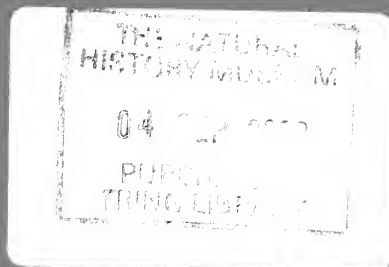


TOS 4402

# African Bird Club



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 7 No 2 September 2000

Records from  
Gambela, Ethiopia

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Peregrine/Barbary  
Falcon complex  
in Morocco

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Breeding biology  
of several species  
in north-west  
Africa

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fishing owls in  
Agenebode,  
Nigeria

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Lesser Flamingo  
breeding in  
Mauritania

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Banded Kestrel  
behaviour in  
Madagascar

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Sad story of  
Alootra Grebe

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Glossy Starlings  
field ID

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Kakamega Forest  
schools project

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African Broadbill  
range extension

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# 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

Phil Atkinson (Chairman), Keith Betton, Richard Butler, Mark Catterall, Stan Davies, Roy Hargreaves, Moira Hargreaves, Gordon Holtshausen, Paul Lascelles, Rob Lucking, Bill Quantrill (Secretary), Alan Williams (Treasurer) and John Wyatt. President: Martin Woodcock

## Bulletin Editorial Team

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

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## The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The *Bulletin of the ABC* provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, 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, Zimmerman *et al* for East Africa and Dowsett & Forbes-Watson for all non-*Birds of Africa* species, eg from the Malagasy region. 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.

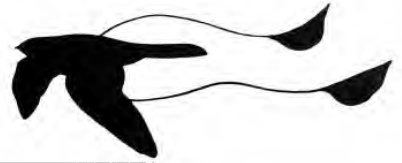
Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should, if possible, follow those on standard or readily available maps.

(continued inside back cover...)

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# Contents

Bull ABC Vol 7 No 2



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## News & Comment

- 86 **Club News**  
*Compiled by Paul Lascelles*
- 89 **Minutes of Sixth AGM**
- 90 **Advertising rates**
- 91 **ABC Conservation Programme**
- 92 **Africa Round-up**  
*Compiled by Ron Demey and Guy Kirwan*
- 96 **Requests for Information**
- 106 **Conservation Fund Update**
- 132 **Discoveries**  
**A nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* constructed on a tree**  
*Matthias Waltert and Michael Mühlenberg*  
**Red-tailed Greenbul *Crimiger calurus* and Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch *Nigrita bicolor*, new to Bénin**  
*Maarten van den Akker*  
**African Swallow-tailed Kite *Cbelyctinia riocourii* breeding in the Saloum Delta, Sénégal**  
*R.E. Brasseur*
- 141 **Photospot**  
**Star-spotted Nightjar**  
*Michael Mills and Claire Spottiswoode*
- 144 **Recent Reports**  
*Compiled by Ron Demey*
- 152 **Reviews**
- 153 **Letters**

## Features

- 97 **Records from Gambela, western Ethiopia**  
*Claire Spottiswoode and Michael Mills*
- 101 **Taxonomy of the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* / Barbary Falcon *F. (peregrinus) pelegrinoides* complex in Morocco**  
*Valéry Schollaert and Gilles Willem*
- 104 **Notes on the breeding biology of several species in north-west Africa**  
*Peter Castell*
- 107 **Fishing owls at Agenebode, Nigeria**  
*Anthony Turk*
- 109 **Suspected breeding of Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* in Mauritania**  
*Olivier Hamerlynck and Brabimould Messaoud*
- 111 **Behaviour of Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris* in western Madagascar: a possible foraging association with Sickle-billed Vanga *Falculea palliata***  
*Ruth E. Tingay and Martin Gilbert*
- 115 **The sad story of Alaotra Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus***  
*Frank Hawkins, Rado Andriamasimanana, Sam The Seing and Zarine Rabeony*
- 119 **Identifying glossy starlings in the field**  
*Adrian Craig*
- 128 **Kakamega Forest: a living classroom for the growing generation**  
*Solomon Mwangi*
- 135 **Range extension of African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* into Soutpansberg, Northern Province, South Africa**  
*C.T. Symes and M.R. Perrin*

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### Front cover plate

Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* by Mark Andreus

### Illustrations

Mark Andreus, Nik Borrow, Craig Robson, Colin Touw

### Photographs

Peter Castell, W.S. Clark, Olivier Hamerlynck, A.P. Leventis, Michael Mills, Solomon Ngari, Claire Spottiswoode, Craig Symes, Paul Thompson, Anthony Turk, Maarten van den Akker, Johan Verbauck, Matthias Waltert

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# Club News



Anyone with information they feel would be of interest to the membership for publication in Club News should send it to the Club Secretary or by e-mail to:  
paullascelles@hotmail.com

## The Whitley 2000 International Conservation Awards

On 10 December 1999, Fleur Ng'weno, an ABC member in Kenya, was short-listed for the Whitley Award Scheme for International Nature Conservation. Fleur has become a prominent figure in Kenyan conservation, having led bird walks around Nairobi for almost 30 years. She has also been campaigning to establish a biodiversity park on the city's outskirts. This is the world's largest conservation award, with UK£200,000 being made available each session in five awards, ranging from UK£5,000 to UK£50,000. Fleur was short-listed from the applications of 68 conservationists worldwide. The awards are administered by the Royal Geographic Society, e-mail: grants@rgs.org.

## PAOC

The Club has sponsored two full and one student place at the Pan-African Ornithological Congress this September, for Council members to represent and promote the Club throughout the event. Also, UK£2,500 will be made available to support the presence of African nationals, including those presenting papers and posters at the congress.

## ABC membership

Club membership is again projected at c1,300 members in 2000, with 187 currently not renewed. If you have not already done so, please re-subscribe for 2000, or 2001, by completing and returning the membership renewal form enclosed with this bulletin.

## Supported and affiliated membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The

scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£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 that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£25 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. African who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes Clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

## ABC e-mailing list

With our membership scattered in over 60 countries, e-mail provides a quick, convenient and inexpensive means of maintaining contact with our members. We now have e-mail addresses for c33% of the membership, but are sure there are many other members' addresses are not in the Club's records. If you have not already done so, please let the Club Secretary know your e-mail address by contacting wquantrill@msn.com. At the same time, please let the Secretary know if you are willing for your address to be added to the general Club mailing list. As well as using e-mail to communicate with members individually, a general Club mailing list has been compiled, used for sending messages to the membership collectively. The addresses on this list are confidential and not divulged to any outside individual or organisation, and will not be used for commercial purposes. Members are welcome to use this list to circulate their own requests for information or advice, identification queries etc, but not, of course, to send commercial messages. If you have a query or request that you would like to address to the membership please let the Secretary know, either by e-mail at the address given above, or if you do not have e-mail, by post to the Club's usual postal address.

## ABC information service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also cutodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. Fax: +44 171 637 5626. E-mail: kbetton@abta.co.uk.



## ABC Representatives Scheme

Due to an increased workload, Vicki Lucking has been forced to hand-over the scheme's reins to Paul Lascelles. The current listing of ABC Representatives contains a number of amendments to that found in the previous bulletin.

**Australia:** K. David Bishop, P O Box 6068, Kincumber, NSW 2251. E-mail: kdbishop@ozemail.au.

**Austria:** Remo Probst, Radetzstr. 21/11, A-1030, Vienna. E-mail: a8960178@unet.univie.ac.at.

**Belgium:** Jan Goosens, Vruntebaan 18, 2520 Emblem. Tel fax: +32 3 488 13 71. E-mail: azv@glo.be.

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

**Cameroon:** O'Kah Ebwekoh Monya, Mount Cameroon Project, P O Box 437, Limbe.

**Canada:** Antonio Salvadori, 17 Colborn Street, Guelph, Ontario. N1G 2M4. E-mail: rosella@snowwhite.cis.uoguelph.ca.

**Canary Islands/Spain:** Tony Clarke c/o Republica Dominicana, No 61, Barrio de Fatima, 38500 Guimar, Tenerife. E-mail: clark@arrakis.es.

**Côte d'Ivoire:** Olivier Lachenaud, CIRAD, 01 BP 6483, Abidjan 01. E-mail: lachenaud@cirad.fr.

**Denmark:** Lars Dinesen, Sjællandsgade, 37, 3 tv, 2200 Copenhagen N. Tel/Fax: 35367164. E-mail: regulus@inet.unic.dk.

**Egypt:** Sherif and Mindy Baha El Din, 2 Abdalla El Katib St. Apt. 3, Dokki, Cairo. Tel/Fax: 3608160. E-mail: 103257.1554@compuserve.com.

**Ethiopia:** Ato Mengistu Wondafraash, Ethiopian IBA Program, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, P O Box 60074 Adis Ababa.

**France:** Bob & Françoise Dowsett, 12 rue des Lavandes, Ganges, F-34190. E-mail: Dowsett@aol.com.

**Finland:** Annika Forsten, Messeniusgatan 11 B 54, 00250 Helsingfors, Finland. E-mail: annika.forsten@intrum.com.

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

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

**Hungary:** Ákos Hivekovics, 10 Zrinyi Street, H-8756 Nagerecse. E-mail: tacshun@elender.hu.

**Italy:** Giuseppe Micali, Via Savona 71, Milano, MI 1-20144. E-mail: GMicali@USCCMAIL.bms.com.

**Kenya:** Colin Jackson, PO Box 383,

Watamu. E-mail: CjJacko@bigfoot.com.

**Madagascar:** Lily-Arison René de Roland. The Peregrine Fund, BP 4113, Antananarivo 101. Tel: +261 20 22 21546. E-mail: Pfundmad@mts.mg.

**Morocco:** Jacques Franchimont, Dept Biologie Faculte des Sciences de Meknes, B P 4010, Beni M'Hamed 50003, Meknes. E-mail: j.franchimont@extra.net.ma.

**Namibia:** Chris Hines, PO Box 22527, Windhoek.

**Nigeria:** Dr Vincent Ejere, Dept. of Zoology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. E-mail: ijay@infoweb.abs.net.

**Seychelles:** Adrian Skerrett, Shipping House, PO Box 336, Victoria, Mahé. Fax: 322978. E-mail: maheship@seychelles.net or askerret@uk.packardbell.org.

**Tanzania:** Maurus Musha, PO Box 70919, Dar es Salaam.

**The Gambia:** Clive Barlow, The Atlantic Hotel, PO Box 269, 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, 222 South Figueroa St. Apt. 1922, Los Angeles, CA90012, USA. E-mail: Joseph.C.Thompson@kp.org.

**Zambia:** Pete Leonard, PO Box 630025, Choma. FAX: 032 20621. E-mail: pleonard@zamnet.zm.

**Zimbabwe:** Librarian, Birdlife Zimbabwe, PO Box CY 161, Causeway. E-mail: birds@zol.co.zw.

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

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC

Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact Paul Lascelles. E-mail: paullascelles@hotmail.com, or write to 1 Glasgoego Farmhouse, Kinellar, Aberdeen, AB21 0RY, UK.

## ABC sales items

The following items are currently available from ABC Sales.

1. ABC Sweatshirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club Working for Birds in Africa'; black, navy or bottle-green. Sizes: medium, large, extra-large and extra-extra large: UK£20.
2. Old-style ABC Polo shirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club. Working for Birds in Africa', forest-green. Sizes: small and medium only: UK£6.50.
3. New-style ABC Polo shirt featuring an embroidered ABC logo and 'African Bird Club. Working for Birds in Africa', bottle-green, navy-blue and black. Sizes: large, extra-large and extra-extra-large only: UK£13.50.
4. New ABC T-shirt featuring Bush Shrikes by Dave Nurney, grey. Sizes: large, extra-large and extra-extra-large only: UK£13.50.
5. ABC T-shirt featuring African Rollers by Mark Andrews, white. Sizes: large and extra large: UK£9.
6. ABC T-shirt featuring Turacos, white. Sizes: extra large only: UK£9.
7. ABC caps featuring an embroidered ABC logo, black, bottle green, red, maroon and navy: UK£7.
8. ABC enamel badge featuring a Slender-billed Curlew design: UK£1.
9. ABC car and telescope stickers: UK£1.
10. ABC bone-china mugs: 2 designs featuring Carmine Bee-eater or Golden-breasted Starlings by Martin Woodcock: UK£7 or UK£12 a pair.
11. Pen, printed with 'African Bird Club' and ABC logo: UK£0.25
12. Pencil, printed with 'African Bird Club' and ABC logo: UK£0.15.
13. 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£3.50.
14. 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.
15. 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 five cards in a hand-woven wallet: UK£5.
  16. Self-adhesive 're-use envelope' labels featuring ABC logo: UK£1 for 10
  17. *Bull. ABC*, volume 1, 1994, number 1 and 2: UK£5 each.
  18. *Bull. ABC*, volume 2, 1995, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
  19. *Bull. ABC*, volume 3, 1996, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
  20. *Bull. ABC*, volume 4, 1997, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
  21. *Bull. ABC*, volume 5, 1998, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
  22. *Bull. ABC*, volume 5, 1998, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
  22. Azores Trip Report, Sep–Oct 1997 by Willem Steenge and Theo Bakker: UK£6.
  23. Cameroon Trip Report, Dec 1994–Jan 1995 by Richard Webb: UK£6.
  24. Cameroon Trip Report, Mar–April 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle: UK£4.
  25. Cape Verde Trip Report, Mar 1996 by Theo Bakker and Klaas van Dijk: UK£6.50.
  26. Ethiopia Trip Report, Dec 1995–Jan 1996 by Richard Webb: UK£7.50.
  27. Ethiopia Trip Report, Oct–Nov 1996 by Jon Hornbuckle: UK£4.
  28. Ethiopia: In search of endemic birds, Sep–Oct 1997 by Julian Francis and Hadoram Shirihai: UK£10.
  29. Ethiopia/Eritrea Trip Report, Mar–May 1998 by David Murdoch: UK£3.
  30. The Gambia, 10–17 Sep 1999 by Stuart Sharp: UK£5.00.
  31. Birding Ghana, Feb 1996 by Mindy and Sherif El Din: UK£6.50.
  32. Ghana Trip Report, Jan–Feb 1997 by Simon Plat: UK£4.
  33. Côte d'Ivoire by public transport trip report, Jan–Feb 1995 by Eddie Williams: UK£4.
  34. Kenya Trip Report, Feb–Mar 1995 by Mike Hunter and Graham Speight: UK£8.
  35. Madagascar and the Comoros, Oct–Nov 1995 by Jon Hornbuckle: UK£4.
  36. Madagascar, Nov–Dec 1997 by Chris Bell, Mike Hunter, Dawn Ross and Malcolm Roxby: UK£3.
  37. Madagascar (with Mauritius and Réunion), winter 1997–98 by Brian Gee: UK£9.
  38. Madagascar Trip Report by Paul Noakes: UK£2.50.
  39. Malawi, March 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle: UK£3.
  40. Malawi and the Luangwa Valley, Zambia, Jul–Aug 1997 by Henk Hendriks: UK£8.
  41. Namibia and the Cape, Nov 1994 by Jon Hornbuckle: UK£4.
  42. Birding Sénégal, 10–29 November 1998 by Mindy and Sherif Baha el Din: UK£5.
  43. Eastern South Africa and Zimbabwe, Feb–Mar 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle: UK£5.
  44. Voyage Naturaliste au Cape Provinces d'Afrique du Sud, Sep–Oct 1997 par Georges et Mireille Oliosio: UK£6.
  45. Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, Jan–Feb 1996 by Eddie Williams: UK£4.50.
  46. Uganda Trip Report, Jun–Aug 1995 by Henk Hendriks: UK£6.50.
  47. Wakkerstroom Bird and Nature Guide, by Warwick and Michèle Tarboton: UK£4.
  48. Birdwatch Zimbabwe, 1991, by Derek Solomon and Jacko Williams: UK£7.

Postage and packing: please send UK£2 for each UK order, and UK£3 for each overseas surface mail order. For overseas airmail please add UK£1.50

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, United Kingdom. Enquiries may also be sent to ABC Sales Officer, Moira Hargreaves, at the Club's address or e-mail: Moira.Y.Hargreaves@btinternet.com.

### 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 receive 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 individual or company with inquiries or suggestions about the scheme should write to Moira Hargreaves at the Club address or e-mail: Moira.Y.Hargreaves@btinternet.com.

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to BirdLife International for the use of their offices as a mailing address, Alcedo Publishing of Colorado Springs, USA, and Crowes of Norwich, UK, for their assistance in producing the bulletin. 

# Minutes of the Sixth AGM of the African Bird Club

held on 4 March 2000 at the School of Oriental and African Studies,  
Thornhaugh Street, London at 14.00 hr

## Present

The following registered their attendance at the meeting:

T Addinell, Philip Adlington, R Allison, Phil Atkinson, David Barker, Keith Betton, Mike Blair, Nik Borrow, Richard Bosanquet, C F Brooks, Dennis Buisson, Richard Butler, Mark Catterall, Nick Chambers, Bob Cheke, P C Cherry, Nigel Cleere, Chris Collins, J P Darch, Marc Depauw, Megan Dickens, S Ecclestone, David Fisher, Lincoln Fishpool, Paul Fuller, F M Gauntlett, Brian Gee, John Hammick, Moira Hargreaves, Roy Hargreaves, Vicki Harley, Dave Harris, Peter Headland, Christopher Helm, Chris Hendley, Mr and Mrs A Holcombe, Gordon Holtshausen, Nigel Jarman, R J Jeffers, Michael Kings, Paul Lascelles, Mark Lawrence, Russell Leavett, Simon Levene, Duncan Macdonald, Arthur Mason, Christine Mason, Andy Merritt, Tony Morris, John Mujinga, David Porter, Madeleine Prangley, Bill Quantrill, A W Seymour, M P Stanyer, B R Sykes, Jane Tatchell, Don Taylor, Anne Thain, Hazell Thompson, A J Todd, John Walder, T Watson, Alan Williams, Barbara Woodcock and Martin Woodcock.

## Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Patrick Claffey, Jon Gibbons, Joan Howie, Guy Kirwan, Rob and Vicki Lucking, Amberley Moore, Anne Nason, Rowena Quantrill, Nigel Redman, Beau Rowlands, Yvonne Savidge, P J Sellar and Richard Webb.

## Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and approved unanimously.

## Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

## Report of the Council for 1999

In introducing the report, copies of which had been distributed at the meeting, the Chairman noted that membership at the end of 1999 was unchanged from a year previously, at just over 1,300. 1999 was the first year since the Club was founded during which there had been no significant membership growth. Steps were now being taken to promote the Club more actively, particularly in key African countries. Encouraging progress had been made with the Conservation Awards programme, and there had been four successful applications for NHBS/ABC Book Awards. The first of the new Expedition Awards had been made to the Nigerian Conservation Foundation to help finance an expedition to the Oban Hills/Cross River National Park. The Chairman paid tribute to three members of Council who were standing down, Geoff Randall, Jacqui Bridges and Alan Wilkinson, and also thanked the Club's Corporate Sponsors, as well as the many volunteers who have helped the Club in different ways over the past year.

Looking forward to the coming year, the Chairman announced that Council would be undertaking a wide-ranging review of the Club's aims and objectives, and of the format and content of the Bulletin. Any member who had strong views on these questions was welcome to participate in the review. The year will see the 10th Pan African Ornithological Congress, to be held in Kampala, at which ABC will be present.

Preparations will also continue for the 2nd World Birding Conference, to be held at Swanwick in spring 2001. The Chairman concluded his remarks by appealing for more members to take an active part in the Club, in particular by volunteering for election to Council.

## Presentation of the Accounts for 1999 and Treasurer's Report

In presenting the accounts, copies of which had been distributed at the

meeting, the Treasurer reported that the Club's finances remained healthy. The increased expenditure on the Bulletin and from the Conservation Account reflected deliberate decisions by Council to spend more on these items, since it was not Club policy to accumulate excessive reserves. The Treasurer also reported that the Inland Revenue had now confirmed that the Club could recover any tax that might have been paid on subscriptions to the Club by members who were UK tax payers. At the moment this should be done by a Deed of Covenant. The government was reported to be considering simplifying the system by eliminating the need for covenants, but for now members were invited to complete and return the deed forms distributed with the latest issue of the Bulletin. There being no questions, the Accounts were approved unanimously.

## Election of Council

The following were elected to the African Bird Club Council for 2000:

Phil Atkinson, Keith Betton, Richard Butler, Mark Catterall, Stan Davies, John Farnsworth, Moira Hargreaves, Roy Hargreaves, Gordon Holtshausen, Paul Lascelles, Rob Lucking, Bill Quantrill, Alan Williams and John Wyatt.

## Election of Executive Officers

The following were elected as Executive Officers of the Club for 2000:

Chairman: Phil Atkinson  
Secretary: Bill Quantrill  
Treasurer: Alan Williams

## Appointment of Auditor

Mr B P G Blackler, FCMA, MIMgt was elected as Auditor for 2000.

## Any Other Business

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 14.30 hr.

**African Bird Club—summary statement of accounts  
at 31 December 1999**

*(A copy of the full statement may be obtained from the Club Treasurer on request)*

**Income and Expenditure Account—  
year to 31 December 1999**

<u>Main Account</u>		
INCOME		
	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>
Subscriptions	16506	16844
Other revenue	3396	2795
Bank and Building Society Interest	<u>372</u>	<u>750</u>
	20274	20389
<b>Less:</b>		
Bulletin Costs (including postage)	<u>14829</u>	<u>13120</u>
<b>Income before expenses</b>	5445	7269
EXPENSES		
General expenses—stationery, telephone, meeting costs etc	3966	4400
Participation at IOC		795
Finance costs—bank charges, depreciation, accountancy etc	<u>1160</u>	<u>1050</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	5127	6245
<b>Surplus for year</b>	<u>318</u>	<u>1024</u>
<u>Conservation Account (see Note below)</u>		
INCOME		
Donations and sponsorship	633	1249
Profit on sales of Club merchandise	<u>2138</u>	<u>1197</u>
<b>Total income</b>	2771	2446
EXPENDITURE		
Conservation awards made in year	<u>3322</u>	<u>2290</u>
<b>Balance for year carried forward</b>	-551	156

Note: £8000 was set aside at the end of 1997 to form the Conservation Fund. Profits on sales of Club merchandise and income from donations and sponsorship are now added to this fund.

**Balance Sheet at  
31 December 1999**

<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
Equipment	1169
<b>Current Assets</b>	
Stock of goods for resale	4827
Bank and Building Society Balances	<u>22528</u>
	<u>27355</u>
<b>Less:</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
Subscriptions paid in advance	7924
Life memberships	5496
Sundry creditors	<u>1134</u>
	<u>14553</u>
<b>Net current assets</b>	<u>12802</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	<u>13971</u>
<b>Represented by:</b>	
Accumulated Fund brought forward	6048
Surplus for year	318
Conservation Fund brought forward	8156
Conservation Fund balance for year	<u>-551</u>
	<u>13971</u>

## Advertise in the *Bulletin of the ABC*

All advertisements must be sent **prepaid** (cheques made payable to the African Bird Club) as camera-ready copy, bromide/film or on floppy disk to:

Moira Hargreaves, 30 Highfield Road, Tring,  
Herts, HP23 4DX, UK.

If adverts are sent on floppy disk we can accept Pagemaker 6, CorelDraw7 files or unformatted ASCII text files and uncompressed TIF graphics files. If adverts are prepared on an Apple Mac the diskette should be formatted for PC.

The current rates are as follows and are based on a print run of 1,500 copies. These rates are guaranteed for the March 2001 *Bull ABC*.

Please address all queries to Moira Hargreaves at the above address.

### African Bird Club Advertising Rates

**Black & white**

Full-page	£95	(210 x 145mm)
Half-page	£60	(100 x 145mm)
Quarter-page	£40	(100 x 70mm)
Eighth-page	£25	(50 x 70mm)

**Colour**

Please contact Moira Hargreaves on Tel/Fax: 01442 823624. E-mail: moira.y.hargreaves@btinternet.com (or write to the address given above left.)

**Copy deadlines**

Spring Bulletin	15 January
Autumn Bulletin	05 June



# African Bird Club

## CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

### **ABC Conservation Fund**

The ABC Conservation Fund supports small conservation projects in Africa. In 1998, seven Conservation Awards totalling over UK£3,000 (US\$4,500) were made. These awards embraced a wide range of activities in five countries from environmental education projects to research on endangered species.

ABC Conservation Awards are available to African individuals or institutions or to people normally resident in an African country and the Club welcomes project proposals for funding up to a maximum of UK£750 (US\$1,500). Further information on the Conservation Fund and guidelines on how to write a project proposal can be found on the ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>) or obtained from the Club address below.

### **ABC/NHBS Book Awards**

The ABC/NHBS book award scheme is a collaboration between the ABC and the Natural History Book Service. Five book vouchers to the value of UK£100 (US\$150) each are awarded annually to successful applicants. The vouchers can be redeemed against books to the same value sold by NHBS. The aim of the award is to promote awareness of birds, birding and bird conservation in Africa and ideally applicants should be able to demonstrate that the material will be available for a wide range of people to consult. The deadline for applications for the 2000/2001 book awards is 31 January 2001.

NHBS catalogues are available on request from NHBS, 2–3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN, UK. E-mail: [nhbs@nhbs.co.uk](mailto:nhbs@nhbs.co.uk)

### **ABC Expedition Award**

The ABC Expedition Award is a new initiative for the year 2000. One award of UK£1,000 (US\$1,500) will be made annually. Full details can be found on the ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>) or obtained from the Club's address below.

### **Further information...**

For further information about the African Bird Club Conservation Programme, please write to Rob Lucking at: African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK, or e-mail [Rob.Lucking@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Rob.Lucking@rspb.org.uk)

# Africa Round-up



Isabelline (=Red-tailed) Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* by Mark Andrews

## General

### Races of Isabelline Shrike and their nomenclature

Isabelline (=Red-tailed) Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* is usually regarded as comprising four subspecies, two of which reach Africa in winter, *phoenicuroides* and *speculigerus*. D. J. Pearson demonstrates, in a recent paper, that *speculigerus* is actually a synonym of the nominate race.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 120, pp 22–27

### Sand plover identification revisited

A recent paper in the journal *British Birds*, by Erik Hirschfeld and co-authors, has taken a fresh and comprehensive new look at the identification of Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus*, as well as re-evaluating the global ranges of their subspecies. Illustrated by a series of colour plates, photographs and line drawings (the former and latter by Alan Harris), the paper marks a significant step forward in the identification of these two, frequently misidentified, species, and will be required reading for all shorebird enthusiasts.

Source: Br. Birds 93, pp 162–189

### Golden Orioles wintering in Africa

A recent study of the European Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* in Africa

has demonstrated that the species has two main wintering areas (mid-December to February) in the continent: a small area north of the Cameroon and Central African Republic rainforests, and a much larger area south of 05°S. There are no reliable winter records in West Africa. For winter habitats it prefers savannah woodland, forest-savannah mosaic, riverine and gallery forests and Guinea Zone forests, while on migration, which continues until December and commences in February, it will also occasionally use rainforests.

