shearwaters may feed up to 500 km from their breeding grounds—the nearest point in the Cape Verde archipelago, where this bird breeds, is 460 km away. As the species is reportedly absent from its breeding islands between late November–late February⁶, birds in early October off Senegal may have been breeding adults with young at the nest, failed breeders or non-breeders. The largest daily numbers at sea, all around fishing trawlers, were 1,700 and 1,000 on 9 and 11 October 1996, and 4,500 on 3 November 1997. The total breeding population on the Cape Verde Islands was estimated at c.10,000 pairs in 1988–1993⁶.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

On 23 November 1988, DN *et al* recorded 21 at sea during their exploratory trip. A further ten birds were recorded in autumn. From land, singles were seen on 13 and 18 October 1995, and at sea there were singles on 7 and 11 October 1996, two on 9 October 1996 and four on 3 November 1997.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Just two recorded in spring, flying north on 22 April 1992. In autumn, one of the most numerous south-bound species, as is evident from Tables 3 and 4. The highest daily totals in autumn each year were 328 on 24 October 1995, 1,765 on 6 October 1996, and 1,315 on 30 October 1997. Most large-scale movements have been during north-westerly winds.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*

Table 3 gives the totals recorded each autumn, all from land. In October 1996, when the largest numbers were recorded, the daily maxima were 13 and 17 on 10 and

12 October. All were of the race *boydi* which breeds on the Cape Verde Islands, where the population is probably several 1,000s⁶.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

In April 1992 all records were at sea, with 1,259 passing north on four days, the maximum being 615 on 25 April. Autumn records were from both land (maximum 54 on 30 October 1997) and at sea (maximum 104 on 11 October 1996).

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

This species tended to appear later than Wilson's and European Storm-petrels in autumn (none in spring), with 48 at sea in 1995 between 12–21 October (maximum 22 on 16 October); one at sea on 10 October 1997; 40 from land between 29 October–2 November 1997 (with a peak of 22 on 29 October); and three at sea on 3 November 1997.

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*

Singles were recorded as follows: flying north at sea on 22 April 1992; flying west on 31 October 1997 from land; and at sea on 3 November 1997. The species breeds on the Cape Verde Islands, where the total population may not exceed 1,000 pairs⁶.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

Six recorded at sea in April 1992 and two observed at sea in each of October 1995, 1996 and 1997. All records were of birds around L'Isle des Madeleines on the west side of Dakar, where it breeds. However, singles were seen from Isle Ngor on 30 October and 1 and 4 November 1997, all flying south.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

In spring, singles at sea, on 22 and 27 April 1992. Autumn records all from land, with singles on 13 and 15 October 1995, 10 October 1996 and 29 October 1997, with two on 30 October 1997. The species breeds



Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*
by Craig Robson

Table 3. Autumn totals. Land-based observations (observer coverage given in parentheses). Totals in [] indicate possible identifications only.

Species	^a 1995	^b 1996	^c 1997 (1)	^c 1997 (2)
Bulwer's Petrel <i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>	1	6	9	0
Cory's Shearwater/Cape Verde Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea/C. edwardsii</i>	186	1,604	0	4,585
Great Shearwater <i>Puffinus gravis</i>	2	0	0	0
Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	1,716	4,802	1,031	3,701
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	17	24	55	0
Mediterranean Shearwater <i>Puffinus (puffinus) mauretanicus</i>	[2]	1	1	0
Little Shearwater <i>Puffinus assimilis</i>	17	56	2	16
Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	1	48	2	63
Leach's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	0	0	0	40
Madeiran Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma castro</i>	0	0	0	1
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	0	0	2	3
Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	2	1	0	3
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	3	21	4	25
Grey Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	2	158	72	3
Pomarine Skua <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	3,025	3,740	119	6,233
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	814	1,093	669	476
<i>Stercorarius skua</i> sp.	209	0	0	0
Long-tailed Skua <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	10	162	144	55
<i>Catharacta skua</i> sp.	145	180	10	125
Little Gull <i>Larus minutus</i>	0	1	0	0
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	824	3,356	235	245
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	0	1	0	0
Grey-headed Gull <i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>	0	0	2	0
Audouin's Gull <i>Larus audouinii</i>	132	280	0	20
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	2	12	4	0
Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus (argentatus) cachinnans</i>	0	1	0	0
Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i>	3	9	2	1
Royal Tern <i>Sterna maxima</i>	169	65	51	0
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	30	6	194	10
Royal/Lesser Crested Tern	95	2	0	0
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	901	126	1,206	68
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	0	29	13	7
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	508	2,049	6,454	450
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	47	1,446	355	239
Common/Arctic Tern	3,554	511	0	0
Bridled Tern <i>Sterna anaethetus</i>	0	6	0	0
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	28	143	18	14
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	4,303	23,923	4,849	862

^a1995 (105 hrs on 14 days) ^b1996 (78 hrs on 11 days)
^c1997 (48 hrs on 8 days) ^c1997 (64 hrs on 8 days)

on the Cape Verde Islands, with a population not exceeding c1,000 pairs⁶.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

The spring total of 769 between 21–28 April 1992 involved 678 birds travelling steadily northwards and

91 feeding at sea. Passage was of single birds or very small groups, unlike the substantial flocks seen in spring in British and Irish waters; the largest day total was 282 on 23 April. Most birds at sea were 7-20 km from shore; only 23 were recorded during seawatches, the maximum being 15 on 24 April.

Autumn passage seen from land (see Table 3) was steady and at times dramatic, with some large daily totals, all of birds flying south: 521 on 20 October and 437 on 24 October 1995; 1,383 on 10 October and 897 on 12 October 1996; and 3,199 on 1 November (including 1,424 in 1.5 hrs in the early morning), with 845 on 2 November (recorded throughout the day) and 887 on 3 November 1997 (in only 2.5 hrs watching at dawn and dusk). The largest movements were during north-westerly winds. Most birds at sea in autumn (see Table 4) were feeding around fishing trawlers, the largest gathering being 200 on 3 November 1997, 20 km from the coast. The largest flock seen passing the coast consisted of 52 birds. Passage was rarely nearer than 500 m from land, whereas Arctic Skuas were usually closer inshore.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

In spring, 27 passed north between 21–28 April 1992, of which 24 were at sea and included 18 on 22 April; over 75% were adults. Autumn birds, conversely, were principally seen from shore, and only c10% were adult. Table 3 shows the annual autumn totals from land; highest day counts being five on 13 October 1995, 70 on 14 October 1996, and 73 on 9 October and 36 on 1 November 1997. Birds mostly passed in singles or small groups of up to three, occasionally with Arctic or Pomarine Skuas. Immatures presented some challenging identification problems which we can now tackle with more confidence than when we started these watches. The variations in plumage of juvenile and other immature birds in autumn is surprising, and flight action and jizz are very important in separating them from Arctic Skua.

skua sp. *Catharacta*

Earlier observers recorded Great Skua off Senegal and we recorded three in April 1992. A further 160 *Catharacta* skuas were recorded in October 1995, all of which we suspected as being South Polar Skua, which was confirmed through consultation with Klaus Malling Olsen, Killian Mullarney and Bill Bourne. In 1996, a further 198 similar birds were seen and in 1997, on our two trips, another 140 individuals. Most were seen from shore and were heading purposefully south in flocks of up to 12. In an earlier paper⁸, we suggested that some, if not all, of these birds were South Polar

Table 4. Autumn totals. Pelagic observations (observer coverage given in parentheses).

Species	^a 1995	^b 1996	^c 1997 (1)	^d 1997 (2)
Bulwer's Petrel <i>Bulweria bulwerii</i>	0	0	3	0
Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	38	1	1	1,500
Cape Verde Shearwater <i>Calonectris edwardsii</i>	0	2,785	189	4,500
Cory's Shearwater/Cape Verde Shearwater	0	0	0	600
Great Shearwater <i>Puffinus gravis</i>	0	4	0	4
Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	40	243	17	9
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	1	3	0	2
Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	171	282	116	20
European Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	14	12	9	12
Leach's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	48	0	1	3
Madeiran Storm-petrel <i>Oceanodroma castro</i>	0	0	0	1
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	2	2	2	0
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	0	1	0	0
Grey Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	2	2	1	0
Pomarine Skua <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	184	339	21	220
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	9	6	14	0
Long-tailed Skua <i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	12	4	8	0
<i>Catharacta</i> skua sp.	15	18	3	2
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	20	144	14	5
Audouin's Gull <i>Larus audouinii</i>	1	9	0	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	0	4	0	0
Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i>	0	0	0	1
Royal Tern <i>Sterna maxima</i>	0	1	2	0
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	0	0	4	0
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	0	14	15	0
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	0	29	13	7
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	6	504	10	57
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	5	6	2	0
Common/Arctic Tern	36	0	0	0
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	219	217	58	15

^a1995 (40 hrs on 5 days) ^b1996 (21 hrs on 3 days)

^c1997 (22 hrs on 3 days) ^d1997 (5 hrs on 1 day)

Skua. This has generated some debate, with suggestions that some of the birds might be immature Great or even Brown Skuas, and at the time of writing we are gathering data and photographs to try to confirm the identifications. If nothing else, our observations have alerted observers to the presence of considerable numbers of *Catharacta* skuas off Senegal and is leading to a stimulating reappraisal of many of the identification criteria of this complex and difficult group. Additional observations would be very helpful.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

In spring 1992, a total of 242 was recorded moving north (see Table 2), of which the largest day total was 76 at sea on 22 April. In autumn large numbers passed south along the coast, with relatively few seen at sea

(see Tables 3 and 4). Some day totals were impressive: 193 and 156 on 15 and 21 October 1995; 804, 1,107 and 932 on 6, 10 and 12 October 1996; and 153 on 9 October and 146 on 1 November 1997. Heaviest passage occurred in north-west winds. Some sampling, between 4–11 October 1997, of the ratio of adults to juveniles suggested that only c10% were juveniles. The largest flock recorded was of 60 birds passing relatively close inshore on 10 October 1996.

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*

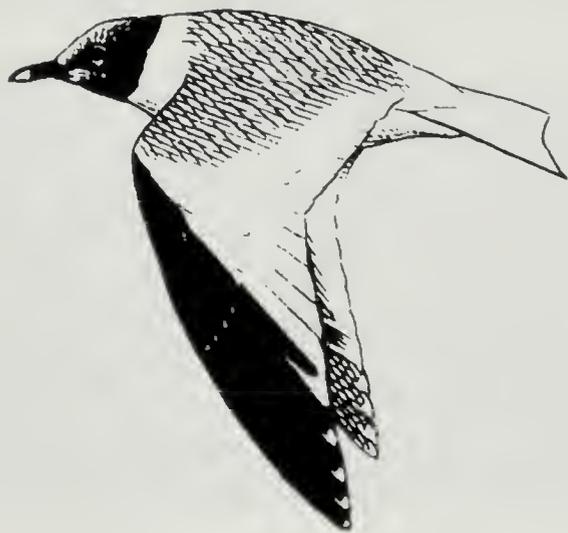
In spring, one seen from land, flying north on 26 April 1992. In autumn several hundred were flying south from shore (see Table 3) but only 12 were seen in total at sea (see Table 4). Highest day totals for each year were 34 on 24 October 1995; 77 on 10 October 1996 and nine on 1 November 1997. Nearly all were immatures.

[Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*

Immature gulls, considered to be of this species, were recorded from Isle Ngor as follows: three on 14 October 1995 and one on 6 October 1996.]

Terns *Sterna* and *Chlidonias* spp.

Terns pass in huge numbers at both seasons (see Tables 2, 3 and 4), with **Black Tern** being the most numerous at both seasons eg 2,271 flew north and 1,100 were feeding offshore on 28 April 1992, while 12,645 passed south on 12 October 1996. In autumn, terns were mostly passing over the sea in front of the Isle Ngor (see Figure 2) but on some days numbers were observed flying between the island and the mainland, and many could have been missed in this way. In 1996, we observed boys on surfboards catching **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandwicensis* on baited hooks as they fished in the channel behind Isle Ngor, which was reported to the Senegalese Ambassador in London; he



Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*
by Craig Robson

gave us assurances that steps would be taken to stop this, and we saw no such activity in 1997. The spring total of **Roseate Tern** was encouragingly high in 1992 with 96 flying north (see Table 2) but autumn totals have been much lower than this (see Table 3). One **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* was recorded flying north on 28 April 1992, and in autumn 1996 six flew south, five on 12 October and one on 14 October. The species has recently bred on L'Isle des Madeleines, near Dakar³, but does not breed on the Cape Verde Islands.

Direction of passage

Most birds in spring were passing north, except some which paused to feed off the coast or around boats. In autumn, birds passing Isle Ngor appeared to follow the coast and were heading west or west-south-west as they passed. Many birds seen from boats continue in this direction on reaching Pointe des Almadies. However, their true direction is doubtless south, distorted by the angle of the African coast at this point.

Effect of wind direction

In April 1992, northward passage was into a north wind between Force 2–5 (Beaufort Scale). In autumn, the largest movements were of birds heading west or west-south-west past Isle Ngor in north-westerly winds, sometimes of only Force 1–2. Heaviest passage was in October 1996; the greatest numbers on days of north-west winds. The period 4–11 October 1997 was characterised by winds between north and east (usually north-east) and far lower totals were recorded in that week than between 28 October–4 November 1997, when winds were mostly north-west to north. On many days with north-west winds, the passage of species such as Sooty Shearwater, Pomarine Skua, Sabine's Gull and Black Tern has been so spectacular that 3–4 observers have been hard-pressed to count and record totals for these and other birds pouring past.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly the western point of Africa at Dakar in Senegal is an important location for viewing spring and autumn passage of shearwaters, petrels, skuas, gulls and terns. The topography of the coast is ideal for observing southbound autumn movement, with an unrestricted north-facing coast providing optimum observation conditions from Isle Ngor. Northbound spring passage is harder to observe, as a large reef, a wreck and a lighthouse 1.5 km off Point des Almadies cause many birds to pass further out. Pelagic trips have added to our knowledge of the species which pass, or feed offshore and out of sight of land, and the presence of fishing trawlers in autumn has been beneficial to our

observations¹. The most favourable winds for viewing passage have been from the north-west. Further observations are required to provide additional information on the status, distribution and migration patterns of many seabird species. ²

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Appendix

Isle Ngor was chosen for autumn watching, in preference to the grounds of the Hotel Presidente, used by other observers, as birds were discovered to pass much closer to the Isle than to the mainland coast. Isle Ngor is approached via a minor road leading to the north from the road between the international airport and Pointe des Almadies and about halfway between the two. Frequent public passenger boats run throughout the day from the beach 250 m west of the Hotel Ngor, a large sandy coloured building visible from some miles distance.



Marsh Wren
by Terry O'Nele

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2



3



4



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7

- 1 Flock of Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* off Dakar, Senegal, April 1992 (B.A.E. Marr)
- 2 Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, at sea off Isle Ngor, Dakar, Senegal, October 1997 (B.A.E. Marr)
- 3 Wilson's Storm Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, at sea off Isle Ngor, Dakar, Senegal, October 1997 (B.A.E. Marr)
- 4 Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii*, at sea off Isle Ngor, Dakar, Senegal, October 1997 (B.A.E. Marr)
- 5 Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, at sea off Isle Ngor, Dakar, Senegal, October 1997 (B.A.E. Marr)
- 6 Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii*, at sea off Isle Ngor, Dakar, Senegal, October 1997 (B.A.E. Marr)
- 7 Fishing trawler and Cape Verde Shearwaters *Calonectris edwardsii* off Isle Ngor, Dakar, Senegal, October 1996 (B.A.E. Marr)

Field observations of the Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis*: a newly described Malagasy endemic

Frank Hawkins^a, Marc Rabenandrasana^a, Marie Clementine Virginie^a,
Rabeony Orly Manese^b, Raoul Mulder^c, Emabalala Rayonné Ellis^c and Ramariason Robert^d

Ny vanga mena soraka na *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* dia karazam-borona vaovao tsy misy afatsy eto Madagasikara. Ny fampitahana sy ny fandinihana natao tamin'ny endrika ivelany sy ny loko ankapobeny dia hita fa tsy mitovy mihitsy amin'ny Todikasaroaka *Calicalicus madagascariensis* ity Vanga vaovao fa tena karazany hafa mihitsy. Bibikely sy fanday na lolo madinika no fotontsakafony. Ary Rehefa mitady sakafo izy dia saika eo anelanelan'ny 2 ka hatramin'ny 3 m miala amin'ny tany. Ny vinavina nataonay dia mety misy mpivady misa 20 kahatramin'ny 100 monja no mety misy eo alahain'i St Augustin Toliary eo. Raha io isa io no jerena dia vitsy tokoa nefa ity karazam-borona ity dia mbola tsy fantatra marina ireo toerana mety ahitana azy any amin'ny faritra atsimo andrefan'ny Nosy iny. Angamba mety ho eo amin'ny manodidina ny lembalemban'i Mahafaly fotsiny ihany no mety ahitana azy eto Madagasikara.

Les premières observations sur le terrain du récemment décrit *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* ont montré que son plumage et ses vocalisations le distinguent clairement de son unique congénère, *C. madagascariensis*. L'iris de *C. rufocarpalis* est jaune chez les deux sexes et l'articulation carpienne est coloré de rouge chez la femelle. L'espèce fut rencontrée dans une zone de maquis dominée d'Euphorbias d'environ 30 km² située au sud de Toliara. Les effectifs de cette zone ont été estimés à 20–100 mâles chanteurs. L'habitat favorable s'étend néanmoins sur une superficie beaucoup plus grande, tant vers le sud que vers le nord. La prospection de cette zone constitue une priorité.

The Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* was described from two female specimens collected in 1947 near Toliara, south-west Madagascar¹. In the type-description, Goodman *et al*¹ published a photograph, taken in the same area, of a male *Calicalicus* which was presumed to relate to this species. The type-specimens and the photograph were the only evidence of the species' existence. The purpose of this paper is to confirm the appearance and identification criteria of the new species, including its distinctive call and song, and to give preliminary assessments of its habitat requirements, conservation status and recommendations for further work.

Rediscovery of the species

Before the type-description appeared in print, several attempts had been made to find Red-shouldered Vanga in the area where the two specimens had been collected, without success. Following the formal description of Red-shouldered Vanga, field survey workers working for the ZICOMA project (Zones d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux à Madagascar, the Madagascar Important Bird Areas Project) spent three days in the area looking for the species, between 23–25 July 1997. A total of c9 singing males was located, and photographs of both male and

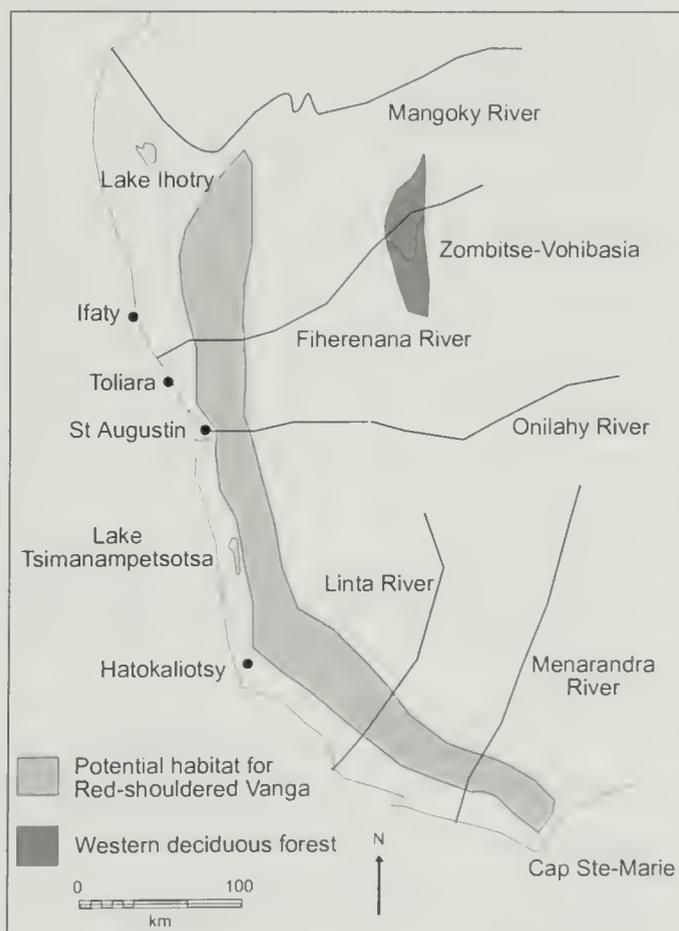
female, and tape-recordings of song and calls were made.

Description and behaviour

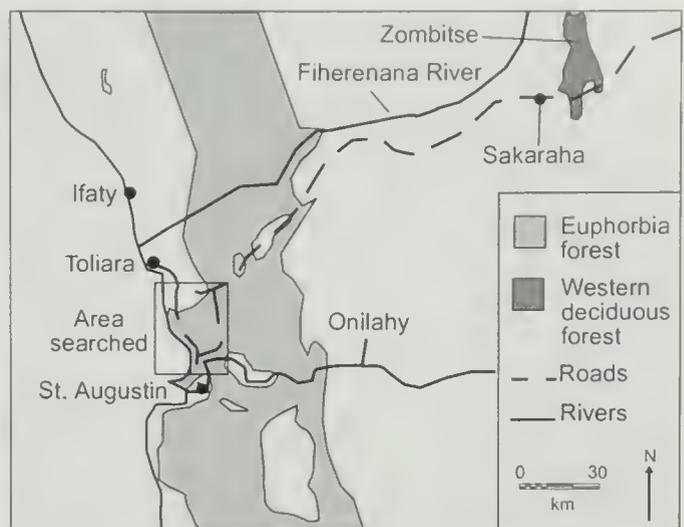
The photograph of a male *Calicalicus* published in the type-description does indeed refer to that of the Red-shouldered Vanga. Male and female Red-shouldered Vangas are both similar to the respective sexes of the Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalicus madagascariensis*. However, there are several significant differences. Most were noted in the original type-description¹, but are clarified here. All comparisons made here are with the respective sexes of Red-tailed Vanga. Both sexes are somewhat larger overall than Red-tailed Vanga, with longer bills, tails and tarsi, shorter wings and pale legs. This gives the bird a rather elongated appearance. Males have a somewhat larger black bib and a brighter narrow white band over the forehead to behind the eye. The whitish cheek patch appears narrower. There is a conspicuous yellow-white iris and rufous on the marginal, lesser median and at least some inner greater coverts, and on some individuals on the inner web of the upper tertial. This red area is limited to the lesser and marginal coverts on Red-tailed. The tail appears duller grey above than Red-tailed, appearing strongly rufous in flight and from below.

The flanks are suffused rufous, as in Red-tailed. The female is quite characteristic, with a pale line over the forehead and eyes, echoing the male's pattern. It has a noticeable, narrow but clearly defined pale eyering and a pale yellow-white iris. There is a conspicuous rufous patch on the lesser coverts, and median coverts in some individuals. The upperparts are a uniform pale greyish brown, with no contrast between the crown and mantle as in Red-tailed. Contrary to the inference in the type-description, the tail appears relatively rufous, especially in flight. Potential confusion of females of this species with the sympatric Archbold's *Newtonia archboldi* and Common Newtonias *N. brunnicauda*, both small pale passerines with pale irides, can be avoided by noting the pale rufous shoulders, red tail and whitish eyering of Red-shouldered Vanga.

Male and female Red-shouldered Vangas forage low in dense dry 2–3 m high *Euphorbia* scrub, calling frequently. Both take small insects, principally by gleaning from leaves and branches, but also by sally gleaning. The male (for which more detailed observations were made) repeatedly appeared to try to flush potential prey by flicking its wings open once or twice. This appeared not to be a display, as it was followed on two occasions by attempted sally gleans.



Map showing potential Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* habitat in south-west Madagascar



Map showing area searched for Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* near Toliara, south-west Madagascar.