Source: Die Vogelwarte 40, pp 63–79

### Satellite-tracked eagles carry UNEP message

In July 1999, several adult Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* were caught in northern Germany by members of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls (WWGBP). These were equipped with solar-powered satellite transmitters, weighing c35 g, which will provide new information about the flyways and roosting sites (stopovers) of these eagles. The fact that they reach even the southernmost areas of the African continent and the coincidence of their presumed arrival in early November when the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP CMS) was holding its 6th Conference of the Parties (COP 6) in Cape Town (4–16 November 1999) led to the idea of equipping the eagles not only with transmitters but also with a message: 'This Eagle connects ecosystems of Europe, the Middle East and Africa—Migratory animals are paramount symbols of our common natural heritage'. This message, focusing on the above conference, was addressed to the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in the name of Prof. Dr Klaus Töpfer, the Executive Director of UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). The eagles migration routes, which can be viewed on the Internet (<http://www.dialogis.de/cms/eagles.html>), were displayed in a keynote speech by Dr Töpfer during the opening ceremony of the conference. The increase in public awareness of endangered migratory

species throughout the world was the main goal of this symbolic action, which is also supported by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme).

Source: <http://www.dialogis.de/cms/eagles.html>

### Recent Ornithological Literature

Not all members may be aware that the AOU/BOU/RAOU literature abstracts are now available freely on the Internet (<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/ROL/index.html>). This is the most complete bibliography available, it is updated frequently and can be readily converted into a PC database. Inclusion of the African literature has unfortunately been very incomplete, but with *Tauraco* taking over responsibility for organising sub-Saharan abstracts, it is hoped the backlog can soon be dealt with. The latest issue to be posted (no. 79) does not include any African titles, but there are a large number in no. 80 (which will probably be available on the Internet by the time you read this).

For this service to be as complete and prompt as possible, the collaboration of a team of abstractors is necessary. For a number of serials we do not have abstractors. Any volunteer prepared to examine a journal promptly on publication, and having access to e-mail, is encouraged to contact Bob Dowsett (e-mail: [Dowsett@aol.com](mailto:Dowsett@aol.com)).

### Southern Africa

#### New genus erected for Kerguelen Petrel

Storrs Olson has recently established the need for a new genus, *Aphrodroma*, for the Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*, which breeds on Kerguelen, Crozet, Marion, Tristan da Cunha and Gough islands in the southern Atlantic Ocean. A 1985 proposal had resurrected the genus *Lugensa* for this species, based on intestinal traits, Mallophaga and behavioural analyses. Subsequently, a relative degree of consensus had been reached that the species is not particularly closely related to other

*Pterodroma* petrels. Olson's research has demonstrated that *Lugeusa* is unavailable for Kerguelen Petrel. Due to lingering doubts over the identification of the 'battered' type-specimen, it may be that the specific name *brevirostris* should be related with the alternative *kidderi*, but this must await further research. For now, Olson proposes that the species be henceforward known as *Aphrodroma brevirostris*.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 120, pp 59–62

### Cattle Egret diet in southern Africa

Grzegorz Kopij has recently published a study of the stomach contents of adult and chick Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. The results indicate that the species, in South African grasslands, principally feeds on insects (69% of total dry mass) and vertebrates (28%). Chick diet is relatively more dependent on vertebrates than that of their parents. It appears that breeding season rainfall may influence the relative importance of vertebrates and insects in Cattle Egret diet. In addition, adult diet becomes more reliant on insects in winter (June–August) than in summer (September–March), when vertebrates increase in importance. As the young grow there is a noticeable shift toward insects in their diet.

Source: Die Vogelwarte 40, pp 98–109

### New subspecies of *Levaillant's Cisticola* described from the Western Cape, South Africa

All *Levaillant's Cisticolas Cisticola tinniens* south of the Limpopo River were considered to belong to the nominate race, but Marc Herremans and his co-workers found that several data demonstrated that those from the Western Cape were best treated as a separate subspecies, which they have named *brookei* in honour of Richard K. Brooke, for his major contributions to African ornithology. Atlas data indicate a distinct discontinuity in the distribution of *Levaillant's Cisticola*, separating populations in the winter rainfall region of the Western Cape from those in the summer rainfall zone of South Africa. Western Cape birds breed and moult earlier, are smaller in wing and tail lengths, but heavier in weight, and lack the distinctive summer plumage of a pale rufous, unstreaked crown found in nominate *tinniens*. Both forms undergo a partial body moult in spring, but *brookei*

moult from a winter plumage similar to nominate birds into a breeding plumage where most have the back of the crown marked with dark stripes. Nominate *tinniens* has the underparts almost white in breeding plumage and darker grey-buff in non-breeding plumage, whereas in *brookei* the underparts are similar to the non-breeding nominate throughout the year.

Source: Ostrich 70, pp 164–172

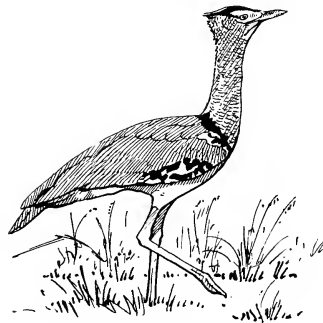
### Zambia Bird Report 1998

The second issue of this periodical builds on the standards set by the first volume, and will prove essential reading for those interested in the country's avifauna. In the traditions of quality bird reports, established in recent years, this publication of the *Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS)* contains much more than the year's systematic bird list: 11 articles, including the results of the African Waterfowl Census in July 1998, descriptions of three species new to the country, the avifauna of Mwinilunga's marginal forests, and 12 shorter notes form the bulk of the present report's 197 pages. Contact the ZOS, Box 33944, Lusaka 10101, Zambia, e-mail: zos@zamnet.zm, for details of membership and how to purchase the report, as well as to submit records for 1999 and subsequent years.

Source: Pete Leonard in litt. December 1999

### Additions to the *Zambian bird list*

In 1998 four species were accepted by the *Zambian Ornithological Society* as additions to the country list: Rüppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii*, Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*, Brown-chested Lapwing *Vanellus superciliosus* and Shrike Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulatus*. The bustard and lapwing had been reported earlier but



Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*  
by Mark Andrews

were not accepted because the records were considered insufficiently proven.

Source: ZOS Newsletter 29

### Peregrine nesting habitat quality may affect foraging efficiency

An eight-year study of Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* nest sites in three areas of South Africa revealed that modes of foraging varied significantly between different sites, and that males hunted more frequently than their partners. A mean of c0.5 hunts was recorded per observation hour and, although foraging mode did not positively correlate with cliff height or elevation above surrounding terrain, those pairs occupying higher cliffs had higher success rates. Most strikes were made from elevated sites close to the nest and were more successful than those made on the wing. In addition, the height difference between the Peregrine and its prey at the start of the strike significantly affected its success. It would appear that high nest cliffs contribute to foraging success by affording perch-hunting Peregrines with a more effective height advantage over their prey.

Source: Ibis 142, pp 235–246

### Waterfowl Census 1999 in Malawi

The 1999 waterfowl count in Malawi was the best ever. Between early June and early September 1999, a total of 9,348 waterbirds of 79 species was recorded at 14 sites. Among the most important locations were the fishponds at SUCOMA, Chiromo and Sungu Island at Nkhotakota.

Source: Vocifer 2 (19), Oct 1999

### Bar-tailed Godwit wintering areas

Within the context of the relatively small numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* wintering in southern Africa (c3,500 in Namibia and South Africa), the discovery during 1996 to 1998 of a population of up to 5,523 in the Bazaruto Archipelago, off the coast of central Mozambique, is surprising.

Source: Die Vogelwarte 40, pp 142–144

### Mozambique Bird Atlas Project: phase 2

With the publication, in 1999, of *Atlas of the Birds of Sul do Save, Southern Mozambique* (see *Bull ABC* 6: 86–87), the first phase of the atlas project, begun in 1995, was completed. The author, Vincent Parker, has now commenced atlas work in the central



part of the country, the area between the Save and Zambezi rivers, as well as Tete Province. The plan is to produce an atlas for central Mozambique within three years, after which the northern part of the country will be investigated. Already 14 species have been added to the Mozambique list. Observers visiting any part of Mozambique are urged to complete atlas checklists, which are available from the Endangered Wildlife Trust (Private Bag X11, Parkview, Johannesburg 2122, South Africa; tel. (011) 486-1102; e-mail: [ewt@ewt.org.za](mailto:ewt@ewt.org.za)) and the Avian Demography Unit (University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa; tel. (021) 650-2423; e-mail: [adu@maths.uct.ac.za](mailto:adu@maths.uct.ac.za)).

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 4 (6), p 22

### Inaccessible buntings

A project based at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Cape Town, aims to study the buntings of Inaccessible Island, one of three islands in the Tristan da Cunha group. This small volcanic island, situated midway between Cape Town and South America, is home to four land birds, all endemic to Tristan: Inaccessible Island Rail *Atlantisia rogersi* (the world's smallest flightless bird), Tristan Thrush *Nesocichla eremita*, Tristan Bunting *Nesospiza acunhae* and Wilkins' Bunting *N. wilkinsi*. The two buntings occupy different niches: the small-billed Tristan Bunting is a dietary generalist, whereas the large-billed Wilkins' is a specialist that feeds primarily on the seeds of the islands' only tree species. On Inaccessible Island the two species have been found to hybridise in food-

poor areas. As males and females of mixed pairs are able to exploit different foods, such partnerships appear to hold an advantage in such situations. Their offspring, however, have intermediate-sized bills, which are probably not adapted for either large tree seeds and grass seeds. The foraging efficiency of birds of known bill size will be investigated.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 4 (5), p 19

### ...and seabirds

Inaccessible Island is also home to important seabird populations, and urgently required up-to-date information on the status of some of these will also be gathered. Special attention is to be focused on Spectacled Petrel, the distinctive subspecies *conspicillata* of White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, which has suffered greatly from long-line fishing off Brazil and for which Inaccessible Island is the only breeding site.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 4 (5), p 19

### Low breeding success of Namaqua Sandgrouse in Karoo

A project monitoring Namaqua Sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua* within its core breeding area in the Karoo, South Africa, over four consecutive years, has discovered its breeding success to be so low that it may suffer population declines as a result, especially in South Africa. The cause of this alarming situation appears to be the exceptionally high level of nest predation, principally by mongooses. It is suspected that sheep-farmers' control of larger predators, particularly birds of prey and jackals, which are important predators of mongooses, has permitted the latter either to increase in number and/or to forage unmolested across exposed areas where Namaqua Sandgrouse nest.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 4 (6), p 24

### Madagascar Serpent-Eagle studies

The Masoala peninsula, in north-east Madagascar, constitutes the stronghold of the critically endangered Madagascar Serpent-Eagle *Eutriorchis astur*. Russell Thorstrom and colleagues studied the species in this area during 1993 to 1998 and detected 15 individuals at a total of nine localities. Most significantly, they

discovered the first nest of this species known to science, in November 1997, at which time it contained a single egg. It was well hidden in an epiphytic fern, 20 m above the ground. Two weeks later the egg hatched, with the young finally fledging in late January 1998. During its time in the nest, chameleons *Furcifer* sp. and leaf-tailed geckos *Urolaptus* sp. constituted 83% of the 133 identified prey items. Thus, the name 'serpent eagle' is probably a misnomer and 'forest eagle' appears more appropriate. The authors of this interesting study recommend further research to determine the species' distribution and to collect more information on its breeding biology, with emphasis on courtship and nesting habitat.

Source: Ibis 142, pp 217–224

### East Africa

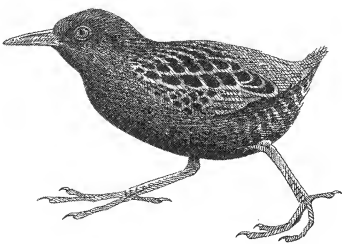
#### New subspecies of East Coast Akalat from Tanzania

Jon Fieldsa and his co-workers have recently published a description of a new subspecies, *alticola*, of the East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi*. The new taxon is apparently endemic to the Nguu Mountains, of north-western Tanga, Tanzania, and clearly differs morphologically and genetically from adjacent coastal populations of the species, and from Sharpe's Akalat *S. sharpei*, which inhabits other montane forests in the country. The discovery once again highlights the tremendous ornithological importance of the Eastern Arc Mountain forests. Fortunately, while most remaining forests in Tanzania are under considerable pressure from the growing human population, those in the Nguu Mts are still relatively pristine and have been designated as a Catchment Forest Reserve, due to their importance as a water catchment area for eastern Maasailand.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 120, pp 27–33

#### What is Ruwenzori Turaco?

Three subspecies of Ruwenzori Turaco *Musopbaga johnstoni*, a montane forest resident of the Albertine Rift, have been described, although *Birds of Africa* regards only two of these as valid, nominate *johnstoni* and *kiwensis*. The other race described is *breDOI*. Michel Louette and co-workers have recently re-examined a comprehensive series of specimens of all three described subspecies, from



Inaccessible Island Rail *Atlantisia rogersi* by Craig Robson

five separate populations (all of which exhibit limited morphological differentiation), and conclude that all, including *bredoi*, are valid. Further study, they suggest, may demonstrate whether more than one species is involved, although Louette *et al* consider the latter possibility as unlikely. In addition, the authors conclude that Ruwenzori Turaco is best placed in the genus

*Ruwenzorornis*, not *Musophaga*.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 120, pp 34–39

### Cosmoledo Atoll bird observations

A recent paper has analysed the status of all birds, particularly focusing on seabirds, known to occur on little-visited Cosmoledo Atoll, in the south-west part of the Seychelles archipelago. Forty-six species have been recorded on the island, and the authors also describe human impacts on the avifauna and make recommendations for future management of this Important Bird Area.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. 120, pp 46–57



White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephala* by Nik Borrow (courtesy of Birdquest)

### West Africa

#### White-necked Picathartes under pressure

Recent (November 1997 and November 1998–April 1999) surveys of a White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephala* colony in Lamto, Côte d'Ivoire, revealed a total of 34 nests, 10 of which were just remnants and only 12 of which were relatively fresh, and just one was occupied during the observation periods. The authors

suggest that limited and responsible ecotourism could have positive benefits for the species in Lamto.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 10, pp 41–46

### New bird species for Guinea...

During an avifaunal survey of Parc National du Haut Niger, in central Guinea, during winter 1996/97, Gerhard Nikolaus discovered 300 bird species, of which 17 were new to the country's list. Abundance, habitat use and monthly occurrence in the park of all species recorded are presented in the resultant paper.

Source: Malimbus 22, pp 1–22

### ...and Mali

Elsewhere in the same issue of *Malimbus*, Peter Spierenburg presents details of three bird species (Red-headed Lovebird *Agapornis pullaria*, Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida* and Mottled Swift *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*) previously unrecorded in Mali, and three others (Bat Hawk *Machaerbambus alcinus*, White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* and Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica*) for which few records exist. It should be noted that the author has overlooked the record of *Apalis flavida* already published, and documented photographically, in these pages (*Bull. ABC* 5: 59).

Source: Malimbus 22, pp 23–28

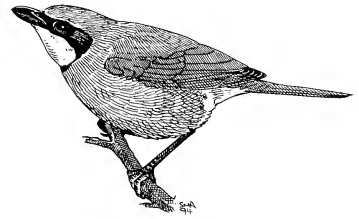
### New information on bird distributions in Mauritania

A visit to Mauritania in October 1995 demonstrated that the following species were expanding their range north-westward: Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*, Scaly-fronted Warbler *Spiloptila clamans*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Grey-headed Sparrow *P. griseus*, while Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* was extending its range southward. The author also draws attention to significant new records of Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* and Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* made during the same month.

Source: Orn. Jber. Mus. Heineanum 17, pp 117–122

### Claim of Yellow-throated Petronia from Chad withdrawn

The claim of the first Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia superciliaris* from Chad, reportedly seen at N'Djamena in February 1998 (see *Bull ABC* 6: 91),



Mount Kupe Bush-Shrike *Telophorus kupeensis* by Mark Andrews

has been withdrawn. The birds were probably Bush Petronias *P. dentata*.

Source: Alauda 67, p 356

### New site for Mount Kupe Bush-Shrike

The critically endangered Mount Kupe Bush-Shrike *Telophorus kupeensis* was found at a new locality, at c1,400 m, in the southern sector of Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary, in October 1999. Previously the species was known only from Mount Kupe and the Bakossi Mountains of Cameroon.

Source: Marc Languy/BirdLife Cameroon Programme

### Birds of Lobéké, Cameroon

The avifauna of Lobéké Faunal Reserve, in south-east Cameroon, has been the subject of recent (1997–1999) surveys by the indefatigable Dowsett husband and wife team, and the results of their research were published recently. Three hundred and five species have been identified in this regionally important reserve, including an as yet unidentified nightjar (probably Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei*) and the globally Data Deficient Ja River Warbler *Bradypterus grandis*, for which Lobéké appears to be the most important site for the species' conservation. Other interesting, rare and little-known species located in the reserve include Olive Ibis *Bostrychia olivacea*, Sandy Scops Owl *Otus icterorhynchus*, Zenker's Honeyguide *Melignomon zenkeri*, Tessmann's Flycatcher *Muscicapa tessmanni*, Yellow-capped Weaver *Ploceus dorsomaculatus* and a population of African Bared Owllet *Glaucidium capense*, which, like others in central

Africa, occurs in open-canopy forest and whose taxonomic position is open to question.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 10, pp 67-87

### More Cape Verde bird records

Kees Hazevoet has sent us a copy of the most recent Cape Verde Islands 'bird report', which includes notes on current conservation issues, as well as information on 15 breeding species and 52 scarce and rare migrants reported in the archipelago during late 1998 and the first half of 1999. The latter include eleven new species to the Cape Verdean avifauna (Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*, Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Semi-palmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Semi-palmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Pallid Swift

*Apus pallidus*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus* and Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*).

Source: *Bull. Zoöl. Mus. Univ. Amsterdam* 17, pp 19-32

### North Africa

#### Barn Owl diet in Morocco

A long-term study of the Barn Owl's *Tyto alba* diet in northern Morocco has revealed that small mammals, including the Algerian Mouse *Mus spretus*, gerbils and shrews are the most abundant prey items (74.4%). Frogs and reptiles are taken, along with birds (principally *Passer* sp.), but most surprising was the incidence of insects (10.5% of total number of items) in the species' diet in this region.

Source: *Alauda* 67, pp 323-336

#### American Golden Plover in Tunisia

A recent issue of *Dutch Birding*

contains an account of the discovery, photographs and a discussion of the identification of the first American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominicus* in Tunisia, at Abu Nawash Golf Course, Djerba, on 24 December 1998. ♀

Source: *Dutch Birding* 22, pp 25-27



Barn Owl *Tyto alba*  
by Mark Andrews

## Requests for Information

### Sub-desert Mesites

Chris Jameson, a PhD student at the University of Michigan, is studying the breeding system of the Madagascar endemic, Sub-desert (Bensch's) Mesite *Monias (Mesitornis) benschi*. He wishes to collect as many recent observations of the species as possible; precise location, time of year, how many were observed and any other information concerning the sighting that is available. ABC members with information on the species are requested to send it to him at: cjameson@umich.edu, or by post to: Department of Biology and Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, 1121 Natural Science Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1048, USA.

### Birds of Cameroon

Jean-Michel Lapios is seeking photographs of the 840 species of birds recorded in Cameroon for use in an illustrated guide on which he is working. ABC members who have photographs they believe would be suitable for this purpose, which they

are prepared to make available are invited to contact him at [jmlapios@diomedea.org](mailto:jmlapios@diomedea.org) for further details of his requirements, terms offered etc.

### Nightingale and Thrush Nightingale vocalisations on their wintering grounds

Roger Mundry, member of a research group investigating several aspects of song (eg learning, development, organisation) in Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* and Thrush Nightingale *L. luscinia*, would be very interested to learn about the vocal behaviour of the two species on their winter quarters in Africa. He would greatly appreciate receiving any records of the two species in Africa, with a special regard to song activity. If you have encountered either in Africa please send information concerning the details of the observation. Please include exact location(s) and date(s) of the observation(s), number of birds etc. If available, please include information about song behaviour, for instance number and percentage of

birds singing, amount of singing (only a few songs, continuous singing, diurnal, nocturnal), kind of song (full, subsong) etc. Rough estimates, raw impressions and less detailed information are also very welcome. Please contact Roger Mundry, Institut für Verhaltensbiologie, Haderslebener Str. 9, D-12163 Berlin, Germany. E-mail: [rmundry@biologie.fu-berlin.de](mailto:rmundry@biologie.fu-berlin.de); tel: +49-30-838 550 67.

### Records from Mont Peko National Park

Any birders or researchers, with bird or mammal observations from Mont Peko National Park, Côte d'Ivoire are requested to them to Hugo Rainey, Tanyard, Steeple Bumpstead, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 7DS, UK, or e-mail: [hugorainey@hotmail.com](mailto:hugorainey@hotmail.com). Please provide a list of species with, if possible, dates, location within the park and habitat details. Details of observations from any of the forests north of Taï Forest would also be gratefully received. ♀

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# Records from Gambela, western Ethiopia

Claire Spottiswoode and Michael Mills

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Les basses terres de l'est de l'Éthiopie ont une faune, une flore et une culture distinctes de celles du reste du pays. L'avifaune de cette région est mal connue. Nous avons visité les environs de Gambela dans la province de l'Illubador pendant une semaine en décembre 1999 et y avons observé plusieurs espèces considérées comme rares en Éthiopie, entre autres le Butor étoilé *Botaurus stellaris*, l'Épervier à pieds courts *Accipiter brevipes*, le Souimanga pygmée *Anthreptes platurus* et l'Amarante pointé *Lagonosticta rufopicta*.

The lowlands of Illubador Province in extreme western Ethiopia have a fauna and flora, landscape and culture quite distinct from the rest of the country. Despite easy access to the region, with daily buses and thrice-weekly flights covering the 500 km between Addis Ababa and Gambela (the second town of Illubador), it has received surprisingly little ornithological attention. The only published descriptions of the area's birds appear to be the recent Ethiopian Important Bird Areas (IBA) directory<sup>5</sup> and a list of records from the 1970s<sup>5</sup>. These intriguing accounts lured us to spend 7–12 December 1999 birding around Gambela (08°15'N 34°35'E; 560 m). Despite the lack of a vehicle, we were able to explore the woodland and river in the immediate vicinity (c10 km radius) of the town reasonably thoroughly on foot and by bicycle, and recorded several species apparently new to the region.

Gambela town straddles the Baro River, a reputedly navigable tributary of the Nile. Close to the town, riparian vegetation has been cleared almost in its entirety for subsistence agriculture. However, on leaving the town by bus, we noted considerable untouched riverine forest c40 km to the east, where the road to Metu rejoins the Baro. In the vicinity of Gambela town, the Baro flood plain appears relatively narrow, extending no more than 300 m from the northern bank of the river. During our visit, some areas were flooded and held reasonable numbers of birds despite disturbance from grazing cattle.

Vast areas of apparently largely intact dry deciduous woodland cloak the plains surrounding Gambela. This habitat is varied by occasional rocky hillocks, scattered termite mounds (supporting thickets) and grassy depressions. The c1,000 mm annual rainfall occurs principally from May to October, and our visit thus fell within the dry season. We encountered numerous large bush fires, fuelled by the 2m-tall understorey grass swathe. These fires are started by local people and have been previously thought not to be damaging<sup>1</sup>. A five million ha area to

the south and west of Gambela has been proposed as a conservation area, Gambela National Park<sup>5</sup>.

## Woodland

**Pygmy Sunbird** *Hedydipna platura* appears to have been hitherto regarded as a vagrant to Ethiopia<sup>7</sup>, with no breeding yet recorded and, in Sudan, occurs only considerably further south and west<sup>4</sup>. We discovered it to be one of the commonest sunbirds and observed two pairs nest-building.

Two raptors considered very scarce in Ethiopia were noted: **Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes* was seen twice in dry woodland c5 km south of the town, and a single **Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* in moister woodland adjacent to the river.

The woodland also held a number of other species that are local in Ethiopia and many of which are more characteristically West African. Commonly encountered species were **Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*, **Green Wood-hoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus*, **Green-backed Eremomela** *Eremomela pusilla*, **Foxy Cisticola** *Cisticola troglodytes*, **Yellow-bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flavigaster*, **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver** *Plocepasser superciliosus*, **Black-headed Gonolek** *Laniarius erythrogaster*, **Black-faced Firefinch** *Lagonosticta larvata* and **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza affinis*. Seen once each were **Black-billed Wood Dove** *Turtur abyssinicus*, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops birundineus*, **Brown Babbler** *Turdoides plebejus*, **Gambaga Flycatcher** *Muscicapa gambagae* and **Black-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda troglodytes*.

## Baro River

The sought-after **Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius* appears easy to find here, although this may change with rising water levels during the wet season, when they are known to be nomadic<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, one ringed at Gambela has been recovered as far afield as Khartoum<sup>4</sup>. Three were regularly seen feeding in the



Figure 1. Dry deciduous woodland, c5km south of Gambela, habitat of Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* and breeding Pygmy Sunbird *Hedydipna platura*, both highly localised in Ethiopia (Claire Spottiswoode)



Figure 2. Distant fires sweep across the humid low-lying Gambela plain that extends from the western highlands of Ethiopia to the Sudanese border. Low granite outcrops punctuate the gently undulating deciduous woodland of this ornithologically curiously neglected region (Claire Spottiswoode)



Figure 3. Anuak women leaving Gambela town. Moister woodland such as this, close to the Baro River, supports Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*, Gambaga Flycatcher *Muscicapa gambagae* and Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster* (Claire Spottiswoode)



Figure 4. The Baro River descends from the western highlands to the Nile. Intriguingly, it forms substantial swamps close to the Sudanese border, historically supporting Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex*. Close to Gambela, remnant riparian vegetation hosts Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla*, while adjacent flood plains hold Bar-breasted *Lagonosticta rufopicta* and Black-faced Firefinches *L. rupestris*, both of which are rarely recorded in Ethiopia (Claire Spottiswoode)



Figure 5. Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius* feeds among bathers along a squalid stream in Gambela town. Wet-season movements may take these birds as far as Khartoum (Claire Spottiswoode)



Figure 6. Red-throated Bee-eater *Merops bulocki* (Johan Verbauck)



Figure 7. Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* (Johan Verbauck)

small, polluted stream that runs through Gambela town into the Baro, oblivious to the throngs of bathing villagers. A trio was also seen roosting on a rock in the Baro, a few hundred meters upstream of the bridge.

A single **Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was seen at dusk over the river and adjacent floodplain, at the eastern extreme of the town. This species has not been recorded from southern Sudan<sup>4</sup>, and is considered rare in Ethiopia<sup>7</sup>. Other notable species associated with the Baro, all previously reported by Nikolaus<sup>4</sup>, were **Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera*, **Red-throated Bee-eater** *Merops bulocki*, **Snow-crowned Robin-chat** *Cossypha niveicapilla*, **Moustached Grass-Warbler** *Melocichla mentalis* and **Bar-breasted Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta*. A party of the latter included two recently fledged young.

Limited by lack of a vehicle, we were unfortunately unable to explore the reputedly extensive swamps to the west, between Gambela and Jikao on the Sudanese border. Ethiopia's only records of **Shoebill** *Balaeniceps rex* come from this area<sup>2,6</sup>, and it is thus surely worthy of investigation by visitors with their own transport. A truck departs daily for Itang, halfway between Gambela and Jikao, but we were informed that the swamps lie further west still.