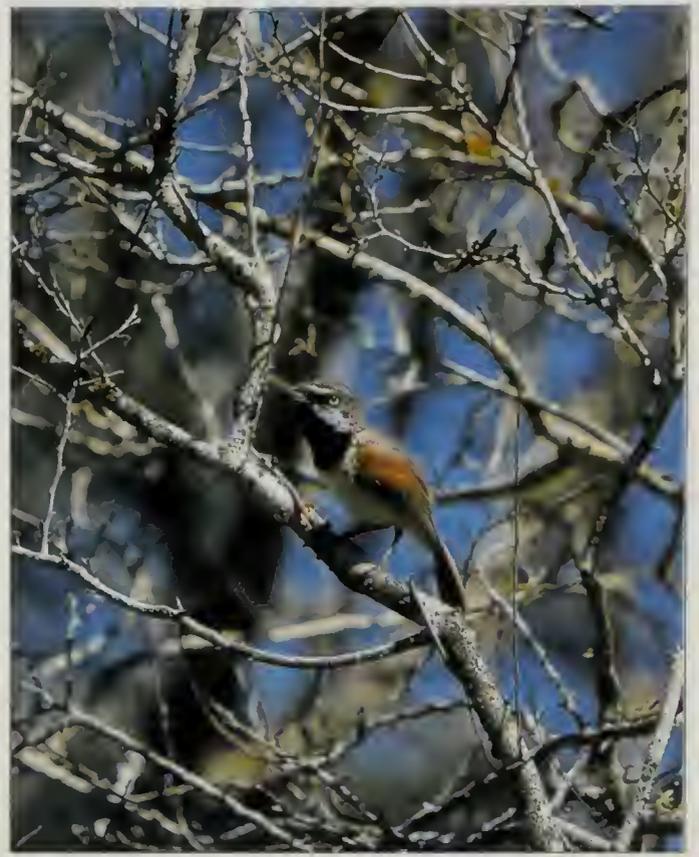
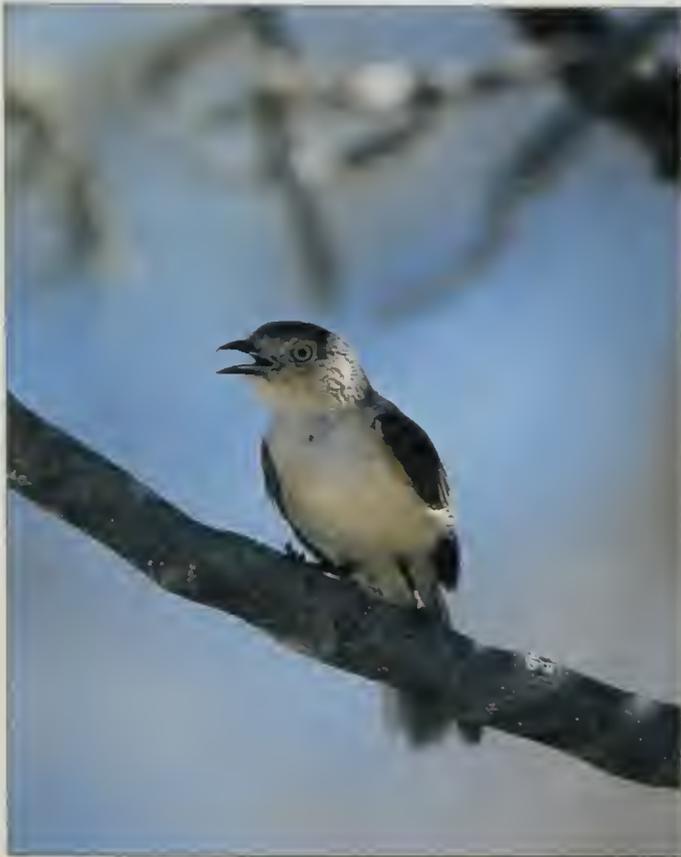
Both sexes held prey in their feet while dismembering it.

Calls

All calls heard from Red-shouldered Vangas differed substantially from those of Red-tailed. The alarm or contact call was a peevish *karr-trkkk*, the initial note like a sunbird, dropping to a low wooden rattle. This was modified into a rolling *kwotroikk*, again with a slight rattle at the end, as agitation increased. A different note, possibly a contact call, is a loud, rather beautiful *ksisisisisusu*, a rapid, dropping, rolling cadence with a slight whistling or chanting quality. The song of the male, uttered occasionally when feeding during the heat of the day as well as more regularly in the morning, is a loud *tyub-tee* or *pu-tee*; the notes of rather similar tone but the second louder and more whistled. At a distance, the second note is more clearly audible and a sounds not unlike the song of the Hook-billed Vanga *Vanga curvirostris*, although shorter.

Distribution and conservation

Male Red-shouldered Vangas were found singing all along the road between La Table and St Augustin (Fig 1). However, the density in this area was low, with probably only one male approximately every 1–3 km of trail. We detected singing birds at distances up to c300 m, so were surveying a swath of land c0.6 km² per km of trail. The area of suitable habitat where the species definitely occurs covers c30 km², so there are probably between 30–100 pairs in this area. This estimate is based on numbers of singing males in midwinter. Males may be much more vocal during the breeding season, so this density estimate may be too low. The habitat is patchily disturbed, with areas of extraction of timber for charcoal and browse for goats.



Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* (P.A.J. Morris)

particularly near the main road and St Augustin. It is probable that many of the larger timber trees have been extracted, some a very long time ago. However, the great majority of the area is generally intact and will probably remain so for the medium-term future, as cultivation on this soil type would be unproductive, and many of the local people are fisherman and goatherds rather than agriculturalists. Nonetheless, if immigrants with different agricultural traditions were to arrive, as has happened in many other forested areas of Madagascar, then the situation could change rapidly and the habitat be lost.

Outside the immediate La Table–St Augustin area, there is a relatively large area of similar habitat inland and to the south. If Red-shouldered Vanga occurs south of Onilahy, then they should occur almost as far south as Cap Ste Marie, 250 km along the crest of the Mahafaly plateau. The species appears to be absent from Cap Ste-Marie itself (pers. obs.). The Mahafaly plateau area includes the Strict Reserve of Tsimanampetsotsa, the only protected area which might hold populations of Red-shouldered Vangas. However, the region around Hatokaliotsy has also been identified as a site of special interest² and warrants protected area designation. Clearly, the most urgent priority is for surveys in *Euphorbia* scrub around Tsimanampetsotsa and Hatokaliotsy, and to the north of the main Toliara–Antananarivo road, and a con-

certed effort to establish density estimates in different habitats and degrees of forest degradation.

Acknowledgements

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¹Projet ZICOMA, BirdLife International, BP 1074, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar.

²Ministère des Eaux et Forêts, BP 243, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar.

³Centre Ecologique de Libanona, BP 42, Tolagnaro, Madagascar.

Mayotte Scops Owl *Otus rutilus mayottensis*

Alan Lewis

Le statut, les vocalisations et les caractéristiques du plumage de *Otus rutilus mayottensis* sont examinés, en se référant à la forme grise et la forme rousse de la sous-espèce nominale. Des données biométriques de ce taxon apparemment distinct sont présentées, ainsi que les premiers sonogrammes et les premières photographies. *O. r. mayottensis* pourrait constituer une espèce distincte.

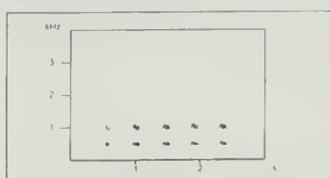
During a visit to Mayotte (a French territory in the Comoro archipelago) in November 1995, I tape-recorded and photographed 'Mayotte Scops Owl or Malagasy Scops Owl', a form currently retained within the Madagascar Scops Owl *Otus rutilus* group as *O. r. mayottensis*. This taxon is very poorly known, although it appears to be common, as Benson¹ heard up to 12 from one point, and, in degraded wet forest at Combani, I heard three individuals (two of which were seen) calling from a single point soon after dusk on 11 November 1995, the only night spent there. This note presents a brief summary of the known differences between *mayottensis* and nominate *rutilus* of Madagascar, and includes the first published photographs and sonograms of this taxon.

Vocalisations

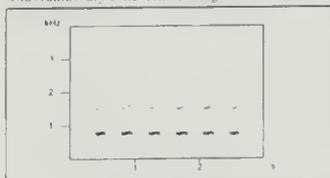
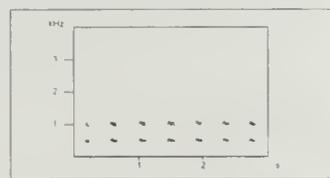
The primary song is similar to nominate *rutilus* ie a series of 3–10 (usually four) hoots. Benson¹ found the calls of *mayottensis* and eastern *rutilus* (from Perinet, Madagascar) identical, but did not have sonograms to compare them critically. In the field and compared to tape-recordings I made of eastern (at Perinet, September 1995) and western *rutilus* (on the St Augustin road, near Toliara, October 1995) in Madagascar, the territo-



Otus rutilus mayottensis 11.95



Otus rutilus 'dry-zone form' St Augustin road 10.95



Otus rutilus 'wet-zone form' Perinet 9.95

Sonograms of *Otus rutilus* and *O. r. mayottensis* (Alan Lewis)



Top: Madagascar Scops Owl, *Otus rutilus*, grey form, at Zombitse, western Madagascar, October 1995 (Alan Lewis)

Middle: Mayotte Scops Owl, *Otus (rutilus) mayottensis* at Combani, Mayotte, November 1995 (Alan Lewis)

Bottom: Madagascar Scops Owl, *Otus rutilus*, rufous form, at Perinet, eastern Madagascar, September 1995 (Alan Lewis)

rial call of *mayottensis* sounds shorter and lower in pitch than eastern *rutilus*. Comparison of sonograms demonstrates that the call of *mayottensis* is restricted to a single frequency (460 Hz with notes spread over a 25 Hz range), and whilst the delivery is somewhat slower (note spacing 0.35–0.4 sec), the individual notes are actually marginally longer (note length 0.2–0.3 sec) than nominate *rutilus*. These differences are readily apparent on the sonograms, which also suggest that the call of *mayottensis* may lack the strong harmonies of *rutilus*, and compared in Table 1. No response was seen when *mayottensis* calls were played to eastern *rutilus* at Perinet, Madagascar although this was only tried on one occasion and no control was used (ie playback of eastern *rutilus*). Playback experiments would help to clearly define the potential for differences in vocalisation to act as an isolating mechanism between the two forms.

Table 1. Attributes of recordings of three populations of Madagascar Scops-Owl *Otus rutilus*

Population	Fundamental frequency (Hz)	Range (s)	Note length (sec)	Silence length (sec)
eastern <i>rutilus</i>	750	90	0.15–0.20	0.25
western <i>rutilus</i>	480	130	0.10–0.15	0.30–0.35
<i>mayottensis</i>	460	75	0.20–0.30	0.35–0.40

Biometric data

Whilst researching the taxonomy of Anjouan Scops Owl *Otus capnodes* of Anjouan, which had been incorrectly subsumed by many authors into *O. rutilus*, Safford² also examined four specimens of *Otus (r.) mayottensis* held in the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring and 37 specimens of nominate *rutilus* from the British Museum and the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge. The biometrics recorded for these two forms indicate that *mayottensis* is a larger bird with a longer bill than *rutilus* (wing length of 166–175 mm vs 145–166 mm for nominate *rutilus*; culmen length of 25–26 mm vs 19–22 mm for nominate *rutilus*). In addition, there is some feathering on the tarsus (approximately 1/6) of *mayottensis* whereas the tarsus of nominate *rutilus* is bare. More biometric data can be found in Safford².

Plumage

Based on eight specimens, Benson¹ considered *mayottensis* to be, compared to *rutilus*, less boldly streaked below with white markings on the abdomen less strongly developed, more markedly white on the chin and lores, and with a better developed pale buff

nape collar. I have been unable to study specimens, but the birds I saw and photographed on Mayotte were closest in plumage to the rufous (primarily eastern) phase of nominate *rutilus*. The individuals of *mayottensis*, which I observed, did however, appear less rufescent overall and greyer facially than rufous forms of the nominate form. The accompanying photographs demonstrate these features.

Call of nominate *rutilus*

There is some evidence that eastern 'wet-zone' and western 'dry-zone' forms of *rutilus* in Madagascar have territorial calls. The call of the western bird has a distinct tremolo (often referred to as a trill) and is shorter and lower-pitched in tone than that of the eastern bird. Some differences are evident from the sonograms; however, in the structure of the notes, eastern and western *rutilus* seem more similar to each other than either is to *mayottensis*.

Is *mayottensis* a biological species?

It was already known that *mayottensis* differs morphologically from nominate *rutilus* on Madagascar, and I suggest, for the first time, that vocalisations (perhaps the most crucial taxonomic character for scops-owls, at least under the Biological Species Concept) also differ. It is therefore worth considering whether *mayottensis* is specifically distinct from nominate *rutilus*. To test this possibility, more information is required on variation in *rutilus* from Madagascar, as well as in *mayottensis*; Benson¹ pointed out that the latter's call is variable in pitch. This would permit an assessment of whether *mayottensis* differs consistently, and such a study should include analysis of more recordings, the results of playback experiments and further critical examination of specimens. Critical examination of specimens will be required to determine whether any plumage features differ with any consistency since there is often tremendous intra-specific plumage variation within the genus *Otus*.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to Richard Ranft of the National Sound Archive (Wildlife Section) for preparing the sonograms that accompany this note. ♀

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Vocal and other peculiarities of Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus*

Françoise Dousett-Lemaire and Robert J. Dousett

Un Engoulevent à deux taches *Caprimulgus binotatus* a été capturé au filet au Parc National de Nouabalé-Ndoki (Congo), en utilisant la repasse d'un chant d'engoulevent jusqu'ici non attribué. La voix (très inhabituelle pour un engoulevent africain) et certaines particularités morphologiques (notamment la présence de touffes de plumes au-dessus des oreilles et les tarses très larges et courts) suggèrent que cet engoulevent pourrait appartenir à son genre propre *Veles*. Outre l'Engoulevent de Bates *C. batesi*, il reste en Afrique Centrale une troisième espèce d'engoulevent forestier non encore identifiée.

Nouabalé-Ndoki NP, in extreme northern Congo (02°30'N, 16°30'E), contains over 3,800 km² of pristine forest and is explorable only on foot. A single vehicle track, 31 km-long, leads from Bomassa Camp (on the edge of the Sangha river) east to the park's boundary on the Ndoki river. FDL first visited the park in April 1996 and discovered a nightjar of uncertain identity holding territory near Ndoki Camp⁵; the voice, small size and habitat (semi-evergreen forest with relatively open canopy) excluded Bates's Nightjar *Caprimulgus batesi* (a large species of closed-canopy swamp or evergreen forest, with a loud whistled song⁶). It was at first assumed to be Brown Nightjar *C. binotatus*, the only other species known from the Lower Guinea forests, but whose song remains undescribed. However, the existence of yet another undescribed nightjar song taped recently by M. Gartshore and others in Ivory Coast and Ghana (also attributed to *C. binotatus* by process of elimination, as *binotatus* is the only forest nightjar collected from West Africa) prompted us to return to Ndoki for further investigation, as these birds could, in addition to *C. binotatus*, prove to be an undescribed species or the very rare Itombwe Nightjar *C. prigoginei*, known from a single specimen collected in the Itombwe Forest of, what was formerly, eastern Zaïre¹⁰.

During a brief survey of Lobéké Reserve in south-east Cameroon (13–25 April 1997), prior to our arrival at Ndoki, we found two nightjar species occurring sympatrically in semi-evergreen forest: one sang like the Ndoki bird (a dry staccato song) and the other like the West African recording (a series of spaced out, metallic *klion* notes). Obviously one of these two birds would almost certainly turn out to be *C. binotatus*, already known from south Cameroon and adjacent Dzanga-Ndoki NP in Central African Republic.

Most of the time in Nouabalé-Ndoki from 25 April–20 May 1997 was devoted to locating nightjar territories along the Bomassa to Ndoki track and trying to mist-net individuals, making use of tape playback.

One of the two species was trapped and we report here on the first live capture of *C. binotatus*, some peculiar plumage characters of the bird examined in the hand and the voice, all aspects of the species previously undescribed in the literature (see Ery *et al*).

Methods and results

The first 6 km of the trail from Bomassa pass through secondary *Musanga* forest which appears unsuitable for most nocturnal species except African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii*. The remaining 25 km pass through semi-evergreen rainforest, mostly with a relatively open (25–50%) canopy: this section was explored systematically, stopping at fixed distances to seek nightjars (provoked into song by tape playback) and owl species. The use of one of the project vehicles for this exercise permitted accurate measurement of distances (essential for relocating individual birds). Forest-dwelling nightjars usually sing perched in vegetation typically at elevations of 6–20 m, occasionally higher, and the voices of both species we were seeking are not readily audible beyond 150–200 m. Therefore, we paused every 250 m practising tape playback on either side of the vehicle, often walking up to 100 m along the track. Our limited field experience of forest nightjars suggests that, after calling briefly at dusk, birds often vacate the territory for one or more hours presumably when feeding activity peaks. It was therefore considered most productive to seek nightjars in the last few hours of darkness until dawn, ie from 02.00–05.20 hr local time. It was necessary to conduct eight nights fieldwork to cover the 25 km.

Ten nightjar territories were located, seven of *C. binotatus* and three of another species (the identity of which awaits confirmation). All were situated in forest with open or patchy canopy, and dense understorey—where Zingiberaceae and Marantaceae (especially the herbaceous creeper *Haumania*) were common. Nightjars were absent from a continuous stand of 5 km of relatively closed-canopy forest. It



1



2



3

Plates 1–3 Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus*, Nouabalé-Ndoki NP, Congo, May 1997 (F. Dowsett-Lemaire)

seems likely that some territories were overlooked within open forest, as on one occasion no nightjars were found at a given locality during our first visit but an additional survey two hours later provoked a *C. binotatus* into song. The two species appear to have non-overlapping territories (although they do not react to each other's songs), and calling individuals were nowhere closer than 1 km. The minimum distance between two *C. binotatus* territories was 500 m but normally at least 750–1,000 m separated neighbouring calling birds.

Unlike savannah species, forest nightjars do not rest on roads. They feed in clearings and gaps between canopy trees, around tangles of lianas and sometimes over the Marantaceae understorey (typically 3–5 m high) and over forestry tracks. Only three nightjars occupied territories situated on either side of the track,

and 4m-high mist-nets were placed in two of these (one of each species).

During five nights of mist-netting, one *C. binotatus* was caught using tape playback on 16 May at 05.15 hr (5 mins before dawn). When first contacted on 1 May, at c03.00 hr, this bird was silent at first but responded to tape playback by 'dive-bombing' the observer holding the recorder, while calling in flight. It then perched, still singing, on the side of the road. Early in the evening of 2 May (18.10 hr), the bird sang (c12 notes) spontaneously on the roadside and after a short period of tape playback, crossed the track to sing on the other side before apparently leaving the territory. We set up the nets in the afternoon of 15 May; at dusk (18.20 hr), the bird sang only one note before leaving the territory. At 18.40 hr, almost certainly the same individual was found feeding over the track 200–300



Fig. 1. Sonograms of the songs of Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus*.

Top: from Lobéké Reserve, Cameroon.

Middle: from near Bomassa, Congo (both by F Dowsett-Lemaire).

Bottom: from Tiassalé, Ivory Coast (M Gartshore).

Cassette recordings were analysed with Sona-Graph Kay Electric Co, type 7029A, using wide band setting.

m further on and dive-bombed FDL while giving one note of song (although no tape was being played). Tape playback was tried near the nets on several occasions from 19.30–22.15 hr with no results. At 22.30 hr, the bird gave a distant answer (a single note) on two occasions, but without coming nearer. It was decided to try again in the last hour before dawn and at 04.30 hr the bird responded immediately, near one set of nets. FDL practised short snatches of tape playback every few minutes: the bird answered each time, flying overhead and singing (both in flight, then perched in nearby vegetation) at heights of 6–10 m. On one occasion, it was joined by a second bird and a chase ensued. At 05.10 hr, the bird sang from c50 m away and we thought that he had lost interest. However, two more song-notes played back brought the bird directly over FDL's head, calling, before flying into the lower net at a height of 1.6 m. The bird was measured (wing 150 mm, tail 97 mm) and was found to have progressed halfway through primary wing-moult (score of 28 out of a total of 50, ie it had replaced five of ten primaries and the sixth was partly regrown), with one rectrice growing back. It was impossible to ring it, as the tarsi were surprisingly thick and short—a 3-mm ring, normally suitable for African savannah nightjars, was too narrow, and the bigger 4.3 mm ring proved too long. The tarsal measurement of only 10–12 mm presented for this species by Bates¹ is consistently the shortest of all African nightjars⁷. Being exhausted after too many short nights, we unfortunately forgot to weigh it!

As far as we know, this is the first time a *C. binotatus* has been trapped alive and photographed in the hand. The bird showed two short 'horns' of stiff, pale feathers on either side of its broad forehead (Plates 2 and 3). This feature, unique among African nightjars, is apparently not reported in the literature⁷.

perhaps because it is not evident in museum skins (M Louette *in litt*). It is unclear whether this feature is visible in the photo on which the artist for Fry *et al* based a line drawing². In addition, the very broad gape (more like an Asiatic frogmouth) and peculiar metallic voice—rather reminiscent of an *Epomops* bat and quite unlike that of any of the churring or whistling songs of all other Afrotropical nightjars—could justify placing this species in a separate genus (the name *Veles Bangs* is available). This capture confirms that *C. binotatus* is indeed the originator of the spaced-out, metallic *kliou* notes. These are given spontaneously at a rate of about 1 sec, or slightly faster, when responding to tape playback (Fig 1). Prior to our recordings in Cameroon and Congo, there existed two recent tapes of the species from Ivory Coast and Ghana (C Chappuis *et al. in litt*), but the species had not been determined. This incidentally confirms the presence of *C. binotatus* in Ivory Coast, as no specimens are known from there⁴. An updated distribution of the species is mapped in Fig 2, taking into account the correction of published errors^{8,9}. The presently known distribution extends from Grassfield, Mt Nimba east to Yangambi on the Congo River. Another locality in former eastern Zaïre is mapped by Colston⁴, but as details cannot now be traced (P R Colston *in litt*, M Louette *in litt*) this is separately identified by an open symbol.

It is worth noting that, unlike the other two forest nightjar species present in Congo (*C. batesi* and *C. sp.*), *C. binotatus* apparently does not produce a type of call-note distinct from the song. It is possible that the female also sings occasionally as, in Lobéké, two birds were found singing very close to each other, apparently without any aggressive interaction. In one of these, the song was less sustained and the series of notes shorter. Playback attracted one of these, which flew overhead after each of four playback experiments before singing from nearby vegetation.

In addition to the seven territories mentioned above and the pair found in Lobéké, all in dryland forest, another *C. binotatus* was heard at dusk on the

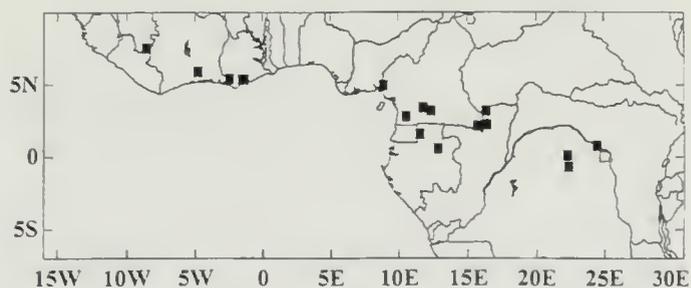


Fig. 2. Distribution of Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus*. Filled squares: records confirmed by specimens, photos or tapes; open square: plot derived from Colston⁴, details of which cannot be traced. Map prepared using DMAP.

edge of a stream (at Wali in the Bomassa buffer zone), at the ecotone between monodominant *Gilbertiodendron dewevrei* forest and swamp forest. The latter had a fragmented canopy, with isolated trees or clumps of trees festooned with lianas. It seems that, for both *C. binotatus* and *C. sp.*, large clearings are important whereas *C. batesi* is confined to evergreen closed-canopy forest (in dryland or more often swamp forest: pers obs in Kouilou, Odzala, Ndoki in Congo and Lobéké in Cameroon).