In stark contrast to Duckworth<sup>1</sup>, we saw no large mammals whatsoever in the Gambela area. An annotated list of birds recorded is available from the authors.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Louis A. Hansen and Marc Herremans for their very helpful comments on a previous draft of this note, and Duan Biggs for his company in the field at Gambela. ☺

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# Taxonomy of the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* / Barbary Falcon *F. (peregrinus) pelegrinoides* complex in Morocco

Valéry Schollaert<sup>a</sup> and Gilles Willem<sup>b</sup>

La taxonomie, l'identification et la répartition respective des différentes sous-espèces du complexe Faucon pèlerin/Faucon de Barbarie demeurent problématiques et incomplètement connues. Le Faucon de Barbarie *Falco pelegrinoides* est considéré soit comme une espèce à part entière, soit comme une sous-espèce du Faucon pèlerin *Falco peregrinus*. Forsman<sup>9</sup>, qui le traite comme sous-espèce, se base pour cela entre autres sur des oiseaux marocains qu'il estime être des intermédiaires. Ceux-ci, parfois appelés 'atlantis' et connus du sud-ouest du Maroc, apparaissent toutefois former une population intermédiaire stable entre les sous-espèces *minor* et *brookei*. On observe une évolution clinale, les oiseaux côtiers étant plus proches de *brookei*, tandis que les oiseaux de l'est de la vallée du Souss (Aoulouz) sont plus proches de *minor*. Pour ces raisons, et en plus des différences morphologiques et de sa cohabitation avec *minor* et *brookei*, *pelegrinoides* semble bien être une espèce à part entière. Afin de mieux comprendre sa répartition géographique et ses éventuels mouvements migratoires au Maroc, il est demandé aux observateurs de porter une attention particulière à ces oiseaux. Notons que toutes les observations de Faucon de Barbarie devraient être soumises à la Commission d'Homologation des oiseaux rares du Maroc.

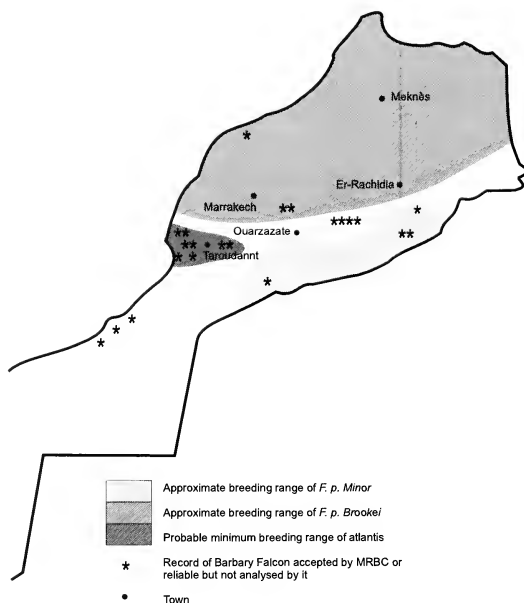
## Introduction

Despite the availability of excellent descriptions of all Western Palearctic falcons, the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* complex remains problematic, in respect of the identification, taxonomic position and respective ranges of its subspecies. This is especially true in Morocco, where at least four subspecies of Peregrine occur, in addition to Barbary Falcon *Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides*. This paper attempts to summarise current knowledge of the taxonomy and range of Moroccan populations. It should be borne in mind that there is still much to learn about these forms in Morocco.

## Moroccan populations

Most Peregrines seen in Morocco are *brookei*<sup>13</sup>, which is known from the Mediterranean<sup>6-8,13</sup> and Atlantic coasts<sup>2,14-16</sup> south to at least Essaouira (pers obs), and has also been recorded inland<sup>14-16</sup>, notably in the High Atlas Mountains, where it is not uncommon (pers obs). In winter, it is also recorded further south, e.g. in the Souss Valley. The other breeding population is the localised and apparently rare *minor*<sup>4,8,13,16</sup>, which is restricted to desert and arid areas south of the High Atlas (pers obs), but is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>6,12</sup>. In winter, both Eurasian *calidus* and *peregrinus* have been recorded (pers. obs.), but neither form breeds in Morocco.

Barbary Falcon *Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides* is relatively widespread, being known from the High



Atlas, Anti Atlas, Souss Valley, desert areas in the south-east and along the coast from (at least) Oualidia (pers obs) in the north to the extreme south, probably as far as the Mauritanian border<sup>3-6,10,14-16</sup>. It could be even more widespread, but north-east Morocco is under-surveyed by ornithologists and its status there is unclear, although unconfirmed sightings have been reported from this area<sup>14</sup>.

Another population, sometimes called '*F. peregrinus atlantis*'<sup>13</sup> or 'Atlantic Peregrine'<sup>3</sup>, is found mainly in the Souss Valley and along the coast near Tamri, Agadir and the mouth of Massa River, and has an uncertain taxonomic position which is discussed below.

## Taxonomic problems

The principal problem is the relationship between Barbary Falcon and sympatric or parapatric forms of Peregrine. Although differences exist in structure and plumage between Barbary Falcon and Peregrine, the two are certainly very close to each other<sup>10</sup>. Species status for these two forms is principally based on their sympatry without apparent interbreeding<sup>9</sup>, notably in Morocco. This last point is discussed by Forsman<sup>9</sup> who considers some strange-plumaged individuals photographed in Morocco to be possible hybrids between *brookei* and *pelegrinoides*.

Another problem is the position of the so-called '*atlantis*' form, about which almost nothing is known. It has occasionally been treated as a possible new subspecies<sup>13</sup>.

## Discussion

Our knowledge of '*atlantis*' leads us to believe that it cannot be a hybrid, principally because, in the Souss Valley, pairs of '*atlantis*' breed together (pers obs) and no other form of Peregrine is known to occur during the breeding season within its range. Moreover, it occurs only in south-west Morocco, where it is not uncommon, but has not been reported elsewhere.

We do not consider them to be intermediate between *pelegrinoides* and *brookei* (contra Forsman<sup>9</sup>). Indeed, Forsman<sup>9</sup> depicts two *brookei*-like '*atlantis*', which are typically seen along the coast (pers obs), that he considers to be 'Peregrine/Barbary Falcons' and intermediate between the two. In our opinion this population is obviously close to *brookei*, especially in coastal areas, and that elsewhere they are closer to *minor* than to *pelegrinoides*, with those of the eastern Souss Valley even more similar to *minor*. We are, therefore, convinced that they form a stable intermediate population between *brookei* and *minor*, intergrading with the former along the coast (south of Essaouira) and with *minor* east and south-east of the Souss Valley.

Size of coastal '*atlantis*' is very close to *brookei* (and *pelegrinoides*), but appears smaller in the east. Structure is very close to *minor* and *brookei*, but not to *pelegrinoides*, which has different proportions: tail (relative to wings) longer and marginally wider, body shorter, more prominent head, wings narrower (appearing longer) and less heavy jizz. Their flight

actions are also different. Notably when pursuing prey, Barbary has parrot-like wingbeats, unlike '*atlantis*', *brookei* or *minor*. Underparts in coastal '*atlantis*' are barred like *brookei*, but in the east they are less marked and (more) tinged rufous, like *minor*. They are, however, never spotted like some *pelegrinoides*. The head pattern is very similar to *minor*, with rufous-tinged cheeks, occasionally some rufous on the nape (as in some *brookei*), moustachials narrower than in most *brookei*, but similar to most (but not all) *minor* and broader than in *pelegrinoides* (pers obs). Tail pattern is like *brookei* and *minor*. Underwing pattern is regularly barred like *brookei* and *minor*, with no darker area on the wingtips and trailing edges like *pelegrinoides*. Upperparts coloration is darker than in *pelegrinoides*, relatively dark in coastal birds and very dark in eastern birds, which approach *minor* in this aspect. Note that all these differences relate to adults.

Interestingly, '*atlantis*' breeds in the same area as both Barbary and Lanner Falcons *Falco biarmicus erlangeri*, eg in Aoulouz where the three taxa breed in the same gorge (pers obs).

## Conclusion

Barbary Falcon is sympatric with both *brookei* and *minor* without interbreeding. It is also widely sympatric with an unusual form of Peregrine, '*atlantis*', which appears to be intermediate between *minor* and *brookei* (with which '*atlantis*' is allopatric), and is often reported in south-west Morocco. Therefore, and due to clear, well-known differences in the structure and plumage of Barbary Falcon compared to Peregrine, Barbary Falcon is best treated as a species.

However, at least in Morocco, the respective range of all populations of Peregrine are still imperfectly known, as are their seasonal movements. Moreover, the range of Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* is also poorly understood, especially in the north of the country. Some movements are suspected but have not been proven. Therefore, all records of these taxa are welcome, and a description of all Barbary Falcons seen in the country should be submitted to the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (c/o Dr. Jacques Franchimont, Quartier Abbas Lmsahdi, Rue n°6, n°22, VN 50.000 Meknes, Morocco). ☞

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## Appendix 1. Moroccan records of Barbary Falcon *Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides*

### Records accepted by MRBC

Taroudannt & Souss Valley: three  
 Aoulouz: one  
 Jorf/Erfoud: two  
 Merzouga: one  
 Boumalne-du-Dadès/El Keela M'Gouna: four  
 Mahmid: one  
 Tamri: one  
 Agadir/Massa: three

### Recent records awaiting decision by MRBC

Oualidia: one  
 Tizi'n Tichka: one  
 Tamri: one  
 Goulimine/Tan-Tan: three



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# Notes on the breeding biology of several species in north-west Africa

Peter Castell

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Lors de visites récentes au Maroc et aux Iles du Cap Vert, de nouvelles données ont été obtenues concernant la biologie des espèces suivantes: Ammomane élégante *Ammomanes cincturus* (description de l'oisillon), Rubiette de Moussier *Phoenicurus moussieri* (sites de nidification), Fauvette de l'Atlas *Sylvia deserticola* (description de l'oisillon), Fauvette naine *Sylvia nana* (incubation et description de l'oisillon) et Bruant striolé *Emberiza striolata* (description de l'oisillon).

**D**uring recent visits to Morocco and the Cape Verde Islands, several colleagues and I have made a number of interesting observations concerning the breeding biology of some bird species characteristic of these regions. Details of these records are presented below.

## **Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cincturus***

Nestlings of this species do not appear to have been previously described. I found several nests on the island of Sal, Cape Verde Islands, in October 1998. Each was constructed within a hollow on the ground beneath and almost completely screened by an overhanging rock. The nestlings are altricial and downy, with long thick buff down on the head and upperparts. The mouth is orange-yellow, with the typical five spot markings of the lark family, ie two black spots at the rear of the tongue, one at the tip, and one at the inside tip of each mandible. Gape flanges are yellowish white.

## **Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri***

Usual nest sites for this species are on the ground, sheltered by a low bush or tussock, or in a recess in the side of a low bank or tree, and occasionally in low dense bushes 30–60 cm above ground. In late May 1999, we found c30 nests in open woodland along the coastal road north of Agadir, Morocco. Approximately half were in tree forks, typically just below 2 m above ground; many were in discarded tin cans, not only on the ground, but also up to 2 m high in bushes. One nest was constructed within a pair of trousers, which had been left hanging over a tree branch, c2 m above ground. These nests were at all stages, with eggs, small and large young, and were probably all second broods. In other parts of the country, we found nests in April, and saw many flying broods in late April.

## **Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola***

In April–May 1999, we found five occupied nests of this species in the Atlas Mountains, south of Midelt, southern Morocco. All were situated low (typically 50

cm) in sage bushes, and in the third quarter of April most were under construction or contained incomplete clutches. We established that incubation, which takes 13 days, commences with the next-to-last egg laid in the clutch. The role of the sexes in incubation appears to be unknown, but we saw only females incubating. Nestlings are altricial and naked at hatching. Skin is dark pink, darker on head and back. The mouth is orange-yellow. There are two distinct and elongated black markings, one at either side of the base of the tongue, with a faint dark narrow line from the tip of each, continuing along the edge of the tongue, and converging near the tip. These are joined near the base by a faint dark marking, which tapers to a point halfway down the centre of the tongue. Gape flanges are pale yellow. Both adults were feeding the resultant young in late May.

## **Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana***

In April 1999, we found four nests of this species near Merzouga, south of Erfoud, in southern Morocco. The

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1. Nestling of Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cincturus* on Sal, Cape Verde Islands, on 31 October 1998 (Peter Castell)
  2. Habitat of Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* near Midelt, southern Morocco, April 1999 (Peter Castell)
  3. Nest and eggs of Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* near Midelt, southern Morocco, April 1999 (Peter Castell)
  4. Fledgling Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*, aged c11 days, near Midelt, southern Morocco, May 1999 (Peter Castell)
  5. Habitat of Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* near Merzouga, southern Morocco, April 1999 (Peter Castell)
  6. Nest and eggs of Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* near Merzouga, southern Morocco, April 1999 (Peter Castell)
  7. Newly hatched nestlings of House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* in southern Morocco (Peter Castell)



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area was mainly flat open desert, with slightly lower areas and wadis with scattered thick bushes. Sitting in the car at the edge of one of these bushy areas, we played a recording of the song of Desert Warbler. One (the male, we suggest, from behaviour) immediately appeared, alarm called, and perched in a bush c3 m from the car, and a second (the presumed female) appeared within a further 30 secs. As soon as the tape was stopped, both flew to two adjacent bushes, within c100 m of the car. On searching these bushes, the male flew from one, and the female was discovered incubating two eggs in a nest in the other. All four nests were c1 m above ground and well concealed in thick thorn bushes, c2 m tall. We established that incubation commences when the final egg has been laid and occupies 12 days. Clutch size is 2–3 eggs. Nestlings are altricial and naked at hatching, with

flesh-pink skin. The mouth is orange-yellow with two dark elongated markings, one on either side of the tongue. Gape flanges are pale yellow.

#### **House Bunting *Emberiza striolata***

Nestlings of this species have not been adequately described. This is rather surprising given its relative abundance in and around human settlements in North Africa. Plate 7 depicts nestlings in southern Morocco in April 1999. They are altricial and downy, with long and dense whitish-grey down on the head and upperparts. Mouth and tongue are deep pink, the latter with prominent pale pink rear spurs, and pale yellow edges and tip. Gape flanges are whitish yellow. ♀

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## **African Bird Club Conservation Fund Update**

#### **• Four further conservation awards have been made since the last Bulletin**

An award of UK£400 was made to Aride Island Nature Reserve, Seychelles, to produce an informative reserve guide in the local language, Creole. ABC also helped fund Tadesse Woldemariam Gole's recent attendance at the 10th Annual Conference of the Biological Society of Ethiopia, where he presented a paper on bird diversity and density in montane forests on the country's central plateau, was funded by the Club. The Albertine Rift Conservation Society has been awarded UK£1,000 towards a planned conference on Species Data Mobilisation and Sharing. The Nigerian Conservation Society was granted UK£1,000 towards a field expedition to Cross Rivers National Park, but this project has unfortunately been postponed due to funding difficulties.

**• ABC/NHBS Book Awards** These awards again attracted much interest, with four high-quality applications. Congratulations to the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, Bureau d'Etudes Scientifiques et Techniques (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Nature Kenya (two applications) who each received UK£100 worth of books. Applications are now invited for the 2000/2001 awards. Sincere thanks are due to the Natural History Book Service for continued sponsorship of the scheme.

**• ABC Expedition Award** The first ABC Expedition Award has been won by a multi-disciplinary expedition to the Annobon, one of the Gulf of Guinea islands off the African west coast. Annobon supports internationally important seabird populations, as well as five species of passerines endemic to the Gulf of Guinea group. The expedition,

comprising Spanish and local biologists, will undertake a census of seabird populations (last performed in 1959) and research the habitat requirements of the endemic landbirds. Other members of the team will survey marine and terrestrial molluscs, and undertake botanical surveys. The deadline for applications for the 2001 ABC Expedition Award is 31 January 2001.

**• ABC at the PAOC** The 10th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) will be held in Kampala, Uganda, in September 2000. ABC has allocated UK£2,500 to help fund African ornithologists who would otherwise be unable to attend. ABC intends to play an active role at the PAOC and a full report will be published in the next Bulletin.

*For further information, see p. 7 of this bulletin.* ♀

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# Fishing owls at Agenebode, Nigeria

Anthony Turk

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L'auteur présente des observations de la Chouette-pêcheuse de Bouvier *Scotopelia bouvieri* faites à Agenebode, Nigéria, en 1995 et juillet 1999. Les caractéristiques du plumage et les vocalisations des chouettes pêcheuses de cette localité indiquent qu'il s'agit bien de cette espèce et non de la Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *S. ussberi*. Il y a très peu de mentions antérieures de *S. bouvieri* au Nigéria.

Very few sightings of Vermiculated Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri* have been reported in Nigeria. Elgood<sup>3</sup> mentioned four records, those near Lagos representing the most westerly ever, apart from a single taken by F X Stampfli in Liberia in 1885, and considered 'undoubted' by Bannerman<sup>2</sup> but questioned by Gatter<sup>1</sup>. This is the only record west of the Togo-Bénin Gap.

In 1995, Phil Hall observed a fishing owl near a village on the banks of the Ogwe River, a tributary of the Niger, near Agenebode, Nigeria. Hall is an experienced and very knowledgeable observer, and noted that it was paler and more rufous than the published descriptions of Vermiculated, and was therefore possibly a Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussberi*, which has not been recorded east of Accra<sup>5</sup>. He returned to the site several months later and discovered the remains of a fishing owl that had been eaten by a villager (P Hall pers comm). Some of the remains were sent to the Natural History Museum (Tring) for identification but no firm conclusions could be reached as to the identification.

An opportunity to visit this region arose in July 1999. The fishing owls are found along the Ogwe River, on a farm managed by the Leventis group of companies, at Weppa (06°57'N 06°35'E). Although the farm is no longer operated on a commercial basis, it is the home of an agricultural college established for local young farmers. People from the fishing villages cultivate some land near the river, but the farm is otherwise being allowed to revert to its original state of Guinea Savanna.

The Ogwe River floods during the rainy season and remains high for c6 months of the year. This results in areas along the river being unsuitable for cultivation and has ensured the preservation of the riverine forest where the fishing owls are found. The river is slow moving and meandering even during the rainy season, when it rises 6 m above its dry-season level and floods 100s of metres of adjoining forest. In this habitat, there is an abundance of low branches where the owls perch searching for prey. The local fishermen consider the fishing owls' favourite food to

be *Clarias* catfish (locally called flat-heads), which are extremely abundant in this area and have primitive lungs that force them to surface regularly for air (R Markham pers. comm.). On one occasion, I flushed a fishing owl while it was feeding and retrieved a sufficient part of the remains to identify it as a *Clarias*, while another was seen in flight with what was clearly a catfish in its talons. Along the c9 km of river that flow through the farm there is one lake and several backwaters and pools, which remain wet in the dry season, providing additional hunting grounds for the owls.

With the help of a local guide, I had 27 sightings of 8-9 owls in 25 days. Individual variation in plumage coloration was extremely noticeable. Some had heavy, dark markings on the upper breast and head, while others had less broad brown streaking. The upperparts, head and mantle also varied individually, from pale rufous to darker brown; and one was quite grey in appearance. However, all had the ground colour of the underparts off-white, while the bill was pale cream to yellow, as in Vermiculated Fishing Owl. In Rufous Fishing Owl the underparts have a pale rufous wash and the bill is darker in appearance<sup>1</sup>. All had dark eyes and pale yellow legs and feet.

Recordings were also made of their calls. Only one recording of Rufous Fishing Owl is available for comparison, made by R Ranft of a female at London Zoo. At Agenebode two distinct calls were noted: a 'wail', which on one occasion was repeated for over 45 min with intervals ranging from 15 s at the start to over 70 s, before ceasing altogether, and, secondly, a 'hoot' that, on occasions, sounded like a duet. Some calls recorded at Agenebode are very similar to the Ranft recording, but most resembled those made by R Wilkinson, F Dowsett-Lemaire and J M Lermould of Vermiculated Fishing Owl (all recordings deposited at the British Library National Sound Archive).

Researchers or birders wishing to study the fishing owls should contact Phil Hall in Lagos, e-mail: 110226.2654@compuserve.com or fax on: (234) 12691245. Comfortable guesthouse accommodation is available and visitors are made very welcome.





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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank A.P. Leventis and the Leventis Foundation for funding the study, Phil Hall for his logistical skills and advice, and Richard Markham, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria. The International Owl Society provided equipment and Daniel Mochi assisted in locating the owls. The manuscript was significantly improved by helpful comments from Dr Richard Shore and an anonymous referee. ♀

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Figure 1. Dark form of Vermiculated Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri*, Agenebode, Nigeria (A.P. Leventis)

Figure 2. More typical colour form of Vermiculated Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri*, Agenebode, Nigeria (A.P. Leventis)

Figure 3. Flooded forest, Agenebode, Nigeria, habitat of Vermiculated Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri* (Anthony Turk)

# Suspected breeding of Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* in Mauritania

Olivier Hamerlynck and Brahim ould Messaoud

Suite à la restauration du régime d'inondations saisonnières, effectuée dans le cadre des aménagements pour le Parc National du Diawling, des observations d'immatures du Flamant nain *Phoeniconaias minor* dans le bas-delta du fleuve Sénégal suggèrent que l'espèce a repris sa nidification, qui n'avait plus été confirmée depuis 1965.

On 3 October 1998 we observed two very dark brown immature flamingos at Chott Boul, a lagoon in the Sénégal River Delta, in Mauritania<sup>1</sup>. They appeared smaller and browner than the immature Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* that commonly occur in the area. However, as they flew off quickly and there were no other flamingos present for direct comparison, we could not be certain of our tentative identification of Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*.

On 13 September 1999 we were more fortunate. In the late afternoon, a group of 10 adult Lesser Flamingo was present in the west part of the lagoon, with nine immature flamingos, six of which were dark brown with wholly black bills, and three were larger, more greyish and possessed the typical bicoloured (bluish-grey and black) bill of immature Greater Flamingo (a characteristic not depicted in Cramp & Simmons<sup>2</sup> or Brown *et al*<sup>3</sup>). The shape of the bill, especially the lower mandible (much more angular in Lesser Flamingo) was clearly observed and compared with the Greater Flamingos present. The birds were photographed (see Figs. 1 & 2). A group of c1,700

adult Lesser Flamingo was observed circling overhead and c50 more were settled in the east part of the lagoon. On 29 October 1999, at the same site, three adult and five juvenile Lesser Flamingo, with more greyish plumage, were present.

## Discussion

The only previous record of successful breeding by Lesser Flamingo in West Africa dates from 1965<sup>7</sup> at a site c20 km north of Chott Boul lagoon, in the Aftout es Saheli. A failed breeding attempt was noted in the same area in 1988, when the area was flooded<sup>5</sup>. Following restoration of the flood regime in the Mauritanian lower delta, around Diawling National Park<sup>4</sup>, important concentrations of Lesser Flamingo (up to 8,000) have been observed year-round<sup>6</sup>. In particular, 1998 and 1999 were especially favourable years, because large quantities of fresh water from the Sénégal River reached the hypersaline Chott Boul lagoon, and even flooded the southern Aftout es Saheli basin, restoring productivity to these areas, as exemplified by the high concentrations of waterfowl often present (maximum numbers on the 200 ha



Figure 1. Adult Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor*, Chott Boul, Sénégal Delta, Mauritania, September 1999 (Olivier Hamerlynck)



Figure 2. Adult and immature Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* and (on left) three immature Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Chott Boul, Sénégal Delta, Mauritania, September 1999 (Olivier Hamerlynck)

lagoon included 200 Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, 1,000 White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, 2,300 Greater Flamingo, 5,600 Eurasian Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and 800 Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*).

Other known breeding areas of Lesser Flamingo (East African Rift Lakes and Namibia) are very distant, and it appears highly possible that the immatures observed at Chott Boul were bred in the immediate vicinity, probably in July–August. Moreover, the observation of the presumed same juveniles in late October suggests they are sedentary. Aerial surveys of the area, which is almost wholly inaccessible, planned for the 2000 breeding season, may confirm breeding. More extensive flooding of the southern Aftout would probably be highly beneficial to many bird species, and permit the re-establishment of the former breeding colonies of Greater Flamingo, White Pelican and Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*.

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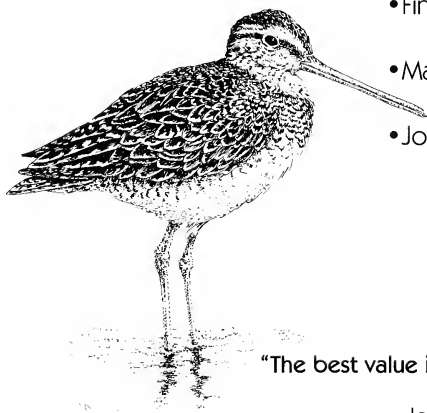
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# Behaviour of Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris* in western Madagascar: a possible foraging association with Sickle-billed Vanga *Falculea palliata*

Ruth E. Tingay<sup>a</sup> and Martin Gilbert<sup>b</sup>

Des observations sur le comportement du Faucon à ventre rayé *Falco zoniventris* dans l'ouest de Madagascar semblent indiquer que cette espèce s'associe avec la Falculie mantelée *Falculea palliata*. Les auteurs évoquent la possibilité d'une association dans la recherche de nourriture, permettant au faucon d'exploiter les insectes dérangés par la Falculie.

## Introduction

During a study of Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* in June–October 1999<sup>7</sup>, we made observations of all bird species encountered on a casual basis<sup>8</sup>. The endemic Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris*, considered relatively common in western Madagascar<sup>4</sup>, was seen infrequently throughout the period. This may be more a reflection of its rather elusive nature than true abundance<sup>6</sup>. Daily observations of up to four were made at two localities between mid-August and mid-October 1999. Only two were observed together, and as the two sites were less than 1 km apart, it is possible that the same individuals were involved.

Much of the Banded Kestrel's natural history is poorly known<sup>6</sup>, although descriptions of its foraging and breeding behaviour are available from the north-east of its range<sup>3,6</sup>. We present observations of a

possible foraging association with the endemic Sickle-billed Vanga *Falculea palliata*. This behaviour may be peculiar to the species' western range only, as Sickle-billed Vanga does not extend as far east as Banded Kestrel<sup>4,9</sup>.

## Locality and habitat

The study area lies within the Antsalova wetland region of western Madagascar, c10 km inland of the Mozambique Channel, and includes three lakes, Befotaka, Soamalipo and Ankerika. It is situated at the southern limits of the dry deciduous Tsimembo Forest, which in this area has a mean canopy height of 12–15 m, a well-developed shrub layer, and many vines; there is little or no herbaceous stratum and epiphytic plants are rare<sup>4</sup>. Annual rainfall is 1,000–2,000 mm, and there is a 6–8 month dry season (typically May–November), while mean monthly temperatures are greater than 20°C<sup>1</sup>.

All observations of Banded Kestrels were made at two localities on the shores of Lake Soamalipo; one on the west shore, where intensive observations were conducted at an active Madagascar Fish Eagle nest, and one on the east shore, around The Peregrine Fund's Camp, Ankivahivahy. Banded Kestrels were always observed at degraded forest edges, adjacent to the lake.