Copies of FDL's tapes of *C. binotatus*, *C. sp.* and *C. batesi* are lodged with C Chappuis and the National Sound Archive (London).

Acknowledgements

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Zombitse–Vohibasia: a new national park in south-west Madagascar

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Le futur Parc National Zombitse–Vohibasia, à Madagascar, est ‘une zone importante entre les deux grandes régions biogéographiques du pays’⁴. Ce parc sera la seule aire protégée au sud de la fleuve Morondava. Dans la Domaine de l’ouest, il ne reste plus que 18 forêts qui ont une superficie au dessus de 15,000 ha. Le parc est important sur le plan biodiversotique: 71% des oiseaux recensés dans le parc ont une aire de repartition limitée à Madagascar et aux environnantes. La distribution du Bulbul d’Appert *Phyllastrephus apperti*, espèce menacée, est limitée même au parc. Depuis 1994, Zombitse–Vohibasia a été sous l’influence d’un Plan de Conservation et Développement Intégré, dont l’originalité consiste principalement dans son approche communautaire à la gestion des ressources naturelles. Le projet d’écotourisme du parc va cibler des ornithologues qui souhaitent regarder *P. apperti*, qui est facile à trouver près de la Route Nationale 7 à Andranomaitso, 13 km à l’est de Sakaraha.

Introduction

The forests of Zombitse (Zombitsy) and Vohibasia, soon to be afforded national park status, are a crucial life-support system for unique biodiversity and the local human population in semi-arid south-west Madagascar. The new national park will comprise dry deciduous forest, characterised by baobabs and vivid green trees of the family Euphorbiaceae protruding through the low canopy. These forests are the sole refuge for the poorly known and globally threatened Appert’s Greenbul *Phyllastrephus apperti* and support several other birds of conservation concern. Visibility, although impaired by a high density of vines, is better than in the eastern rainforests and most speciality birds can be seen during a short visit. The park lies in one of the most culturally sensitive regions of Madagascar. The complexities of human development and conservation of the region’s endemic birds, plants and lemurs are heavily inter-dependent.

Conservation Importance

Zombitse–Vohibasia is of prime significance for the conservation of the remaining 3% of the forests of the western floral domain²². The future national park is the only protected area south of the Morondava river^{11,17}. The adjacent forests of Zombitse and Vohibasia are two of just 18 forests in Endemic Bird Area C34 (West Malagasy Dry Forest)¹² with an area greater than 15,000 ha. The forest watershed helps maintain two major rivers, the Fiheranana and Taheza, and thousands of hectares of paddy fields that provide much of the region’s staple food requirements²³. Increasing forest destruction is putting Zombitse–Vohibasia’s unique biodiversity at risk.

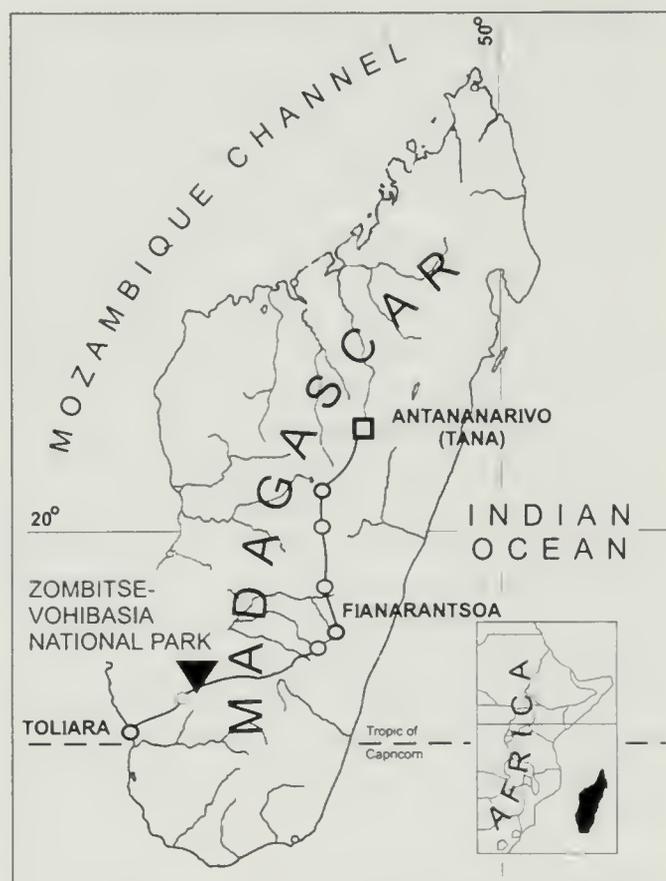


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the new Zombitse-Vohibasia National Park in Madagascar

Biological Diversity

The park’s full significance has probably not yet been realized. Recent brief ecological surveys have already produced a new genus of insectivorous mammal from the family Tenrecidae (S M Goodman pers. comm.); a new species of blind burrowing snake (*Typhlops* sp.) and several new plant species in the Euphorbiaceae, Cucurbitaceae and Sarcolaenaceae families^{4,10,23}.

Of the 86 bird species currently known from the park^{10,16} (see Appendix 1), 61 (71%) are endemic to Madagascar and related islands¹⁴. Five species have a restricted-range of 50,000 km² or less^{12,21} and a further four are limited to the western biome¹¹. Three species are considered globally threatened (Madagascar Little Grebe *Tachybaptus pelzelinii*, Appert's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus apperti* and Benson's Rock-thrush *Pseudocossyphus bensoni*) and five are near-threatened³.

Phyllastrephus apperti is only known with certainty from the park^{3,10,16}. This predominantly terrestrial bird appears to be rare in Vohibasia (type-specimen and three recent records) and locally common in Zombitse¹⁶. Reports from other localities are inconclusive¹⁶. In 1974, a subspecies of Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina madagascariensis diluta* was described from "forests east of Sakaraha" (thus within or adjacent to the park)¹, but has not been recorded subsequently^{10,16}. The three near-threatened forest species known from Zombitse–Vohibasia (Madagascar Crested Ibis *Lophotibis cristata*, Henst's Goshawk *Accipiter henstii* and Madagascar Sparrowhawk *Accipiter madagascariensis*) occur rather widely (but at low densities) in Madagascar's remaining dry western and humid eastern forests. In the park's non-forest habitats, the first breeding population of Benson's Rock Thrush *Monticola bensoni* away from Isalo national park was located at Vohimena in 1996⁹.

Endemism and endangerment are also characteristics of other classes represented in Zombitse–Vohibasia. Four of the park's eight lemur species^{6,15,16} are subject to some degree of global threat¹³: Verreaux's Sifaka *Propithecus v. verreauxi*, Coquerel's Dwarf Lemur *Mirza coquereli*, Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta* and Pale Fork-marked Lemur *Pbanerfurfifer pallescens*. In 1995, the second population of Madagascar's largest endemic diurnal gecko (Reptilia), the commercially traded Standing's Day Gecko *Phelsuma standingi* was discovered at Zombitse^{7,19}.

Birding in Zombitse

Dry forest

The relatively degraded forest surrounding Andranomaitso, relatively rich in birdlife, is the proposed entry route for visitors to Zombitse–Vohibasia²² (see Fig. 2; also Box—Finding Appert's Greenbul). Mixed-species flocks include greenbuls (Appert's and Long-billed *P. madagascariensis*) and vangas (Blue *Cyanolanius madagascariensis*, Hook-billed *Vanga curvirostris* and Rufous *Schelba rufa*), both frequently joined by couas (notably Giant *Coua gigas* and Coquerel's *C. coquereli*), which also bask on trails or in glades. The

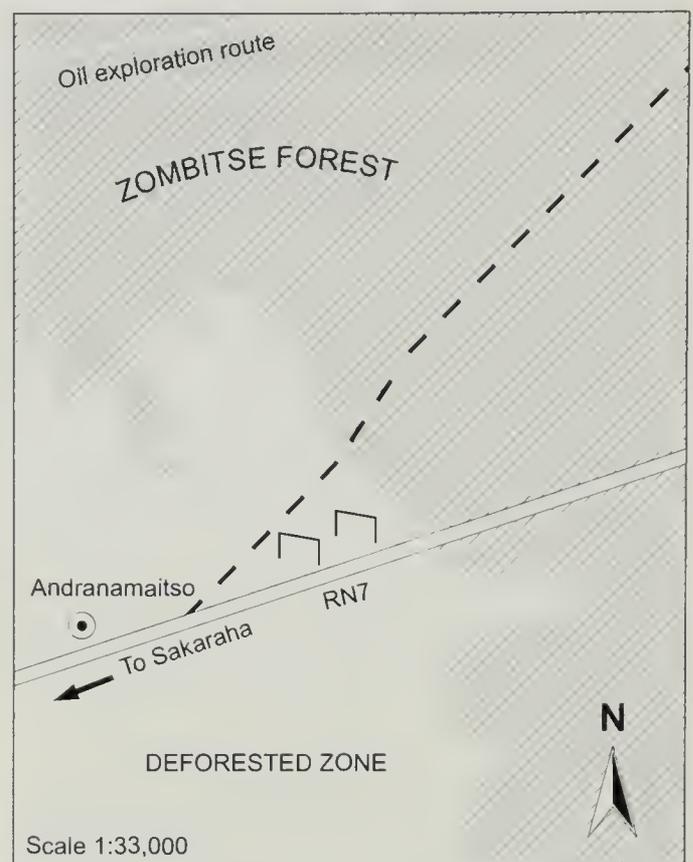


Figure 2. Map showing proposed entry route for visitors to Zombitse–Vohibasia

Madagascar Crested Ibis is elusive but can be seen on trails at dawn and dusk.

Gallery forest

Species diversity is highest in the park's riparian habitats¹⁶. Gallery forest is an irreplaceable and diminishing dry season refuge for the park's wildlife. In deforested terrain, surface water is lost through evaporation or, where the narrow impermeable organic layer is breached by uprooted trees or wells, by irrevocable drainage into the sandstone. A short distance from the village of Beba Manamboay, the source of the Ambiamena river nourishes one of the few pieces of intact gallery forest left in Zombitse–Vohibasia (see Fig. 1). Large flocks of Sickle-billed Vangas *Falco pelliata* regularly occur, Henst's Goshawks perform courtship flights over the valley and Madagascar Cuckoo-falcon *Aviceda madagascariensis* has been seen hunting in the understorey. This is the most likely area to see other specialities such as Fossa *Cryptoprocta ferox*, an arboreal carnivore; the three diurnal lemurs (*Lemur catta*, *Propithecus v. verreauxi* and Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*); and occasional wetland birds such as Madagascar Little Grebe and Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae*. A nocturnal walk will almost guarantee sightings of Malagasy Scops Owl *Otus rutilus*, the rare Coquerel's Dwarf Lemur and Pale Fork-marked Lemur.

Grassland

This habitat is considered almost wholly anthropogenic^{8,16} but does support a few interesting regional endemics. Réunion Harriers *Circus maillardi* are occasional and Benson's Rock Thrushes have been seen around villages picking scraps from gardens⁹. The Thamnornis Warbler *Thamnornis chloropetoides*, most familiar in the *Didiera* thorn forests to the west, and Lantz's Brush Warbler *Nesillas lantzi* (recently granted specific status from Madagascar Brush Warbler *Nesillas typica*^{8,20}) occur in secondary brush habitat. Outside the park, the village of Sakaraha is worth an evening visit to look for the crepuscular Bat Hawk *Machaeramphus alcinus*. On two occasions in 1995 and 1996 an individual was hunting bats around the radio mast opposite the market.

Recent History

Zombitse was protected from unlicensed exploitation when it was allocated "classified forest" status in 1962. The first permits for limited logging became available in 1974–80 and the immigrant village of Andranomaitso was subsequently formed along Route National 7 (RN7). In 1987, permission was granted to clear-fell the region around the village. This caused the deforestation of 2,400 ha (10%) of Zombitse in just four years, and the region now supports several other such villages around the immigration epicentre of Andranomaitso⁸.

The vast majority of the maize grown on the newly deforested terrain does not reach local markets, but is rather exported to La Réunion, where it is converted into chicken feed for sale in France (A. F. A. Hawkins pers. comm.). Selective exploitation of timber for charcoal and building materials continues to destroy the forest's physical structure and to threaten its biological diversity¹⁸. Around the remaining forest tracts, baobabs *Adansoniata*—the only tree with no timber value—have been left as statuesque reminders of this recent tragedy.

Conservation Strategy

The national park, when formally designated, will comprise three distinct zones: Zombitse forest (13,501 ha), Vohibasia forest (13,570 ha) and Isoko forest/Vohimena (2,689 ha). In total, 27,391 ha (94%) of the park is forest, the remainder consisting of deforested areas, marsh and anthropogenic grassland²³.

Since 1994, Zombitse–Vohibasia has benefited from a low-cost Integrated Conservation Development Plan (ICDP) initiated by Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées (ANGAP), the Direction des Eaux et Forêts (DEF) and WWF-Mada-

gascar²³. The ICDP has aimed to introduce the sustainable management of natural resources and to ensure that local communities become "responsible guardians" of the national park²³.

The Human Factor

Traditionally, the indigenous Bara tribe have sustainably managed the forest edges of both Zombitse and Vohibasia by rotational burning and grazing. In the past 25 years, the western and southern sectors of Zombitse have been deforested by an expanding immigrant population. Deforestation threatens the hydrological, ecological and physical stability of the environment. Beba Manamboay, meaning 'place where crocodiles were', is a village situated on the river Manamboay along the western flank of Zombitse.

Familiar denudation craters or lavakas are joined by a more bizarre effect of deforestation in the southwest, the shakashak. High evaporation rates cause water to permeate up through the coarse sand substrate. The heavy sand then slips downhill, glacier-like, gouging through irrigation canals and rice paddies. Subterranean flows have also been blamed for massive subsidence during the short but severe rainy season (December–January).

Ecotourism

Integral to the designation of national park status for Zombitse–Vohibasia is its perceived potential for ecotourism. Tourism is an increasing source of revenue for Madagascar, and the number of tourists has increased from 11–15,000 p.a. in the early 1980s to 65,100 in 1994 and a predicted 230,000 by the year 2006.

Although the Vohibasia forest is relatively inaccessible, Zombitse is perfectly situated to capitalise on this growth. Straddling the RN7, it is equidistant from Isalo National Park and the coastal resorts (and *Didiera* thorn forests) north of Toliara. It is estimated that Zombitse will attract 25% of the visitors who go to Isalo, which numbered nearly 8,000 in 1995²³.

Future Prospects

Cultural diversification and demographic expansion are hampering attempts to monitor the park's development. Due to a history of selective exploitation, it is difficult to ascertain whether any primary forest remains. If the park's fauna and flora is able to survive in secondary forest then equitable conservation and human development could co-evolve. Given Zombitse–Vohibasia's importance as a floristic 'oasis', conservationists have to reconcile the needs of the burgeoning local population whilst curbing further

forest loss. The recent creation of a dozen 25 m-wide oil exploration tracks across both forests⁸ destroyed habitat and facilitated access for illicit exploitation of forest products. Consolidating existing local opposition to such radical exploitation is one way to ensure that the forest will continue to serve traditional local needs.

Acknowledgements

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Visiting Zombitse and finding Appert's Greenbul

A new national park headquarters, visitors centre and car park are to be constructed at a site east of Zombitse forest. Before entering the park, visitors will have to call here to collect permits and guide. Until the tourist infrastructure is fully operational, permits should be acquired from ANGAP (Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées) in Antananarivo and the Sakaraha office of WWF should be contacted. Andranomaitso, the entry point for Zombitse is accessible by public transport. All taxi bés between Antananarivo and Toliara pass through the village and there are several (but irregular) *taxi-brousses* daily between Sakaraha and Andranomaitso. Inexpensive accommodation and *hotely* facilities are available in Sakaraha.

Appert's Greenbul, the local endemic and main attraction for visiting birders, is common and easy to see at one site accessible from the RN7, but within the park and thus still requiring a permit. Thirteen kilometres east of the town of Sakaraha (or one kilometre north-east of the village of Andranomaitso), a charette track heads north east from the RN7 and crosses a football field before entering the forest (see Figure 2). Sightings are virtually guaranteed: listen for the contact call—a high pitched trill, similar to but much softer than Long-billed Greenbul. Appert's Greenbul is poorly illustrated in Langrand¹⁴, being rather similar to Grey-crowned Greenbul *P. cinereiceps* of the humid eastern forests.

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Appendix: List of species recorded at Zombitse-Vohibasia national park

Key

Sta: Global threat status (following Collar *et al.*³). V = Vulnerable; nt = near-threatened.

RR: Restricted-range species (following Stattersfield *et al.*²¹) indicated by *

Bio: Biome-restricted species (following BirdLife International¹) indicated by *

End: Species endemic or near-endemic to Madagascar. Species indicated by a * have their breeding and wintering range wholly restricted to Madagascar; species indicated by a (*) are restricted to the Madagascar region (defined by Langrand¹⁴ as being Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion and the Comores).

Ha: Species considered by Hawkins¹¹ to be valuable for comparing the importance of West Madagascar dry forests are indicated with a *.

¹Nomenclature follows Langrand¹⁴ unless otherwise indicated.

²We follow Schulenberg *et al.*²⁰ in treating *Nesillas (typica) lantzii* as a full species and the suggested English name (per A. F. A. Hawkins pers. comm.).

Scientific name ¹	English name	Sta	RR	Bio	En	Ha
<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>	Madagascar Little Grebe	V				*
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Black-crowned Night-heron					
<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Squacco Heron					
<i>Ardeola idae</i>	Madagascar Pond-heron		nt			
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret					
<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	Great Egret					
<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron					
<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Hamerkop					
<i>Lophotibis cristata</i>	Madagascar Crested Ibis		nt			* *
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	White-faced Whistling-duck					
<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Knob-billed Duck					
<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	Red-billed Teal					
<i>Aviceda madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Cuckoo-falcon					*
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Black Kite					
<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>	Madagascar Harrier-hawk					*
<i>Circus maillardi</i>	Réunion Harrier		nt	*		(*)
<i>Accipiter henstii</i>	Henst's Goshawk		nt			*
<i>Accipiter madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Sparrowhawk		nt			*
<i>Accipiter francesii</i>	Frances' Sparrowhawk					(*)
<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>	Madagascar Buzzard					*
<i>Falco newtoni</i>	Madagascar Kestrel					(*)
<i>Falco zoniventris</i>	Banded Kestrel					*
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine					
<i>Margaroperdix madagascarensis</i>	Madagascar Partridge					*
<i>Coturnix</i> sp.	quail sp.					
<i>Numida meleagris</i>	Helmeted Guineafowl					
<i>Turnix nigricollis</i>	Madagascar Buttonquail					*
<i>Dryolimnas cucui</i>	White-throated Rail					(*)
<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Purple Swamphen					

Scientific name ¹	English name	Sta	RR	Bio	En	Ha	Scientific name ¹	English name	Sta	RR	Bio	En	Ha
<i>Pterocles personatus</i>	Madagascar Sandgrouse			*	*		<i>Phyllastrephus madagascariensis</i>	Long-billed Greenbul					*
<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>	Madagascar Turtle-dove					(*)	<i>Phyllastrephus apperti</i>	Appert's Greenbul	V	*	*	*	*
<i>Oena capensis</i>	Namaqua Dove						<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Bulbul					
<i>Treron australis</i>	Madagascar Green-pigeon					(*)	<i>Copsychus albospectularis</i>	Madagascar Magpie-robin					*
<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>	Greater Vasa-parrot					(*)	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Stonechat					
<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>	Lesser Vasa-parrot					(*)	<i>Pseudocossyphus bensoni</i>	Benson's Rock-thrush	V	*			*
<i>Agapornis cana</i>	Grey-headed Lovebird					*	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>	Lantz's Brush-warbler ²				*	*
<i>Coua gigas</i>	Giant Coua			*	*		<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>	Thamnornis Warbler			*	*	*
<i>Coua coquereli</i>	Coquerel's Coua	*	*	*	*		<i>Cisticola cherina</i>	Madagascar Cisticola					(*)
<i>Coua ruficeps</i>	Red-capped Coua			*	*		<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>	Common Newtonia					*
<i>Coua cristata</i>	Crested Coua					*	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	Common Jery					*
<i>Centropus toulou</i>	Madagascar Coucal					*	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>	Stripe-throated Jery					*
<i>Tyto alba</i>	Barn Owl						<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>	Madagascar Paradise-flycatcher					(*)
<i>Otus rutilus</i>	Madagascar Scops-owl					(*)	<i>Nectarinia souimanga</i>	Souimanga Sunbird					(*)
<i>Ninox supercilialis</i>	White-browed Owl					*	<i>Nectarinia notata</i>	Long-billed Green-sunbird					(*)
<i>Asio madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Long-eared Owl					*	<i>Zosterops maderaspatana</i>	Madagascar White-eye					(*)
<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Nightjar					(*)	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>	Red-tailed Vanga					*
<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>	Malagasy Spine-tailed Swift					(*)	<i>Schetba rufa</i>	Rufous Vanga					*
<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	African Palm-swift						<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>	Hook-billed Vanga					*
<i>Apus melba</i>	Alpine Swift						<i>Falcoea palliata</i>	Sickle-billed Vanga			*	*	
<i>Corythornis vintsioides</i>	Madagascar Malachite-kingfisher					(*)	<i>Leptopterus viridis</i>	White-headed Vanga					*
<i>Ispidina madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Pygmy-kingfisher			*	*		<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>	Chabert's Vanga					*
<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	Madagascar Bee-eater						<i>Cyanolanius madagascariensis</i>	Blue Vanga					(*)
<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	Broad-billed Roller						<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>	Crested Drongo					(*)
<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>	Cuckoo-roller					(*)	<i>Corvus albus</i>	Pied Crow					
<i>Upupa epops</i>	Hoopoe						<i>Hartlaubius auratus</i>	Madagascar Starling					*
<i>Mirafra hova</i>	Madagascar Bush-lark					*	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Common Myna					
<i>Phedina borbornica</i>	Mascarene Martin					(*)	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>	Sakalava Weaver			*	*	
<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	Madagascar Wagtail					*	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Red Fody					*
<i>Coracina cinerea</i>	Ashy Cuckoo-shrike					(*)	<i>Lonchura nana</i>	Madagascar Mannikin					*

- 1 Coquerel's Coua *Coua coquereli* (James C. Lowen)
- 2 Long-billed Greenbul *Phyllastrephus madagascariensis* (James C. Lowen)
- 3 Female Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa* (James C. Lowen)
- 4 Madagascar Nightjar *Caprimulgus madagascariensis* (James C. Lowen)
- 5 Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra* (James C. Lowen)
- 6 Cuckoo Roller *Leptosomus discolor* (James C. Lowen)



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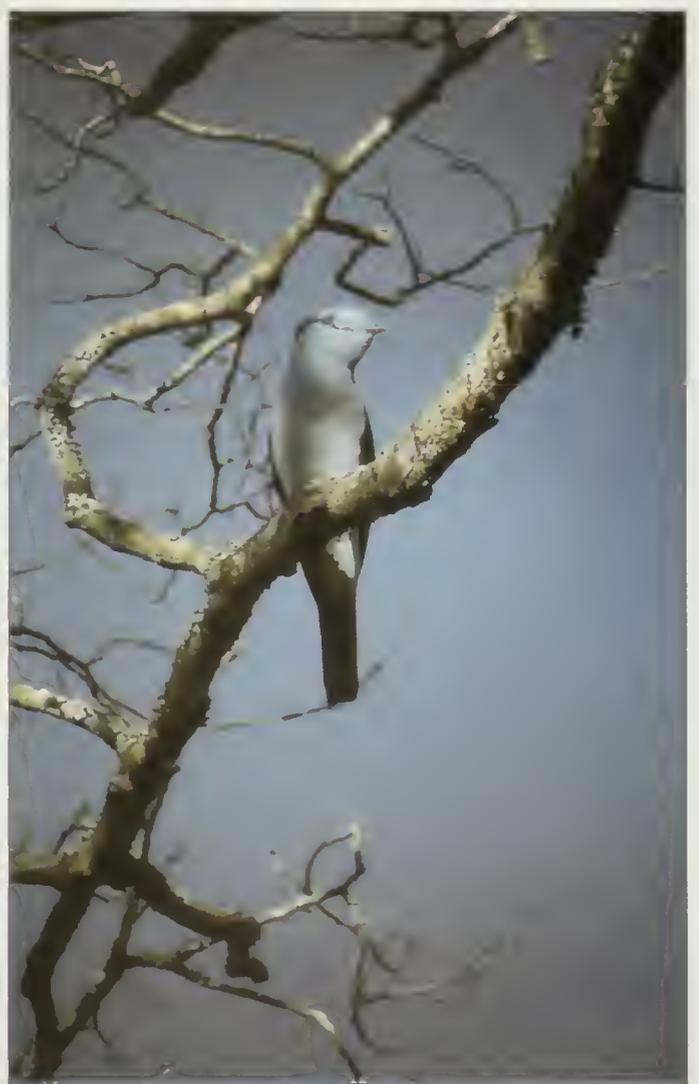
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Mystery birds from Djibouti

Geoff and Hilary Welch

La description de deux espèces non-identifiées observées à Djibouti est présentée dans l'espoir que d'autres observations puissent contribuer à l'identification de ces deux oiseaux. La première espèce est un beaumarquet apparenté au Beaumarquet melba *Pytilia melba* mais n'ayant pas de rouge dans le plumage. La deuxième est un souimanga, appartenant probablement au genre *Nectarinia*. Les deux espèces ont uniquement été observées dans les lambeaux de forêt situés sur le côté nord du Golfe de Tadjoura, habités par l'endémique Francolin somali *Francolinus ochropectus*. Il est intéressant de noter que des oiseaux ressemblant le *Pytilia melba soudanensis* 'typique' ont été observés sur le côté sud du Golfe, dans une zone sans forêt ni francolin.