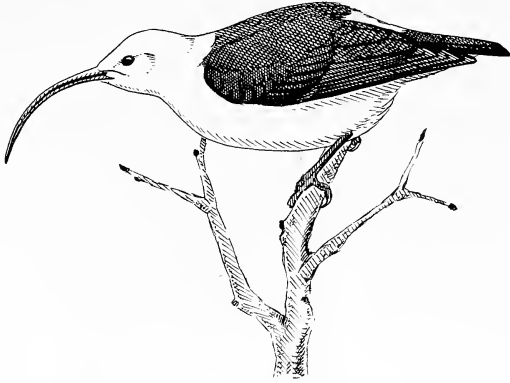
## Sickle-billed Vanga behaviour

The largest representative of the endemic Vangidae family, Sickle-billed Vanga is known to forage in gregarious and noisy groups of up to 20<sup>4</sup>. Their principal foraging technique is to use the long, slender bill as a probe to glean insects from the surfaces of tree trunks and branches, and to extract prey from crevices in the bark<sup>9</sup>.

Two discrete groups of foraging Sickle-billed Vangas were observed daily at both localities, each comprising 18–22 individuals. Both groups foraged systematically throughout their territories, and, as a



Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris*  
by Craig Robson



Sickle-billed Vanga *Falco pascuorum*  
by Craig Robson

group, each would cover the full height of each tree from ground level to the canopy. Both groups fed in specific areas at certain times each day, suggesting a routine foraging pattern. Foraging activity was most noticeable at dawn and dusk, due to the highly vocal chorus of all members of the group, characteristic of this species<sup>4</sup>.

## Possible foraging association

### West-shore locality observations

Despite a relatively intensive search effort from 24 June 1999 onwards, the first observation of a Banded Kestrel was not made until 10 August 1999, at the west-shore locality. An aerial pursuit between two Banded Kestrels was seen along the forest edge, with both individuals calling (the call was similar to the defensive call of both Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni* and Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra*). This behaviour was interpreted as a territorial dispute, as the first Banded Kestrel was pursued out of the area and the other was observed perching prominently after the chase. This individual was believed to be an adult, based on its overall grey plumage<sup>4</sup>, with yellow legs and bare yellow ocular skin. Its underparts appeared much more heavily banded than those of female Frances's Sparrowhawk *Accipiter francesii*.

The next observation of a Banded Kestrel at this site was made on 31 August 1999. One was observed perching in the canopy, at c17.30 hr (dusk), in close proximity to a flock of foraging Sickie-billed Vanga. The Banded Kestrel intently followed the Sickie-billed Vangas movements, with occasional head-bobbing behaviour. The Sickie-billed Vangas moved through the area in typical foraging mode, with no apparent

interaction between the flock and the Banded Kestrel, which remained perched for a further 20 min but appeared to become more alert (head-bobbing) as it became darker. At 18.00 hr it suddenly flew up above the canopy and appeared to aerial-hunt insects in the erratic flight manner of a crepuscular insectivorous bat. It emitted what we described as a 'sonar'-type call, reminiscent of an echolocation sound heard on a radar. Darkness at 18.06 hr precluded further observations. This appears to be the first account of aerial foraging behaviour in this species. Although the light was too poor to ascertain if this individual was catching insects with its mouth, the presence of rictal bristles on Banded Kestrel (noted on all adults observed by us) may indicate that this foraging technique is not unusual in the species (cf nightjar *Caprimulgus* spp.). However, it appears to be undocumented among the Falconidae, which generally grasp prey with their feet.

A Banded Kestrel was observed daily in the same tree and at the same time during the following month; its appearance coincided with the arrival of the Sickie-billed Vanga flock on each occasion. Numerous hunting forays by the Banded Kestrel were observed. These consisted of prolonged periods of motionless perching, with head-bobbing movements made towards the area where the flock was foraging, before suddenly leaving its perch to make a short, rapid flight to an adjacent tree, swooping upon insect prey perhaps disturbed by the activity of the Sickie-billed Vanga flock. Prey was not specifically identified, other than as small invertebrates. This foraging technique has been described<sup>2,3,6</sup>, although this appears to be the first account of a possible foraging association with Sickie-billed Vanga.

### East-shore locality observations

The first observation of Banded Kestrel was on 20 September 1999, when an adult was observed perch hunting in close proximity to a foraging group of Sickie-billed Vangas at dusk. Hunting forays by the kestrel were identical to those described from the west shore, with the falcon catching insects in trees recently vacated by the Sickie-billed Vanga flock. The Sickie-billed Vanga group of 22 individuals was observed to roost in a low bush (<3 m high), and the Banded Kestrel was lost to sight in the darkness at 18.10 hr.

The following morning, just before dawn, an adult Banded Kestrel was observed perching close to the Sickie-billed Vanga roost bush. The group left the roost at dawn in a noisy flock, and began to forage systematically through the forest. The Banded Kestrel followed the group for c30 min and further hunting

forays were observed. Eventually, the Sickie-billed Vangas flew a short distance across the lagoon (<100 m) and the kestrel followed, until we lost sight of it as the flock continued into the forest. That evening, shortly before dusk, we again located an adult Banded Kestrel perching in close proximity to the Sickie-billed Vanga roost, as the group was heard approaching through the forest. The kestrel began head-bobbing in their direction, before flying towards them. The same behaviour was observed at the same place and time, each dawn and dusk, over the next 22 days. It is unclear whether the Banded Kestrel used the calls of the approaching Sickie-billed Vanga flock as a cue to a hunting opportunity, or whether it chose to perch in the same position at the same time in anticipation of the group's arrival.

### Lack of courtship and nesting behaviour

A second adult Banded Kestrel was observed at the east-shore site on 6 October 1999, hunting independently of the first adult (and was seen over the next six days until our study ended). No interaction was observed between the two individuals, eg no territorial disputes and, conversely, no courtship behaviour, although they were seen perched together in the same tree for several minutes, apparently perch hunting but facing in opposite directions. This apparent lack of courtship and/or nesting behaviour was surprising, given that Colebrook-Robjent<sup>3</sup> reported courtship behaviour in late September, and Thorstrom<sup>6</sup> breeding activity in October. Both authors' observations were made in the north-east of the species' range, rather than the west, perhaps indicating a difference in timing of breeding activity. However, it is also possible that a failed breeding attempt had been made, or that both individuals were non-breeders. We searched for nest-sites at the east-shore location, following reports by Langrand<sup>4</sup> that Banded Kestrel uses old, disused nests of Sickie-billed Vangas, although no evidence was found to support this. Cade<sup>2</sup> speculated that the species may also utilise disused nests of Hammerkop *Scopus umbretta*, which is present in western Madagascar<sup>1</sup>, but was not observed during this study<sup>8</sup>. Banded Kestrel nests in epiphytes elsewhere within its range<sup>3,6</sup>, but the rarity of this vegetation in dry deciduous forests suggests that, in the west, nests must be placed in different structures. Safford & Duckworth<sup>5</sup> refer to a Banded Kestrel visiting a nest (resembling that of a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*) in south-west Madagascar, but we are unaware of any other documented information. As such, we suggest further research to investigate the nesting and breeding habits of Banded Kestrel in

dry deciduous forests of west Madagascar, which may differ significantly from Banded Kestrels in the north-east wet forests.

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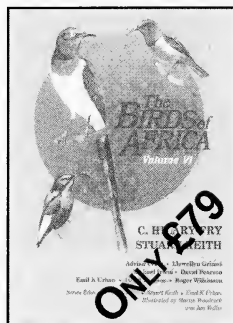
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# The sad story of Alaotra Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*

Frank Hawkins, Rado Andriamasimanana, Sam The Seing and Zarine Rabeony

Le Grèbe de Delacour *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*, espèce endémique du centre-est de Madagascar, semble toujours avoir été peu commun. Les données disponibles, relativement peu abondantes, semblent indiquer qu'il est devenu nettement plus rare au début des années 1980 et est maintenant quasi-certainement éteint, et cela peut-être depuis une décennie. Lors d'inventaires ornithologiques effectués de fin-avril à mi-mai 1999, l'espèce n'a pu être localisée. Un certain nombre de causes pour son déclin sont avancées. La dégradation des zones humides du Lac Alaotra, due à l'utilisation excessive de pesticides, parallèlement à l'introduction quasi-simultanée, dans les années 1980, de filets maillants et du poisson prédateur *Ophicephalus striatus* ont probablement sonné le glas pour l'espèce.

**A**laotra (Madagascar Red-necked) Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus* was described in 1932<sup>1</sup> from specimens collected by the Mission Franco-Anglo Américaine<sup>5</sup>, at Lake Alaotra in central-east Madagascar. It was a small grebe, similar to the African subspecies of Little Grebe *T. ruficollis capensis*, but differing from it and Madagascar Little Grebe *T. pelzelinii*, by its pale eye, pale rufous-washed neck, dark underparts and short wings<sup>2</sup>. Alaotra Grebe had a long and strong bill compared to Little Grebe, suggesting that it specialised on small fish. The only known photograph of the species, taken in 1985, appears here as Fig 1.

Lake Alaotra is the largest lake in Madagascar, c40 km long and 10 km wide, with c350 km<sup>2</sup> of marshes, (mostly *Cyperus* spp) and c500 km<sup>2</sup> of ricefields at its southern end, and c220 km<sup>2</sup> of open water. It is situated in a basin at c750 m, between two north-south scarps<sup>3</sup>. The lake is also famous for Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata*, which also appears to have been practically endemic to the lake and its environs, and may now be extinct, the last individual having been recorded in 1991<sup>5</sup>.

Alaotra Little Grebe was only ever reliably recorded on Lake Alaotra; reports from elsewhere<sup>6,7</sup> appear to be in error for *T. pelzelinii*<sup>5</sup>. The species' short wings seem likely to have limited its distribution to the immediate vicinity of the lake, as it would probably have been able to fly only short distances<sup>9</sup> (A Konter pers comm). Early accounts of grebes at Lake Alaotra mention it being relatively common, at least around the time of its original discovery<sup>1</sup>, while Little Grebe seems not to have been common on the lake at that time<sup>1</sup>.

## Decline

Published reports from Lake Alaotra between the 1930s and 1980s are rare and only Voous & Payne<sup>11</sup>

mention the species composition of grebe flocks on the lake. They report that, in 1960, 'around 50 [Alaotra Grebes]', with c10 Madagascar Little Grebes were present; Little Grebe was considered the commonest grebe at the lake. By 1982, while grebe flocks were still relatively common, Alaotra Little Grebe appeared scarce, with c12 being identified, as well as several hybrids<sup>5</sup>. By 1985, although c100 grebes were present on the lake, only 2–3 definite Alaotra Little Grebes were identified<sup>10</sup> (P Thompson pers comm). In 1986, B Dawson (unpublished report held at BirdLife International) recorded c8 adult and immature Little Grebes, and one adult and one immature Alaotra Grebe. Two years later D Thorns (unpublished report held at BirdLife International) saw an adult and an immature grebe that were also probably the latter species. Subsequently, in 1989–90, Wilmé<sup>13</sup> and Young & Smith<sup>14</sup> reported Madagascar Little Grebes and Little Grebes, but no definite Alaotra Grebes. Between January 1993 and January 1994, Pidgeon<sup>4</sup> saw only one each of Madagascar Little Grebe and Little Grebe. He also recorded the two commoner species at three lakes near Andilamena, north-east of Alaotra: two unidentified grebes and eight Little Grebes at Lake Antsomangana, four of each species at Maromandia, and two Madagascar Little Grebes at Lake Amparihalava. In addition, he found two of each of both common grebes on the River Ivondro, near Didy Marsh. Surveys conducted at Lake Alaotra by Julien Ramanampamonjy<sup>5,6</sup>, on behalf of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Wetlands International, produced two Madagascar Little Grebe in 1997, one Madagascar Little Grebe in 1998, and no grebes in 1999.

In early 1999, this situation prompted Projet ZICOMA to propose a survey of sites around Lake Alaotra in order to try and find Alaotra Grebe. Funding was obtained from the African Bird Club Conservation

Fund (with complementary financing from AviFauna), and 30 April–17 May was spent visiting sites around Lake Alaotra<sup>15</sup>. Seven areas around the main lake, lakes within a few kilometres of Lake Alaotra near Amparafaravola and Imerimandroso, and those visited by Pidgeon in 1993 near Andilamena were surveyed. The only site which held any grebes was Lake Antsomanagana near Andilamena, where four Madagascar Little Grebes were seen. Other lakes near Andilamena, which had held grebes in 1993, were almost dry and held few waterfowl<sup>15</sup>.

## Discussion

The striking result of this analysis is the precipitous decline of grebes in general at the main lake since c1985. It suggests that a new pressure, manifest from the early 1980s, was responsible for the elimination of all resident grebes from the main lake by 1992, and that all subsequent sightings relate to birds that have arrived from other areas, only to be very rapidly eliminated before they could breed. It appears that this pressure is absent, or at least a lot lower, at Lake Antsomangana. In addition, the pressures appear to have selectively targeted grebes, as other species (eg Meller's Duck *Anas melleri*, Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota* and Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*, while in decline since the 1930s, are still relatively numerous<sup>5,6</sup>).

Several potential causes of the decline have been suggested. There is considerable evidence to suggest that some hybridisation between Little Grebe and Alaotra Grebe occurred, and that even the type was a hybrid. This has been mentioned as a potential reason for the extinction of the species. The extent to which hybridisation can explain the species' decline is impossible to judge, but it appears that until the final sighting, individuals possessing the majority of characters of Alaotra Grebe were present, and that the decline of that species was accompanied, on Lake Alaotra at least, by an equal decline in other grebe species. The introduction of predatory fish (especially Black Bass *Micropterus salmoides*) may have impacted substantially upon potential grebe food<sup>4</sup>. Exotic vegetarian fish, especially carp *Cyprinus* sp. and some *Tilapia* species have radically changed the vegetation of the lake since the 1930s, when the majority of open water was covered in water lilies *Nymphaea* sp.<sup>15</sup>. Organochlorine pesticides, frequently used in ricefields surrounding the lake since the 1960s, have probably been mounting in the Lake Alaotra ecosystem. Many products now banned in the West are in common use at Alaotra. Hunting of waterfowl, already intensive in the 1930s<sup>15</sup> appears to be very high at present<sup>4</sup>. However, it is principally concentrated

on duck species that fly between the lake and ricefields at night<sup>4,5</sup>.

These pressures have certainly contributed to the overall decline in bird populations at Lake Alaotra, but they do not appear to have radically increased in the 1980s, and changes in wetland vegetation and hunting, at least, would appear likely to have affected all species of waterfowl. Hunting may have played a part in the decline of Madagascar Pochard<sup>4</sup>, which was reported by local people to be tame and easily caught, but the small grebes do not appear to have been specifically hunted. Two pressures, which do appear to have increased markedly in the relevant time period, are the use of monofilament gill nets and predation pressure from the introduced Snakehead *Ophicephalus striatus* (Channidae), a predatory fish of pike *Esox* sp.-like in size and habits. No data are available on the rates of gill-net use prior to the early 1990s, but at this time they were so widespread in the lake's open water as to impede the progress of boats with outboard motors (H G Young pers comm). These nets undoubtedly catch grebes, as diving birds do not see them underwater and drown if ensnared. Widespread use of gill-nets is not apparent on Lake Antsomangana.

Snakeheads were introduced to Madagascar in the late 1970s and probably reached Lake Alaotra in the early 1980s<sup>4</sup>. This genus of fish, along with others, has been implicated in the elimination of grebes from waters in their native south-east Asia (J Fjeldså pers comm). A similar situation exists in Europe, where Little Grebes do not breed successfully in waters inhabited by large pike, as the fish eat adults and chicks. At Lake Alaotra, local fishermen relate many tales of adult grebes being found dead on the surface of the water with fatal injuries, which they attribute to Snakeheads. According to fishermen, the fish attack grebes when underwater, and Snakeheads are reputedly absent or very rare in Lake Antsomangana.

## Conclusion

It appears undeniable that Alaotra Grebe is extinct. Despite repeated intensive searches, there have been no records for over ten years and it appears that all resident grebes have now been eliminated from Lake Alaotra. The near-flightless nature of Alaotra Grebe makes it extremely unlikely that populations remain undiscovered elsewhere in Madagascar. A series of effects have apparently contributed to the degradation of wetland habitats at Lake Alaotra, including indiscriminate pesticide use, hunting and competition from native fish, but that the final devastating blow to this species, as well as probably for the equally unfortunate Madagascar Pochard, was the near-simultaneous introduction of monofilament gill nets



Figure 1. Adult breeding plumaged Alaotra Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus*, Andreba, Lake Alaotra, 1985 (Paul Thompson)

and the Snakehead. Fig 1 thus stands, apart from museum specimens, as the last testament of this species, which appears to have become extinct in c1988–89, without the conservation world noticing.

### Acknowledgements

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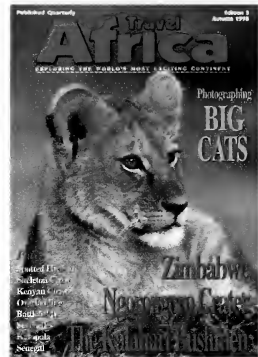
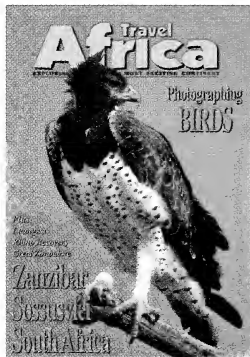
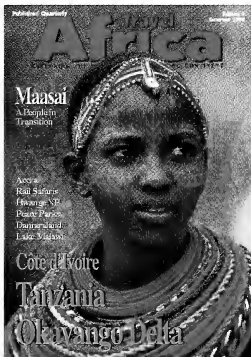


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# Identifying glossy starlings in the field

*Adrian Craig*

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L'article traite de l'identification des choucadors (ou merles métalliques) africains au plumage uniformément bleu-vert, placés traditionnellement dans le genre *Lamprotornis*. Si les espèces forestières de l'Afrique centrale et occidentale ne posent que peu de problèmes d'identification, ceci n'est pas le cas pour les espèces de l'Afrique orientale et méridionale, qui comprennent un certain nombre de formes assez semblables dont les aires de distribution se chevauchent. Bien que les vocalisations et le plumage juvénile soient souvent caractéristiques, l'observation détaillée des patterns de plumage dans des conditions d'éclairage convenables permettent également, dans la plupart des cas, d'identifier correctement l'espèce. Si, à quelques exceptions près, les points d'identification sont relativement bien connus, beaucoup reste à découvrir sur l'écologie et la biologie de ce groupe.



Figure 1. Rüppell's Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis purpuropterus*, Uganda (Johan Verbauck)

**A** first encounter with an African glossy starling is a memorable event, even for those without a special interest in birds. As the angle of light on the plumage changes, we see shifting iridescent greens, blues and purples, with occasional flashes of metallic copper and bronze. These are all structural colours, resulting from the reflection and diffraction of light by the feather keratin, in which melanin granules are embedded. In typical blue-green African glossy starlings, the melanin granules are oblong in cross-

section, with an air space inside. There is a single row of granules parallel to the surface of the feather barbules, with other granules scattered in the central region with no regular orientation<sup>6,8</sup>. However, in two West African species, similar colours are produced by flattened, solid melanin platelets. This resembles the condition found in sunbirds<sup>7,9</sup>. In starlings, the arrangement of the melanin granules appears consistent at a generic level, and this, along with other evidence, has led me to suggest some rearrangements

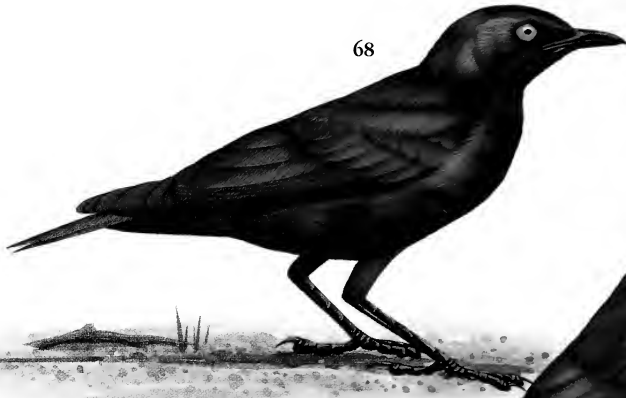


Plate 1. 68: Cape Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis nitens*. 69: Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*. 70: Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus* (a = adult, b = juvenile). 71: Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalcurus*.



Plate 2. **72:** Splendid Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus* (**a** = adult male, **b** = adult female). **73:** Principe Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis ornatus*. **74:** Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris*. **75:** Purple Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus* (**a** = adult, **b** = juvenile).





Plate 3. 76: Rüppell's Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis purpuropterus*. 77: Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis caudatus*. 78: Golden-breasted Starling *Lamprotornis regius* (a = adult, b = juvenile).

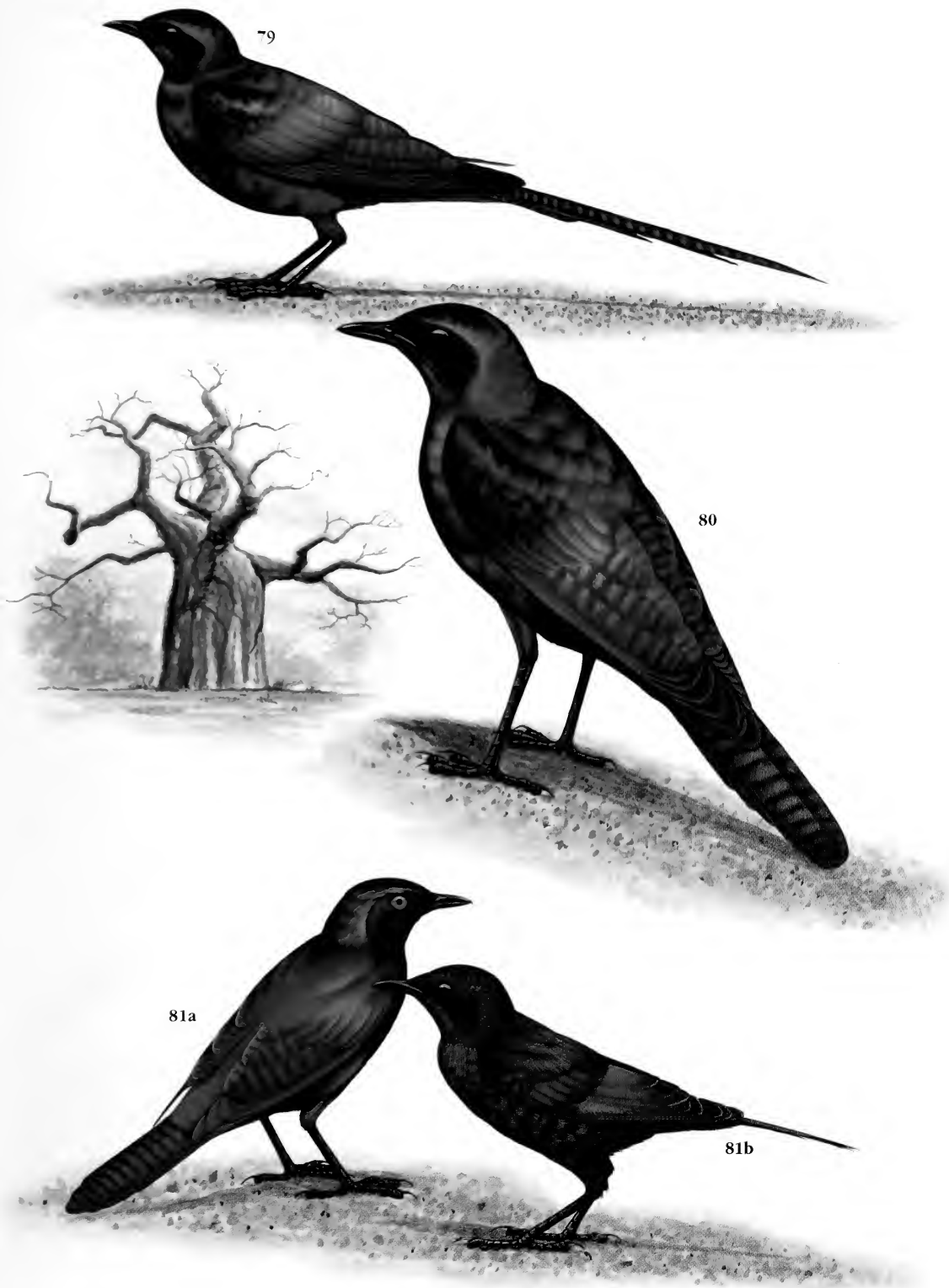


Plate 4. **79:** Meves' Long-tailed Starling *Lamprotornis mevesii*. **80:** Burchell's Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis australis*. **81:** Sharp-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis acuticaudus* (**a** = adult, **b** = juvenile).



Plate 5. **82:** Black-bellied Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis corruscus* (**a** = adult male, **b** = adult female). **83:** Purple-headed Glossy Starling *Hylopsar purpureiceps*. **84:** Coppery-tailed Glossy Starling *Hylopsar cupreocauda*.

to the taxonomy of African starlings<sup>2</sup>. Traditionally all the glossy blue-green starlings were placed within the genus *Lamprotornis*, but some additional species, formerly in the genus *Spreo*, such as Superb Starling *Spreo superbus* and Golden-breasted Starling *Cosmopsarus regius*, also appear to belong there. However, these species all have ventral areas with pigmented, non-iridescent plumage, which simplifies their identification. So in this article I will discuss only the uniformly blue-green glossy starlings.

If the colours of these birds are very much in the eye of the beholder, it will be difficult to rely on colour for field identification. This is certainly true and careful observation of the patterns of colour arrangement is a better approach. I must admit at the outset that I have yet to see all the species discussed here in the field, although I have pored over many museum specimens and visited collections holding captive starlings. So this should be regarded as a progress report, to which other observers can contribute.

The glossy starlings are, to some degree, segregated by habitat and geographical distribution but some species are very widespread, at least one is migratory, and large scale movements in the non-breeding season are likely in several others. Often three species may occur regularly at the same locality and 5–6 species are likely to be found together at times.

## Forest starlings

For these species, geographical distribution is very helpful in narrowing down one's options. On the east coast of Africa, from South Africa north to the southern tip of Somalia, including offshore islands such as Inhaca, Pemba and Zanzibar, the only true forest representative is Black-bellied Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis cornucius*. The field impression is of a small, dark starling with yellowish eyes. The sexes can be distinguished in good light, as the female has matt charcoal underparts, whereas the male has the ventral side black with a faint bronzy sheen. Breeding males have red eyes and in the hand exhibit a remarkable ability to change their eye colour, presumably by flushing the iris with blood. One, which I handled for ringing, had a red eye facing me, whereas the eye on the other side of the head was yellow! After a few minutes, both eyes became yellow. Black-bellied Glossy Starlings principally occur within 50 km of coasts, but in Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya they penetrate much further inland in gallery forest along river valleys. However, their small size and dark greenish appearance distinguish them from any of the savanna species, which are likely to enter this habitat.