Despite its relatively small size (c23,000 km²), the ornithology of Djibouti has been very little-studied. Most recent understanding results from seven expeditions undertaken by us between 1984–1993 (principally to study the autumn migration of raptors across the Bab-el-Mandeb straits⁹, the endemic Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* and near-endemic Bankoualé Palm *Livistona carinensis* in the Goda and Mabla massifs, and the globally threatened Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*⁷) and the work of Alain Laurent, a resident of Djibouti between 1981–1993. A total of 343 species^{3,pers.obs.} has been recorded in the country, a remarkable total given the extremely limited observer coverage and limited variety of habitats.

During our fieldwork, we observed two species which currently remain unidentified—a pytilia, apparently closely related to Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba* based on its plumage and a sunbird. Detailed field notes and photographs (of variable quality) are presented here and it is hoped that the publication of this information here will either stimulate further fieldwork on these taxa or perhaps bring to light additional records, either from Djibouti or adjacent countries, which may help to resolve the currently indeterminate taxonomic position of these birds.

The pytilia

Details of the discovery of the pytilia were published in Welch & Welch⁸ where it was proposed the Djibouti birds should be treated as a previously undescribed subspecies of Green-winged Pytilia *P. m. flavicaudata*. Photographs are lodged at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, UK—reference nos: PL2001.1, PL2002.1, PL2003.1 & PL2003.2—but the rules of scientific nomenclature decree that a specimen is necessary as a reference from which to support the formal naming of a taxon and therefore the Djibouti birds remain effectively unnamed^{1,5,6}.



Map showing location of Djibouti

Description

Male. Crown, nape, rear half of ear-coverts, hindneck, mantle and lores grey, the grey on the mantle gradually shading into dull greeny brown on the scapulars, lower mantle and wings. Forehead, chin, throat, frontal half of ear-coverts, sides of neck and upper breast bright golden-yellow. Lower breast, belly and vent white. Underparts marked with fine black barring extending from upper breast to lower belly and undertail-coverts, becoming coarser and broader on the lower belly and flanks, but absent from vent. Tail rich golden-yellow, only slightly duller than face. Central tail feathers greenish, outer tail feathers very bright yellow. Bill pinkish with grey culmen. Legs and feet pink, irides deep red.

Female. Similar to male but with yellow of face and upper breast replaced by pale grey; tail slightly duller yellow and wings brighter green.

Call of both sexes a short, loud *pituk*; apparently this is typical of all grey-lored subspecies of *P. melba* (J Nicolai pers. comm.).

Compared to 'normal' *P. melba*, Djibouti birds differ in completely lacking red on the face or tail. Details of our observations were sent to J Nicolai who has undertaken extensive studies of pytilia species in the field and captivity. He confirmed that the birds from Djibouti were different to any that he had studied or was aware of, while most similar to *P. m. jessei* which occurs from Eritrea south to Dire Dawa¹⁰.

The sunbird

Apart from the description which appeared in our Djibouti II expedition report⁷, information on the birds observed in Djibouti has never been widely available. Therefore full details are given below.

Three sunbirds, a pair and a presumed well-grown young, were observed in Wadi Tôha (11°48'N 42°45'E) on 24 November 1985. A few photographs were obtained of the 'female'. These have been compared with all available literature and all sunbird specimens in the British Museum and we have concluded that they do not resemble any known species. Copies of our field descriptions and photographs have also been examined by Hilary Fry and Robert Cheke, again without a clear identification being suggested. These are the only known observations.

Description

Size judged to be similar to Shining Sunbird *Nectarinia babessinica*. In all three individuals the most striking feature—which appears to be lacking in all other sunbird species—was a bright, slightly metallic yellow-green crown, most pronounced in the male. (The possibility that the yellow crowns could have been caused by a dusting of pollen was considered at the time but rejected by all three observers. The crown of the male had a slightly metallic sheen, pollen would have been more likely to result in a matt appearance. Additionally the amount and distribution of yellow in all three birds appeared to be identical, making us feel that pollen was unlikely to be the cause. However, this possibility cannot be 100% eliminated.) The 'female' was dull earth-brown above and dirty white below. The wings were slightly darker than the rest of the upperparts; pale tips to the median- and greater-coverts formed two pale wingbars. Many of the flight feathers also had paler margins and the alula was pale brown. The tail was black. The undertail-coverts were slightly paler than

the remainder of the underparts, many feathers having distinct blackish tips. The bill was long, markedly decurved and black. Legs and feet black. Irides large and dark.

The male differed from the 'female' in having the chin, throat and upper breast bright metallic green, with a narrow black band below this separating the green from the remainder of the underparts. Otherwise it resembled the 'female' while appearing slightly darker overall. It is possible that this bird was in non-breeding plumage.

The presumed young bird was very similar to the 'female' but was noticeably paler below, had distinct pale supercilia and lacked blackish tips to the undertail-coverts.

The general structure and behaviour of these birds suggests that they may belong to the genus *Nectarinia*, perhaps being closely related to *N. babessinica* or *N. mariquensis*, an interpretation shared by Hilary Fry (*in litt.*).

Habitat

Both the pytilia and the sunbird were found in areas of secondary forest primarily comprising mixed *Acacia mellifera* *Rhigozum somalense* scrub, with numerous taller *Acacia seyal*. The pytilia has also been found in horticultural gardens in the vicinity of the native-style tourist village at Dittilou (11°47'N 42°42'E), in the Goda massif. These observations range between 500–850 m above sea level for the pytilia, whilst the sunbirds were seen at 180 m.

Discussion

Apart from the undetermined taxonomic position of these birds, one of the most interesting aspects of our observations is that both forms have been observed only in the same remnant forest areas of the Goda and Mabla massifs inhabited by the endemic Djibouti Francolin—see map. There is, therefore, the intriguing possibility that the pytilia and sunbird became isolated

Figures 1–4 (page 48)

- 1 Male pytilia, near Dittilou, Goda massif, Djibouti, May 1987 (Alain Laurent)
- 2 Female sunbird, Wadi Tôha, Goda massif, Djibouti, November 1985 (Geoff & Hilary Welch)
- 3 Female Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*, near Dittilou, Goda massif, Djibouti, March 1989 (Alain Laurent)
- 4 Displaying male Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*, near Dittilou, Goda massif, Djibouti, March 1989 (Alain Laurent)



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M Woodcock

from their nearest relatives as has the francolin. Could all three have evolved into distinctive taxa contemporaneously? Until appropriate biometric and DNA data are available, examination of this question cannot be progressed but the suggestion seems highly plausible on geographical grounds.

We have observed the yellow-tailed pytilias in 1985, 1987 and 1990 with all birds, apart from those involved in the initial discovery in the Mabila mountains, being seen in the Goda massif. Alain Laurent saw birds regularly at Dittilou from 1987 until the outbreak of civil war in Djibouti in 1992 when travel to the north of the country became impossible. In January 1993 we made observations in south Djibouti which added an interesting dimension to the puzzle. On 22 January 1993, we found a male resembling typical *P. m. soudanensis* ie with red face and red tail at Wadi Qalan (11°06'N 42°49'E) plus a further eight birds in Wadi Hadla (11°03'N 42°57'E) later the same day. Both of these sites are on the southern side of the Gulf of Tadjoura (c75 km south-south-east of Wadi Tôha) where there is no forest (and the francolin does not occur).

The taxonomic situation regarding *P. melba* is complex with as many as 13 subspecies described and intermediates occurring where subspecies overlap. Clement *et al*¹ recognise seven subspecies, with *P. m. soudanensis* being that occurring in areas bordering Djibouti.

Three other species of sunbird have been recorded in Djibouti—Shining Sunbird and Pygmy Sunbird *Antbreptes metallicus* (both relatively common and widespread wherever there is suitable habitat) and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird *A. orientalis* (two records: males in Wadi Qalan on 21 January 1993 and Deg Ouïen on 10 April 1993).

Clarification of the taxonomic situation of the pytilia and the sunbird is also relevant to assessment of the conservation importance of the Goda and Mabila massifs. Because of the presence of the Djibouti Francolin, the Forêt du Day in the Goda massif is ranked 37= in terms of its conservation importance for threatened birds in Africa², however should the pytilia and sunbird prove to be new species and therefore

endangered due to their restricted ranges, the Forêt du Day's ranking would rise to 8= and the area would qualify under current criteria as an Endemic Bird Area (EBA). Such a re-evaluation of the status of these forests would strengthen efforts to institute greater protection for Djibouti's remnant forests and their unique wildlife.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Alain Laurent for the loan of his slides of the pytilia and francolin, and to Martin Woodcock for the painting which accompanies this contribution. ♀

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Minsmere Reserve, Westleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 3BY, UK.

Plate on page 49: upper three birds unidentified sunbird, left to right, male, presumed immature and female; lower bird unidentified male pytilia (Martin Woodcock)

These illustrations are based on field notes and photographs provided by the authors, not reference to skins. The illustrations of the male and immature sunbird should not be viewed as a definitive references for these plumages as they are representations compiled from written descriptions and slides of the female.

Birding in Tanji Bird Reserve and Bijol Island, The Gambia

Anne Nason

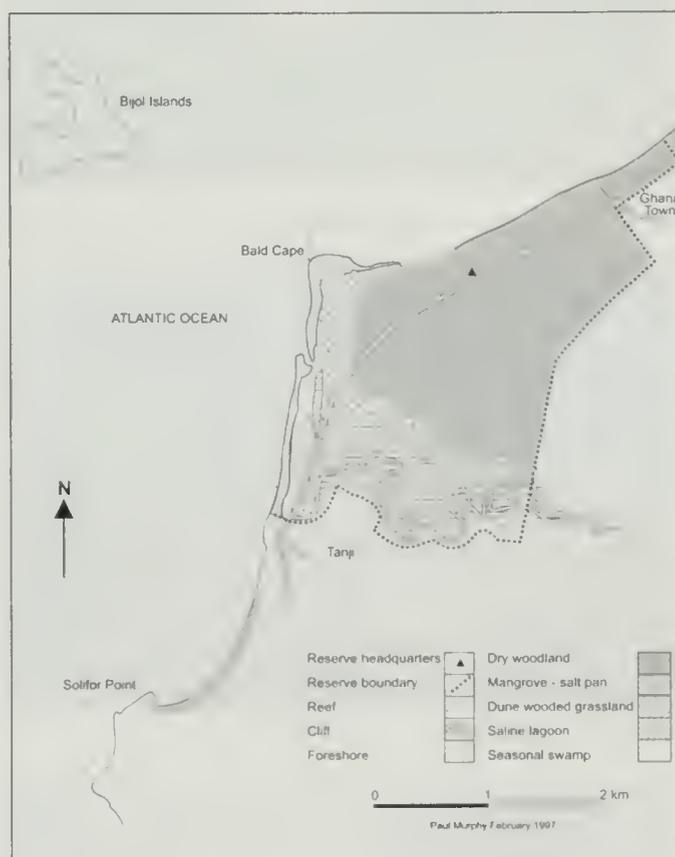
Note: the author visited The Gambia for two weeks in February 1997 with members of the British Army Ornithological Society on a tour organised by Clive Barlow, the ABC representative in The Gambia; therefore this article describes the ecology of the reserve in the dry season only.

The Gambia is now a well-established destination for European birders because of the great variety of species which can be seen in a relatively small and accessible area covering a broad range of habitats. Hospitable people and the lack of dangerous big game also play an important part in the enjoyment of birding as, unlike in parts of East and South Africa, it is unnecessary to be confined to a vehicle. The country has been well-described as 'the gateway to African birding'. Organised bird tours are available, as are charter flights from Manchester and Gatwick and many similar options are available from other European countries. There are hotels in Banjul and along the Atlantic coast to suit most pockets. The popular time to visit is during the dry season, October–April, when many Palearctic migrants are present and all roads are passable by vehicle. However, it is apparent that the wet season offers a completely different perspective to the visiting birder; a period which is at present under-watched.

Tanji Bird Reserve

This area, which includes nearby Bijol Island (see map), is notable because it is one of the newest established reserves in West Africa; its importance lies in its diversity of habitats which support both resident species and Palearctic migrants during the dry season. It lies on an internationally important migration route and 86 species of Palearctic migrant have thus far been recorded in the area. In total, over 300 species have occurred in the reserve since 1985. At present, the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management are working on a long-term development and management plan for the reserve.

Habitats in the reserve include: marine estuary, seasonal freshwater marsh, coastal dunes, mangrove at the Tanji river mouth, woodland savannah and small pockets of thicket. Tanji is a major fishing village situated approximately halfway between Banjul, the country's capital, and The Gambia's southern border



Map of Tanji Bird Reserve

with Senegal. This important bird area's potential was first realised in the 1980s by Clive Barlow, a resident British ornithologist. In 1993, a 136 ha area was gazetted as a protected site under the auspices of the DPWM, although lobbying had been going on for several years before that with Drs Almamy Camara and Tim Wachter playing important roles in its creation. The 'Tanji Birders' Society was formed to help support and develop the potential of the reserve, complementing the well-established Abuko Nature Reserve, which principally comprises forest habitat. In order to maintain the support of the local population, some utilisation of the Tanji site is permitted, including access to the fishing pirogues, clam-gathering and some grazing. Problems, with off-road vehicles driving into the reserve and even paper-chases through the area have occurred, but sad to say, this disturbance is mainly caused by inconsiderate tourists and expatriates rather than local people; however, the whole area is under threat of encroachment by wood collectors, who supply both domestic users and the nearby commercial fish smokeries.



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Apart from the site's interesting habitat and avifaunal diversity, one of its advantages is that there is easy access to the reserve, as a public (laterite) road runs through it. In addition, it is close to centres of population, making it easily accessible to both the interested birder and local school groups, for which it provides a useful conservation education resource.

Information for visitors

Unless you join an organised birding tour, transport to the reserve will normally be by taxi. Tourist taxis from the hotels are relatively expensive, but cheaper local taxis are also available. As Tanji is some distance from the hotels, it may be better to consider the journey inclusive of 'waiting time', otherwise procuring a taxi for the return journey could entail walking some distance to Tanji village. It is advisable to take plenty of water and some protection from the sun, as at present there are no refreshments or facilities available within the reserve, and the only way of getting around is on foot, although the 'waiting' taxi can be used for transport along the road which transects the reserve. Unsurprisingly, early mornings and evenings are the best time to visit. An inaugural trail has been cut, starting at the reserve's headquarters where all visitors must first report, but most of the reserve is relatively open and easy to walk around. A small fee (D30 = £2 in February 1997) is payable at the headquarters and entrance to the reserve, which is on the road between Ghana Town and Tanji village, and is signposted. It is possible to become a 'Tanji Birder' for a year with the payment of a £10 subscription, which will support the reserve's maintenance and development plans. Paid-up members of Tanji Birders are permitted multiple access to the reserve for the duration of their membership. A park warden and several reserve staff, employed by the DPMW, are based at the headquarters.

One of the added enjoyments of a visit to Tanji is the presence of mammals: **Western Red Colobus Monkey** *Colobus badius*, **Green Monkey** *Cercopithecus aethiops*, **Striped Ground Squirrel** *Xerus erythropus* and **Gambian Sun Squirrel** *Heliosciurus gambianus* are all frequently encountered. **Spotted Hyena** *Crocuta crocuta* is occasionally present, but rarely seen. Other small mammals on site are **mongoose** spp., **genet** spp. and **Bush Buck** *Tragelaphus scriptus*.

Habitat types

Marine estuary

Below the main entrance to the reserve is a shifting saline lagoon area where large mixed flocks of gulls and terns regularly gather at high tide. A variety of waders, including **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*, **Ringed Cbaradrius** *hiaticula* and **Kentish Plovers** *C. alexandrinus*, **Wood** *Tringa glareola* and **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos*, and **Senegal Thick-knee** *Burbinus senegalensis* can also be seen. **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*, which breed in the sandy banks and **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* (both white and dark phases) are also common around the lagoon. In the dry season, Palearctic migrants such as **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* and large flocks of **Sandwich** *Sterna sandvicensis* and **Royal Terns** *S. maxima* gather along the shore, which can be reached by wading through a lagoon. However, it is necessary to keep moving rapidly through the water, carrying your gear above your head, as the bottom of the lagoon is sinking sand!. A low density population of the dashing **White-fronted Plover** *Cbaradrius marginatus* is present here too, and **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* is common. Tanji is the only known site in this part of West Africa for **Kelp Gull** *L. dominicanus*, discovered here in the early 1990s.

Freshwater marsh

This dries out during the dry season, but because of its large open space, it is a good area for hawking insects; in consequence **Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* and **Blue-bellied Roller** *Coracias cyanogaster* are common in the trees and bushes along its edges. Other species to expect in this area are **Black-headed Bush-shrike** *Tchagra senegala*, **Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava*, **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* and **Oriole Warbler (Moho)** *Hypergerus atriceps*, the latter quickly identified by its melodious song. **Double-spurred Francolin** *Francolinus bicalcaratus* and **Stone Partridge** *Ptilopachus petrosus* are often encountered in this area either scurrying away, or if caught in the open, making short hurried flights for cover. During the wet season, this area is the reserve's main source of fresh-

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- Plate 1. Tanji Bird Reserve entrance, The Gambia (I. G. Nason)
- Plate 2. *Avicenna* mangrove at Tanji River mouth, The Gambia (I. G. Nason)
- Plate 3. Woodland savannah, Tanji Bird Reserve, The Gambia (R. Dickie)
- Plate 4. Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster* (I. G. Nason)
- Plate 5. Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* (I. G. Nason)
- Plate 6. African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceryx picta* (I. G. Nason)
- Plate 7. Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* (I. G. Nason)
- Plate 8. Western Grey Plantain-eater *Crimifer piscator* (I. G. Nason)

water and supports transient **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*, **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* and **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* as well as other freshwater dependants which leave the reserve when this area dries out. In the wet season, several **weaver** spp. construct their nests in the trees along the marsh edges, providing hosts for the parasitic **Didric** *Chrysococcyx caprius* and **Klaas' Cuckoos** *C. klaas*. Eight of the nine species of kingfisher occurring in The Gambia are present at the marsh during the course of the year, ranging in size from the **African Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* to the miniature **African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ceyx picta*.

Coastal dune

The vegetation in this area is dominated by Beach Convolvulus *Ipomaea pescaprae* and maritime grasses, which provide favourable habitat for migrant **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* and resident **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*.

Tanji River mangrove

This area, of *Avicennia* mangrove, is home to a variety of herons including **Black** *Egretta ardesiaca*, **Grey** *Ardea cinerea* and **Green-backed Herons** *Butorides striatus*. In addition, one of the most noticeable birds in this part of the reserve is the handsome **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica*, as one of its chief foods, fiddler crabs, are plentiful. Deep inside the mangrove, it is possible to spot **Mouse-brown Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus*, flitting restlessly among the vegetation. At low tide, many waders are in evidence, including **Whimbrel** *Numentius phaeopus* and **godwits** *Limosa* spp. and the occasional **Curlew** of the long-billed *orientalis* subspecies is regularly seen, identified by its much larger size.

Woodland savannah

Part of the reserve is dominated by the ginger-plum (Tamba) *Parinari macrophylla* tree but nearer the lagoon *acacia* predominates, with scattered baobab *Adansonia digitata* trees. **White-faced Scops Owl** *Otus leucotis* can be detected, roosting bolt upright amongst the *acacia* foliage, during the heat of the day, and the tiny **Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum* is also not infrequently seen by day. **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* ranges over Tanji at last light, usually selecting a remote tall forest tree to spend the day. The woodland savannah abounds with insectivores and is an excellent area to see migrant warblers, including **Olivaceous** *Hippolais pallida*, **Melodious** *Hippolais polyglotta* and **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* as well as **Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*. This area also supports **Red-billed** *Tockus erythrorhynchus* and **African Grey Hornbills** *Tockus nasutus*, **Abyssinian Roller**

Coracias abyssinica, **Yellow-crowned Gonolek** *Laniarius barbarus*, **Vieillot's Barbet** *Lybius vieilloti*, **Bearded Barbet** *Lybius dubius*, **Green Wood-hoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus*, **Black Wood-hoopoe** *Phoeniculus aterrimus*, **Variable (Yellow-bellied)** *Nectarinia venusta* and **Splendid Sunbirds** *Nectarinia coccinigaster*, and several species of dove to mention but a few among the host of colourful African species present. **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus* is a speciality here.

Thicket

This area needs nurturing and time for regeneration to ensure a future for forest birds in the area, as population pressure will inevitably lead to a reduction of neighbouring forest. The thickets have a few large trees and a dense undergrowth of lianas and bushes, which support forest species such as **Snowy-crowned Robin-chat** *Cossypha niveicapilla*, **Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida*, **Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera nivosa*, **Collared Sunbird** *Anthreptes collaris* and **Black-necked Weaver** *Ploceus nigricollis*. Other forest birds listed for Tanji include **Green Turaco** *Tauraco persa*, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus*, **Little Greenbul** *Andropadus virens* and **African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro*. On the edges of this fragment **Gambian Puff-back Shrike** *Dryoscopus gambensis* (the reserve's emblem), **Violet Turaco** *Musophaga violacea* and **Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike** *Telophorus sulfureopectus* can be found.

Salt pans

Just inland of the road, the salt pans are generally deserted during the day, but at night are important hunting grounds for hawking **Long-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus climacurus*. During the author's visit, an adult **Western Banded Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens* flew overhead calling a strange goose-like *bonk* to its following juvenile. **African Harrier Hawk** *Polyboroides typus*, a 'crafty' predator with double-jointed legs, is not uncommon in the reserve. Other raptors include **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*, **Shikra** *Accipiter badius*, **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*, **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* and **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*, the latter are thought to be wintering British birds.

Bijol Island

This small island 1.8 km north-west of Bald Cape has been incorporated into the reserve. There is very restricted public access but members of Tanji Birders may obtain permission from the DPMW, whose offices are situated near the Abuko Reserve, although this may not always be granted as it is such a sensitive area.

The Army Ornithological Society team, of which I was a member, was fortunate enough to be allowed to visit in order to count the gulls and waders present. The most significant count was the 30+ **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* (on 9 February 1997), an important single count for The Gambia.

The island is only c. 1.5 km long by 0.45 km wide. Above the shoreline, the sand is covered with Beach Convolvulus, and three small *Casuarina* saplings and an emergent Baobab are also obtaining a foothold. Both **Great White** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* are usually found on the island. Seabirds which use the island as a normally undisturbed resting place include **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*, and **Caspian** *Sterna caspia* and **Little Terns** *S. albifrons*. In the dry season, the island is also of importance to many Palearctic waders, and during the author's visit c280 **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*, c50 **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*, c250 **Sanderling** *Calidris alba* and three **Red Knot** *C. canutus* were counted. Anyone fortunate enough to visit Bijol will be immediately aware of the tremendous importance of this tiny island for both resident and migratory seabirds and waders, and its inclusion as part of the reserve greatly enhances the status of Tanji. With data relating to the concentrations of birds using these islands going back to 1985 and, in view of recent concerns about foreign fleets over-fishing in Gambian waters, the site has been recommended by Clive Barlow to the the Gambian government as a suitable site for seabird monitoring.

Development plans

The provision of several observation platforms around the reserve is planned for the near future, one of which will provide a view across to Bijol Island and of Bald Cape. Funding is now available for this. Other plans include developing the quarry area, which is situated a short distance from the main entrance. Exploratory bore holes dug in 1993 show the likelihood of sufficient water to keep a freshwater lake supplied throughout the year. This would be an enormous boost to the reserve and encourage many more waterbirds, especially in the dry season. Another plan, still in its embryonic stage, is to construct an education and interpretation centre above this lake, which would also act as a hide for observation purposes.

In summary, Tanji Bird Reserve is notable both for the number and variety of species seen and the relative ease with which one can observe the birds in this generally open habitat. It is a regionally important new reserve in The Gambia, for which the the Gambian

government should be congratulated. It is worthy of much support for the conservation of both resident and migrant species, and for its potential for carrying the message of conservation to schools in a rapidly developing West African country.

Address for Tanji Birders

UK: 154 Lightwoods Hill, Warley, West Midlands B67 5ED, or in The Gambia: Clive Barlow, Atlantic Hotel, tel: 220 22 86 01 ext 428 during office hours.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are due to Clive Barlow for his assistance in the preparation of this article. ☺

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Little-known African Birds

Somali Starling *Onychognathus blythii* in south-central Ethiopia

Peter G. Ryan and Ian Sinclair

Des nouvelles observations de *Onychognathus blythii* en provenance d'Éthiopie sont présentées, y compris des régions montagneuses du sud et du centre qui indiquent que l'espèce pourrait être commune dans celles-ci. Des données additionnelles sur la physionomie, les vocalisations et les façons de se nourrir sont également présentées.

The Somali Starling *Onychognathus blythii*, also called the Somali Chestnut-winged Starling, is a little-known species restricted to Eritrea, northern Somalia, Socotra and north-east Ethiopia². Despite being listed as "Frequent to common" in south-east and north-east Ethiopia⁵, we know of only one recent sighting of the species by the increasing numbers of birders visiting Ethiopia: one at the summit of Mt Fantale, Awash National Park, on 25 May 1996¹. We assumed that this was because most of the species' range in Ethiopia lies to the north and east of the area generally visited by most birders. However, our recent observations suggest that the species is common in the south and central highlands during the austral summer. This note seeks to clarify its status in this region of the country and to present new behavioural information on the species.

Somali Starlings were first encountered on the high plateaux of the Bale Mountains, south-east highlands, on 16 May 1997. Flocks of up to 50 birds were encountered above 3,800 m, both along the main road west of Dinsho and on the Sanetti Plateau south of Goba. The birds were feeding on large stands of red-hot poker *Knipofia* sp. flowering at this time, and the towering flowerheads of giant lobelias *Lobelia* spp. Many birds had substantial amounts of pollen accumulating on their heads. Flocks were encountered repeatedly in these areas during 6–8 and 20–23 June 1997. All, with the exception of one female which alighted briefly in natural woodland south of Goba at c.3,200 m on 21 June 1997, were recorded above the treeline.

Urban & Brown⁵ list the south-east highlands as an area where the species may occur; this is now confirmed. It is probable that the species is a seasonal visitor to the area, exploiting the abundance of nectar during the peak flowering period. It is unlikely that the

species has been overlooked by the many birders visiting the Bale Mountains during the austral winter. We also encountered two pairs of Somali Starling on the cliffs north of Ankober, in the central-western highlands, on 26 June 1997. This is well south of the reported range in the western highlands, but is relatively close to Fantale, where Bill and Sue Smith reported a bird in May 1996¹. It may be that birds move to highland areas south and west of the usual range during the northern summer. This coincides with the start of the main rainy season in Ethiopia, but it is unclear how it relates to the species' breeding season.

Little has been published on the behaviour and appearance of the species, with the exception of the population on Socotra³. The absolute size was hard to judge, but it is slender relative to other *Onychognathus* species. We found the best identification feature to be the peculiar tail shape; roughly diamond-shaped with elongated central tail feathers. The broadest point of the tail was only a third to halfway along the tail, unlike the Slender-billed Starling *O. tenuirostris*, where it is at least two-thirds of the way to the tail-tip. At rest, the male appears uniform black with a glossy sheen on the head and back. The adult female has a uniform grey head and neck, becoming scaly as it extends onto the breast and upper belly (scaling visible only at close range). The female also is characterised by a narrow, pale mask extending from the lores to slightly behind the eye. On Socotra this is apparently less extensive, forming a ring around the eye³.

We found the flocks to be somewhat skittish, flying long distances when disturbed, and often retreating to the sanctuary of large cliffs. They were not very vocal, occasionally uttering a rather weak, high-pitched *tink-ink-ink* call. Ours appears to be the first record of the species feeding extensively on nectar

and pollen; previous observers have only recorded fruit and insects in the diet¹⁻³. They foraged from the flowers by clinging to the stems beneath inflorescences and probing individual flowers in the manner of giant sunbirds. They shared this food resource with Tacazze Nectariniid *Tacazze* and Malachite Sunbirds *N. famosa*, but were not seen to interact with other species. The lone female in the woodland above Goba was seen in the same vicinity as a pair of Red-winged Starling *O. morio*, but the two species did not associate. †

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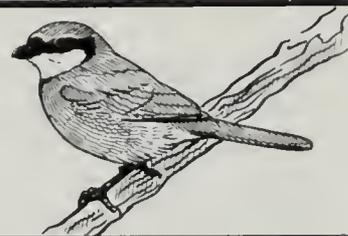
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First record of European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* in Madagascar

Rob Morris

Le première observation de *Merops apiaster* à Madagascar—un petit groupe à Ifaty, sur la côte sud-ouest, le 29 novembre 1996—est documentée. En vue de la route migratoire de l'espèce, sa présence dans le pays n'est pas surprenante.

Between 28 November–1 December 1996, I stayed at the Mora Mora Hotel, in Ifaty, north of Tuléar in south-west coastal Madagascar. From an ornithological perspective, this area is famous for its 'Spiny-desert' endemic species such as Long-tailed Ground Roller *Uratelornis chimaera* and Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi*. During my stay in this area the winds were relatively strong (25–40kph) and predominantly from a north-westerly direction.

On the evening of 29 November, I was birding a relatively large area, 3–4 km north of the Mora Mora Hotel, which had recently been cleared of vegetation. I was primarily searching for Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris* which had been noted in this area on several occasions during the preceding weeks. As I scanned across the trees and vegetation that remained, I noted a number of Madagascar Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* both perched and feeding in the area. Continuing, principally searching for birds perched in prominent positions, I noticed a small group of European Bee-eater *M. apiaster* perched at a range of 75–100 m, and observed them with my wife, Cerian, through a 30x telescope. All of the birds were worn adults. At this point, four Madagascar Bee-eater joined the group, permitting a direct comparison of the two species. The European Bee-eaters remained in the area for at least an hour. Later the same evening, I again saw four European Bee-eaters, c1 km to the south; these birds may have been part of the same group.

That evening, I mentioned the sighting to a number of birders in the area, but the following day the birds were not seen. It was only during evening discussions at the Mora Mora Hotel that I noticed that Langrand² did not list European Bee-eater as having been recorded in Madagascar.

Description

European Bee-eater is a species with which I am very familiar and, indeed, I had seen them on many occa-

sions during the preceding six weeks in southern Africa. They were immediately recognisable and separable from Madagascar Bee-eater by their turquoise-blue upper chest and belly, and the chestnut cap, nape and mantle. In addition, the birds exhibited a full yellow throat from the base of the bill to the thin black line separating the throat from the turquoise-blue breast. The central tail feather projection was far shorter than the Madagascar Bee-eaters present in the same area. In flight, the golden-yellow scapulars and rump were prominent, although the colours were somewhat faded.

Madagascar Bee-eater is more reminiscent of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *M. persicus*, being predominantly green with a rufous throat, and are thus not really confusable.

Distribution

European Bee-eater is a common summer visitor to North Africa, and southern Europe east to Central Asia. It winters predominantly in southern and eastern Africa from Kenya south to Transvaal, although small numbers winter in West Africa. Fry *et al*¹ provide full details of its status and distribution. It is a common migrant through the Arabian Gulf in spring and autumn and it seems unsurprising to me that a small group should find itself in south-west Madagascar during its 8,000 km migration between the breeding and wintering grounds, particularly taking into account the relatively strong onshore winds at this time. ♀

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Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*: a new bird for Mali

Volker Salewski

Le 3 janvier 1995, dans les environs de Bougouni, Mali, un *Apalis flavida* fut capturé dans un filet japonais et photographié. L'oiseau présentait des parties supérieures uniformément verdâtres ainsi qu'une gorge et une poitrine jaunes contrastant avec un ventre blanchâtre. Ces caractères sont indicatifs d'un immature. Ceci constitue la première mention de cette espèce pour le Mali.

On 3 January 1995, whilst mist-netting near Bougouni, Mali for two days, a Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida* was caught and photographed. The bird was uniformly greenish above and had a yellow throat and breast contrasting with the whitish belly. These characters show that the bird was an immature². Measurements were: wing 48 mm; tarsus 18 mm; weight 7.4 g. This is apparently the first record of the species in Mali: it is not listed by Dowsett & Forbes-Watson¹ or Urban *et al.*². Elsewhere, Yellow-breasted Apalis occurs in open forest and savannah from The Gambia and Sierra Leone, north to Chad and Niger, east to southern Sudan, Uganda and central Kenya, and south to northern Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and eastern South Africa². The bird's age suggests the species breeds in Mali.

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Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*, Mali, January 1995
(Volker Salewski)

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Reviews



The Birds of Africa. Volume 5: thrushes to puffback flycatchers.

E. K. Urban, C. H. Fry and S. Keith (eds). 1997. Academic Press, London. 660 pp, 32 colour plates, 347 distribution maps. £99.

At last; this volume has appeared five years after the publication of the last one, but it has been worth the wait. It treats thrushes not dealt with in Volume 4, the Old World warblers and flycatchers. The series has improved with time and a number of innovations in this volume add to the accuracy and value of the book. A few (including the gazetteer and red shading on the maps which indicate breeding areas), are major steps forward and enhance the value of the series as a whole. A positive advance, from a fieldworker's viewpoint, would have been reference to a standard colour key when describing egg colours and other features (plumages are largely catered for by the colour plates); perhaps this innovation can be added to forthcoming volumes, assuming that source material is available.

As before, a number of experts have written the texts ensuring that the accounts are as accurate as possible. Individual authors, in consultation with the editors, were given carte blanche to make their own taxonomic interpretations resulting in some rather different opinions than we in Africa are used to. The acoustic references are comprehensive and make the location of a particular song-type even easier than before. The illustrations are all excellently done—although somewhat duller than the printers proofs, which I saw at the 1997 Rutland Water Bird Fair—and Martin Woodcock is to be congratulated. However, a number of inconsistencies in the artwork left me wondering whether taxonomic decisions were made independently of the artist.

I am unsurprised at the lack of natural history data for many species covered here. Compare, for example, the information on European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, with African Reed Warbler *A. baeticatus*. There is much scope for good natural history data on these and other species (witness the number of accounts where nests,

incubation and fledgling periods are unknown). The dearth of indigenous African ornithologists, north of the Limpopo River, contributes to this and until the malaise in the affairs of the continent is turned around, this lack of data will continue. Also, the current trend in world ornithological journals to publish cutting-edge science at the expense of solid natural history studies is worrying in an African context, particularly when so many birds are under threat. There are few international journals which will publish general biology papers, and those African journals which accept such work have a limited circulation or are beset with financial worries due to collapsing currencies. It is worth remembering that we cannot adequately protect species of which we know little, but data presented on many species in this volume goes some way to highlighting the need for natural history data, some of it urgently.

Surprisingly, a number of names are re-introduced in this volume and in some cases the authors have adopted common (and sometimes scientific) names unused in Africa for many years. The authors should have attempted to retain names in current use eg in southern and East African field guides. Some of the more obvious changes include Moustached Grass Warbler *Melocichla mentalis* (in East Africa this is the African Moustached Warbler, in southern and central Africa the Moustached Warbler); Cape Grass Warbler *Sphenoeacus afer* for Grassbird; Miombo Wren-Warbler *Camaroptera undosa* for Miombo Barred Warbler in East Africa and Stierling's Barred Warbler in southern Africa. In East Africa, common name changes include Moreau's Tailorbird *Apalis moreaui* for Long-billed Apalis and African Tailorbird *Orthotomus metopias* for Red-capped Forest Warbler, to name a few.

There is inconsistent use of common names within *Phylloscopus*. Some are called Willow Warbler and others, within the genus, have woodland added to their names eg Yellow-throated Woodland-Warbler *P. ruficapilla*, following the names used in East Africa. As they all occur in woodland of some description, I think this could have been omitted. Some prinias are placed in the

genus *Schistolais*; if ever there was cause for inventing a new common name, perhaps it is here?. Common names for *Parisoma* are a nightmare of confusion. Layard's Warbler/Tit-babbler *Sylvia layardi*, Chestnut-vented Warbler or Tit-babbler *S. subcaerulea* and Brown *S. lugens* and Banded Parisoma *S. boehmi* are names used for members of this genus; it might have been more sensible to apply one common name (tit-babbler, warbler or parisoma), as, with time, such uniformity might gain acceptance. Mariqua Flycatcher *Bradornis mariquensis* has not been used in southern Africa for a number of years and Marico is now in common use. As this bird occurs almost exclusively within the confines of southern Africa, I cannot understand why an outdated name has been used in preference to that in common use.

The taxonomy in this volume is inconsistent although, to be fair, some species under consideration are little-known. The taxonomic approach is varied and in some cases voice is given more emphasis than equally important factors, such as DNA. As so little is known about some species, I would have presumed that the molecular evidence of relationships would have been given precedence, but this does not appear to be the case. Some decisions are well-defended but others—particularly where forms have been treated as subspecies and molecular evidence suggests otherwise—not so well. The rules are inconsistently applied, being used in some instances and ignored elsewhere, particularly in examples where change appears justifiable. In respect of subspecies, opinions will always vary, as noted by Irwin (review of *The Birds of Africa* Vol 4, *Honeyguide* 39: 39–42) and many forms are liable to recognition when only the specimens in European and North American museums are examined; an occasionally uneven treatment of subspecific and specific taxa reflects this. This volume is beset by this particular problem because it deals with the warblers and flycatchers, of which many are little-known in the field and appear very similar in plumage when skins are examined by authors not resident on the continent. Those living

in Africa often possess in-the-field experience but may lack the perspective gained from looking at specimens from across the continental range of a species, because of a lack of access to the museums concerned. At times, this makes species limits decisions for familiar birds very difficult to swallow.

In the present day, I wonder just how useful the superspecies concept is? It appears to stifle new approaches to inter-species relationships and tends to assemble taxa into larger groups on the basis of appearance, which may make little sense in molecular terms. I believe that adherence to this concept has resulted in much of the taxonomic confusion that exists today and that we should be more open-minded to those molecular studies which produce unexpected results. For example, on DNA evidence there are three families in Sylviidae with some non-conventional inserts (eg bulbuls), but some African workers do not recognise this. The editors of *The Birds of Africa* have adopted a policy of following convention for Palearctic genera (reflecting their Holarctic roots) but Afrotropical genera are sorted in an order of their own making, adding to existing confusion. Some genera are transferred to flycatchers and babblers, although 44 African genera are in fact too little-known to produce an evolutionary tree. This is important when discussing avian diversity in the Afrotropics, as taxonomic decisions ultimately determine the number of species in a given area. To be more specific, the placement of Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsipsirupa* into the monotypic genus *Psophocichla* appears reasoned and logical. I wonder if the Orange Ground Thrush *Zoothera gunneyi* population in Angola still exists and if it is really the same subspecies that occurs in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia? Sixteen subspecies of the Olive Thrush *Turdus olivaceus* are mentioned and the taxonomic note notes the persistent confusion but does not mention that some are essentially savannah forms (eg *T. libonyana* south of the Zambezi) while others are mainly restricted to forest. Other differences exist between the savannah and forest forms (eg significantly different egg colours—pale green and blotched in the savannah forms; light blue and relatively unmarked in the forest forms—and their DNA). There is much scope for future work on the basis of behaviour, vocal and molecular studies and I would not be surprised if there were some cryptic species in this conglomeration.

Among warblers 45 genera and c210 species are currently recognised in Africa, and thus there is bound to be some disagreement and differences in interpretation of taxonomic relationships. In the text for *Bradypterus haboecala* it states that *B. b. tongensis* occurs in east and south Zambia and extreme east Zimbabwe in the Zambezi Valley from Tete to the Chobe River. Previously, it was stated to be largely absent from the Zambezi Valley which is confirmed by the distribution map. Another race merges with *tongensis* on the Chobe River but there is essentially no suitable habitat for this species below Victoria Falls and there is also no illustration of the well-studied southern form, which is much darker above and below than that which is illustrated.

River Warbler *Locustella fluvialis* is stated to be widespread in Zimbabwe during the austral summer but this is not supported by observations: it is very rare with perhaps two sightings a year. The large concentration reported in north-east Botswana in the austral summer was perhaps a one-off. The problem is that the land where the birds were wintering is inaccessible without a permit, which can only be obtained, after an exhaustive bureaucratic process, through the local wildlife agencies.

The editors have dispensed with African Marsh Warbler in preference to African Reed Warbler, which they have retained as *boeticatus* despite suggestions that it is conspecific with European Reed Warbler. I agree with this decision, as it reflects its close taxonomic affinities with European Reed Warbler. However, the distribution map is surely a gross overstatement of its breeding range, particularly in southern Africa, reflecting observer confusion with similar warblers.

The distribution map of Greater Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens* on the Upper Zambezi is very disjointed: is this real or a function of the data available? In this area, it occurs in small patches of papyrus and, if papyrus occurs most of the way upstream from Victoria Falls, then the species will probably occur throughout. The two subspecies apparently occupy different habitats in West and East Africa, leading one to speculate that the two taxa might be specific—they appear quite dissimilar. Certainly, the nest situation of a West African form was different to nests on the upper Zambezi.

The taxonomic notes, which complete each cisticola species account, suggest that there is much taxonomic

work to be done on this group. Sibley & Monroe⁵ suggested that the cisticolas are a distinct group within the Sylviidae, which should give some inkling of the possibility of a number of undescribed species. All such work has taken the form of molecular studies, but the authors ignore molecular differences in some cases (*Cisticola chubbi* and *C. discolor*) and opt for more traditional viewpoints. I understand that there are a number of undescribed cisticolas in Tanzania, highlighting the urgent need for taxonomic work on this group. Several taxa, presently considered species, were originally described as subspecies (eg *C. bodessa* (*C. subruficapilla bodessa*), *C. njombe* (*C. aberrans njombe*), *C. aberdare* (*C. robusta aberdare*)) and it is possible that other subspecies in the *C. laiso*, *C. galactotes* and *C. aberrans* complexes are also meritorious of full species status, but data are currently lacking. Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythropus* song is as a duet but this is not easily detected in the field despite specifically listening for it. Is *C. e. nyasa*, including *arcana* and *elusa*, the same as more northerly forms? *C. lepe* is treated as a subspecies of *C. erythropus contra* to some previous work, which accorded it full species status. I am unconvinced that *C. discolor* is conspecific with *C. chubbi*: genetic evidence suggests they are different and song playback results are equivocal. In my view, the authors should have stated that song similarities may exist but, until these are better studied, they followed genetic evidence in treating these forms as different species. The *emini* subspecies of Rock-loving Cisticola *C. aberrans* has different DNA but similar morphology and song to other forms and is therefore lumped with them. No mention is made of the significantly different song of *C. a. nyika*, which does not respond to playback of South African birds. It occupies a different habitat to these and is perhaps specifically distinct. In view of this, I wonder just how similar the calls of *C. a. emini* are to those of other forms and if it is best treated as a subspecies. Wailing Cisticola *C. lais* includes a variety of potentially new forms, eg Lynes's Cisticola *C. distinctus*, which is accorded specific recognition by Zimmerman *et al* but not by Dowsett & Forbes-Watson². Also included in this complex are *C. l. masbona* and *C. l. oreobates* from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, one of which has a very distinct breeding plumage not shared by the other, although this is not mentioned in the

text. Indeed, *oreobates* may warrant specific recognition.

It is extremely difficult to discover what the breeding plumage of any of the forms of Winding Cisticola *C. galactotes* looks like, as each section, almost without exception, refers the reader to a previously mentioned subspecies. From the same text, it is obvious that these subspecies' songs and, to some extent, habitats are different, but no mention is made of the possibility that more than one species may be involved. From a Zimbabwean perspective, *isodactylus* (the form occurring in the south-east of the country) is treated within *suabelicus*, but subsequently it is stated that *galactotes* is the form occurring in the south-east. This viewpoint rests on Lynes' (1930s) opinion and ignores a more recent (1960s) analysis which lumps the south-east Zimbabwean lowveld forms with those from Mozambique, which is far more likely. The authors appear not to have examined specimens from this area. If they had, they would surely have commented on the obviously grey head, grading into the grey back in non-breeding plumage of *isodactylus*. These birds are very obviously not *suabelicus* or *galactotes* on this basis, although they respond well to the call of *galactotes* from Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa. In breeding plumage, the head assumes a grey-brown colour—quite unlike the form occurring in north-west Zimbabwe. The distribution of the *luapula* subspecies is more widespread than given and it is likely that it, *schoutedeni* and *stagnans* are all conspecific—previously suggested by a number of authors but ignored here. These birds do not respond to the calls of *galactotes* from Kwazulu-Natal or East Africa, but with some vigour to calls from within their restricted-range (most of Zambia, north-east Namibia, north-east Botswana and north-west Zimbabwe). The described habitat occupied by a number of forms across its vast continental range varies from all types of marsh vegetation, except dense papyrus (although it is occasionally found there in north-west Zimbabwe), especially at the edge of open water etc, highland streams and marshes, highland grassland, broadleaved tall grass savannah and *Acacia* short grass savannah in Ethiopia, and bush, cultivation and dunes in East Africa. It is worth questioning whether these constitute the same species, as they occupy such a wide variety of habitats over a range of altitudes and localities, and possess a number of distinctly different songs and plumage

types. In my opinion, there are potentially a number of full species within this complex.