In lowland forests of western and central Africa are two closely related species, Purple-headed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis purpuriceps* and Coppery-tailed Starling *L. cupreocauda*, which I have placed in a separate genus, *Hylopsar*<sup>3</sup>. Coppery-tailed Starling is restricted to the region from Guinea east to Ghana, while Purple-headed Glossy Starling has a much wider distribution, from southern Nigeria east through the Congo basin to western Uganda. Within forest, the barring on the tail, which is conspicuous on specimens and in the illustration of the species, is not a useful field character. The yellow iris and overall bluish plumage should separate it from the dark-eyed Purple-headed Glossy Starling, with its greenish body plumage, although the two species are not known to occur at the same sites anywhere in West Africa.

Both these small forest starlings may occur alongside the much larger Splendid Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus*. This is a truly spectacular bird when seen at close quarters, showing more subtle variations in plumage colour than one can convey effectively in a written description. It has a wide range in lowland forests from Senegal to western East Africa, Zambia, Congo, and northern Angola. In southern and western regions it is a migrant and large mobile flocks are characteristic of the non-breeding season. Roosts containing thousands of individuals have been reported in Gabon<sup>4</sup>. This is a large starling, dorsally showing many shades of blue and green, with purple underparts. The iris is white and the female is duller than the male, although this is unlikely to be evident to an observer peering up into the dim forest canopy. Splendid Glossy Starlings are raucous birds, which James Chapin described as gathering in groups to practice the most marvellous discords!<sup>5</sup> Their outer primary feathers have large notches halfway along them, so that their flight is accompanied by a loud swishing noise, which Chapin compared to the sound of a distant paddle steamer. In small woodland patches or at forest edges, Splendid Glossy Starlings can potentially occur alongside many of the savanna glossy starlings. Their white iris, purple underparts and relatively long blue tails, with dark blue centres to the feathers, are likely to be the best distinguishing characters in this situation.

On Principe Island, Splendid Glossy Starling may occur alongside its closest relative, Principe Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis ornatus*. These two species both possess a white iris and notched wing feathers, but Principe Glossy Starling is bronzy, rather than greenish on the back and the underparts are greenish instead of purple. Current information suggests that Splendid Glossy Starling is an irregular visitor to

Príncipe, and may not breed on the island, although it is resident on Bioko<sup>11</sup>.

### Woodland and savanna glossy starlings

Away from forests, West African woodlands have another six species of glossy starlings to offer, and here my field experience is negligible. Nevertheless, I believe that the Emerald Starling *Lamprolornis iris*, formerly often placed in a monotypic genus, *Coccycolius*, is unlikely to be confused with any other species in the inland savannas of Guinea, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. Its brilliant emerald-green plumage is produced through a slight modification of the typical *Lamprolornis* arrangement of hollow, oblong melanin granules<sup>6,8</sup>. It has a purple ear patch around a dark iris, and a purple belly. Another distinctive species, Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis caudatus*, is much larger and longer tailed than any other starling in West Africa. However, it ranges east to Sudan, where it reportedly occurs alongside Rüppell's Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis purpuropterus*. Current visitors to this area of overlap will tend to focus on military activity rather than bird observations. It appears likely that Rüppell's can be distinguished by its glossy blue, rather than blue-green body, but more information on these populations is required. Some taxonomists have included the long-tailed starlings from Sudan and Ethiopia as a race of *L. caudatus* rather than *L. purpuropterus*<sup>11</sup>, and this debate cannot be settled by re-examination of specimens collected 50 years ago.

Gradually we are homing in on the real problem area—the short-tailed savanna woodland glossy starlings. There is one more relatively distinctive species, Purple Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis purpureus*. This is a bulky, strikingly short-tailed bird, with blue-green upperparts, purple underparts and a yellow iris. It ranges from Sénégal to west Kenya, and throughout this area can occur alongside three other species: Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis chalybaeus*, Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling *L. chloropterus*, and Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling *L. chalcurus*. All three have a distinct ear patch, which contrasts with the coloration of the surrounding feathers—when the light is favourable for the observer. This ear patch has a purple wash in Bronze-tailed, whereas it is deep blue in Greater and Lesser Blue-eared. The central tail feathers of Bronze-tailed Glossy Starlings are bronzy, and some barring may be visible (I have not seen live specimens of this species). The tail is proportionately shorter than in the other two species, and the uppertail-coverts possess a purple tinge, rather than being blue-green. The four outer primary feathers of Greater Blue-eared Glossy

Starling have distinct indentations, while smaller indentations are present on the primaries of Bronze-tailed Glossy Starlings, so that the flight of these two species is much noisier than that of Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling.

In many glossy starlings there are dark blue spots at the tips of some, or all, of the wing-coverts. In Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling there are typically two complete rows of spots visible on the folded wing, compared to a single row in Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling. Comparable information is lacking for Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling. A more reliable field character is underparts coloration. The belly plumage of Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling has a purple wash, whereas in both blue-eared species there is a magenta patch on the flanks. This coloration ends just in front of the legs in Lesser Blue-eared, whereas in Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling the magenta area extends forward well beyond the hind limbs. Clearly, careful comparison and favourable viewing conditions are crucial. Fortunately, in many reserves, glossy starlings are so habituated to people that they will strut about, allowing one to obtain a good look from different angles.

When juveniles are present with the adults, they may provide additional clues. In first plumage, Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling has a fawn, or chestnut-brown in southern Africa, vent. This is diagnostic of this species, as in Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling the juvenile has dark ventral plumage with some brown undertones, and at the same stage young Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling appears to have blackish underparts.

From Kenya southwards, the two blue-eared species overlap in Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. A third species, Cape Glossy Starling *L. nitens* joins them in Zimbabwe. Cape Glossy Starling is also sympatric with Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling in South Africa, Botswana, northern Namibia and southern Angola. Here I am on familiar territory, and voice is a significant character in this region: Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling has a whining *sbeaarr* call, unlike any call of Cape Glossy Starling.

Southern Africa has a further three species of glossy starling, which overlap locally with the trio above, but are much easier to separate from them and from each other. Meves' Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis mevesii* is a slender, dark-plumaged species with a dark iris and a long tapered tail. It is quite localised in its distribution, favouring areas of baobab or mopane trees. Burchell's Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis australis* also appears dark in the field, with a dark iris, but it is much bulkier, with a broad,

blunt-ended tail. Both have prominent cross-barring on the tail. Finally, Sharp-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis acuticaudus* is a glossy green bird with a pointed, faintly barred tail, and an orange or red iris.

Observers will continue to delight in the iridescent plumages of glossy starlings. My hope is that they will go beyond the identification puzzles to document more of the basic biology of these species. I am sure that field experience of the calls of the different glossy starlings can ensure rapid identification of all species described here, but sufficient information is not yet available for many of them. Juvenile plumages have in some cases been described from single specimens of uncertain age, and for all species with a coloured iris, juveniles apparently start out with a dark iris. Intraspecific variations in adult iris coloration exist, and it is probable that species other than Black-bellied Glossy Starling exhibit seasonal or spontaneous short-term changes in eye colour. Although Chris Feare and I recently co-authored a comprehensive review of the starling family, we attempted to emphasise how little is known about many species. Cooperative breeding occurs in at least 11 of the 48 African species, and probably in others whose breeding biology is unstudied. For 11 African starlings, the eggs are undescribed, while for eight species the only detailed observations on incubation and feeding of the young have been made on captive birds in Europe. There is always something new to discover in Africa.

### Acknowledgements

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# Kakamega Forest: a living classroom for the growing generation

Solomon Muangi

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Un programme original d'éducation pour la conservation a été mis en œuvre auprès de certaines communautés villageoises vivant aux alentours de la forêt de Kakamega, dans l'ouest du Kenya. Ce projet a été financé par une bourse de l'African Bird Club, et l'article en présente les premiers résultats et impressions.

## Kakamega Forest

**A**long the Kisumu–Eldoret road, 300 km west of Nairobi, Kenya, lies the only true remaining patch of tropical rainforest in Kenya—Kakamega Forest.

Kakamega Forest covers an area of 15,480 ha and is the easternmost outlier of the Guinea–Congo forest, and biogeographically unique. It harbours more than 200 forest-dependent bird species, 16 found nowhere else in Kenya. Two species are globally threatened, Turner's Eremomela *Eremomela turneri* and Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscivora capensis*. Kakamega is a haven for naturalists and researchers, and is renowned for its unique fauna and flora, harbouring 20% and 75% of all Kenyan plant and butterfly species. The forest has recently been listed as a globally important biodiversity site, making it a key area for conservation<sup>1</sup>.

Kakamega is a tiny island within a sea of needy people, as the area surrounding the forest has one of the highest human densities in the country (268 km<sup>2</sup>). This has resulted in increased pressure for land and forest-based resources. Uncontrolled firewood collection, forest grazing and illegal logging are some of the problems facing Kakamega. The forest, with its rich flora and fauna, could disappear unless these illegal and unsustainable activities are addressed.

## The programme

During World Environment Day in 1999, an initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) celebrated annually across the world on 6 June, students from nine schools around Kakamega Forest, teachers, headmasters and the area Chief were treated to 23 songs, three plays and several poems presented in different languages, including the local language, Kiswahili, and English. A play by Muleche Primary School was particularly impressive. Artwork with messages about the birds of Kakamega, theme of the year, as it related to the IBA programme, was displayed in the field. This event sparked off the ABC-funded pilot education programme in Kakamega Forest, which has been conducted in tandem with the

ongoing Kakamega Environmental Education Programme. The programme, *Save the vanishing birds of Kakamega forest: investing in the young generation through conservation education*, focuses on providing environmental education within schools.

Children consider their parents to represent 'Mr and Mrs Right', emulating everything they see them say and do, irrespective of the consequences. In Kakamega, communities use natural resources to meet their various household needs, in most cases unsustainably, and such practices are passed on from generation to generation. The programme aims to cultivate enthusiasm for, and skills in, birdwatching among the pupils as a stepping stone to creating awareness about other environmental concerns in Kakamega Forest. It is hoped that this will have a long-lasting impact. Specifically, by focusing on birds, the programme sought to provide pupils, teachers and wildlife clubs with an understanding of Kakamega Forest and its biodiversity, and the threats the area faces. It is hoped that if the students grow up knowing the value of the forest, they will become agents of change in their own community in the future.

## Phase I: visits to schools

The first phase of the programme involved visits to schools by members of Kakamega Guides Association. These visits consisted of:

Meet school headmasters, patrons and other interested teachers, and fix a meeting day during the week.

Meet the club or students interested in forming a club:

- Give a short lesson on what a wildlife or conservation club is (assisted by the teachers)
- A short game with the pupils to stir up their interest.

Short presentation:

- Kakamega forest
- What are birds
- Importance of birds study table
- How to construct a bird-feeding table.



Short bird walk in the school compound

- Identification of common birds
- Teaching observation skills (listening, behaviour, watching)

Small booklets on birdlife of Kakamega were used

## Results

A total of 22 schools and over 800 pupils have had contact with the programme. During the visits, theoretical lessons on the history, geography, importance and problems facing Kakamega Forest were conducted. Particular emphasis was placed on areas that feature in the school curriculum. In similar visits, within the school compounds, pupils identified plants using local and English names, and learned of the traditional uses and pests management strategies. As a result, three schools have already formed conservation clubs and more than 500 pupils secondary school—membership has grown to 17, with elected officials, office bearers. Other schools not previously involved in the project have requested visits from the programme.

Bird identification formed a major part of the entire programme, including the use of colour, shape and size of the bill, and size of the feet, among other features. Pupils were instructed in identifying different habitats for birds within their school compounds and discovering which were the best for birdwatching. The overall aim was to compile bird checklists for individual schools. By observing the manner in which different species feed, pupils identified certain specific adaptations, especially in the size and shape of bills, as part of the school science curriculum.

Four core schools (those demonstrating exemplary interest and performance) commenced mini projects, which involved writing about different traditional beliefs concerning birds that served to enhance their conservation protection, and the role these species played in the AbaLuhya people's lifestyles. Some of the more remarkable beliefs that pupils, from three different AbaLuhya subtribes (Isukha, Tachioni and Kabras) living around Kakamega Forest, collected from their grandparents are presented below.

### **sunbirds** *Nectarinia* spp. (Muchuni)

Boys who had not passed through circumcision rituals should not kill these species; failure to observe this stricture would lead to their bleeding profusely during the ritual.

### **sparrows** *Passer* spp. (Lirolesi)

The local name is believed to derive from dreaming (Khulora) among the Isukha subtribe. Among the Tachioni and Kabras these species, which are known

to collect different items for nesting, are associated with witchcraft and sorcery.

### **Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* (Isimbishila)

The Tachioni practised polygamy; in cases where one wife wanted more favour from her husband, she would roast a whydah for him in order to achieve this. Among Kabras this bird is believed to attract customers to a business.

### **weavers** *Ploceus* spp. (Matekeye)

Among Tachioni these birds were thought to bring wealth and were considered to be an omen of impending good fortune whenever they were seen nest building around a home.

### **Red-cheeked Cordonbleu** *Uraeginthus bengalus* (Khasisi)

Among Tachioni it was believed to be an essential part of the homestead. The Kabras, on the other hand, believed that it should not be killed and, if killed, would signal the end of good luck.

### **lovebirds** *Agapornis* spp. (Ingringeri)

Lovebirds were rarely seen in Luhya land, being noted very occasionally during the course of a year. Among Tachioni, anyone seeing a lovebird was viewed as a hero in society, and these species' presence was considered beneficial. Among Kabras, they were seen as a blessing when they visited fruiting *Ficus* trees around homesteads, but the whereabouts of their nesting areas were unknown to local people.

### **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna subcylindricus* (Ling'ang'a)

Among Isukha this species was known to invite a bright good day, but if it was not seen or heard the day's weather would be dull.

### **Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* (Namulobi)

This comparatively small bird is known to build a huge, unmistakable nest, usually near streams. Among Kabras, a nest within a farm was considered a community blessing, while the nest was also associated with a welcoming home—especially because other birds, rodents and sometimes tree snakes would occupy the nest, once abandoned.

### **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (Inyanji)

Well known for trailing livestock and wild mammals while grazing, Kabras believed that when it appeared among a herd, it signalled good livestock husbandry, which would lead to an increase in wealth.

### **falcons** *Falco* spp. (Shikakalila-Is, Shikhokorero-Kab)

One falcon was known for its ability to hover expertly in the air. Among Kabras, Isukha, and Tachioni this

species was believed to rarely lose its feathers. In the event that it lost a feather while hovering, it was believed that the bird would retrieve it. If a feather happened to fall within a homestead it was considered an omen of good luck and that the entire family would be endowed with much wealth.

#### **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* (Makunyi)

Storks were a sign of festivities at the end of the year. In addition, Tachioni and Kabras believed that locusts followed the species and if it was seen on migration, people feared locusts would arrive shortly.

#### **African Harrier Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* (Liyayi)

This species was known for predating more than one young chicken at a time. Its name derives from the action of picking more than one item at a time and flying away (Khuyaya).

### **Reactions/questions from pupils**

The following are some of the questions that pupils asked at the end of talks held in different schools. Most of the questions were similar or related, and this is a summary of the principal ones:

**Q** Why do we conserve fierce animals like snakes, leopards, and buffaloes?

**A** They help to balance the environment, and attract tourists and researchers.

**Q** How does the government provide forest conservation?

**A** By employing forest guards, forest extension officers and foresters, and by encouraging other organisations to undertake projects in the forest.

**Q** What qualifications are required in order to become a game warden?

**A** O-level passes in English, Mathematics, Geography and Sciences, and a strong interest in natural history.

**Q** How does Kakamega Forest contribute to the economy of Kenya?

**A** It attracts tourists, mainly birdwatchers and botanists, thus creating employment for Kenyans as wardens, rangers, foresters and guides, as well as promoting education in various fields.

**Q** How many tourists visit Kakamega Forest?

**A** The annual number has increased from 353 in 1990 to 4,278 in 1998, and the total continues to increase each year.

**Q** Is the forest important to Egyptians and North Africa?

**A** Yes; through the streams that have their source in the forest and then join the main rivers flowing

into Lake Victoria, which is the source of the River Nile whose water is used for irrigation in Egypt and other countries further north

**Q** What is the difference between National Park and National Reserve?

**A** National Parks are located on state-owned land and are manned by government officials through the Kenya Wildlife Service. National Reserves are largely situated on trust land and are manned by local government employees.

**Q** How much rain does Kakamega Forest receive?

**A** Over 2 000 mm per annum.

**Q** What is the meaning of the term biodiversity?

**A** Variety within life forms, referring to plants and animals and their environment.

**Q** What would happen if all the forests were cut down?

**A** A source of life—water—would be lost. The air would lose its purifier, soil erosion would increase and land would become unsuitable for farming while temperatures would also be affected.

**Q** If man evolved from primates, birds from reptiles, what of plants?

**A** Plants are also a product of evolution, but most ancient plants appear to have disappeared.

**Q** Why are De Brazza's monkeys not found in the main Kakamega Forest?

**A** Further research is required, they were introduced in 1998 around one of the streams but have since disappeared.

**Q** Are there any differences between different snake poisons?

**A** Yes, some affect the nerves and others the blood.

**Q** Why must we learn about wetlands?

**A** They provide a home for many living organisms, and Man with food, building materials and water.

### **Case study: Buyangu primary school**

Buyangu primary school is located on the east edge of Kakamega Forest and is one of more than 22 schools that have benefited from visits and talks by Kakamega Forest Guides through the ABC-sponsored pilot conservation education programme in collaboration with Kenya Wildlife Services. The school was founded in 1976 and has 272 pupils (148 boys and 124 girls) with nine teachers. It has nine clubs, among them a wildlife bird club, which is the most active, scouts and girl guides, a geographic club, and debating, drama and music clubs. The bird club is one of the most successful of the school clubs involved in the pilot



Figure 1. Buyangu primary school—edge of the forest edge (Solomon Ngari)



Figure 2. Bird-feeding table provided by Buyangu (Dr. J. J. Soliman, Ngari)



Figure 3. Buyangu bird club and its patron (Solomon Ngari)

education programme, and has a tree farm with over 100 trees. A bird-feeding table and hide, where club members and other pupils can watch study birds at a close range, have been erected.

During a recent Wildlife Clubs of Kenya competition in the Kakamega region, the first five best pupils came from Buyangu primary school—the bird club has over 20 active members, headed by Eric Lichungu (Chairman), Benjamin Ingutia (Secretary) and Eunice Sachita (Treasurer). The school has a very good relationship with the Kenya Wildlife Service and has received donations in the form of desks and a piece of land to expand the school. Buyangu primary school participates in other national events such as soil conservation, games and Wildlife Clubs quizzes. It hopes to involve more pupils in the activities of Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme in Kakamega.

### Phase II: visits to the forest

The aim of this phase was to provide pupils with first-hand experience of the forest, construct environmental games, debate different aspects of the forest, and conduct forest walks and competitions. This phase is ongoing and further progress reports will be made to ABC.

### Problems and Constraints

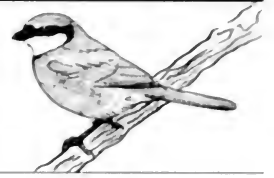
- Time allocation: it has been difficult for guides to find time to devote to school visits and also guide tourists, which is their only source of income.
- Travel expenses proved to exceed the predicted budget.
- Lack of support and goodwill from some school heads and patrons has led to slow progress in some areas.
- This was the first donor-funded project administered by the group. Some group members had expectations beyond those that could be achieved through available funds, which caused some conflicts and delays in implementation. ☛

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Nature Kenya, c/o East Africa Natural History Society, Museum Hill, PO Box 44486, Nairobi, Kenya.

 Supported by ABC Conservation Fund



## A nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* constructed on a tree

Matthias Waltert and Michael Mühlentberg

Un nid du Picatharte à cou gris *Picathartes oreas* a été observé pour la première fois sur un arbre. Le nid en forme de coupe a été découvert début mars 1999, dans la zone du Projet Korup, Cameroun, sur un contrefort d'un grand *Piptadeniastrum*, à 1.5 m au dessus du sol, près d'un petit ruisseau en forêt. Il mesurait e30 cm de long, 8 cm de large et 10 cm de hauteur, le bord extérieur était endommagé



Figure 1. Nest of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* on tree, CAFECO concession, Korup Project area, Cameroon (Matthias Waltert)

Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* is a restricted-range species, confined to the north-western Lower Guinea forest zone, between south-east Nigeria and north and central Gabon<sup>1,2</sup>. Although elusive and not easy to observe, it is not uncommon in suitable rainforest habitat in Cameroon (R Demey pers comm). It usually breeds in small colonies, building its mud nest on the surface of overhanging rocks, caves and boulders<sup>2,5</sup>. There is a single record of a nest within a hollow in a burnt-out log<sup>2</sup>.

On 3 March 1999, in an unlogged part of the CAFECO concession, Korup Project area, Cameroon, we found a nest of this species attached to the buttress of a large *Piptadeniastrum* tree, 1.5 m above ground, near a small forest stream. The cup-shaped nest was e30 cm long, 8 cm wide and 10 cm high. The outer rim was damaged and some fibrous material was

noticeable. It was undoubtedly a picathartes nest: it looked exactly like those built on rock faces we had come across in the same area, where we found several colonies. According to locals, the bird was seen on the nest several weeks before and the breeding site was reported to have been in existence for years. This appears to be the first record of a nest of Grey-necked Picathartes built on a tree.

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# Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus* and Chestnut-breasted Nigrofinch *Nigrita bicolor*, new to Bénin

Maarten van den Akker

L'auteur mentionne la découverte de deux espèces nouvelles pour le Bénin. Il s'agit du Bulbul à barbe blanche *Criniger calurus* et de la Nigrette à ventre roux *Nigrita bicolor*, captures dans des filets japonais et photographies en février–mars 1999 dans la Forêt de Niaouli.

**I**n comparison with other African countries, research on resident birds has just commenced in Bénin and there is still much to discover. The country is situated in the so-called Dahomey Gap – separating the Upper and Lower Guinea–Congolian forest blocks. In this area only small, scattered forest patches are found. In 1997, the Dutch Embassy in Bénin financed a project to protect Niaouli Forest, one of the last semi-deciduous forests in the south of the country.

Niaouli Forest (06°41'N, 02°29'E), within the Guinea–Congolian vegetation zone (c.115 ha in extent). It consists of two distinct parts: the dry Plateau (90 ha) and the lower lying Bas-fonds (25 ha), where several springs form a small stream. Ornithological surveys were undertaken from 1997 onwards and in February–March 1999, two new species for Bénin were discovered.

On 20 February and 5 March 1999, single Red-tailed Greenbuls *Criniger calurus* were mist netted on the Plateau and Bas-fonds. In size they were between Little Greenbul *Andropadus teneos* and Grey-headed Bristlebill *Bleda naucapilla* and were identified by their dark grey head with grey orbital ring and white streaked ear-coverts, olive green upperparts and tail (indicating that the subspecies involved was *terreuxi*), white throat, yellow belly and olive-green flanks. Bill and legs were blue-grey, the eyes red-brown (Fig. 1). Wing lengths 85 mm and 86 mm; weights 24 g and 31 g.

On 6 March, a Chestnut-breasted Nigrofinch *Nigrita bicolor* was trapped in the Bas-fonds. Its

chestnut-coloured face and underparts, and blackish-grey upperparts, blacker on the wings and tail, readily identified it. The bill was black, the eye red-brown and the legs dark brown (Fig. 2). Wing length 59 mm; weight 10 g.

These are the first documented records for both species in Bénin. Neither appears on the Dowsett's<sup>3</sup> list and they have not been recorded by other ornithologists subsequently working in the south of the country. Both occur in adjacent Togo<sup>2</sup> and Nigeria.

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Figure 1. Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus*, Niaouli, Bénin, 20 February 1999 (Maarten van den Akker)



Figure 2. Chestnut-breasted Nigrofinch *Nigrita bicolor*, Niaouli, Bénin, 6 March 1999 (Maarten van den Akker)

# African Swallow-tailed Kite *Chelictinia riocourii* breeding in the Saloum Delta, Sénégal

R.E. Brasseur

La première nidification de l'Élanion nauler *Chelictinia riocourii* au Sénégal a été constatée en janvier 2000, avec trois nids (dont deux avec des oeufs) découverts dans le Parc National du Delta du Saloum, et un quatrième 30 km au nord. Dans les deux cas on a trouvé, des nids d'autres rapaces (Élanion blanc *Elanus caeruleus*, Petit-Duc africain *Otus (scops) senegalensis* et Vantour oricon *Aegyptius tracheliotos*) dans les environs immédiats.

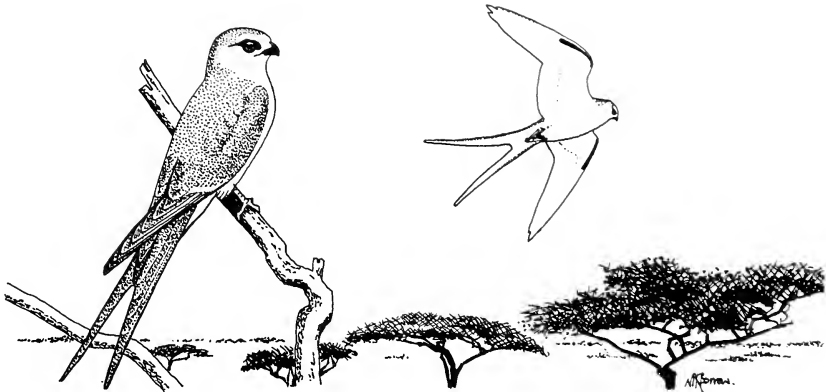
On 20 January 2000, near Sokoné in Saloum Delta National Park, Sénégal, warden Mansaly Valentin found three pairs of African Swallow-tailed Kites *Chelictinia riocourii*. Two individuals were incubating eggs, while the other pair was still engaged in courtship. The nests were constructed on stunted *Mitragyna inermis* trees in a patch of grassland surrounded by almost bare salt flats, on one of the delta's many islands. One nest was within the same bush as an African Scops Owl *Otus (scops) senegalensis* nest, which was hanging in a creeper *Abrus precatorius* and contained two fledged young. Less than 50 m away, a Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* nest, containing two almost full-grown chicks, was found near the top of another *Mitragyna* tree. Subsequent visits on 29 January and on 2 February confirmed the kites' continued breeding, while, on 10 February, another African Swallow-tailed Kite nest was found c30 km further north by Jacques Peeters, an advisor with Senegal's National Parks service. This nest was in the same tree (an *Acacia seyal*) as that of a Lappet-faced Vulture *Aegyptius tracheliotos*. In early March, Mansaly Valentin visited the first site again. Both the owl and Black-shouldered Kite nests were empty, but ten pairs of *Chelictinia* had joined the earlier group of three. With the exception of one nest in an *Acacia seyal*, all of the new nests were in *Mitragyna inermis*

trees, which had by this time shed their leaves. These are the second breeding records of African Swallow-tailed Kite in Senegal, following one in 1992<sup>1</sup>. The above observations also demonstrate that the species appears to be attracted to areas in which other large birds of prey are nesting, but also to the nests of nocturnal birds of prey, and that it does not always nest colonially. Furthermore, Brown *et al.*<sup>2</sup> note only the use of *Acacia* and *Balanites* trees by nesting African Swallow-tailed Kite. ♀

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African Swallow-tailed Kites *Chelictinia riocourii*  
by Nik Borrow (courtesy of Birdquest)

# Range extension of African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* into Soutpansberg, Northern Province, South Africa

C.T. Symes and M.R. Perrin

Le Projet d'Atlas Ornithologique Sud-Africain n'a pas constaté la présence de l'Eurylaïme du Cap *Smithornis capensis* dans le nord-ouest de la Province du Nord, Afrique du Sud. La capture d'une femelle et les nombreuses mentions de l'espèce au Levubu et dans l'est du Soutpansberg semblent toutefois indiquer que l'Eurylaïme du Cap n'y est pas accidentel et pourrait par contre être assez régulier dans la région. La présence de l'espèce a été constatée dans cinq carrés d'un quart de degré du Soutpansberg oriental dans lesquels elle n'avait pas été trouvée auparavant. La Luvuvhu et la Mutale, qui traversent le nord du Parc National du Kruger, et la confluence des rivières Limpopo-Luvuvhu pourraient servir de voies de migration vers la région de Soutpansberg, où l'oiseau pourrait nicher comme hôte d'éte. Les implications pour la conservation sont examinées.

## Introduction

The northernmost mountain range in South Africa the Soutpansberg lies at 23°05'S–22°25'S and 29°17'E–31°20'E (Fig. 1). Altitude is 300–1 719 m at Hanglip, and 1 748 m at Letimma. The Soutpansberg's geology developed c1 700 million years ago during an east-west faulting of the Limpopo Mobile Belt which caused dipping to the north and rising to the south<sup>1</sup>. The mountains end north of Thohoyandou between the Luvuvhu and Mutale rivers (Fig. 1). Forest is prominent on south-facing slopes in the south of the range, but is not aspect dependent at

high altitudes. Rainfall is seasonal, falling mostly in the summer (October–March). Entabeni receives highest rainfall (c1 800 mm year<sup>-1</sup>), with the Drakensberg ramshadow causing Louis Trichardt, to the west, to receive c510 mm year<sup>-1</sup>. Rainfall decreases to the east, with Punda Maria, at c200 m, receiving c620 mm year<sup>-1</sup>. Temperatures are hot in summer, but cooler with increased altitude in the mountains.

The Luvuvhu River originates east of Louis Trichardt and flows west-east along the south of the range. East of the Soutpansberg it turns north-east, meeting the Limpopo River at Crooks Corner in

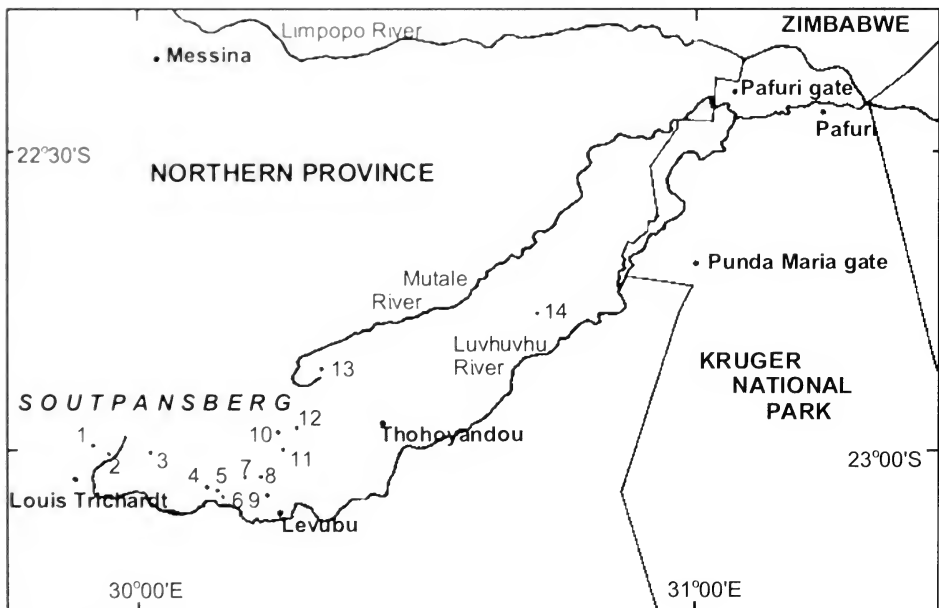


Fig. 1. Map of the study area. Numbers correspond to sites in Table 1.





1



2



5

Figures 1-2. Female African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*, Vireers Farm (site 9), 1 October 1999 and retrapped 60 days later when it had a prominent brood-patch (Craig Symes)

Figures 3-4. View from Vireers Farm (site 9) towards Soutpansberg Mts, illustrating African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* habitat. Afromontane forest and commercial evergreen plantations are visible on the distant slopes (Craig Symes)

Figure 5. Dry lowland semi-deciduous forest at Ratombo (site 7) (Craig Symes)

northern Kruger National Park. The Mutale River originates at Thathe Vondo, flows north-east and joins the Luvuvhu in north-west Kruger National Park, near Pafuri Gate (see Fig. 1). Although the geological features of the Soutpansberg extend as far north-east as Pafuri, it is in the region between these rivers, in the east, where altitude decreases, that the Afro-montane elements of Soutpansberg begin to decrease.

African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* is an uncommon endemic resident in Africa<sup>10</sup>. It is the only broadbill in the southern African subregion and inhabits a variety of habitats, including dense woodland, riparian forest, mumbwa woodland, lower storeys of evergreen forest, and deciduous thickets<sup>11</sup>. In southern Africa its range extends from the KwaZulu-Natal south-east, north into Mozambique and through the Zambezi Valley to the western Caprivi of Namibia<sup>12</sup>. It is a rare resident in Swaziland and very scarce in the former Transvaal. In the south its range extends to Port Shepstone (30°45'S 30°20'E), where it inhabits evergreen forest and coastal scrub. In Mozambique a southern population in coastal woodland and forest is distinct from those in the north, which largely occur in *Androstachys johnsonii* forest. Throughout the Zambezi Valley it occurs in dry scrub bush associated with riverine forest, and in the Eastern Districts in dry forest at the Haroni-Lusitane confluence, and lower Pungwe River areas. It may be an overlooked resident of riverine forest in the Okavango Delta, Botswana<sup>13</sup>. It is usually silent and inactive in low vegetation, and consequently easily overlooked.

While bird ringing at a site near Exley (Table 1, site 9) a female African Broadbill was captured. Additional sightings were made at nearby Ratombo (site 7), a dry lowland semi-deciduous forest. The South African Bird Atlas Project did not record the species in this region, the nearest occurrences being

in south-east Zimbabwe, c250–300 km distant. Several subspecies are recognised and our records are probably of *conjunctus*. These records prompted an investigation into the presence of African Broadbill in the region.

## Methods

Records of African Broadbill in the Soutpansberg, west of Kruger National Park, were located in the literature. Additional data, gathered from birders who had recorded it in this region, were obtained and the following information collated: 1) locality, 2) altitude, 3) grid reference, 4) date of recording, 5) identification, and 6) reference recorder.

## Results and discussion

African Broadbill has been found in five quarter-degree squares not recorded in the South African Bird Atlas Project (2229DD Wyllies Poort, 2230CD Eshohoyandou, 2230DC Makondo, 2329BB Louis Trichardt, 2330AA Ratombo)<sup>14</sup>. These records are summarised in Table 1 (see also Fig. 1).

### Range extension

The South African Bird Atlas Project did not record the species in Northern Province, either because of its inconspicuous nature, or its considered status as a vagrant. The records presented here, from five additional quarter-degree squares, suggest it is more common than previously thought. Most records were in early spring and summer, suggesting that it may be seasonal in occurrence although, given that breeding occurs in September–February<sup>15,16,17</sup>, the records may result from an increase in the birds' activity during this period.

### Possible seasonal movements

African Broadbill is an uncommon to fairly common localised resident in south-central Africa<sup>10</sup>. Known

**Table 1.** African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* records in the Soutpansberg (see Fig. 1).

Site	Locality	Alt. (m a.s.l.)	Grid Ref	Date	Identification	Reference
1	Bluegumspoor	1 320	22°59'30"S 29°55'20"E	Nov 1997	seen & heard	E. Eastwood
2	Freshwoods Farm	1 100	23°00'20"S 29°57'15"E	Dec 1992	heard	S. Venter & J. Crafford
3	Roodewaal Forest	1 020	23°00'15"S 30°01'20"E	Dec 1992	seen & heard	S. Venter & J. Crafford
4	Goedehoop forest station	860	23°04'10"S 30°07'40"E	Nov 1998	heard	M. Holford
5	Softwaters Farm	760	23°04'20"S 30°08'30"E	Nov/Dec 1998	seen & heard	M. Holford
6	Goedgevonden	750	23°04'25"S 30°08'50"E	Nov 1995	heard	A. Muller
7	Ratombo Forest	900	23°02'30"S 30°11'50"E	Nov/Dec 1999	seen & heard	This study
8	Entabeni (Safcol Offices)	820	23°02'35"S 30°13'15"E	-	seen	A. Bester
9	Vireers Farm	700	23°04'20"S 30°14'00"E	Oct–Dec 1999	seen & heard	this study
10	Matiwa	1,350	22°58'40"S 30°15'10"E	Jan 1997	seen & heard	D. Pretorius
11	Matiwa	1,350	22°59'55"S 30°15'35"E	-	seen & heard	A. Bester
12	Mutshindude Valley	1,100	22°58'S 30°17'E	18 Oct 1985	-	Tarboton <i>et al</i> <sup>18</sup>
13	Thathe Vondo	1,320	22°52'30"S 30°20'40"E	Oct 1976	seen & heard	Tarboton <i>et al</i> <sup>18</sup>
14	Gaba Forest	980	22°46'20"S 30°43'20"E	Jan 1998	heard	S. Venter

from the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe<sup>17</sup>, additional high-altitude records during the breeding season suggest that it moves into the region to nest. It was recorded by Swynnerton in the upper Buzi River basin<sup>5</sup> and, more recently, a pair was recorded at Tsanga River, Nyanga (1,860 m), in December 1998<sup>18</sup>, with three records from the Bvumba Highlands, eastern Zimbabwe (max. altitude 1,911 m)<sup>19</sup>. These records, together with those presented here, are mostly from the breeding season. The female ringed at Levubu (site 9) on 1 October 1999 was recaptured in the same place on 6 December 1999, when it had a prominent brood patch and another, possibly a male, was heard calling nearby. On 13 November and 5 December 1999, at Ratambo Forest (site 7), a male was observed in the same place giving the conspicuous *tttt-rrrrrrrrrr* call. It may have been holding territory, and was possibly breeding.

No evidence exists to suggest that broadbills are migratory<sup>10,11</sup>, although some species may be nomadic or perform altitudinal movements in response to food availability and prevailing weather conditions<sup>10</sup>. African Broadbill presence in the Levubu–Lous Trichardt area may be seasonal, with a post breeding return to the Mozambique lowveld in winter. The vegetation of the Levuhvu and Mutale rivers is predominantly riverine (pers. obs), providing ideal habitat through which local movements could occur. It may, however, be resident, being inconspicuous when not breeding and calling.

### Conservation implications

The recent South African IBA (Important Bird Areas) inventory did not record the presence of African Broadbill in the Soutpansberg (SA 003)<sup>1</sup>. Habitat destruction, especially in heavily populated areas, threatens this species and it is considered regionally Vulnerable<sup>11,12</sup>. The region through which the Levuhvu and Mutale rivers flow, before reaching Kruger National Park, is populated by rural settlements of the former Venda homeland. Slash-and-burn agriculture is practised and there is no control over the clearing of bush and development of farmlands (S Venter pers comm). If this habitat is important as a migratory corridor for broadbills and other species between northern Kruger National Park and the Soutpansberg it requires conservation.

### Acknowledgements

Sarah Venter, Prof Dries Bester, 'Boesman' Muller, David Pretorius, Dr Jan Crafford, Ed Eastwood and Mike Holford provided additional records of African Broadbill in the region. The Mullers of Levubu are thanked for their hospitality during this study. Dries Joubert granted access to ringing sites on his land (site

9). The African Bird Club funded bird-ringing equipment. ♀

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# Photospot: Star-spotted Nightjar

Michael Mills and Claire Spottiswoode

Star-spotted Nightjar (*Caprimulgus stellatus*) has been known to science for little over a century, since being discovered at the Kassim River (eastern Ethiopia, in January 1899). It has subsequently remained a relatively obscure species, observed only occasionally and photographed more rarely still. Consequently, its breeding biology is unknown, and status within its localised range poorly known. Zimmerman *et al.* describe it as locally common in a Kenyan lava rock-strewn deserts with scattered patches of bare sandy soil, while Safford *et al.* report that *Caprimulgus stellatus* was probably also common on the Nechisar plains, where its presence was confirmed by two crowd kills (R Safford pers. comm.).

The species owes much of its migratory reputation to its localised distribution, which is largely restricted to relatively remote areas of northern East Africa. Its strongholds lie in north and north-west Kenya (north of 01°15' N and between 34°55' E and 38°00' E) and central Ethiopia (in the Awash valley). It is recorded more sporadically in Djibouti, north-west Somalia, south-east Sudan and at Arba and Nechisar National Park in Ethiopia. Star-spotted Nightjar favours dry habitats at low altitudes (possibly up to 1980m) including stony semi-desert, black lava fields, dwarf bush grassland and dry open bushland.

Identification is made especially difficult by an overlap in distribution with the almost indistinguishable (and possibly more variable) Plain Nightjar (*Caprimulgus inornatus*). Both these plainly marked species are small to medium sized, and have proportionately large heads. Zimmerman *et al.*, the only field guide to illustrate and comprehensively describe the two, states that Star-spotted Nightjar is 'Similar to Plain Nightjar but still plainer, and readily distinguished from it by prominent white throat patch (usually divided by a dark midline) and smaller white tail corners'. In the case of the individual photographed, the white throat markings were almost unnoticeable even in the hand, and only became apparent by closely examining the parted throat feathers.

Importantly, female Plain Nightjar lacks white in the tail and wings, while the male has broader white tips to the two outermost tail feathers. Only in the hand, when wing and tail patterns can be examined, can these species be separated with certainty.

This individual, believed to be an adult female, was caught on 28 November 1999 in Nechisar National Park, Ethiopia. It was located shortly after sunset in marginal habitat on the western border of the Nechisar plains, between grassland and dry open bush.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Roger Safford and Nigel Cleere for their help in identifying this bird, and Gus Mills, Duan Biggs and Peter Osborne for helping to catch it. ♀

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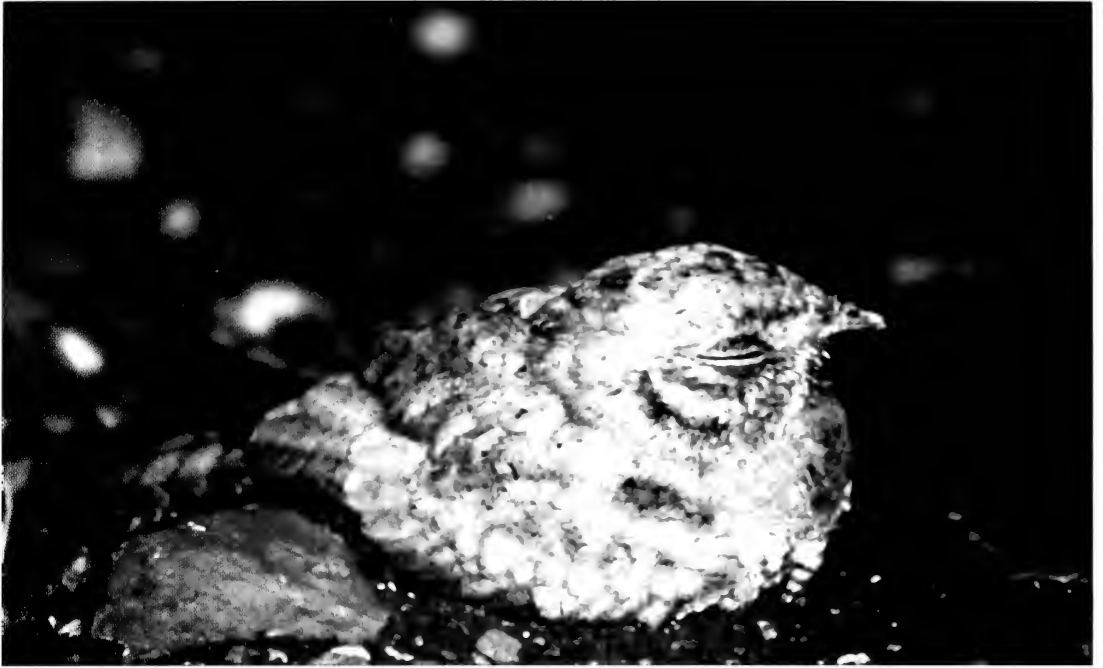


Figure 1. Star-spotted Nightjar *Caprimulgus stellatus* in its natural habitat in northern Kenya and central Ethiopia. The bird was photographed on 15 November 1999 (Claire Spottiswoode & Michael Mills)

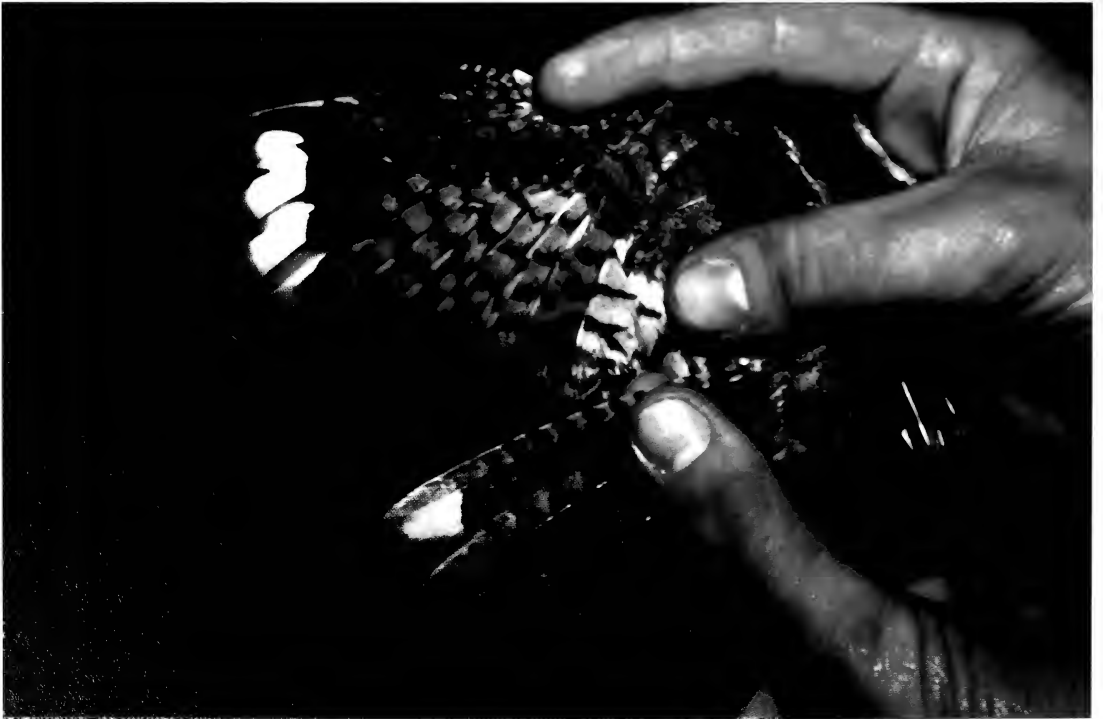


Figure 2. Diagnostic flight-feather pattern of female Star-spotted Nightjar *Caprimulgus stellatus*. Note the smudge of white covering just the tip of the outermost tail feathers and the narrow white blotches to the four outermost primaries (Claire Spottiswoode & Michael Mills)





Figure 1. A large, dense, spherical cluster of indistinguishable Plain (unspotted) or Star spotted (large heads) *Caprimulgus* spp. (a useful field character).



Figure 2. A close-up view of a large, dense, spherical cluster of indistinguishable Plain (unspotted) or Star spotted (large heads) *Caprimulgus* spp. (a useful field character).



Figure 3. A view of a plain, southern Ethiopian Rift Valley, 1000-1500 m, of plain nightjar species including the little known *Caprimulgus solala* (described on the basis of a single egg from a road kill) and Star spotted *C. stellatus* (Camp. spotti woodi).

# Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only: **records are mostly from late 1999–early 2000, with a few from earlier dates**. We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R.J. Dowssett's (1993) *Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists* (in: R.J. Dowssett and F. Dowssett-Lemaire, *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds*, Tauraco Research Report 5, Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent and appropriate sources before submitting records.

## Azores

Records from October–November 1999 include a **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Lagoa Azul Sete Cidades, São Miguel, on 1–2 November. Further observations at the same site included a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*, the seventh for the Azores, on 25 October, and a male **American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes*, seven female/immature **American Wigeon** *A. americana*, a **Eurasian Wigeon** *A. penelope*, a female **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*, and an immature male and seven female **Lesser Scaups** *A. affinis* on 1–2 November. A male and female **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* were found at Corvo on 19 October. Approximately 40 **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* were reported from several sites from 19 October into November, with up to 22 at Sete Cidades, on 27 October, 17 still there on 1 November, and five at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 3 November. Records from Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 3–6 November included two first-calendar-year **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus*, a **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii*, a **Purple Sandpiper** *C. maritima* and a **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*. Up to three **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularia*

were reported from three islands—Flores, Terceira and São Miguel—from 15 October to 6 November at least. Up to four **Chimney Swifts** *Chaetura pelagica* were observed at Sete Cidades, on 26–27 October. If accepted, a **Common Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea* at the same site on 27 October would be the first for the Azores (per *Dutch Birding* 21: 358–359; *RC, KdR & DC per Birding World* 12: 113).

In January–March 2000 the following species were reported. Two **Great Northern Divers** *Gavia immer* were off Praia Islet, Graciosa, on 20 February. A **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* was seen at Sete Cidades on 4 March, while a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* were at Lajes do Pico on 11 March. A **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was at Ponta Harbour, Faial, on 21 January, and another at Praia, Graciosa, on 9–17 March (first seen on 19 February). A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** *L. hyperboreus* was at Madalena Harbour, Pico, on 30 January. Also reported on 23rd and said to be regular at this site in recent winters). Up to ten **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* at Calderia, Faial, on 20–27 February, appear to be the first flock reported from the island (MB per *Birding World* 13: 57; MB & GE per *Birding World* 13: 102).

## Burkina Faso

The following records were made in the Banfora area, in the country's extreme south-western corner, in February 2000. An **African Cuckoo Falcon** *Ariceda cuculoides* was seen at the Cascades on 22nd. The same day, 14 **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were found on Lake Tengrela (with two on the Comoé River on 23rd). Also at the lake were a **Pei's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* (two were seen at the same site in February 1999) and a **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* (ASE & AMr).

## Cameroon

What appears to be the first **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* for continental Africa south of the Sahara



White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* by Craig Robson

was discovered at the coast near Batouka Limbe area, on 12 April 2000, and remained till at least 22nd, when it was photographed (ML). Another new species for Cameroon was a **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* first netted and photographed in February 2000 at Lake Moga (per SBA). Two more species could be added to the Cameroon list: it confirmed a **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*, claimed off Fitude in January 1999, and a **Brown-necked Parrot** *Poicephalus robustus* reported from Benoue National Park on 20 February 1999 (JIS).

Further records from the first half of 1999 include a **Spot-breasted Ibis** *Bostrichus rara* at Zoebefame, near the Dja Reserve, in May, a **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* at Ngaoundaha ranch on 27 February, and an **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* at Eboumetoum, north-east of Dja Reserve, on 22 April (per ML).

Records in December 1999–April 2000 include the following. **African Swallow-tailed Kites** *Chelicictina riocourii* were common from Mozogo-Gokoro to Kaélé in January (c15 records) (ML). An adult **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* was seen on the southern slopes of Mt Cameroon, Batoka area, on 16 February (VS) and an immature at Ebogo, near Mbalmayo, on 5 March (RD & EW). In Korup NP, an adult **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* was observed on 23 February (VS). **Fox Kestrels** *Falco alopex* were found to be common in the Mandara

Mts. with a group of up to 55 individuals at a roost (MI). **Eurasian Hobbies** *Subhutes* were seen at Mfong (MI). Ngaoundaba in April (M). The behaviour of a **Bronze-winged Coursier** *Actinopygia imber* (MI) at Mayo Louli near Moko in the North Province in January suggests breeding. Records of **Brown-chested Lapwing** *Vanellus melanoptera* indicating local breeding include two pairs north of Mape (MI) and one another near the Mayo Louli (MI). Magha in March–April (SI) and **Egyptian Plovers** *Pluvialis capensis* and **White-fronted Plovers** *Charadrius marginatus* were breeding in the same area. **Grey-headed Gulls** *Larus argentatus* were at Mape (MI) on 7 April. This species had previously been recorded south of the Baka (MI). Several pairs of **Afep Pigeons** *Columba tinnunculus* nesting in the central Bakoua Mts. in the Mts. A. is noteworthy, there are few records of this species north of the Mts. A. (FDI & RD). A **Black Spinetail** *Telacanthura melanopygia* was at Bachi (AK) in March (SI). **White-rumped Swifts** *Apus affinis* were at Mayo Louli (MI) on 7 April (MI). **Bannerman's Turaco** *Trogon bannermani* was found in the Baka locality where it appears to be relatively common (the species was also recorded in Ntanga Forest near Nkambe (RD) & KYV). **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** *Merops viridis* (MI) previously only known from Bakoua and Faro NP, were reported from Mayo Louli and Forest Gokoro as well as the foothills of T. (MI). Gandaba (MI, SBK, KYV). **Willcock's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* was seen and tape-recorded at T. (MI). Gandaba on 7 April and **Zenker's Honeyguide** *Melignonius zenkeri* (MI)

at M. (MI). **Mr. Marenga Warbler** 7 December (MI). A **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignonius flavipes* was found at Bachi (AK) in the Mape area on 7 March. Also there was a pair of **Fire-bellied Woodpeckers** *Acanthopneuste* foraging with wax-eating this species (SI). The first record for **Long-legged Pipits** *Pipitops longipes* was reported from Mayo Louli (MI) and from several localities to the south from K. (MI) to the Djerem (MI) with **Orange and Magpie** (KYV, MI). A pair of **Red-throated Pipits** *Pipitops erythrops* were recorded at T. (MI). **Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike** *Cuculops melanoleucus* (SI) was at Mayo Louli on 28 March (MI). **Forest Swallows** *Hirundo forsteri* were at Mayo Louli (MI) on 22 February (SI). **Red-capped Robin Chat** *Corvinus ruber* was at Mayo Louli (MI) on 22 February (SI). **Dorst's Cisticola** *Cisticola dorsalis* was at Mayo Louli (MI) on 22 February (SI). **Bamenda Apalis** *Apalis bamenda* was recorded for the first time in the Mts. A. (MI) on 7 April (MI). It was also recorded by the Cameroon IBA team (SI) on 7 April (RD) & KYV. A **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* was also recorded at Mayo Louli (MI) on 7 April (SI). **Uganda Woodland Warblers** *P. badamensis* were singing in primary forest south of Akouli (Campe) Mts. in NP in February (RD) & MI). Several pairs of **Oriole Warbler** *Hyperolius atriceps* were found in the Younde area. **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* were common at Mozogo Gokoro in January (MI). **Green-breasted Bush Shrike** *Malaconotus gladiator* was recorded at Bah Ngemba Forest Reserve near Bamenda (new locality), where **Green-throated Sunbirds** *Chalcophaps rubescens* of the distinctive race *rossensis* (lacking the green throat) were also present (RD) & KYV). **White-winged Black Tit** *Parus leucomelas*, **White-collared Starling** *Grafiata torquata* and **Black-faced Firefinch** *Lagonosticta larrata* were observed at Mayo Louli in January; these apparently constitute the northernmost records for these species

in Cameroon (MI). Two **Yellow-mantled Weavers** *Ploceus tricolor* were seen in Korup NP on 19 March; this is a rare bird in the park (MI). A **Yellow-capped Weaver** *P. a. isomaculatus* seen well at Mt Kupe on 25 February appears to be the first record of this species north of the Sanaga River (MI). At least ten **Grosbeak Weavers** *Amblyospiza albigularis* were around Nyaososo on 25–21 March; this rainy season visitor is normally present at Mt Kupe between mid June and late October (MI).