The Pectoral-patch *C. brunnescens* and Pale-crowned Cisticolas *C. cinnamomeus* are treated as full species (previously the form occurring in Zimbabwe was considered to be *C. brunnescens cinnamomea*) although the rationale for this is not well-explained (it appears to be on the basis of some instances of sympatry between the two and Wing-snapping Cisticola *C. ayresii* in Gabon). The description of breeding plumage Pale-crowned Cisticola is unconvincing; the form in Zimbabwe is more like the description of Pectoral-patch Cisticola and is similar to that illustrated in Zimmerman *et al*, which on this treatment is not *cinnamomeus* but *brunnescens*. The decision to split the two also caught the artist off-guard and Pale-crowned Cisticola is 'stuck' between a number of races of *brunnescens*. As a result, variations in *cinnamomeus* are not illustrated, including the obvious breeding plumage. A detailed taxonomic note is warranted under *brunnescens* and not under *ayresii*, which is a very different bird altogether. Additionally, I found the explanation under *ayresii* to be unconvincing as there is no literature citation but many pers. comms. without obvious supporting data (eg tape-recordings or specimens) of the birds in question.

The variation in the plumage types of Bar-throated Apalis *Apalis thoracica* is almost unbelievable and a detailed appraisal of the DNA of these forms might reveal some surprises in terms of their relationships. The occurrence of different songs among these forms (*fuscigularis*) is mentioned, and the comment that some incipient speciation may be occurring in this group appears an understatement. This group deserves intensive work, a comment equally applicable to most members of the genus. Rwenzori Apalis *A. ruwenzorii* was initially considered a form of *A. pulchra*, on the basis of vocal similarity, but is now recognised as a species on the basis of distribution, plumage characters and its differing number of tail feathers. Likewise, Yellow-breasted Apalis *A. flavida* occurs in a number of locally sympatric and vocally distinct forms, suggesting that a number of unrecognised species are currently retained in this grouping. My experience of Black-headed Apalis *A. melanocephala* in the lowland forest of Zimbabwe indicates that it has red-brown eyes (confirmed from specimen-labels at

Bulawayo Museum), but most illustrations depict the species as having pale irides. Is this significant in a breeding context, as the birds we saw were in the non-breeding season?. Chapin's Apalis *A. chapini* is specifically distinct from *A. porphyrolaema* due to its different head and breast pattern, and voice, as is Brown-headed Apalis *A. alticola* which was recently discovered to be sympatric with the Grey Apalis *A. cinerea* in parts of its range, supporting the contention of some authors (eg Sibley & Monroe⁵) that it is a species.

Five apalis species have grey backs and rufous throats/upper breasts, making sight records very difficult to verify, and I wonder what the impact of sight records has been on the distribution maps presented here. Also, given different skin preparation techniques and possibly undescribed plumage variation, how accurate has the identification of these forms in the museum been?. The placement of *Apalis moreau* and *Ortbomus metopias* in the genus *Artisornis* coupled with a change in their common names could have been better defended and explained.

Bleating Warbler *Camaroptera brachyura* is a contentious species whose exact limits and races have been the subject of much debate and taxonomic revision over a long period. Here, it is retained in the lumped form (with some misgivings) and despite strong evidence (molecular and otherwise eg song and preferred habitat) that *brachyura* and *brevicaudata* are perhaps distinct enough to warrant separate species status. Hybridisation has been reported in zones of contact but some supposed hybrid specimens in Bulawayo Museum can be allocated to one taxa or the other with some confidence. My belief is that two species are involved.

I concur with the placement of the small grey warblers, some of which are barred below, which occur in the woodlands of central Africa in *Calamonastes* but disagree with the comment that 'all forms might be considered well-marked races of a single species', which made me wonder how well the authors know these warblers in the field, if at all?. The taxonomy is no better for the treatment given this group and if anything has taken a retrogressive step, as in the field these birds are quite different. Detailed analysis of these forms' songs is presented in the voice section of *C. undosus* and the differences between *simplex/undosus* and *stierlingi* highlighted. As the use of song voice differences has been used in this volume

as a justification for some taxonomic decisions, I was very surprised to note that obvious differences in the song of these birds has been ignored in this respect. The calls of *C. stierlingi* and *simplex* from Zambia are very different⁶ as is the habitat occupied with *simplex* occurring in richer (=moister) Miombo woodland than *stierlingi*¹. Benson *et al*⁶ mention a hybrid zone but some such specimens held in Bulawayo could quite easily be separated into *stierlingi* or *simplex*, although Stjernstedt⁶ has a tape-recording of an apparent hybrid from the area of overlap. It seems that they have been unnecessarily lumped on the basis of their plumage alone (which in my opinion is unconvincing) and without taking into account the song and habitat differences between the two. A more logical arrangement would be: *C. simplex* in the north, *C. undosus entices* in Rwanda, Tanzania, Angola, Congo and north Zambia, *C. stierlingi* in the rest of Zambia, Zimbabwe, east Botswana, south-west Angola, Caprivi (Namibia), Mozambique and South Africa and *C. fasciolatus* in Namibia, south-west Angola, Botswana and the Transvaal (South Africa).

A taxonomic note suggests that a number of species (two or more?) may be involved in the Pale=Pallid Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus* complex and stresses the need for field studies of the various forms. This applies to all species for which there is dispute over the number of races and their status. Certainly the distribution map of this species suggests that a number of species may be involved—fieldwork will prove or refute this.

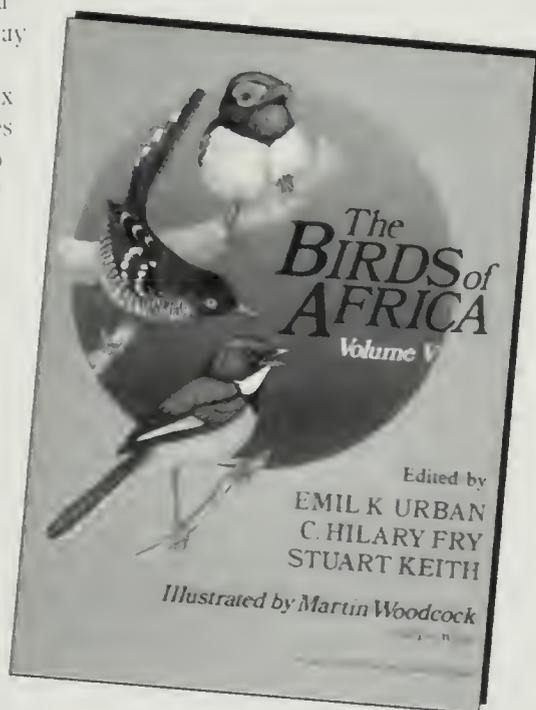
Whilst Zimmermann *et al* use Lead-coloured Flycatcher, *The Birds of Africa* coin the new (?) name Grey Tit-Flycatcher for *Myioparus plumbeus*. To my mind, Fan-tailed Flycatcher is probably the best name as it well-describes the bird and its actions. The other member of the genus, *M. griseigularis*, could be called Grey-throated Fan-tailed Flycatcher—no less of a mouthful than Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher and probably describes the bird much better. These taxa were originally considered to be warblers and, given the behavioural similarities between Fan-tailed Flycatcher and Fairy Flycatcher, there may be some justification for treating them within the same genus. The monotypic endemic Fairy Flycatcher *Stinostira scita* has been through the taxonomic mill,

having been variously treated as a muscicapid flycatcher, monarchid flycatcher and a sylviid warbler by different authors. The authors make a novel suggestion that *Myioparus plumbeus* is close enough to (presumably based on behaviour) *Stinostira* and that they should both probably be placed in that genus (which pre-dates *Myioparus*). Molecular data suggest it is a warbler and fieldwork should help assess its evolutionary placement and relationship to Fan-tailed Flycatcher.

Genuine plumage variability is recorded in Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* but it is not stated how this affects the subspecies which are subsequently described and some confusion in taxonomy results: male *T. v. viridis* is described as having deep rufous upperparts, white wing edgings, glossy blue-black throat extending onto breast, and rufous tail and undertail-coverts. This race is illustrated as having the back, all upperwing-coverts, tail, undertail-coverts and lower breast white; the flight feathers, mid- and upper breast, head, nape and crest are blue-black. Reports of hybrids between *T. viridis*, *T. rufiventris*, *T. bedfordi* and *T.*

variously treated as flycatchers, shrikes, warblers and thrushes. Molecular studies have demonstrated that some are closest to crows, bush-shrikes and helmet-shrikes. A complete study of the calls, behaviour, nesting and DNA of each species might heighten our understanding of their taxonomic affinities. The forms of Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, *Dyaphorophya blissetti blissetti* and *D. b. balybea*, are considered the same species by some, as they occur in the same location at different altitudes, but as allospecies by other authorities. They appear different on the basis of this book's illustrations and, despite the authors decision to treat them as conspecific until more data are available, they seem safely separable to me. Likewise, the three subspecies of Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *D. concreta* look different, do not overlap in distribution and habitat, and sing differently; characteristics which have previously been used to justify specific separation.

Opinions concerning the species limits and superspecies affiliations of batis⁷ have varied greatly over the years and the final say will presumably be had by students of vocal and other social communication characteristics. A number of species are almost identical, creating major problems in the field for the uninitiated and past mistakes with identifications, even in the museum, will be very difficult to rectify. For example, plumage differences between Senegal Batis *Batis senegalensis* and Angola Batis *B. minnula* are not as great as those between *B. poensis poensis* and *B. p. occulta*, which are probably separate species (as suggested by Lawson¹). Additionally, the accompanying taxonomic note does not detail the distribution of *B. p. occulta* at all. If their ranges overlap, then there are certainly two species involved, but this decision cannot be made according to the information presented here. The songs of Cape Batis *Batis capensis kennedyi* (the isolated Zimbabwean population) are different from those in the Cape. Although these two populations are morphologically similar, the territorial calls are different (although both respond to and make the same mobbing call). It is also difficult to determine the exact ranges of *B. c. hollidayi* and *B. c. capensis*, as details of their distribution suggest that the two forms overlap in the Kwazulu-Natal region of South Africa, making me speculate on the subspecific validity of *hollidayi*. This illustrates just how difficult it is to make



batesi, based solely on the study of museum skins should, I believe, be reported with caution, due to the large amount of individual variation in subpopulations of these species. I concur that field studies in areas from where 'hybrids' have been reported would be most instructive.

Flycatchers, wattle-eyes and batis are other groups which have been through the taxonomic treadmill, having been

an informed decision using a single feature (eg plumage, distribution or voice) and that the multi-taxonomic viewpoint is probably the most informed option to take.

From a southern African perspective, some distribution maps had errors. Records of Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythroptera* in Kruger National Park, South Africa are erroneous. The map for Burnt-necked Eremomela *Eremomela usticollis* incorrectly shows a gap in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe where it is regularly found. Likewise, the dashed line dividing the northern long-billed forms of Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens* from southern short-billed forms does not equate with that described in the text. The 1994 record of Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* in eastern Zimbabwe has been overlooked, although this suggests that some birds may wander down the Rift Valley. The isolated population of Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* in the Kalahari desert of Botswana is erroneous and the occurrence of Yellow-bellied Hylia *Hylia flavigaster* in the Caprivi of Namibia is unproven. Records of Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas* at Victoria Falls are unacceptable and considered to be misidentifications (for a Puffback Shrike *Dryoscopus cubla* in one instance). No population is known from nearby so the supposed records cannot be of local birds and in the absence of a specimen are best ignored. There are remarkably few typographical errors: two I found were Chinanimani mountains = Chimanimani Mountains on p. 76 and Herremans, M. not H. (under River Warbler).

I regularly use the already published volumes as a baseline from which to plan further work or to discover what is known of the birds in which I'm interested. Despite the comments above, this volume is the best yet and if all the remaining volumes are as good, then we really have something to look forward to. By highlighting the gaps in our knowledge, the authors are providing an important service whereby it can be pinpointed if new observations add to existing knowledge of little-known species, some of which have limited distributions and possibly small populations. Time is of the essence in this production though and I trust that the remaining volumes will be produced a little more quickly than this one. In addition, the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is being published at such a rate, it could overtake *The Birds of Africa* as

the first choice information source on African birds. It is up to the editorial team to see that this does not happen.

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Dr Kit Hustler

Shrikes. A Guide to the Shrikes of the World

Norbert Lefranc and Tim Worfolk. 1997. 192 pp, 16 colour plates, 23 line drawing and 33 maps. Pica Press, The Banks, Mountfield, Nr. Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY. UK£25.00.

This latest offering from Pica Press is typically very well-produced and follows a similar format to those of previous volumes in the series. The usual introductory chapters include a discussion of the taxonomy and relationships of the helmet-shrikes, bush-shrikes, 'true shrikes' and Bornean Bristlehead, and provide a justification for the decision to restrict the scope of the book to the Laniidae. With the exception of the recent elevation of *Lanius meridionalis* to species status, the taxonomy follows that of Sibley & Monroe. However, I feel that the decision to treat just the three genera comprising the Laniidae is something of a missed opportunity, since the helmet-shrikes, bush-shrikes and Bornean Bristlehead all share common morphological features with the true shrikes and the book would have surely been of greater use to its audience, and in



particular to readers of this journal, had the additional families been covered.

A fascinating overview of the genus *Lanius* covers such varied topics as names, morphology, plumages and moult, origins, distribution and migration, habitats, social organisation, foraging behaviour, breeding biology, food, aspects of population dynamics and conservation. Overviews of *Corvinella* and *Eurocephalus* are much briefer totalling less than a page each and presumably reflects a reduced level of knowledge about these groups.

The colour plates are all of the high standard now expected in publications such as this. For most species the adult males are well illustrated with many races depicted. It is, however, a little disappointing to find that for most species just one race is illustrated in immature plumage and female plumage.

The main bulk of the book comprises the species accounts. These vary from approximately three-quarters of a page for little-known species such as Uhehe Fiscal *Lanius maruizi* to over eight pages for better known and more thoroughly studied species such as Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*. The accounts are clear, well-written and as far as I can tell, generally accurate. In a book covering just 30 species, I would have preferred to see even greater depth entered into, rather than just listing references where the reader could delve further. Areas where there are gaps in our knowledge are pointed out and should enable future researchers to target their work where more can be learned. Earlier volumes in this series suffered from some difficult to understand distribution maps: those included here are easy to interpret. The maps showing the distribution of the various

rases for species such as Great Grey Shrike, for example, are very clear and easy to understand.

Despite the fact that I am left with the feeling that an opportunity has been missed to extend the scope and increase the depth of coverage, this is nevertheless a very well-produced book that many people will wish to own

Chris Bradshaw

A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal

Clive Barlow, Tim Wacher and Tony Disley. 1997. 352 pp, 48 colour plates, many distribution maps. Pica Press, The Banks, Mountfield, Nr. Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY. UK£26.00.

The Gambia has long been a popular destination for birders from Western Europe to visit but, until now, there were only a few, relatively incomplete, guides available to assist with field identification, status and other issues. This book admirably redresses the situation and will hopefully foster an upsurge of interest in the area, as well as encouraging visitors to submit their sightings (to the address on page 13) to further improve our knowledge of the region's avifauna. It is reasonably priced, being virtually a pocket-sized, hardcovered handbook rather than a true field guide.

The authors state that the guide covers every species on the Senegambia list, some 660 species, and illustrates virtually all 540 or so species that have been recorded in The Gambia. The 48 colour plates illustrate 570 species, the remaining 90 species are largely vagrants only recorded on a few occasions and usually well-illustrated in other (Western Palearctic, North American and Asian) field guides. It is only the occasional extralimital African species, Kordofan Lark *Mirafra cordofanica* for example, which may present problems.

Within the guide, there are four maps detailing the area covered and illustrating districts, nature reserves, towns etc: three of these maps constitute endpapers and the other is tucked away on pages 6 and 7. The first two pages of text list many acknowledgements and are followed by a very informative nine page introduction to the geography, climate, habitat, protected areas network etc. Next, there is a four page section devoted to 'using the book', which is surprisingly helpful, giving insight into such minefields as

bird vocalisations and volatile taxonomic issues among other useful hints. Finally, before the real meat of the book, are two pages of plumage topography. The detailed colour plates, which are placed together ahead of the main text, are accompanied by brief texts presenting the status of each species, the major identification features and, in some cases, a useful hint as to its distribution, as well as the relevant page reference to the main text. The 270 pages of text are very informative, being broken down into 'Identification' with a sub-section on similar species if appropriate, then 'Habits', 'Voice', 'Status and Distribution' and 'Breeding' if this occurs in the region. The last few pages of the book give brief space to the Tanji Birders Club and a thorough five page Bibliography, followed by indices of English and scientific names.

I find this book hard to fault. I am sure that if I really nit-picked I could find some trivia to gripe about, but overall I was most impressed and just wish it had been available for my (so far) only visit, back in 1984, when I managed to get such 'exotic' species such as Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* and Pochard, *Aythya ferina* rejected due to a lack of adequate field notes caused by not realising the significance of the sightings. This book should ensure that nobody blunders into the same pitfall in the future.

David Holman

Important Bird Areas of Ethiopia: a first inventory

Solomon Tilahun, Sue Edwards and Tewelde Egziabher. 1996. 314 pp, several line drawings and maps. Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society, Addis Ababa. \$20.

I lived in Ethiopia for three years in the 1970s and have returned several times since then to renew my acquaintance with its rich avifauna. More recently, I have been researching and writing the Important Bird Area (IBA) texts for Botswana, so it was with particular interest that I anticipated reading this recent publication. I was not disappointed. The Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society (EWNHS) and in particular, the three editors, Solomon Tilahun, Sue Edwards and Tewelde Egziabher, as well as Yilma Dellelegn, the IBA co-ordinator, and all the IBA survey team in Ethiopia, must be warmly congratulated on its production. I can fully appreciate what a mammoth task it

has been to identify the sites, undertake the surveys and research, and write the text for this extremely useful book.

Ethiopia has very diverse habitats from the Dallol Depression in the Danakil Desert some 116 m below sea-level, to the Simien mountain peaks of over 1,000 m, and a range of alkaline and freshwater lakes. The mountain plateaux, long-isolated from the rest of Africa, have developed grasslands and forest with a unique flora and fauna. There are 16 endemic bird species and a further 14 shared with the former province of Eritrea, now a separate country. The main criteria for IBA selection are: the presence of globally threatened species, of which Ethiopia has 30; of species with restricted ranges (Endemic Bird Areas) and of particular assemblages of species in specialised habitats or of large concentrations of waterbirds. Given the richness of habitats and species throughout the country and the large waterfowl populations in the Rift Valley lakes, it is not surprising that as many as 63 IBAs have been identified. As the authors note, this is a provisional list: eight other areas may qualify but for various reasons the survey team was unable to obtain data for them.

The book follows a similar format to the IBA inventories already available covering Europe, the UK and the Middle East. Preceding the inventory of sites are introductory chapters on the country's geography and climate, natural resources, government structure, and a very useful summary of the history of the country, explaining the breakdown in the relationship between man and wildlife over the centuries. Very few communities still control their own natural resources but those that do are responsible for safeguarding important remnants of natural habitat, such as the forest island on Mount Zuqala. The IBAs are arranged alphabetically by political regions, and for each IBA, there is a description and an explanation of why the site has been selected as an IBA, a summary of its bird and other wildlife interest, the threats facing the area, and a short bibliography. I found the texts very informative and immensely readable, helped, I must admit, by the decision to refer to birds by their English names rather than scientific names as in other IBA publications.

Some of the IBAs will be familiar to visiting birders: Lakes Awasa, Abijatta, Shalla and Zeway, the Awash National Park, the beautiful Bale Mountains (its endemic mammals sadly so depleted in

the early 1990s), Bahir Dar – Lake Tana, the Jemna Valley (well-known for its Harwood's Francolins *Francolinus barwoodi*) and the small Lake Gefersa close to Addis Ababa. Descriptions of the IBAs brought back many memories of trips with the EWNHS to sites such as the crater lakes at Debre Zeit. I became quite nostalgic when reading accounts of more remote or less accessible areas which I had once visited.

With the diversity of habitats and birds, it has clearly been a difficult task for the EWNHS to identify sites that qualify as IBAs. However, I did feel that the reasons for including some few sites appeared tenuous. Widely dispersed, threatened or near-threatened endemics or Palearctic migrant raptors do pose a problem but it seems that any site supporting a few pairs or individuals, has been included. Thus, Gefersa Reservoir whilst an interesting site, has no recent record of White-winged Flufftail *Sotbura ayresi*, supports only a few pairs of Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii* and Abyssinian Longclaw *Macronyx flavicollis* and a few highland biome assemblage species covered by other sites. Should Lake Langano rank as an IBA on the basis of small numbers of wintering or passage Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, and occasional Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*? Perhaps this is an unfair criticism as the inclusion of such sites in this inventory does highlight areas to which further field-work should be directed. It would be helpful too, if a map of each IBA could be provided in any update.

Ethiopia faces great pressures from a rapidly growing population (over 3% p.a.) with its needs for fuel and land for grazing and cultivating. Consequent destruction and degradation of forests and woodlands, further planting of the alien *Eucalyptus* trees, overgrazing of grasslands and drainage of wetlands has greatly accelerated over the last two decades to the detriment of endemics such as Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons*, Spot-breasted Plover *Vanellus melanocephalus* and Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii*. Conflicts between farmers and waterfowl, notably geese and cranes, are now commonplace. I was saddened to read of the almost total destruction of *Acacia* woodland in the Rift Valley by Lake Gelila above Koka Dam. This woodland provided excellent habitat for numerous Palearctic migrants in the early 1970s and was a site where I spent many

productive weekends ringing with Dr John Ash.

Some may find the rather garish blue and yellow cover and poor paper quality unappealing and some maps difficult to decipher. However, presumably recycled materials have been used and the book is well-bound and should be durable. I can highly recommend it to all those interested in the avifauna of this remarkable country and indeed of the African continent. I am sure, as the authors hope, it will be a model for other countries involved in producing IBA inventories. It is also a 'must' for any birders planning a trip to Ethiopia. I only hope that it will help direct birdwatchers to poorly known sites so that they can help fill the gaps in knowledge and stimulate them to submit records to the EWNHS for any future update of this important book.

Stephanie J. Tyler

Birds of Botswana. An annotated working bibliography, 1835–1995

Wendy D. Borello and Remigio M. Borello. 1997. *Russel Friedman Books CC, South Africa. 398 pp, 1 map. Pbk. P60 (Botswana), R75 (South Africa), £13 (UK) & \$20 (rest of the world).*

A Bibliography of Afrotropical Birds, 1971–1990

Compiled by R. J. Dowsett, C. H. Fry and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. 1997. *Tauraco Research Report No. 7. 338 pp. Pbk. Available from Aves, Maison de l'Environnement, Rue de la Régence 36, B-4000 Liège, Belgium. UK£30, US\$75, FF200 or BEF1000 (incl. p&p). Payments by cheque or bank draft to "Tauraco Press".*

These two works, the former the culmination of ten years self-funded research, are of enormous credit to their compilers, providing, as they do, comprehensive and invaluable resources for bibliophiles, fieldworkers, researchers and students working with African birds.

The former work seeks to encourage an interest in the ornithology of Botswana, assist in the conservation of the country's rich natural heritage and to draw attention to areas in which further ornithological research would be particularly useful. In all these respects it succeeds.

The introduction outlines the authors' meticulous approach to their self-set task, and also provides an excellent summary of the scope and

content of this work. Newsletter-type publications, popular magazines and the literature concerning falconry, bird husbandry and aviculture have not been trawled, although they may have provided additional entries. The bibliography is divided into four sections: 1) the introduction and user information, and an overview of the development of ornithology in Botswana, presented in detailed tabular form and complete with references and sources (27 pages); 2) the main annotated bibliography, presented alphabetically and, because of the potential importance of pre-colonial and colonial era literature to the ornithology of a country such as Botswana, which is still in its relative infancy, including a separate section devoted to historical and other works, as well as a selected list of 'fundamental works and authoritative ornithological literature' (318 pages); 3) indices, cross-referenced to each entry's sequential master citation number, of geographic location, species, subject and author (31 pages); and 4) appendices listing a glossary of subject keywords, additional species keywords and a gazetteer (16 pages). A foreword, by M. P. S. Irwin, and the acknowledgements make-up the rest of the book. In summary then, this gives every impression of being a near-exhaustive true labour-of-love.