During a survey of the newly established Mbam and Djerem National Park in central Cameroon in March 2000, 305 species were recorded, among which the following were the most noteworthy. **Spot-breasted Ibis** *Bostrychia rara* was found in the south. An adult **Ovampo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter orampensis* was seen over savanna on 13th (only one previous record in Tonette's checklist of 1981), and a **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* on 10th and an **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Therapsidetus ayresii* on 9th. Two **Latham's Forest Francolins** *Francolinus lathamii* on 10th at the forest savanna border, at 05°08'N 12°52'E, constitute a very northerly record. A pair of **Brown-chested Lapwings** *Vanellus spinifer* was delimiting a territory near the Djerem River. Six **Afep Pigeons** *Columba ninnincta* were far north of the range mapped in Tonette (1981), whereas **Bruce's Green Pigeons** *Trogon iradua* were the southernmost found in the country. Three **Yellow-throated Cuckoos** *Chrysocolaptes flavigularis* were tape-recorded in gallery forest in the forest savanna mosaic; curiously, this species was not found in the larger primary forest block in the south of the park. **Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis* was frequent; one was seen excavating a nesting burrow. **Black Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus hartlaubii* was found in primary forest, while **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *T. camurus* was common in gallery forest. **African Broadbills** *Smithornis capensis* were encountered on three occasions in gallery forest. A roost of over 5,000 **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* was discovered in the north of the park. **European Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* and **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbica* were regularly seen over the Djerem River, often in the company of **Preuss's Cliff Swallows** *Hirundo preussi*. **Black-eared Ground**

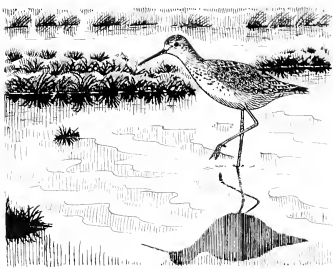


Grey-necked Picathartes  
*Picathartes oreas* by Mark Andrews

**Thrush** *Zoothera camaronensis* was recorded in the south. **Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike** *Campopha quiscalina* and **Red-tailed Ant Thrush** *Neocossyphus rufus* were relatively common in gallery forest, but apparently absent from primary forest. Also in gallery forest, **Red-capped Robin-Chat** *Cossypha natalensis*, **Yellow-throated Apalis** *Apalis flavida* and **Bamenda Apalis** *A. baueri* appeared not uncommon. A **Black-necked (Red-checked) Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophya (blissetti) ebalybea* was tape-recorded in primary forest. **White-collared Starling** *Grafisia torquata* appeared common throughout the forest-savanna mosaic, with c20 seen daily (ML & EW).

### Canary Islands

During November 1999 to March 2000 the following species were reported. A male **American Wigeon** *Anas americana*, a male **Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca carolinensis* and a female **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* were on Tenerife from November, the former two species until at least the first week of March, the latter until at least late February. Three **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were on Tenerife and one on La Gomera in November, with two females in Tenerife remaining until at least late February. Three **Marbled Duck** *Marematouetta angustirostris* were at Embalse de Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, from 25 February through March (TC). Two **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* were at the same site in November (HIP), with five there from 25 February through March. Three **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* reported from Fuerteventura in December-January would constitute the first record for the archipelago, if accepted (TC). Two **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* were

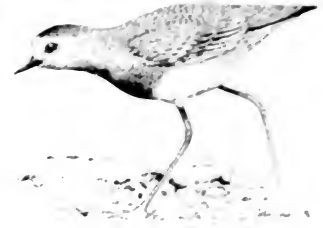


Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*  
by Mark Andrews

observed at Barranco de La Torre Fuerteventura on 11 November. Two **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were found on Fuerteventura on 15–16 November (HIP), while an **Iceland Gull** *L. glaucoides* was recorded on Tenerife. The first **Grey Catbird** *Diomedea carolinensis* for the Canary Islands was discovered at La Mareta, Tenerife, on 1 November (TC). A **Tristram's Warbler** *Sylvia deserticola* and an **Orphean Warbler** *S. hortensis* were found at Embalse de La Perlas, Fuerteventura on 17 November (HIP). A strong dust storm, combined with easterly winds, which started on 21 February and continued into March, brought many migrants, especially to Fuerteventura, including a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* at Barranco de La Torre from 27 February to at least 10 March, a **White Stork** *C. ciconia* (two), **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* (two) and adult **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* at Playa Barca on 1 March, a **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* at least seven, **Black-eared Wheatears** *Oenanthe hispanica*, four **Desert Wheatears** *O. deserti*, four **Orphean Warblers** and hundreds of **Subalpine Warblers** *S. cantillans* (TC).

### Cape Verde Islands

Three female **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* at Ribeira da Malhada Sal, on 16–18 November 1999 constituted the first record for the archipelago (per *Dutch Birding* 22: 39). A male **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* over Branco, on 9 March 2000, is possibly the first record for the island. At Mindelo sewage farm, São Vicente, the following noteworthy species were recorded on 12 March: two **Cape Verde Kites** *Milvus milvus fasciicauda*, a female **Common (Green-winged?) Teal** *Anas crecca* (fifth record for the archipelago), a male **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* (first record), two **Red Knots** *Calidris canutus* (fifth record), a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* (second record), a **Least Sandpiper** *C. minutilla* (second record), two **Spotted Redshanks** *Tringa erythropus* (seventh record), and two **Common Snipes** *Gallinago gallinago* (sixth record). The next day, at Rabil Lagoon, Boavista, a first-winter **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* (second record) and a **Plain Swift** *Apus uuicolor* (first record) were seen (MBu & TC).



White-tailed Lapwing  
*Vanellus leucurus* by Colin Tweed

### Egypt

Two **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* and a **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* were at Lake Qattara (El Fayoum) on 8–10 December 1999 at least (G.A. MBD per *Birding World* 13: 14). A **White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* was on the west side of the Nile at Farafra on 27 December (AM). Records from January 2000 include at least four **Northern Gannets** *Sula bassana* at Zaranik, north Sinai (on 10) (MBD per *Birding World* 13: 14) and 200 **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* at the Daraj Camel Market (north of Aswan) on 10th, two **Dupont's Larks** *Cerops albus duponti* c20 km west of El Daba on 30th, three **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* at Abu Simbel on 20th, a **Red-rumped Wheatear** *Oenanthe moesta* at the El Omayyad Biosphere Reserve (on the north coast) on 30th, three **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* and a **Redwing** *T. iliacus* at Sidr Abdu Rahman on 31st, a **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* at Bir Nakhala, c200 km west of Abu Simbel, on 21st (MBD, SE & RH per *Birding World* 13: 56) and eight **Desert Finches** *Rhodospiza obsoleta* at Gabel Mughara on 12th (MBD per *Birding World* 13: 14). Two **Western Sandpipers** *Calidris mauri* reportedly trapped, on 30–31st, at Zaranik, would be the country's first record if accepted (per *Dutch Birding* 22: 40). In February 2000, species reported from Abu Simbel included a **Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* on 13th, a **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* on 14th (both new for the area), and three **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* on 14th (with 18 more at El Abassa, Nile delta, on 24th), and three **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp*, two **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* and at least four **Cyprus Wheatears** *O.*

*ipleschanka* (1 specimen) (S-1100) (MBD, SE 7° RH per *Ibis* 10, 1995: 56). The first two **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauta dunni* from southern Sudan were reported at Khartoum at Shams el-Sheikh (per *Duck* 10, 1996: 22-199).

### Ethiopia

A trip made in December 1999–January 2000 yielded the following. Two female **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* at Lake Abaya on 30 December were probably the first record for East Africa. The female winning population is in the Napier Valley in EGYPT. A second **Furasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* (aged 1 year) over the Sudd wetlands, Abaya, on 25 December. A **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo longipennis* at the **Golden Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* over Sabetti Plateau on 23 December. A **adult Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* was submitted at Lake Abaya on 30 December and a **juvenile Wahlberg's Eagle** *Buteo waltheri* at Sabetti on 24 December (C. M.).



Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) by Mark Andrews

### Gabon

Two **Gull-billed Terns** *Gygis alba* *nitelica* at Akanda near Libreville on 2 April 2000 constitute only the third report from Gabon; previous sightings were at the same site. Single birds, what appeared to be **Brazza's Martin** *Phedina brazzae* were seen in the Leconi area on 6–7 April. Future visitors should endeavour to confirm this record; the species is unrecorded from Gabon, but is known from the Batéke plateau in neighbouring Congo (FDL, RID & LF).

### The Gambia

Records from late 1999 include the following. A **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* was seen mobbing a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

at the tourism park at the Gambia River near Sir Leifardt Camp on 14 December. A pair of **Arctic Terns** *Neocytus auritus* (single, a rare and probably unrecorded species in 1992, 1999) (see identified in the form of St. Helens) *Bacchus resplandens* (W. S. N. name) (approximately 12) **White-rumped Swift** *Hirundo albicollis* (one, common) (single) (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 5 November. *Excelsior* News, 1993, 1994 and two **Black-faced Firefinches** *Amphispiza bilineata* (single) were seen on 2 November. A **Male A. Oortolan Bunting** *Troglodytes aedon* (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 15 November. *Excelsior* News, 1993, 1994.

### Côte d'Ivoire

Records from 1999 include the following. A **juvenile African Fish Eagle** *Icthyophaga ichthyophaga* (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 10 February. **Cassin's Hawk Eagles** *Eurypyga helina* (one, common) (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 10 February. A **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* (one, common) (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 10 February. A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (one, common) (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 10 February. A **Red Knot** *Red knot* (one, common) (see in *Ornith* Dec. 1999) on 10 February. A **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus erythrorhynchos* was seen at Mt. Niokouko. Two apparently unrecorded **Yellow-throated Cuckoos** *Coccyzoida bicolor* (both) were displaced at Gaminon on 28 January; the display involved pressing the body low down onto the ground and arching the head and neck vertically up, thus exposing the yellow throat to full advantage, while calling vigorously. An owl flushed in daylight at Dabou, in forest by the Agnèbi River, on 4 February, was almost certainly a **Rufous Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia ussberri*. An individual of the rare **Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri* was seen in Tai NP. Also in Tai, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus* and **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *I. willcocksii* were found in the Hana River area. Approximately five **Ethiopian Swallows** *Hirundo aethiopica* were at Adiopodoumé on 25 January and at least 20 at Grand

Bassam on 5 February. **Olivaceous Flycatcher** *Muscivora olivacea* was seen at Mt Niokouko. **Lead-coloured Flycatcher (=Grey Tit-Flycatcher)** *Muscivora plumbeus* at Guiroutou, and **Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher** *Trochoceros nitens* at both sites. Two **Bates's Sunbirds** *Cinnyris batesi* were identified on Mt Tonkour (new locality). Three **Long-tailed Glossy Starlings** *Lamprolornis caudatus* were at Katolo and two between Katolo and Ferkessedougou; there are few previous records. Four **Yellow-winged Pytilias** *Pytilia ingrammeca* were seen in Comoe NP and at least 15 in Marahoué NP; this species appears to have been overlooked at the latter site. A male **Black-bellied Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes ostrinus*, a species not listed by Dowsett (1995), was seen well at Grand Bassam. A female **Pale-fronted Negrofinch** *Agrila luteifrons* was observed at Mt Niokouko (all MB).

### Kenya

Noteworthy records from late 1998 include the following. A pair of **Abyssinian Ground Hornbills** *Bucorvus abyssinicus* with one young was seen at Sigot, Kapenguria, on 18 September. A pair of **Pygmy Sunbirds** *Hedychlpsa platura*, the male in full breeding plumage, was at Shaba Game Reserve on 12 September. **Waller's Starling** *Oreoboga walleri* was reported from Nguman Escarpment on 11 December. On the same day, **Sharpe's Starling** *Cinnyris inclis-sharpi*, one of the less common forest canopy starlings, was seen at Nguman Escarpment (CJ).

In 1999, the following species were reported. Three juvenile **Greater Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor* flew c.3 km offshore from Malindi on 21 November (DR). An adult **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*



Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri* by Mark Andrews

with full tail streamers was watched 10–15 km offshore from Watamu on 7 January; this species is apparently seen more regularly than often suggested, but is rarely reported. A **Swallow-tailed Kite** *Chebelictinia riocourii* was at Meru National Park on 21 February; the species is less common on this side of Mt Kenya. Two **Sooty Falcons** *Falco concolor* flew over the Nakuru–Naivasha road, near Lake Elementaita, on 10 April. A **Blue Quail** *Coturnix chinensis* was flushed twice from rough marshy ground, in a coffee estate west of Thika, on 2 January; this is now a rare species and a significant record close to Nairobi. A **Common Crane** *Grus grus* was near Eldoret over the World Birdwatch 1999 weekend, on 3–4 October (Cf). An **Abyssinian Scimitarbill** *Phoeniculus minor* was noticed at Silversand, south of Malindi, on 27 November (DR). A **Lead-coloured Flycatcher** (=Grey Tit-Flycatcher) *Myioparus plumbeus* was observed at Marich Pass Field Study Centre, Cherangani Mts, on 5 April, the first report from this site. **Shelley's Starling** *Lamprolornis shelleyi* was present in the Malindi Watamu area in February–April (Cf).

For January–April 2000, the following records were received. Two **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* were in the Shimba Hills, on 1–2 April; these would have been migrant *F. p. calidus*, which are not commonly reported. A **Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentota* was on Lake Jilore on 29 January; this is a new record for the area and possibly the coast. Two **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* were at Lake Chemchem, a seasonal lake just north of Arabuko–Sokoke Forest, on 30 January; this species does not normally occur at the coast, although one was seen on Arabuko Swamp a year ago: the first record there. Also at Lake Chemchem was a male **Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis*. A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was on a seasonal pool, in Arabuko–Sokoke Forest, on 29 March, and another near Thika, on 3 April. An adult male **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* was observed at Mida Creek on 15 January; this species is only infrequently recorded in Kenya, mostly at Lake Turkana. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominicus* was with **Grey Plovers** *P. squatarola* at the Sabaki River mouth, Malindi, on 30 January; this is a rare

migrant that is not recorded annually. Two first-year **Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ridibundus* were on Lake Jilore west of Arabuko–Sokoke Forest, Watamu, on 29 January; this is an uncommon species in the coastal region. A **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* was found beside Lake Chemchem on 30 January, a new site for this rare species. Also there were two singing **Sedge Warblers** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*; migrant warblers are not common along the coast. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* was found in Nairobi NP on 27 February, and another at Melepo Hills, Kajiado, on 29th. A **Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* was observed in Arabuko–Sokoke Forest on 15 February, and another in Nairobi NP on 27th; this species is a rare Palearctic migrant (Cf).

Species recorded in Meru National Park on 4–5 March 2000 included an adult **Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circus cinerascens* (rare east of the Rift), **Dusky** *C. aprinidius fraenatus*, **European** *C. europaeus*, **Donaldson-Smith's** *C. donaldsoni*, **Plain** *C. inornatus* and **Slender-tailed Nightjars** *C. clamor* on the road. **White-eared Barbet** *Stactolaema leucotis* is a local and uncommon species, with a small isolated population around Meru. **Grey-olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris* (only recently rediscovered in the Meru area), **Ashy Flycatcher** *Muscivapa caermlescens* (first recorded in October 1999 in the park, but not previously known from this region). The discovery of **Black-headed Batis** *Batis minor* in this area marks a considerable range extension (Cf).

## Madagascar

A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* was claimed from Toliara on 9 November 1999; if confirmed, this would constitute the first for the country (RP).

A pair of **Madagascar Serpent Eagles** *Entriorchis astur* was relocated in Masoala Peninsula, exactly where the species was discovered in 1993, on 15–16 October 1999. Both birds came to a tape-recording of the song. Pairs of **Madagascar Wood Rails** *Canirallus kiolooides* were seen several times at close range: the Masoala population is entirely bright chestnut on the back and could represent an undescribed race. Several pairs of **Bernier's Vanga** *Oriolia bernieri* were

also found in the area, on 14–21 October; the species is apparently more common on the eastern side of Masoala than in the west. **White-throated Oxylobes** *Oxylobes madagascariensis* rarely reported from lowland forest, appeared to be not uncommon in Masoala. **Red-tailed Newtonia** *Newtonia jamouanae* was relatively easy to find in lowland forest at Andohahelo National Park, but apparently absent from lowland palm forest in Masoala (RFD-C-11D).

Scavenging from Fort Dauphin in the first half of 2000 produced some noteworthy records, on 30 January a **Barau's Petrel** *Pterodroma baraui* was the first for mainland Madagascar and second record overall, while on 18 March 1999 **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes* flew north in four hours, the third record (second mainland) and probably the largest number recorded in the western Indian Ocean. They were feeding with **Lesser Crested Terns** *Sterna bergii* on debris left by feeding tuna, which appeared particularly abundant. Also on 18 March, a subadult **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* feeding with the **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** was also a second record for Madagascar, and the first from the coast. A **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*, at Fort Dauphin during the same period, was well out of range; the species is relatively common around Nosy Be, and the northern tip of Madagascar, but has never previously been recorded in the south. It attempted to enter a hole in the roof of a building, was captured and subsequently died at Morondava on 5 May, an estimated 5,500 **Lesser Crested Tern** and c.120 **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* flew north in three hours. All the Caspian Terns and possibly 50% of the Lesser Crested Terns were in breeding plumage. The latter were possibly moving north to breeding grounds in the Arabian Gulf (all FH).

## Madeira

A first-winter **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides* was in Funchal Harbour on 27–29 November 1999 (WO per *Birding World* 12: 479).

## Malawi

A juvenile **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* seen on 3 December 1999 over the Malawi Hills, in the extreme south, is a potential first for the country. Since the arrival of the

first single **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* and 160000. Naldroco Park in 1995—at the time an unexpected new record for Malawi—and/or others have remained together, possibly hybridising with **Blacksmith Lapwing** *V. armatus*. One was still there in December 1999. Surveys continued with the aim of moving further north. At Dzalanyika in 1997 (which also bred), and two were still present there on 25 December 1999.

**White-crowned Lapwings** *V. leucurus* are also rare but sightings have come from five localities in this area. Distribution in December 1999. A migrating flock at 1 **Wood Sandpipers** *Tringa melanoleuca* (1000) Kazungu (Vwaza Marsh) was seen. Flocks of 15 in front of **Scarce Swifts** *Schoutetenia nigriceps* were seen among other swifts on 1 May. Mammals on 5 September 2000. 12 January 2000. Welcome to Malawi under reported and 1000 (2000) species (all 1000).

**Mali**  
Interesting records from Malawi, 2000 include a **Western Reef Egret** *Ardea regularis* and an **African Hobby** *Falco jamaicensis* at Lake Debo, in the north. On both these species are recorded on both the north and south. More than 100 **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygmaeus* (1000) were seen on 18th. A **Violet Turaco** *Megalonyx violacea* and a **Yellow bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flaviventris* were seen at 1000 km west of Bamako. Other recorded bird species: northernmost recorded: 3000, 30 **Red-winged Starlings** *Onychognathus morio* were found in the Grottes de Missississipi. 3000 on 20th. Four **Common Waxbills** *Estrilda astrild* were captured in the Disoro south of Freetown. In the extreme south-east this species was formerly only known from the Boudou du Braoul Biosphere Reserve (all 1000) (AMr).

**Morocco**  
Three males and a female **White-headed Duck** *Oxyra leucocephala* were still at Douvret on at least 20 and 28 September 1999. A juvenile **Dark Chanting Goshawk** *Merula metabates* was 20 km east of Olad Berhil on 30 September, while a subadult **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* was c18 km east of Taroudant on 12 September (per *Dutch Birding* 21, 284–286). In January 2000, 67 **Northern Bald Ibises** *Geronticus*

*eremita* were counted at Larim, on 1st, and an adult and a first-winger **Common Gull** *Larus carinus* were recorded on 10th. Seis on 10th (M. J. J. Birding, W. 2001: 15–17).

**Senegal**  
A flock of 100 **White Storks** *Ciconia albicollis* were seen in the Réserve de Faune de Niakhar on 8 November 1999. This is a large number for northern Senegal, where they are usually scarce. Several were seen on 10th (see also AMr).

**Seychelles**  
100 **Audubon's Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* were seen on 10th. 2000. 1000. **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco tinnunculus* was seen on 10th. 2000. 1000. **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was seen on 10th. 2000. 1000. **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Coccyzus jacobinus* was seen on 10th. 2000. 1000. **European Rollers** *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* were seen on 10th. 2000. 1000.

**South Africa**  
The first **Slender-billed Gull** *Larus tenuirostris* in breeding plumage, was discovered in Durbán Bay on 10 September 1999 (D. J. per *Africa Birds & Birding* 4 (5): 17).  
In December 1999, an immature **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *Theraptia ayresii* flew over the forest at Ndumo Game Reserve on 20th, while a **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* was seen over open scrub. A **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* was found in the Maputoland Coastal Forest Reserve at Rockfall Bay, on 13th. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was feeding with several **Greater Sand Plovers** *C. leschenaultii* at Bayside Nature Reserve, Durban, on 23rd. Two adult non breeding **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* were present at Umgini River mouth, Durban, on 26th, following stormy weather. An **African Scops Owl** *Otus (scops) senegalensis* was flushed in Maputoland Coastal Forest Reserve on 14th. **Olive-tree Warblers** *Hippolais olivetorum* were found in *Acacia* scrub in Kruger National Park, on 5th, near the Shingwedzi River, and on 8th near Olifants River. A male **Woodward's Batis** *Batis fratrum* was seen in Ndumo Game Reserve on 20th (SC).

**Tanzania**  
Records from late 1999, from Zanzibar, which appear noteworthy in view of the species' status in the island's checklist (Pakenham 1979) include four **Long-tailed Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax africanus* on the west coast on 31 October, four **Sanderling** *Calidris alba* at Jambiani on 3–4 November, and three **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* at Jambiani on 3 November. **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* are no



Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* by Craig Robson



Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* by Craig Robson



Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*  
by Mark Andrews

longer confined to Zanzibar town, but also breed at the airport and Jambiani. In the southern part of the island no **Pied Crows** *Corvus albus*, formerly abundant throughout, were seen, while **House Crows** *Corvus splendens* were present in every village and town (DW).

Interesting records from 1999, from Serengeti National Park, include the following. The first **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* for the park was at Lake Ndutu on 20 July. In the Western Corridor, 35 **Lesser Black-winged Lapwings** (**Senegal Plover**) *Vanellus lugubris* were seen on 13 December. **Pangani Longclaws** *Macronyx aurantiigula* were noted on 27 April, and 18 and 30 May, south of Seronera, and on 23 August at Gol Kopjes. A **Grey-olive Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris* was feeding young at Grumeti River on 1 August. **Moustached Grass-Warbler** *Melocichla mentalis* was recorded on 28–29 July and 28 August in the north of the park. Three **Lynes's (Wailing) Cisticolas** *Cisticola lais distinctus* were singing at Lobo Hills on 14 December. **Karamoja Apalis** *Apalis karamojae* was seen in Seronera in May and at Tagora Plains on 7 September (TG).

In February 2000, the following species were reported from northern Tanzania. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* flew over Lerai forest, Ngorongoro Crater, on 11th. A **Shikra** *Accipiter badius* was seen near Lobo Lodge, northern Serengeti, on 15th. A **Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* was at a small roadside pool between Lobo Lodge and Bologonja springs, Serengeti NP, on 14th. An **African Snipe** *Gallinago nigripennis* was at Hippo pool, Ngorongoro Crater, on 10th, and

another near Seronera River, Serengeti NP, on 17th. A **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* was seen in Tarangire NP on 8th, with a second at the Hippo pool, Ngorongoro Crater, on 10th, and a third near Seronera, Serengeti NP, on 16th (ZB). A **Blue-headed Coucal** *Centropus montachus* was seen in a small papyrus swamp at Speke Bay, near Speke Bay Lodge, Lake Victoria, on 29 February, according to Zimmerman *et al* (1996); this species had not been recorded in Tanzania since January 1886 (TG, II, 57, IWO). Three **White-throated Bee-eaters** *Mercops albicollis* were between Lobo Lodge and Bologonja springs, Serengeti NP, on 14th (TG per ZB). A **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* was at Lobo, Serengeti NP, on 15th, and another, distinguishable by its different plumage, there the next day. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* was in full song at Lobo Lodge, Serengeti NP, on 14th. Also there were a **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* and a male **Yellow-mantled Widowbird** *Euphlectes macrourus* in breeding plumage on 15th. At least four **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* were on the grounds of Cultural Heritage at Arusha. One of the five firefinches on the grounds of Lake Manyara Hotel on 19th was identified as a male **Jameson's Firefinch** *Tagonosticta rhodopareia*; Zimmerman *et al* (1996) do not mention the species for the area (ZB).

## Tunisia

In 1999, a dark morph **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* stayed at the Tyna salt pans, near Sfax, from July to at least early October (per *Dutch Birding* 21: 286). Totals of 4,260 **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, the largest number ever recorded in Tunisia, and 250 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* were counted at Barrage Oued El Khaff (also known as Barrage Oued El Hjar) on the Cap Bon peninsula on 7 October (per *Dutch Birding* 21: 353; WO per *Birding World* 12: 479). A flock of 110 **Lesser Crested Terns** *Sterna bengalensis* was at Sebkhia Sidi Garous on 1 October (per *Dutch Birding* 21: 290).

## Zambia

Highlights from July to December 1999 include the following. In July, four non-breeding **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* and a rather late **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*

were near Lusaka on 1st. In the Luangwa Valley two more **White Storks** were present on 12th and two immature **Palm-nut Vultures** *Gypohierax angolensis* were found on 1st. On the Zambezi floodplains, in the Simungoma area, **Burchell's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles burchelli*, **White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis* and **Slaty Egret** *Egretta macacogula* were all regular. Away from the plain, several localised *Acacia* lovers were found including **Tit-babblers** *Parisoma subcaeruleum*, **Black-faced Waxbills** *Estrilda erythronotos* and **Scaly-feathered Finches** *Sporophyes squamifrons*. Waterfowl counts in Lochinvar NP produced the staggering total of 23 **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta macacogula*, as well as 162 **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca*, 1,097 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis takinellus*, 2,900 **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna flavirostris*, 2,239 **Egyptian Geese** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*, 2,945 **Spur-winged Geese** *Plectropterus gambensis*, 7,160 **Knob-billed Ducks** *Sarkidornis melanotos*, 10,197 **Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhynchos*, 724 **Wattled Cranes** *Bucconas arunculatus*, 1,640 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola*, 1,210 **Kitlitz's Plovers** *Charadrius pecuarius*, 2,322 **Blacksmith Lapwings** *Vanellus armatus* and 350 **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flabirostris*.

In mid-August, a **Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* was almost certainly sitting on eggs in Western Province; there are no confirmed breeding records for Zambia. Several unseasonal **Blue Quails** *Coturnix chinensis* were on the Luena Flats and on the Zambezi floodplain, near Simungoma, were 21 **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta macacogula*, 50+ **Burchell's**



Wattled Crane *Gris carunculatus*  
by Mark Andrews





Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides* by Mark Andrews

**Sandgrouse** *Phasianus torquatus* and a **Red-eyed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus nigricans*. Both **Red-capped Robin Chats** *Cossypha thersites* and **Yellow-throated Longclaws** *Macropygia tenuirostris* were occasionally seen during the year, and a juvenile **Thick billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx melanopterus* was seen on 20th.

In September, a **Terek Sandpiper** *Venus cinereus* stayed for several days, mid-month in Livingstone, took a **Greater Striped Swallow** *Hirundo cucullata* there on 28th, a **Black-billed Zambian Thrift** *Chestnut-banded Plover* *Charadrius pallidus* on 29th, and there, it was last seen on 22nd October. At the end of the month, a pair of **Kori Bustards** *Ardeotis kori* were seen on Simangoma and on the **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceogula* was in flight. A **Ruddy Turnstone** *Actiniza lobata* was at Kalalasha and on 28th, a **Red-throated Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo rufigula* at the Mutinda bridge on 26th. In the Luangwa Valley, a **Village Indigobird** *Vulna bahovata* was seen in breeding plumage on 19th, and a **Copper Sunbird** *Cunurus rupestris* took up residence near a safari camp. A record of a **Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops (n) nubicus* seen among **Southern Carmine Bee-eaters** *Merops (n) nubicoides* is unconfirmed and a potential first for the country. In October, a **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceogula* was seen regularly in Livingstone, continuing a marvellous year for this species. The same locality produced a **Baird's Sandpiper** *Cahalis bairdi*, an astonishing first for the country. **Scaly-feathered Finches** *Sporopipes squamifrons* were also found in the Livingstone area for the first time. In Lochinyar NP, on 30th, there were 15–20,000 **African Openbill Storks** *Anastomus lamelligerus*, many thousands of ducks

and geese, several thousand **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus*, 700 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa*, 22 **Ruddy Turnstones** and six **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominicus* were at the Iganga Valley. **Whimbrel** *Numenius tahitiensis* and **Sanderling** *Actiniza nana* were seen on 19th, and a **Pied Avocet** on 31st. A **Wandering Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufirostris* was seen on 22nd, 23rd, 28th and on the same morning a **Mallard Duck** *Anas platyrhynchos* was seen with a pair of **Northern Pintails** *Spatula discors* and a number of **Red-throated Loons** *Colymbus auritus*. **Whistling Swallows**, **Bannerman's Sunbird** *Arremonops baobabensis*, **Mep Pigeon** *Columba squamata* and **Dambo (=Black tailed) Cisticola** *Cisticola erythrorhynchos*. A **Black-collared Bulbul** *Arremonops baobabensis* was recorded on 11th. **Angola Larks** *Melospiza cinerea* were seen on 10th, **Buff spotted** *Scolecophagus* and **White spotted Hiffetails** *Scolopax*

on 10th. **Parasitic Weavers** *Corvinus* were seen on 10th, **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo lunifrons* on 10th, **Scaly throated Honeyguides** *Urocyon* on 10th, **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Ardeotis* on 10th, **Eurasian Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* on 11th, **Common Snipe** *Centrocercus gabonensis* and a pair of **Baglafaecht Weavers** *Phoenicurus haugheyi* were found the latter representing a significant range extension in the country. Also there was a group of at least six **White-throated Bee-eaters** *Merops albicollis*

representing another national first. Around Chori, a station on the FAZARA line, vast numbers of Palearctic migrants were found, apparently attracted to the floodlights. Particularly abundant were **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* and **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. An ascent of the Mafinga Mountains produced records of **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus ruficapilla*, **Placid (Cabanis's) Greenbul** *Phyllostreptus (Cabanis) placidus*, **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* and **Silvery-checked Hornbills** *Ceratogymna brevis*. Finally, a **Black Fern** *Chlidonias niger* among **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus* on Lake Mweru Wantipa would be another addition to the national list if confirmed (all per PL).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by David Alan (DA), Gary Allport Birdlife International (GAI), Mindy Baba El Den (MBED), Mark Beaman Birdquest (MBB), Zul Bbatia (ZB), Mark Bolton (MB), Nik Borrow Birdquest (NB), Chris Bradshaw (CB), Stephen Cameron (SC), Rolf Christensen (RC), Tony Clarke Camarian Nature Tours (TC), Dirk Cohn (DC), Ron Demey (RD), Robert J. Dourslet (RJD), Françoise Dousset Lemaire (FDL), Stephen Eeles (SE), Gonçalo Elias (GE), Lincoln Fishpool (LF), Thomas Gottschalk (TG), Elmar Guttmann (EG), Frank Hawkins (FH), Robert Hinde (RH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Serge Bobo Kadiri Cameroon IBA Project (SKK), Marc Langny Cameroon IBA Project (ML), Peter Leonard (PL), Anders Magnusson (AM), Bob Medland (BM), Arne Moller (AMr), Kerin Yana Njabo Cameroon IBA Project (KYN), William Oliver (WO), Gerard Ouweneel (GO), Richard Patient (RP), Henning Pedersen (HP), Kris de Ronck (KdR), Dellef Robel (DR), Valéry Schollaert (VS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Hans Slabbekoorn (HS), Anette Soune (ASe), Magnus Ullman/AriFauna (MU), Thomas Ullrich (TU), D. Warden (DW), Lars Wellmann (LW), Eddie Williams (EW) and from Birding World, Dutch Birding and Africa—Birds & Birding.



Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* by Mark Andrews

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# Reviews



## Mammals of Madagascar

Nick Garbutt. 1999. 320 pp, 57 colour and 12 black and white plates, numerous line drawings and distribution maps. Pica Press, The Banks, Nr Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY. UK£30.

While serving as a showcase for the considerable photographic and artistic talents of its author, this book provides a fair overview of current knowledge on the mammals of Madagascar, with additional information on the island's biogeography, protected areas and their conservation.

The five indigenous mammalian orders occurring on Madagascar are treated in the species accounts (with subspecies treatment for the lemurs), which are subdivided into the following sections: measurements, description, distribution and behaviour. Where possible, (principally for the lemurs), sections on identification, habitat, population, threats and viewing are included. Distribution maps are presented for each species with delineation or separate maps to show the range of lemur subspecies. Attempts have been made to approximate species' actual ranges by combining distribution data with those available for forest cover.

Though the book is not a field guide, the identification sections and descriptions are sufficient for most species that can safely be distinguished in the field. In addition, the excellent colour photographs, which comprise the overwhelming majority of the plates, provide a useful reference. Difficult groups such as bats, small mammals and nocturnal lemurs present an identification challenge which is not fully met by this book, but it is not an identification manual.

The distribution sections and maps are reasonably good and the uncertainty concerning many species/subspecies is amply illustrated by the need for further work to be undertaken and/or published. However, uncertainty seems to have led to frequent speculation in the literature. Garbutt repeats references to a possible hybrid zone between

*Eulemur fulvus fulvus* and *E. f. albigrons* which has persisted as a result of the fact that their range limits are unclear, thus may overlap and, if so, the two forms may hybridise. On this premise he goes on to state that 'conclusive identification in this zone is, therefore, difficult' and refers to animals observed in the Zahamena Nature Reserve as appearing to resemble the nominate race. While it is only prudent to counsel caution in such circumstances, no evidence of hybridisation is cited and animals resembling both forms have been observed in the Zahamena Nature Reserve. Local reports even suggest not only that both occur, but are separated (*E. f. fulvus* to the west and *E. f. albigrons* in the east) by a large river in the north-east corner of the reserve.

Whilst necessarily brief the behaviour sections are clear and present useful information such as activity patterns, group sizes, diet etc. Many species, particularly non-primates, are poorly known and thus detailed information is often not available.

Where included, the sections on habitat, population and threats are useful, and again highlight the need for further research. It is disturbing to find how little is known about the population status of many species, subspecies and the threats facing them.

The sections on viewing are a very good idea, recommending localities for particular species and giving brief details of sites, the need for guides etc. A subsection under Conservation and Protected Areas lists Top Mammal-watching Sites giving brief details of access, facilities etc.

A delicately executed and splendid collection of line drawings adds to the superb photographs, and quality reproduction, to make this a very attractive book. The text is well written, concise and more than adequate for the general visitor/natural historian. For the more serious researcher, the *Mammals of Madagascar* represents the first synthesis of available literature on the subject and as such will prove

extremely useful. However, one particularly useful feature—the bibliography—is not well designed. While numerous references have been utilised they are not cited in the text accounts and are grouped in the bibliography under subheadings organised along taxonomic lines. This is at best clumsy and at worst can make it difficult to identify particular references with certainty. Given that the book's first stated aim is to 'provide a thorough and up to date review of current knowledge relating to Madagascar's mammals' this arrangement seems particularly unsatisfactory. Both stated aims, the second being to provide a practical synopsis for visitors, would have benefited from some treatment of the marine mammals occurring in Madagascar waters. However these are minor complaints, and I would recommend this book to anyone with more than a passing interest in the island's mammals.

Tim Markou

## Directory of Important Bird Areas in Egypt

S. M. Baha el Din. 1999. 113 pp, several maps and line drawings. BirdLife International & Palm Press, 34 El Mansour Muhammad Street, Zamalek, Cairo 11211. ISBN 977-5089-25-5. No price given.

This is a valuable addition to the growing number of individual country Important Bird Area (IBA) listings. Introductory chapters detail the rationale, objectives, selection and categorisation of Important Bird Areas in general, describe the Egyptian avifauna and bird habitats, examines problems and challenges facing conservationists in the country, and presents an overview and guide to the data presented in the site list. Thirty-four IBAs are described under the following headings: Protection Status, Description, Importance for Birds, Importance for Other Species, and Significant Conservation Issues. Coordinates, the area's size, relevant governorate and criteria under which

the site qualifies as an IBA along with a location map are also included. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most sites are either wetlands (coastal sites, islands or raptor watchpoints). Appendices include a short glossary, gazetteer and list of English and scientific names of species included in the text, while a reference list completes the work. In addition to conservationists and planners, at whom the book is specifically addressed, ornithologists and ornithologists (S and F 2000, 2001) the current lack of field guides to guide are also recommended to see this valuable addition to the ornithological avifaunal canon. Much fieldwork has been made on Egyptian raptors in the studies in recent years (see, for example, Goodman & Medinger's surveys of birds and distribution guide in southern Egypt, 1989) although the species account given the lack of work in southern, poorly visited parts of the country, surprises still await more adventurous birders.

**Swifts. A Guide to the Swifts and Treeswifts of the World**

*P. Chantler and G. Driessens. 2000. 272 pp., 24 colour plates, several line drawings and 96 distribution maps. Pica Press, The Banks, Nr Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY. ISBN 1-873403-83-6. UK£28.*

Second revised and updated edition of a guide that first appeared in 1997, and was reviewed by Don Ewins in *Bull. ABC* 3: 54-55.

*Guy M. Kirman*

**Les zones d'importance pour la conservation des oiseaux à Madagascar**

*Projet ZICOMA 1999. 266 pp., many maps. In French with English abstract. Projet ZICOMA BP 1074, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar. Price to be announced.*

This book is a contribution to the International Bird Areas (IBAs) in Africa programme, coordinated by BirdLife International. It follows a succinct and concise, arranged by chapters, 81 IBAs on the island, based on a very thorough literature search and a rigorous fieldwork by the IBA-MV team, which appears to have identified some important IBAs that were not previously considered. The site accounts are supported by land-use patterns, and are the most comprehensive since the programme's inception. The authors, Laurent Njoroge, writing over the authorizations of the IBAs, as well as the authorizations. This book is one of the contemporary contributions on ornithology in Madagascar, with a concise distribution map will be of great use to ornithologists. Although interested in biodiversity conservation in Madagascar, I am particularly impressed, considering 2000, that the IBA-MV team will find themselves well served and maps of the country, and in fact staff deserve our warmest congratulations for their tireless and hard work.

Arrangements for the sale of the book have not yet been finalised, in the meantime, requests may be sent to the project office in Antananarivo.

*Roger Safford*

**Birds in the Gaborone area and where to find them**

*S. J. Tyler and W. D. Borello. Illustrations by J. Viner and M. Lane-Jones. 1998. 100 pp., 32 colour photographs and several line and colour drawings. Botswana Bird Club, P.O. Box 71, Gaborone, Botswana. P75. Also available from African Bird Club Sales for UK£12 including post & packing.*

This nicely produced site guide and checklist will prove an invaluable addition to the 'armoury' of any birder planning to visit Botswana. Four hundred and thirty species are covered in the detailed checklist (50 pages, or half of the guide), while other chapters detail the vegetation, geography, geology, climate and habitat changes within the study area, as well as providing references, a gazetteer, directions to profitable birdwatching locales and a explanation of the map references used in the guide. Visiting birders may appreciate more detailed maps of the area in any forthcoming editions, but this is a largely exemplary introduction to the avifauna of a relatively small area. Well done Stephanie and Wendy! ♪

*Guy M. Kirman*

**Letters**

**Rare birds, new species, trips abroad and hoodwinks**

It is a well-known phenomenon that some holidaymakers from northern Europe tend to behave in rather uncharacteristic ways when visiting certain Mediterranean resorts. Lads and 'ladettes' throw caution to the wind, and all-night clubbing, drink, recreational drugs and casual sex replace the normal behaviour of bank

clerks, insurance salesmen and checkout operators.

There appears to be a parallel with some birders on foreign trips. Rarities, new species—usually unidentified—and birds well out of their normal range and habitats are found with ease. At home one would hesitate to make such claims without considerable supporting evidence—photographs, detailed descriptions,

field sketches, multiple observers etc—but abroad standards are lowered and records find their way into print in journals and trip reports, with the inevitable result that they insidiously creep into more authoritative works and become 'accepted'.

In 1919 the late M F M Meiklejohn documented 'The Hoodwink' in the Isle of May Bird Observatory log. He also noted that Hoodwinks had been



around for some considerable time, as H Gätke encountered them on Heligoland in the mid-1800s. Strangely these mystery birds always fell into the sea upon being shot and were consequently lost to science. I suspect that Hoodwinks still occur in many parts of Africa and have a tendency to reveal tantalising glimpses to observers visiting an area for the first time. Gnarled old Africa hands also encounter Hoodwinks on rare occasions, but tend to keep quiet about these sightings for fear of ridicule from their peers.

There is no doubt that advances in field identification, modern optical and audio equipment, better field guides and a greater number of observers have all played a part in making genuine new discoveries. Rarities do exist *but are by definition rare*. New species await discovery but are likely to occur in isolated, under-watched or unexplored localities, rather than on standard birding circuits followed by most birders in the country they happen to be visiting.

There are exceptions of course. The recent discovery of Cryptic Warbler *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi* at a well-watched locality in Madagascar was remarkable. However, this small, nondescript canopy-dwelling species was first located through its vocalisation by an observer whose ability to distinguish bird sounds is legendary and in a class of his own. Generally, a dollop of common sense would suggest that early collectors and hundreds of subsequent observers were not staggeringly incompetent in failing to notice rarities or mystery birds, and the possibility of a Hoodwink should be considered.

In recent years Ethiopia has become the in-vogue place to discover rarities, new species and extraordinary range extensions. In *Bull. ABC* 7: 56 an unidentified green turaco is 'documented' from an area of montane forest that is neither particularly remote nor little visited. The locality and habitat is not biogeographically isolated, so is unlikely to hold a relict population. The locality is c700 miles outside the known range of 'similar species' and turacos are not noted for their vagrancy. Unlike Kenya, which has six species of *Tauraco*, Ethiopia is impoverished with only two species, one of which Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* is a restricted-range endemic, the other, White-cheeked

Turaco *T. leucotis* is widespread throughout highland forests and small patches of natural woodland, and is not uncommon in forests from Bale to Sodere. The form *donaldsoni* from south-central Ethiopia may be a distinct species, while those of the nominate form, between Arussi and Wadera, are greener above and have a smaller or even vestigial white neck patch. Turacos are large, noisy, relatively conspicuous birds, which are unlikely to be overlooked, although they can be difficult to observe at times and frequently give poor views.

In several months of field work, the experienced compilers of the *Important Bird Areas of Ethiopia* (Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society 1996) failed to find any new species for science, or even discover a new species for Ethiopia.

I urge all birders visiting new or unfamiliar areas to exercise caution and restraint when confronted by an 'unusual' bird. Consider such possibilities as immature or atypical plumage, the effects of strong light or deep shadows, check the habitat preferences and altitudinal range of similar species and above all, try to apply the same standards as if one discovered a rarity in one's own country.

Iain Robertson, Laurelbank,  
Exnaboe, Virkie, Shetland  
ZE3 9JS, UK.

### Use of laser pointers in the field

*Orniifolks* took a trip to Brazil in 1998 and a participant brought a small laser pointer. We played around with it, amazing the locals. It wasn't until the trip was completed that I seriously considered a real use for this tool. I purchased a pen-size laser pointer, and brought it to Madagascar in October 1999 just as an experiment.

In Madagascar, I loaned it to the native guides, who immediately became proficient in using the laser pointer to locate forest birds for the group in the understorey; it proved especially good for skulkers. With this implement a guide simply projects the red laser beam onto the subject, making it easy for everyone to locate and view. The laser affected individual birds quite differently. Crossley's Babbler *Mystacomis crossleyi* chased the red dot along the ground. A Madagascar Buttonquail *Turnix nigrocollis* ran from it. A Madagascar Nightjar *Caprimulgus madagascariensis* pecked at it when it

was projected upon its wing. Most species, including Mesites (Mesitornithidae) and Ground Rollers (Brachypteracidae) just ignored it.

The advantages of this tool are that members of a tour group can be shown a species in a relatively short period of time, even to those who may otherwise have a difficult time spotting it. It precludes the disturbance created by a group crashing through the forest.

The guides were astonished at how well they worked, each guide asked us to send him one. They definitely recognised the advantages after spending precious time through the years putting persons on difficult birds.

The best laser pointers for field work are those which are pen-sized and take AAA batteries; the smaller ones take the flat watch-type batteries which are not readily available in many countries.

G. Michael Flieg, *Orniifolks*, 6803  
Nashville Avenue, St. Louis, MO  
63139, USA.

### Ben Obanda—a local bird guide in Kakamega, Kenya

I have been leading birding tours in Africa over many years and was recently in Kenya, where I spent several days with my group in the Kakamega region in the west of the country. This has always been a hot-spot for birders, holding many special species associated with West and Central African tropical forests, which are found nowhere else in the country. Many of these specialities typically occur at low densities in forest undergrowth or high in the canopy, and can be difficult to find and identify. I was pleased to meet Ben Obanda, a young Kenyan taking an active interest in birds and conservation. His local conservation group (KABICOTA—Kakamega Biodiversity Conservation and Tour Operator Association) has been receiving small amounts of funding from ABC for education programmes in Kakamega, and he is keen to make a career of his passion for birding. I hired him as a local guide for three days (very reasonable rates) and was impressed by his knowledge of the local birds—most importantly the rarer species, their vocalisations and where to find them. He is enthusiastic, speaks good English, understands what birders want from their brief visits to the area and puts a lot of effort into 'delivering the goods'. If you plan to

visit the Kakamega region. I can thoroughly recommend lining Ben Obanda—sound, up-to-date local knowledge goes a long way in creating short-cuts to and those difficult, sought-after Kakamega specialities. He can be contacted c/o PO Box 2153, Kakamega, Kenya, tel: 0331 30268, fax: 0331 20145.

Peter Roberts, *Cablebirds, Botswana*  
 Bruce Adolph, *Isla*  
 Argill, *FAA, TX, USA*

### Misidentified photograph

The photo of the raptor in Bull. ABC 7: 71 was labelled Steppe Eagle (*Aquila rapax nipalensis*). But it is actually a juvenile Gymnogone (*Polyboroides typus*). The photo has six 'fingers' on the

wingtips, a more slender head and neck, relatively shorter wings, and wider, shorter tail with sides that taper toward the tip. Steppe Eagles have 'fingers' on the wingtips, a thicker neck and head, have relatively longer wings, and straight sides to the tail (see photographs). Further, the hawk in question lacks the broad white band on the underwings shown by all immature Steppe Eagles.

W.S. Clark, 7800 Dasset Court, Apt 101, Trumbull, CA 22003, USA

### A possible new taxon of rock thrush—a correction

Dr. Jones has brought to our attention a new form of this rite, co-authored by Kestrel Swarrimon. A possible new taxon of rock thrush *Monticola*

sp. from the limestone karst region of western Madagascar, in *Bull. ABC* 7: 52–53. Reference no. 3 was incorrectly cited, it should read:

Middleton, G., 1996. The 1995 Australo-Anglo-Malagasy Speleo-Ornitho-Malacological Expedition Tsingy de Bemaraha, western Madagascar. *J. Symbry Speleological Soc.* 10 (9): 141–158. \*

The Editors, *African Bird Club*,  
 c/o *Birdlife International*,  
 Wellbrook Court, Girtton Road,  
 Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK



Figures 1–2. Juvenile Steppe Eagle (*Aquila rapax nipalensis*): Oman (left) and third winter, India (right). Immature Steppe Eagle almost always has a pale band on the underwing (greater coverts), seven 'fingers' on the wingtip, and a broad head and neck. They have relatively longer wings than juvenile Gymnogone *Polyboroides typus* and straight tail sides (W.S. Clark).



Figures 3–4. Juvenile Gymnogone *Polyboroides typus*: Sénégal, March 1982 (left) and The Gambia (right). Juvenile Gymnogone has six 'fingers' on the wingtip, a rather narrow head and neck, and lacks a broad pale band on the underwing. The tail sides taper inward near the tip and the wings are relatively shorter than Steppe Eagle *Aquila (rapax) nipalensis* (W.S. Clark).



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**dates** 25 September 2010 (online) (later in 2010) and 23rd.

**names of birds** use the vernacular name for birds known only by the scientific name (e.g. White-necked Raven *Corvus albicollis*) with hyphen *albicollis* to prevent uses of common name (Underline contains a colon when typed in computer copy, but please format it as *albicollis* in the printed version). Abbreviation on disk with corresponding Latin (scientific) name should have an underline. The names of birds and other animals (including plants, e.g. *Juniper*) a hyphen (eg White-throated Kinglet, *Troglodytes aedon*), but for group names use *frigatebird*, *stomping bustard*, *grows* (Birds of the World, 2002). Common names should be given where they are used – *albatross* (capital letter only) or *herring* (lower case) – but scientific names should be used.

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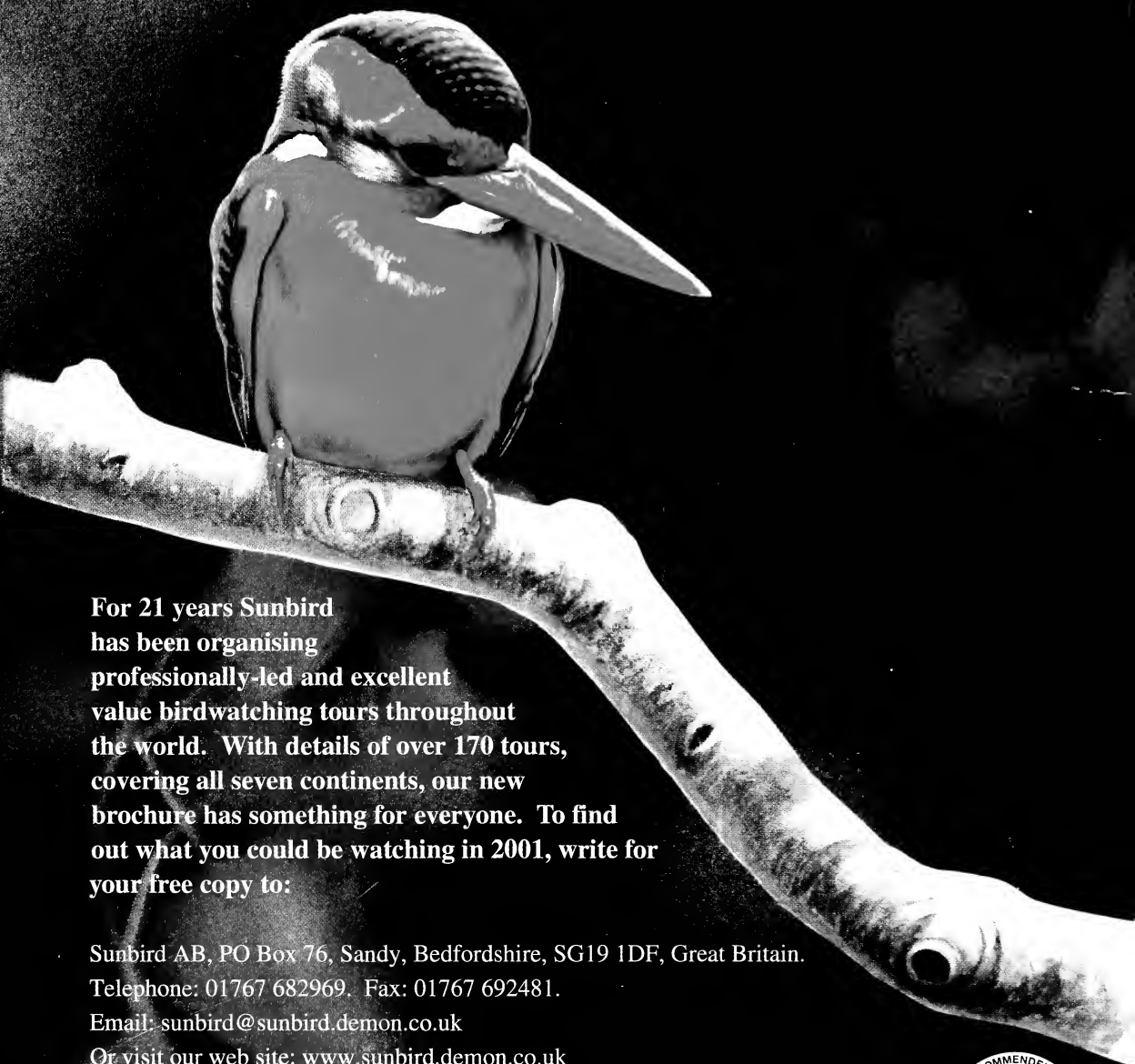
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