A total of 1895 entries relating to the avifauna of present-day Botswana (but not including that territory formerly known as Bechuanaland) appear in this bibliography. The standard format for each entry is: author/s, publication date, title, journal or book reference, keywords and annotation, the latter prepared by the authors, who have occasionally drawn upon published abstracts (this being noted where relevant). For non-English language publications, a translation of the title is included. Keyword use is standardised and they have been extracted with respect to their relevance to Botswana, not necessarily to the main content of the work in question. Copies of all listed references are held on file by the authors, who are able to perform specific computer searches on request. Avian nomenclature largely follows Maclean (1993).

The latest in the Tauraco Press series of research also represents a gargantuan achievement and deserves to be on the shelves of all those with an interest in African birds. It results from the computerisation of CHF's series of coded bibliographies encompassing the period 1975–86 and, with the addition

of other material, covers a significant 20-year period in the development of Afrotropical and Malagasy ornithology. Updates to the present volume will depend upon its own success, but are certainly required and the compilers are thus warmly encouraged to proceed with this task. In contrast to the Botswana bibliography, the interests of completeness have made it necessary to make occasional reference to works not directly reviewed by the compilers, and translations of the titles of those published in languages other than English are given but occasionally. Users of this compendium are invited to inform the compilers of errors, but it would also be helpful if future editions drew attention to those references not actually seen.

All 8,342 citations are numbered and presented alphabetically according to species and family, or one of several subjects: general & faunal works, listed according to country or geographical region, migration, ringing studies, biogeography, atlas projects, nomenclature and systematics, recording and vocalisations, birds & man, pesticides and pollution, bird pests and alien species, bird diseases and parasites, breeding studies, bird-plant interactions, eco-ethology, research techniques, anatomy & physiology, fossil birds, and bibliography & biography, some of which, by Bob Dowsett's own admission, are covered more comprehensively than others. An index to families and topics is presented. Most passerine species receive between one and five references, but some raptors and other comparatively well-studied species and families may be covered by up to a page or more of entries. Nomenclature follows the first-named compilers' own Afrotropical checklists also published by Tauraco Press (see review in *Bull. ABC* 2: 56–57). Each title is quoted just once, but for those references which deal with 2–3 species cross-references to the numbered item concerned are provided. Given the enormity of the task performed, it has proved impossible to provide abstracts, but even without these this work is an essential tool. Each entry follows the following format: author's, date of publication, title and source of publication. I did notice an occasional error, eg a reference discussing ornithological observations in the Hurgada area of Egypt was incorrectly listed under references to the Arabian Peninsula. Of ten randomly selected references, relating to the period 1971–90, taken from the Botswana

bibliography, four could not be swiftly located in the Dowsett *et al* volume. Nevertheless, editors and researchers will find this work, along with access to an exhaustive library, a much-needed resource.

Guy M. Kirwan

Guidebook to Park W National Park, Niger

Christopher M. Jameson and Timothy E.C. Crisler. 1996. 5000 CFA Francs (FF50).

This guidebook to Niger's only National Park has been produced in three languages (English, French and German). As well as an informative history of the park and sections covering geology and climate, there are species accounts describing the identification and status of noticeable trees, mammals, birds (only 29 of over 350 bird species recorded in the park are included) and reptiles. The book also contains complete checklists of mammals, birds and a list of threatened tree species; these lists provide the scientific, English, French and German names, and the Hausa and Zarma names for mammals. An additional useful feature is the comprehensive guide to mammal tracks given inside the front and rear covers.

The book has been produced locally with Peace Corps involvement. Whilst the printing and illustrations are not of the standard to which we are accustomed in many guides, the book contains much interesting information and can be recommended to anyone visiting Park W, or as a model for other similar productions elsewhere.

Rob Williams

Flora and fauna of the Odzala National Park, Congo

R. J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire (eds) 1997. *Tauraco Research Report No. 6*. 135 pp. Pbk. Available from Aves, Maison de l'Environnement, Rue de la Régence 36, B-4000 Liège, Belgium. UK£12, US\$30, FF100 or BEF500 (incl. p&p). Payments by cheque or bank draft to "Tauraco Press".

Until recently, Congo-Brazzaville ranked among the ornithologically least explored countries in Africa: in 1989 a very incomplete list published 40 years previously was still the principal

reference. That year, however, the Dowsetts started their studies which were to add greatly to our knowledge of the country's avifauna. Their results were presented in Research Reports Nos. 2 and 4, published by their own Tauraco Press (reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 3: 136), and in several ornithological periodicals, including this Bulletin (*Bull. ABC* 3: 134–135). The present report is thus the third on Congo in the series. This time, the authors have focused their attention on the hitherto ornithologically unexplored north of the country.

Odzala National Park, a forest and savannah mosaic 3,000 km² in extent, was established as long ago as 1935, but its natural history had remained almost completely unknown. It is one of seven parks and reserves, in seven countries of west-central Africa, being aided by the European Union-funded project Ecofac (Programme de Conservation et Utilisation Rationnelle des Ecosystemes Forestiers en Afrique Centrale). The project was started in 1992 and Bob Dowsett took over as its manager in November 1993. His wife, Francoise, and he carried out field surveys from December 1993 to the end of his contract, in April 1995. Birds were not the only object of their studies: the report also contains chapters on vegetation, mammals, butterflies and park management. These are written either in English or French, with a summary in the other language. All chapters on birds are in English. Although the Dowsetts are mentioned as editors of this report, they are actually also its authors: only one chapter, on small mammals, bears the name of a co-author.

What makes a report like this so interesting is that, like its forebears, it not only contains annotated species lists, which are interesting enough in themselves, but also numerous notes on little-known vocalisations, behaviour and habitat preferences. Here, there are no arcane statistical analyses which, however useful, can be so off-putting by reducing fascinating complex behaviour to dry formulae.

Data on birds were gathered by long-term observations and mist-netting. No shortcuts were taken: although 10-minute point counts were also carried out, the authors experienced that these were rather unproductive, due to the low detectability of most species in the tropics. Several vocalisations were recorded for the first time, details of which are given.

If my count is correct, the studies documented in this report have added another 59 species to the continuously expanding Congo list. Among the most interesting finds was the unexpected discovery of three species associated with mid-altitude or even montane forest elsewhere, and which may be relicts of cooler Quaternary periods here: Grey-headed Broadbill *Smithornis sharpei*, Uganda Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus budongoensis* and Black-throated Apalis *Apalis jacksoni*. The song of the Uganda Woodland Warbler in Odzala proved similar to the recording of an unidentified *Phylloscopus* made in 1977 by Christian Énard in north-east Gabon, thus solving a long-standing mystery. Black-throated Apalis, which was locally common, appears to be part of a small and isolated population occurring in southern Cameroon and (recently discovered) in north-eastern Gabon (see *Bull. ABC* 1: 29). Breeding male Black-backed Cisticolas *Cisticola eximius* appeared to have golden-yellow instead of rufous crowns and rumps and, moreover, songs that differed from those of the nearest known populations in Chad and Nigeria: here was an undescribed, very distinctive race.

I was surprised to learn that Odzala still had lions, the only resident population remaining in the savannahs of west-central Africa. Sadly, their numbers

are very low and decreasing. To add to their plight, two of these lions had to be shot, after having killed and eaten a man. The account of this incident reads like a thriller!

The report contains additional chapters presenting the first annotated birdlists for two other areas of northern and central Congo, the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park and the Léfini Reserve.

In the forested Nouabalé-Ndoki, EDL discovered Banded Owllet *Glaucidium capense*, one of the rare populations presently known to occur in forest, and the unobtrusive and little-known Sandy Scops Owl *Otus icterorhynchus*. Rare species of the Guinea-Congo forest such as Green Ibis *Bostrychia olivacea*, Forest Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus castaneiceps* and Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver *Ploceus preussi*, were encountered at several localities.

The small Bob-tailed Weaver *Brachycopa anomala*, an aberrant Congo Basin endemic formerly known in Congo from only one locality, was an abundant breeder at Ouesso. In the Léfini Reserve, situated on the Téké (or Batéké) plateau, several species of conservation concern were observed, including Finsch's Francolin *Francolinus finschi*, Congo Moor Chat *Myrmecocichla tholloni* and Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentum*. A sighting of a Congo Black-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia*

congoensis, a Congo River endemic, suggests that this little-known species may be more widespread than previously known. Also found was the rare and local Brazza's Martin *Pbedina brazzae*, the authors suggest that it should be looked for near large rivers and lakes between the Congo River and Djambala.

This report is a model of its kind: well-researched, highly readable and well-produced (with a simple, though clear and pleasant layout, and adequately illustrated with maps and sonograms). It should, moreover, be appreciated that the authors have made the results of their field studies so readily available. Highly recommended to anyone with a serious interest in African birds.

Ron Demeijer

Nesting birds. The breeding habits of southern African birds

Peter Steyn. 1996. *Christopher Helm* (A. & C. Black), London. 240 pp, many colour photographs. UK £40.

This large format, well-researched and fully illustrated account of the nests, eggs and breeding behaviour of southern African birds is now available from the UK publishers, A. & C. Black. For a full review of this useful title, see *Bull. ABC* 1: 17.

Mark Cocker

Letters

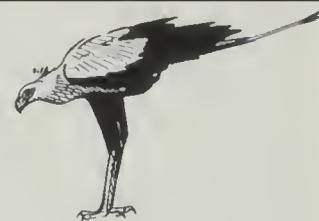
The benefits of the van Perlo guide in West Africa

Although a detailed review of van Perlo's *Birds of Eastern Africa* has already appeared in this Bulletin (*Bull. ABC* 3: 57-58), I would like to add something from the point-of-view of using this guide in West Africa. As most readers will know, the only currently available field guide more-or-less completely covering the birds of West Africa is that by Serle, Morel and Hartwig. Whilst useful, this guide has a number of shortcomings, not least its lack of colour illustrations of

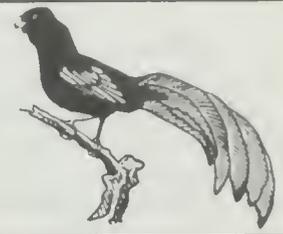
many species. It is worth noting that van Perlo's guide illustrates most of the birds occurring in the Sahel zone, from Somalia all the way to Senegal. For instance, all but 10 of the 523 species known from Niger are illustrated in van Perlo's illustrated checklist. I was able to use it during a recent water-fowl census in this country, and found it most useful. It was such a change to be able to show my Nigerian colleagues colour illustrations of every species we encountered and discuss in detail the various field marks and differences between similar species. My Nigerian colleagues were enthusi-

astic too, and to help them use the book I am preparing a list of bird species known from Niger, with French, English and scientific names, and the number of the relevant illustration in the van Perlo guide. Also included will be notes to help identify species known to occur in Niger which do not appear in the latter guide. There is unlikely to be a French translation of van Perlo's book, but until a comparable work appears for West Africa, I will be sure to pack the English version when I visit this part of the continent.

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Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only and mainly covering the previous six months; all dates refer to 1997 unless otherwise stated. We urge that contributors submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R.J. Dowsett and A.D. Forbes-Watson *Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions* or more recent sources before submitting records.

Azores

A **Herald Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, the first for the Western Palearctic, was seen and photographed off Pico on 18 July (PD, RS per *Birding World* 10: 456–459). A **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* at Faja dos Cubres, São Jorge on 7–9 October, was the second for the Azores and the Western Palearctic. A probable **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* flew past Ponta Delgada, São Miguel on 22 September (White-faced Ibis *P. chibi* could not be excluded). At the same site, a male **Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima* stayed on 22–26 September. At Faja dos Cubres, two **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* were seen on 7 October and a first-winter **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* two days later on 9th (WS, TB per *Birding World* 10: 382). A first-winter **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor*, the third for the islands, was observed on 30 July at pools near Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, where there was also an adult summer **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* (probably also a third for the Azores) (per PD). A juvenile of the latter species was seen at Lajes de Pico, Pico, on 2–3 October. An adult **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* was recorded on 2 October at Lajes de Pico and a juvenile on 11 October at Cabo da Praia, Terceira. A juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* was at Cabo da Praia on 27 September; a second stayed until 11 October. Records of juvenile **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* included one at Praia da Vitoria on 14 September, three at Sete Cidades, São Miguel on 24–26 Septem-

ber and at Cabo da Praia from 27 September onwards, and one at Faja dos Cubres on 7 October. An adult **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* was at Lajes de Pico on 3 October, a first-winter **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Sete Cidades on 24–26 September and at Cabo da Praia on 27–30 September, and a **Solitary Sandpiper** *T. solitaria* at Lago de Sete Cidades, São Miguel on 9 September. Juvenile **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia* were seen at the following localities. Praia da Vitoria, 14 September (one), Lago das Furnas, São Miguel, 23–24 September (one), Mosteiros, São Miguel, 24–26 September (two), Faja dos Cubres, 7–9 October (one, with two on 9th), Lajes de Pico, 2 October (two), and San Mateus, Terceira, 1 October (two) (all TC per *Birding World* 10: 338; WS, TB per *Birding World* 10: 382).



Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*
by Mark Andrews

Botswana

Three **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* were at Gaberone Dam, 5 July, and 26 adults and 20 young in six broods at Bokaa Dam on 12 July. At least 130 **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* were at Kgoro Pan, Good Hope on 29 June. Up to 212 **Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* were roosting at Phakalane on 9 March, with an **African Black Duck** *Anas sparsa* there on 30 June, and two more on an old oxbow of the Marico River north of Malolwane on 13 July. Two **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* were at Bokaa Dam on 12 July. Records of **South African Shelduck** *Tadorna cana* included 12 at

Phakalane on 1 July, two at Bokaa Dam on 12 July and a pair at Maraupula, Gaberone on 29 July. Also at Phakalane on 1 July were 215 **Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa*, with three more near Mmathethe on 29 July. Two **Secretary Bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius*, an uncommon species in the south-east, were at Ruretse, Gaberone on 14 July. Other records of scarce raptors include a **Lizard Buzzard** *Kampifalco monogrammicus* in Sibuye Forest Reserve, 28–29 March and another at the same site the next day (ST), a **Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* at Bobonong in April 1996 (CW) and a **Cuckoo Hawk** *Arceca cuculoides* at Shakawe (EP, DP) and in Chobe National Park in May 1996 (RR). A **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* in Lepokole Hills, December 1996 (CW) and an **African Hobby** *F. curieri* in Chobe National Park, November 1995 (RR) constitute the fifth accepted record of either. Two **Blue Crane** *Anthropoides paradisea* were at Kgoro Pan, Good Hope, 29 July, while an **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was seen at Phakalane the next day (ST). A **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was recorded from Mmabarwa Pan in February 1996 (CB). On the Marico River north of Malolwane, an **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* was seen on 13 July (ST). In June 1996, a **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* was observed on the Selka Plain, Chobe (RR). A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*, very rare in southern Africa, was at Shashe Dam in September 1996 (RVL). **Black Swift** *Apus barbatus* was recorded at Bobonong, also in September 1996 (CW), and there are some records of **Horus Swift** *A. horus* from east and south-east Botswana in May and September 1996. **Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima*, scarce in the south-east, was observed at Phakalane, 4 April. A pair of **Racket-tailed Roller** *Coracias spatulata* with young at Sibuye Forest Reserve, 31 March, represents the second breeding record for Botswana (ST). The species was also seen near the Tsodilo Hills (RID). The third accepted record of **Stark's Lark** *Eremalauda starki* was of one at Makunda, August 1996 (CW), while the first **Natal Red-capped Robin-Chat** *Cossypha natalensis* was seen

at Kasana in November 1996 (RR). A **Fairy Flycatcher** *Stenostira scita* and a **Striped Pipit** *Anthus lineiventris* were at Modipe, 6 July; another **Striped Pipit** was observed near Molepolole, 28 June. Fourteen **African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus* mist-netted at Phakalane, 30 June–3 August, show that some overwinter. An influx of **Pearl-breasted Swallow** *Hirundo dimidiata* was recorded, with 1–2 at Kgoro Pan on 29 June and c50 at Phakalane on 1 July. An overwintering male **African Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* was at Maraupula, Gaborone, 29 July (ST).

Cameroon

During a visit to the south-east of the country in April 1997, four species new to the country were found in the Réserve de la Lobéké: **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* (a pair with a juvenile), **Barrcd Owllet** *Glauclidium capense*, **Uganda Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus budongoensis* and **Locust Finch** *Ortygospiza locustella*. Moreover, an unknown nightjar, which may perhaps prove to be **Prigogine's Nightjar** *Caprimulgus prigoginei*, was sighted and tape-recorded (DDL).

Records from Mount Kupe in June included a **White-naped Pigeon** *Columba albinucha* at 1,000 m and a **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksii* at 1,050 m on Max's trail on 11th. A male **Mount Kupe Bush Shrike** *Malacometus kupeensis* was at 1,170 m on the Shrike trail on 15th. **Eastern Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger chloronotus*, not previously recorded on the mountain, was fairly common along the Nature trail at c900 m. A **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* *beaudouini* flying over Nyasoso on 18th was well south of its normal range and the first for the Mount Kupe area. In the Bakossi mountains, a **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis baematops* on a forest trail at 1,170 m near Edib on 21 June is apparently the first record for the area, although local hunters appeared to be familiar with the species. Two **Chestnut-backed Owllet** *Glauclidium tephronotum* were seen and others heard on the same day. A **Green-breasted Bush Shrike** *Malacometus gladiator* was seen well on 20–21 June at 1,250 m at Lake Edib; its tape-recorded calls matched exactly those described for **Monteiro's Bush Shrike** *M. monteiroi* (EW).

Canary Islands

A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was observed between Tenerife and Gran Canaria on 8 August. A **Red-**



White-faced Storm Petrel
Pelagodroma marina by Mark Andrews

knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* was at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura on 27 July (FJ, FB per *Birding World* 10: 293). **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* bred on Fuerteventura: seven adults with 18 ducklings were at Presa de Las Peñitas on 12 July—the first confirmed breeding in the archipelago since c1857 (TC per *Birding World* 10: 338). A pair of **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* was at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura on 10 November and four juvenile **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* were still at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife on 30 November, with three there on 5 December (TC per *Birding World* 10: 420: 454). A female immature **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* was at Embalse de Valle Molina, Tenerife from 10–19 October at least. A juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia*, first seen at Roquito del Fraile on 23 September, remained until at least 21 December (TC per *Birding World* 10: 382: 454). A pale morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was seen near Adeje on 10 December (TC per *Birding World* 10: 454). A **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica*, the first for the islands, was with **Plain Swifts** *Apus nivicolor* at Ten Bel, Tenerife on 2 October and 26 November (TC per *Birding World* 10: 420). A **Great Tit** *Parus major* was singing at Las Peñitas, Fuerteventura, on 23–25 April; the second for the Canary Islands and the first for Fuerteventura (TC per *Dutch Birding* 19: 138).

The most noteworthy November seabird records include the following. From Playa de Soatavento, Fuerteventura: a late **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* on 9th, a **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* on 8th and two on 9th, a **Mediterranean Shearwater** *P. (puffinus) mauretanicus* on 6th (both species are accidental in Canarian waters), and a record number of 559 **Leach's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* in 2.5 hours on 11th. From Tenerife: c250 **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* on 21st from

Punta del Hildalgo and c130 on 22nd from Punta del Casado (probably the largest counts for the islands) and three **Sooty Shearwater** and a **White-faced Storm Petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* on 18th from Punta del Hildalgo (TC per *Birding World* 10: 454).

Congo (Brazzaville)

The Dowsetts continue to add species to the Congo list. During a further nine months in Odzala National Park from July 1994, the rare **Eastern Wattled Cuckoo-shrike** *Lobotos oriolinus* was the most exciting find and **Grey Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus caroli* perhaps the least expected. Intra-African vagrants included **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio* and **White-throated Swallow** *Hirundo albignularis* (the most northerly, apart from a record in Cameroon mentioned in *Birds of Africa* Vol 4, for which supporting details cannot be traced). **Bronze-winged Coursr** *Cursorius calcopterus* (only one previous record) proved not to be rare. Although clearly off the major Palearctic–Africa flightlines, among the vagrants added were **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* and **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*, while the occurrence of the odd **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* and **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was confirmed. A population of **Blue Waxbill** *Uraeginthus angolensis* at Brazzaville seems to be well-established.

A three-week visit in April–May 1997 to the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in the extreme north of the Congo, produced four additions to the country's list: **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii*, **Brown Nightjar** *Caprimulgus bimotatus*, **Zenker's Honeyguide** *Melignomon zenkeri* and **Grant's Bluebill** *Spermophaga poliogenys*. The unknown nightjar from south-east Cameroon, which had already been located here in 1996, was found again and tape-recorded (all DDL).

Egypt

Records from March–May 1997 include the following. A **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* was seen off Marsa Alam on 1 May (S & MBD, AB, LM per *Birdwatch* 61: 56) and four at Hurghada on 6th (FD). A **Northern Gannet** *Sula bassana*, about the 12th Egyptian record, was at Zaranik on 9 May. At Abu Simbel 33 **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* were present on 28–29 April (AG) and eight on 9–10 May (FD). Two **Green-backed Heron** *Butorides striatus* were recorded at Salaga (Red Sea) and one at Crocodile Island, Luxor, on 7 May (FD). At least five pairs of **Squacco**

Heron *Ardeola ralloides* were estimated to be nesting in an egret colony south of Luxor (a new breeding site) and about ten pairs were breeding for the first time near Abu Simbel, also in an egret colony, on Lake Nasser (AG). A total of 40 **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta garularis*, with only one dark morph, were on the Red Sea coast, on 12 May (FID). Also on the Red Sea, at Shelatine, a **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* was seen on 1 April (AG), while one was on Lake Nasser on 21st (SBD per AG). A total of 36 **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* was around Abu Simbel on 27–29 April (AG), 45 on 6 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181) and at least 30 on 9–10 May (FID).

An exhausted **European Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was found at the Red Sea coast, 100 km north of Hurghada (FID), while two **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* were at Shelatine on 30 March (AG). A **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* flew over Wadi Aideib, Gebel Elba on 1 April (AG). At least 11 adult **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* were hunting at dusk at Hurghada on 6 and 12 May (FID). Ten **Chukar** *Alectoris chukar* were seen at St. Katherine's Monastery, Sinai on 19 May, and a group of at least 15 **Sand Partridge** *Anmoperdix beyi* at Saint Paul's Monastery on 14th (FID). An adult male **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* at Lake Nasser 7 km north of Abu Simbel on 6 May constitutes the first record for the Western Palearctic (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181). At least ten **Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* were at Abu Grida on 14 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181; FID). On 30 March and 1 April, 38 **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* were recorded at Shelatine (AG). Twenty-three **Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* were at Abu Simbel on 27–29 April (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181) and at least 12 on 9–10 May (FID). Other interesting waders include 15 **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* at Shelatine on 1 April (AG), two **White-tailed Plover** *Vanellus leucurus* at Abu Grida on 13–14 May (FID; OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181), three **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, scarce along the Red Sea, at El Gouna, near Hurghada on 3 May (AG) and a **Terek Sandpiper** *Nemis cinereus* at Ras Mohamed National Park, Sinai on 17 May (FID). Two **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Zaranik on 20–21 March are the earliest spring records and 12 at Zaranik on 9 May the largest spring concentration for the country. A

total of 78 **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* at Port Said on 15 March is a good count for this species. Seven **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* were near Abu Simbel on 28 April.

Two **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis* at Ain el Gedeirat, near the Nizzana area in Israel on 9 May, constitutes one of the few Egyptian records in recent years. Up to 15 **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* were seen in wadis around Gebel Elba, south-east Egypt, a known breeding area for the species, on 31 March–1 April (AG) and one was at Abu Simbel on 6 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181); there are several recent records from this site. A pair of **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* nesting near Aswan on 30 April, with a second female present, represent the first proof of breeding for Egypt (AG); one was at Bir Beida on 2 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181). A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*, a rare spring migrant through Sinai, was at Zaranik on 21 March. A **European Scops Owl** *Otus scops*, a potential breeding species for Egypt, was calling at Ain el Gedeirat, north Sinai on 8–9 May. Two **Hume's Owl** *Strix butleri* were calling at their known breeding area at St. Katherine's Monastery, Sinai on 12 March. More remarkable were two in wadis around Gebel Elba on 30–31 March, well to the south of their known breeding range and a significant extension into Africa (AG). An **Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinicus* at Abu Simbel on 4–5 May constitutes the fifth record for Egypt (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181).

Six **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps* were singing and displaying at Abu Ramad, south Egypt, an area where the species has been recorded before, on 30 March (AG). Four **Dupont's Lark** *Chersophilus duponti* were on the Siwa road south of Marsa Matruh on 24 May (S & MBD, AB, LM per *Birdwatch* 61: 56). Three **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra*, a rare wintering species in Egypt, were at El Salhaya Reclamation near Ismailliya on 15 March. The record of nine singing and displaying **Long-billed Pipit** *Ambus similis* at Wadi Aideib, Gebel Elba on 1 April confirms the occurrence and probable breeding of the species in the country; a record from Hurghada in 1996 is still under consideration. This is a significant range extension north of Sudan. Two **Buff-bellied Pipit** *A. rubescens* at Zaranik on 21 March constitute the second record for Egypt

(AG). Two pairs of **African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* were near Abu Simbel on 27–28 April (AG). 11 birds on 4–7 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181) and two pairs on 9 May (FID). Also there was a **Blackstart** *Cercomela melanura* on 6 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181). In May, a strong passage of **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* seems to have taken place, with records of one at Hurghada on 2nd, one at Ain el Gedeirat, north Sinai, on 8th and 5–6 at Ain Sukhna, Gulf of Suez, on 10th; there were only c18 previous records. Ten **Arabian Warbler** *Sylvia leucomena* were observed in Wadi Aideib, Gebel Elba, a known breeding area, 31 March–2 April. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*, recorded less than ten times in spring, was seen at Ain Sukhna, Gulf of Suez on 11 May. Two **Fulvous Babbler** *Turdoides fulvus* at Abu Ramad, south Egypt on 30 March, constitutes the northernmost record for the country. Up to ten were seen in wadis around Gebel Elba, where the species is known to breed, 30 March–1 April. Also there were up to 20 **Shining Sunbird** *Aectarinia babessmica* (AG).

A male **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was 50 km north of Marsha Alam on 8 May (OE, SH & SM per *Birding World* 10: 181); c11th record for Egypt. Up to 21 **Rosy-patched Shrike** *Rhodophanes cinnertus* were in wadis around Gebel Elba, a known breeding area, 30 March–1 April. A **Hooded Crow** *Corvus corone cornix* at Mangrove Bay, south of Quseir on the Red Sea on 1 May, represents a further southward range extension along the Red Sea. Up to 50 **Fan-tailed Raven** *C. rhipidurus* were in wadis around Gebel Elba, a known breeding area. A total of 60 **Red Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* at Crocodile Island, Luxor on 25 April, represents a big increase in numbers at this only recently colonised site, the most southerly known breeding area in Egypt. Two **Desert Finch** *Rhodopechys obsoleta* were at El Arish, north Sinai on 8 May; there are several recent records from this site, though still less than ten records for the country. Four **Sinai Rosefinch** *Carpodacus synoicus* at Wadi Sudr, north-west Sinai on 12 March is well to the north and west of the area where this species usually breeds in central southern Sinai (AG).

Eritrea

Five adult **Waldrapp** *Geronticus eremita* were at Massawa in February 1997. These could concern wandering offspring of the breeding colony at

Birecik, Turkey (*Dutch Birding* 19: 131). A **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* at a small wetland near Asmara on 26 October, and again on 9 and 13 November, apparently constitutes the first for Eritrea. Four **White-tailed Plover** *Vanellus leucurus* were at Sembel Dam, near Asmara from 5–19 October, with one still there on 9 November; apparently only the second record for the country (*JM*).

Ethiopia

During a survey conducted from 24 January–28 February 1997 the following interesting observations were made. Two **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* on the Sanetti Plateau in the Bale Mountains National Park on 25 January; two **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* at Langano on 26 January, two single **Cuckoo Hawk** *Ariceda cuculoides*, a rare species in Ethiopia on 2 and 3 February; an **Ovampo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis*, of which there are fewer than eight previous records, 35 km east of Yabello on 18 January; **Yellow-throated Leaflove** *Chlorocichla flavicollis* near Tepi and Jimma, an extension of the restricted-range of this species; several remarkable unidentified red prinias along the Blue Nile; several **Gambaga Flycatcher** *Muscicapa gambagae*, a seldom reliably reported species, close to the Sudan border south of the Blue Nile on 3 February; apparently the first **Red-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrma* for the country, near Serdo in the Danakil desert on 18 February; the first **Desert Warbler** *Sylvianana* a little further north towards Lake Afrera on 17 February; several **African Golden Oriole** *Oriolus auratus* near the Blue Nile, one of the very few sites from which it has been reported, on 2 February; and another **Olive Sunbird** *Nectarinia olivacea* close to its Tepi site on 10 February (*J1 & J4*; *EWNIS Newsletter* April–June 1997: 6).

Also during February, other observers claimed sightings of the rare endemics **Degodi Lark** *Mirafra degodiensis* (four, 30 km west of Bogol Manyo on 17th) and **Sidamo Lark** *Heteromirafra sidamoensis* (at least two, 13 km south of Negele on 15th), as well as of the following: an adult **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* at Lake Awast on 26th, a **Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* near Nazareth on 11th and one south of Ankober on 28th, two adult **Greater Spotted Eagle** near Lake Ziway on 11th and one at the same site on 27th, an immature **Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* at Debre Birhan on 10th, and a juvenile south of Goba on 13th, a

subadult and an immature **Golden Eagle** *A. chrysaetos* on the Sanetti Plateau on 13th, an adult dark phase **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraetus ayresii* near Negele on 15th, an adult **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* near Negele on 14th and two immatures near Lake Ziway on 25th, a **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* near Yabello on 19th, a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Cbaradrius mongolus* at Lake Baseka on 25th, an adult **Cyprus Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe cyprica* at Addis Ababa on 7th and a first-winter male near Goba on 13th. In March, a **Saker Falcon** flew north between lakes Ziway and Koka on 8th and two adult **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* were east of Robe (north-east of Goba) on 6th (*JS*).

In June, an **African Marsh Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* was seen at Debre Zeit on 16th, a **Scaly Chatterer** *Turdoides aylmeri* in the Yabello area on 19th, a **Prince Ruspoli's Turaco** *Tauraco ruspolii* in juniper woodland at Arero, despite the area being very dry, on 18th, and a small breeding colony of **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver** *Plocepasser superciliosus* two-thirds of the way up Mt. Fantale, Awash National Park on 25th, and one nest-building at the foot of the escarpment in Jemma Valley on 27th (*IS, PR*).

In July–August, 10–15 breeding pairs of **White-winged Flufftail** *Sarothrura ayresi* were found at the same site near Sululta as in 1996, while a new site of about 100 ha held the astonishing number of at least 200 pairs (*BT, EWNIS Newsletter* July–Sept. 1997: 5–6).

Gabon

The second **Red-capped Crombec** *Sylvietta ruficapilla* for the country was observed at Lekoni on 2 September. A pair of **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni*, discovered in the same area, may also constitute a second record. Still at Lekoni, two cisticolas matching the description of **Dambo Cisticola** *Cisticola dambo* were seen; this species, however, normally occurs in damp meadows ('dambos') whereas the birds at Lekoni were in dry savannah. More research is obviously needed to identify these birds with certainty (*MB, RD*).

The Gambia

A recently dead **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolophus* chick was collected from a nest near Tendaba on 23 December 1996, the female was still in attendance (photographed *CB*). An adult was seen at the same site in

February 1997 (*AV*). A **European Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was observed, also in February (*AV*). Rare raptors photographed recently include an immature **Cuckoo Hawk** *Ariceda cuculoides* in the Atlantic Hotel Bird Garden on 6 March (*JV, DID*), an immature **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*, the first wet season record since 1962, at Sanyang fish landing site on 19 June (*JB*), and a female **Western Little Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter erythropus* at Abuko Nature Reserve on 14 February (*KC*). A **Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* was seen in forest near Tendaba in February (*AV*). Two **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* on fields near Tanji Bird Reserve on 1 March constitute the fourth country record, with all previous records from December–January (*CB*). A **Senegal (Lesser Black-winged) Plover** *Vanellus lugubris* photographed at Tanji on 8 December was the first record for The Gambia (*BM*), while a first-winter **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Kotu sewage works on 7 November (*DM*) and a first-winter **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* flying past Banjul on 12 November (*NR*) both constitute second records for the country. An unusually large flock of c.35 **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* was seen offshore from Tanji Bird Reserve on 9 February (*CB, AV*). **Adamawa Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia byopopyrrha* were recorded along the Gambia River east of the Georgetown area in February (*AV*). A pair of **African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii* was disturbed at their roost near Sanyang, Western Division, on 15 April: the second Gambian site for a species first recorded in the country in 1992 (*CB, JW*). Two road-killed **Red-necked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, collected from Kudang on 22 December 1996 and Kiang West on 21 January, are the fifth and sixth records for the country (three other roadkills were recently reported; cf. *Bull. ABC* 4: 51). An adult male **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* in full breeding plumage was seen at Barra North Bank on 19 February; this plumage is rarely seen in The Gambia (*KC, RW*). A **Rufous Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* was near Tendaba in February (*AV*) and a **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*, the seventh country record, at Yundum, 1 March (*CB, JV & DII, AM*).

Ghana

Two **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* were claimed from near Prampram, a coastal area c60 km east of

Accra on 19 May 1996 (VG). This would constitute the first record for the country and by far the southernmost in West Africa; Temminck's Courser *C. temminckii* would be the species to be expected.

Kenya

A **Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* at Sabaki River estuary, 1 August 1996 (JE, BS) constitutes the second record for Kenya; the first, on 7 February 1995, was from the same site (Jackson 1997, *Scopus* 19: 113–114).

Madagascar

More than 100 **Yellow-nosed Albatross** *Diomedea chlororhynchus* were seen from Libanona, near Fort Dauphin, between 20 April–6 June; the species was formerly known only from museum specimens and from sightings south of Cap Ste Marie in July 1991. Also there were a **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*, previously known from only a single recent record (ten to the south of Cap Ste Marie in December 1991) and, on 5 June, a **Subantarctic Skua** *Catharacta antarctica*, a species infrequently recorded along the east coast of Madagascar. At Toliara, a juvenile **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* was seen on 2 February 1996 (only two previous records: four near Fort Dauphin, 22 December 1991; six near Cap Ste Marie, 28 December 1991) and a first-winter **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*, for which there are few recent records (FII).

About nine singing male **Red-shouldered Vanga** *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* were found along the old St Augustin track in July (ZICOMA). The species had not been seen in the field since its description in 1997 on the basis of two specimens from 1948 and a photograph taken in 1991 (cf. *Bull BOC* 117: 5–10).

Madeira

A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was photographed from the Porto Santo ferry on 23 July (*Dutch Birding* 19: 200). At least one **Zino's Petrel** *Pterochroma madeira* was seen and heard between 22.00 and 23.00 hrs near the top of Pico do Arieiro on 25 July. Several **Fea's Zino's Petrels** *P. feae* *P. madeira* were seen at sea between 22–27 July. (EV & ATK). During a pelagic trip from the Canary Islands to Madeira, 3–9 August, 40 **Fea's Petrels** were reported (TM per *Birding World* 10: 293).

Morocco

Records from April include c320 **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* at Ourzazate on 20th, a **Western Reef**



Waldrapp *Geronticus eremita*
by Mark Andrew

Heron *Egretta gularis*, a **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax*, a **Little Gull** *Larus minutus* and a **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* at Merzouga on 25th. Also on the 25th, eight **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* were recorded at Oued Sous estuary. **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*, **Little Crake** *P. parva* and **Baillon's Crake** *P. pusilla* were at Oued Massa on 3th and 19th. At least three **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio* were at Lac de Sidi Bour Haba from at least 25th and into May (VG, HD & AR per *Birding World* 10: 181). In November, at least 105 **Waldrapp** *Geronticus eremita* were counted at Tamri on 7th, 15 **Leach's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* flew past Brieich on 26th, 13 **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* and an exceptional 26 **African Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* were at Merja Zerga on 28th, 17 **Great Bustard** *Otis tarda* at Asilah on 26th, and at least 40 **Desert Sparrow** *Passer simplex* at Calé Yasmina, Merzouga, on 23rd (RB, MG per *Birding World* 10: 451).

Mozambique

Interesting records from a trip to the Beira area, from 13–18 July, include the following. From Chiniziua Forest: **East Coast Akalat** *Sheppardia gammingsi*, **White-chested Alethe** *Aetheya felleborni* and **Blue-throated Sunbird** *Anthreptes reichenowi*. In miombo woodland near this forest, a pair of **Yellow-bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flavigaster* were recorded. Some 22 km north of Dondo, three pairs of **Blue Quail** *Coturnix chinensis* and c50 **Mascarene Martin** *Phedina borbonica* (of which between 20–100 were seen daily from 5–9 July in the same area; *Africa – Birds & Birding* 2 (4): 14) were seen. Mount Gorongosa yielded **Eastern Least Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* and **Speckle-throated Woodpecker** *Campetbera bennettii scriptoricauda*, while **Green-headed Oriole** *Oriolus chlorocephalus* and **African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus*

baeticatus cinnamomeus appeared to be fairly common (AR, DH, AM, RR, EF & MW).

Nigeria

Surveys, conducted by the Nigerian IBA team in the forested south-east of the country on 6–15 December, produced the following interesting records. **Xavier's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus xavieri*, seen and tape-recorded in the Oban sector of Cross River National Park, constitutes the first record for the country. A sighting of **Grey-throated Rail** *Camirallus oculens* is the only record in recent years. Other rarely recorded species observed in the same sector include **Bare-cheeked Trogon** *Apaloderma aequatoriale*, **Lyre-tailed Honeyguide** *Melichneutes robustus*, **Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher** *Myioparus griseigularis*, **Grey Tit-Flycatcher** *M. phanbens* and **Red-headed Antpecker** *Parmoptila woodhousei*. In the Okwango Division of the same park, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus*, **Golden Greenbul** *Calyptrorhynchus serina* and **Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps* were observed. Nearby Afi River Forest Reserve held **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolophus*, **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrorhynchus*, **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Spizaetus africanus*, **Nkulengu Rail** *Ilimantornis haematopus*, **Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques*, **Dusky Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx mechowii* and **Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *C. olivinus*, **Black Spinetail** *Telacanthura melanopygia*, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus*, **Sjöstedt's Honeyguide Greenbul** *Baeopogon clamans*, **Eastern Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger chloronotus*, **Kemp's Longbill** *Macrosphenus kempi*, **Lemon-bellied Crombec** *Sylvietta denti* and **Red-headed Antpecker**. A male **Green-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia rubescens* of the distinctive and very local race *rossensis* was feeding in the company of a male **Johanna's Sunbird** *N. johannae*; the former has only recently been found in Nigeria, in nearby Cross River National Park. **Black-casqued Ceratogymna atrata** and **Yellow-casqued Wattled Hornbills** *C. elata*, which have become mainly rare elsewhere in the country, were found to be still not uncommon.

In the south-west, the experimental ricefields of IITA at Ibadan held a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* on 13 November, two **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* on 20 November and a first-winter **Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* on 16–18 December (all RD)

Senegal

A **European Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* was seen near Kour Ayib Râ, Toubaouta on 27 March and another in the same area one week later (BN). There are few records of this species in Senegal.

São Tomé and Príncipe

Interesting Príncipe records from August include a **Harlequin Quail** *Coturnix delegorguei*, flushed from the runway on 17th, and two swifts, observed for some time near Bom Bom Island Resort on 16th, that may have been **African Black Swift** *Apus barbatus stadeniae*; these would constitute the first for the island (NB, RD).

Seychelles

The report of the Seychelles Bird Records Committee includes the following records for the second half of 1996. A **Watercock** *Gallinula cinerea* at the marsh of Plantation Club, Mahé, 4–7 July, would constitute the first record for the Afrotropical and Malagasy regions, if accepted. Species for which only hearsay reports existed previously, include a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* at Oceangate mudflats, Mahé on 24 October, a **European Scops Owl** *Otus scops* on Aride Island, 8–12 December, and a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* at Roche Caiman Bird Sanctuary, Mahé from 8–28 December at least. Other noteworthy sightings include a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Roche Caiman Bird Sanctuary on 25 October and a **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* at the same site on 18 December (all AS).

Socotra

A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* at Wadi Nutreh on 22 December 1996, constitutes the first record for the island (per GK).

South Africa

October records of scarce species in the Cape provinces include a **Black Egret** *Egretta ardesiaca* and four **White-faced Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* at Mondplaas ponds on 2th, a **Black-breasted Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus pectoralis* at De Hoop on 6th, and a **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus* at Swellendam on 5th, with another at Chapman's Peak caravan park, Nordhoek on 11th (GO).

Tanzania

An adult male **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* flew north over Pemba Island on 26 June. The critically endangered **Uluguru Bush Shrike** *Malaconotus alius* was seen at Bunduki,

in Uluguru South Forest Reserve on 28 June. An **Amani Sunbird** *Anthreptes pallidigaster* was encountered at 1,100 m in the East Usambaras near Amani on 12 June; this is slightly higher than the usually cited 900 m (all VS).

Uganda

In Budongo Forest a **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Spizaetus africanus* and four **Nahan's Francolin** *Francolinus nahanii* were seen on 14 May, while in Mabira Forest six **Afep Pigeon** *Columba uncinata* were observed on 6 June. In Kibale Forest, no less than 100 **White-naped Pigeon** *C. albimucha* were recorded on 21 May (VS).

Records from August 1996 include **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus*, **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus*, **Black-casqued Wattled Hornbill** *Ceratogymna atrata*, **Willcock's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* and **Eastern Bearded Greenbul** *Crimmer chloronotus* at Semliki on 10–11th and **Tit-Hylia** *Pholidornis rufibae* at Buhoma, Impenetrable Forest on 16th, all at their easternmost limits in the country. At Busingiro, Budongo, **Red-eyed (Black-shouldered) Puffback** *Dryoscopus senegalensis* was seen on 10th and **White-checked Oliveback** *Nesocharis capistrata* on 5–6th (AR, CC, RL & IWA). A **Shoebill** *Balaeniceps rex* was seen from Nile Safari Lodge on 18 July 1997 (JE).

Yemen

A juvenile **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* was seen at Amria on 8 November and four **African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus* at Al Urj on 14 November (MU per *Birding World* 10: 454).

Zambia

The following records cover the period April 1996–May 1997. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was at Lochinvar National Park in April 1996, the first there for some time. Elsewhere on the Kafue Flats, a roost of at least 190 **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* was recorded. Over 10,000 **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* were at Lochinvar in May, when both **Harlequin Quail** *Coturnix delegorguei* and **Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* were breeding in enormous numbers. In June, a **Red-eyed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus nigricans* was seen in Livingstone and **Mottled Spinetail** *Telacanthura nssberi* was found in the Luangwa Valley for the first time and is probably resident in small numbers. Also in the Luangwa Valley was an unseasonal July record of **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* which

possibly originated from the southern African breeding population. Also unseasonal for the month were several *Vidua* species still in breeding plumage in Livingstone, amongst which an indigobird imitating **Brown Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta* was discovered. The precise status of this bird, which has also been discovered in Zimbabwe, has yet to be clarified. In August, a **Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* was found for the second consecutive year in Mwinilunga where it is probably more regular than records suggest. Also in that month, **Blue Quail** *Coturnix chinensis* was found in the Luangwa Valley for the first time. A trip to Western Province and Zambezi District in September produced many records of rarely reported species, such as **South African Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo spilodera*, **African Hobby** *Falco curvieri*, **Burchell's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles burchelli*, **White-throated Francolin** *Francolinus albogularis* and **Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys*. Large numbers of **Hottentot Buttonquail** *Turnix hottentotta* were found in Liuwa Plain National Park, with calculations of density and area of suitable habitat suggesting that at least 40,000 individuals could have been present. In October, **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was recorded on the Kafue Flats and **Livingstone's Flycatcher** *Erythrocerus livingstonei* at the top of the Zambezi escarpment at an unusually high altitude. In November, a **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* flew over Lusaka and several **Common Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* of the afrotropical race were reported from the Bangweulu Swamps which may represent one of their strongholds. In December, noteworthy Palearctic migrants included 87 **Black Kite** *Milvus m. migrans* roosting near Mazabuka, and **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*, **River Warbler** *Locustella fluvialis* and **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* near Kafue. A **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* tracked by satellite telemetry as far south as the Luangwa Valley would constitute a new species for Zambia; no sightings were obtained, however.

A trip to Luapula Province in December 1996–January 1997 produced some interesting distributional records, including another addition to the national list, **White-winged Warbler** *Bradypterus carpalis*, which was found in considerable numbers at the mouth of the Luapula River, where **Papyrus Yellow Warbler** *Chloropeta gracilirostris* appeared to be more numerous than

previously recorded. Further north, **Spotted Thrush-Babbler** *Ptyrticus turdinus* was re-found at its only known site in the province, and records of **Bamboo Warbler** *Bradypterus alfredi*, **Grey-winged Robin-Chat** *Cossypha polioptera*, **Anchieta's Barbet** *Stactolaema anchietae* and **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* at Kasangu all represented considerable range extensions.

In January 1997, a **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* on the Kafue Flats at Lochinvar National Park constitutes another new bird for Zambia and the second inland record for Africa. At the same site was a presumably overwintering **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* and five **Corn Crakes** *Crex crex*. Subsequently, heavy rain encouraged large numbers of rallids to move into the country. In February, **Sombre Bulbul** *Andropadus importunus* was discovered west of Lusaka on the northern edge of the Kafue Flats. In March, the **Brown Firefinch** parasite reappeared near Livingstone and in April a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was near Kafue. A **Cape Vulture** *Gyps coprotheres* reported in May over Mazabuka is only the fourth for the country. Eight **Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* were seen near

Kafue and in Mwinilunga **Green-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia rubescens* was recorded for the first time in several years (all per PL). ♀

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by John Ash (JA), Hannes van Aswegen (HvA), John Atkins (JA), Phil Atkinson (PA), Sherif & Mindy Baba el Din (S & MBD), Theo Bakker (TB), Clive Barlow (CB), Frantz Barrault (FB), Richard Bashford (RB), James Bates (JB), Nik Borron Birdquest (NB), Andy Bunting (AB), Tony Clarke (TC), Callan Cohen (CC), Keith Cohen (KC), Ron Demey (RD), R.J. Dowsell & F. Dowsell-Lemaire (DDL), Philippe Dubois (PD), Hugues Dufourny (HD), Jan Elfrink (JE), Jacques Erard (JE), Olivier Eyletten (OE), Erik Forsythe (EF), A.J.G. van Gastel & E.R. van Gastel (VG), Andrew Griere (AG), Marcello Grusso (MG), Tom Gullick (TG), Seppo Haavisto (SH), Frank Hawkins (FH), Dave Hoddinot (DH), JV and Dorothy Hook (JVDH), François Huquet (FH), Frédéric Jignet (FJ), Guy Kirwan (GK), André van Kleunen (AK), Pete Leonard (PL), Rob Leslie (RL), Ray & Val Loret (RVL), Athol Marchant (AM), Tony Marr WildWings (TM),

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Editorial address

All contributions and correspondence should be sent to: The Bulletin Editor, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK. ☎

The views expressed by contributors to this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Editorial Team, the Council of the African Bird Club or its committees.



Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus*, Nouabalé-Ndoki NP, Congo, May 1997. (F. Dowsett-Lemaire)



Mayotte Scops Owl, *Otus rutilus mayottensis* at Combani, Mayotte, November 1995 (Alan Lewis)