

African Bird Club

22 OCT 2003



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 9 No 1 March 2002

New birds for
Nigeria

Cape Parrot

Nigerian ornitho-
logical institute

Bird tracks in
Madagascar

Birds of Aldabra

New to Africa:
Chatham
Albatross

Conservation
work in the
Albertine Rift

Bird observations
in Rodrigues

African bird
recorders

Red-footed Falcon
in The Gambia





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
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC Web site

<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

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The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The *Bulletin of the ABC* provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the *Bulletin of the ABC* does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers

either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the *Bulletin of the ABC* and to any other publication.

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

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Front cover plate

African Green Broadbill *Pseudocalyptomena graueri* by John Gale

Club News



Launch of the *Important Bird Areas in Africa* book in Johannesburg, 22 October 2001

The launch of the African Important Bird Areas (IBA) volume has to be one of the most momentous occasions for African bird conservation. This enormous piece of work, comprising 1,160 pages, took eight years to complete, involved hundreds of ornithologists, volunteers and government staff in 58 countries and territories, who between them have identified a comprehensive network of 1,228 sites or IBAs. It is the first-ever attempt to list all of the sites internationally recognised as the most critically important places for bird and biodiversity conservation in the region, and identifies some of the main threats affecting Africa's IBAs.

South Africa's Minister for Environmental Affairs & Tourism, Mr Mohammed Valli Moosa, launched the directory at a conference hosted by the BirdLife Africa Partnership and BirdLife South Africa. ABC was pleased to be involved in the launch of the book and has supported the distribution of the IBA book to countries where BirdLife

International does not have partner organisations. The IBA book will now reach some of those African countries where much of this kind of basic information is lacking.

Callan Cohen, one of the Club's South African members, represented ABC at the launch and manned an ABC stall at the exhibitors' fair. As at PAOC, there was a great deal of interest in the Club and Callan was able to speak to many of the organisations and individuals involved in the African BirdLife partnership about how ABC can support their activities through the Conservation Fund, and other ABC initiatives. Council would like to thank Callan for helping the Club in this way.

Baillie Birdathon assists ABC

Canada's Baillie Birdathon, or Bird Race, is the oldest sponsored bird count in North America. It was established in 1976 as a national fundraiser that benefits the research and conservation of wild birds and honours the memory of James L Baillie (1905–1970). Jim worked as Assistant Curator in the Dept of Ornithology at the Royal

Ontario Museum for nearly 50 years. Although not formally educated in ornithology, Jim's knowledge of birds was unsurpassed and his enthusiasm inspired hundreds of naturalists to pursue bird study and conservation. Each year an amount exceeding CDN\$175,000 is raised by over 500 participants and 8,000 sponsors. At least 25% of all funds raised are channeled back to organisations designated by the participant. During the past two years Toni Salvadori, ABC's Canadian representative, has participated on behalf of the ABC raising a small amount of money for the ABC's Conservation Fund which fits in perfectly with Jim's original intent. The Birdathon takes place during the month of May when the largest numbers of birds are migrating through Ontario. However, it may be done in May, in any part of the world, as indeed Toni has participated in Baillie Birdathons in Zambia, Australia, Papua New Guinea and of course Canada. If you wish to participate or want to find out more you can contact Toni via e-mail (rosella@snowwhite.cis.uoguelph.ca).

The Council of ABC would like to thank Toni very much for these much-needed funds. As mentioned elsewhere, demand for Conservation Fund awards now far outstrips demand and all contributions are gratefully received!



The South African Minister of Environmental Affairs & Tourism, Mr Mohammed Valli Moosa, being handed the African IBA book by a member of the Bethany School Choir from Soweto, watched (on the left) by Dr Muhtari Aminu-Kano, Chair of the Council of the BirdLife African Partnership (BirdLife International)

Mike King

Mike King, who will have been known to many members passed away in January 2000 after an illness with cancer. Mike was responsible for setting up the Gambian Ringing Project at Ginak Island which has run successfully since the pilot trips in 1994. During this time over 5,000 Palaearctic migrants were trapped and the ringing data have contributed greatly to the ornithological knowledge of The Gambia. A full obituary will appear in the next bulletin.

ABC sales items

The following items are currently available for sale from ABC. All proceeds from sales are used to promote the aims of the Club, UK registered charity 1053920.

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. 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: UK£13.50.
3. New ABC T-shirt featuring Bush Shrikes by Dave Nurney, grey. Sizes: large, extra-large and extra-extra large: UK£13.50.
4. ABC T-shirt featuring Turacos by Mark Andrews, white. Sizes: extra large: UK£9.
5. ABC caps featuring an embroidered ABC logo, black, bottle green, red and maroon: UK£7.
6. ABC bone-china mugs: two designs featuring Carmine Bee-eater or Golden-breasted Starlings by Martin Woodcock: UK£6 or UK£10 a pair.
7. ABC badge featuring Egyptian Plover design: UK £2.
8. White-winged Apalis A4 colour print by Nik Borrow from *Bull. ABC 2 (2)*: signed and numbered limited edition of 50 at UK£7.50; also available unsigned at UK£1.00.
9. 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£1.50 for the pair.
10. 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.
11. *Bull. ABC*, volume 1, 1994, number 1 and 2: UK£5 each.
12. *Bull. ABC*, volume 2, 1995, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
13. *Bull. ABC*, volume 3, 1996, number 1 and 2: UK£6 each.
14. *Bull. ABC*, volume 4, 1997, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
15. *Bull. ABC*, volume 5, 1998, number 2 only: UK£7 each.
16. *Bull. ABC*, volume 6, 1999, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
17. *Bull. ABC*, volume 7, 2000, number 1 and 2: UK£7 each.
18. Azores Trip Report, Sep–Oct 1997 by Willem Steenge and Theo Bakker, 29 pp covering travel, transport, weather, ferry timetables and fares, itinerary and site guides, many maps: UK£5.
19. Birds in the Gaborone Area, Botswana by S J Tyler and W D Borello, 100 pp with detailed species information concerning status and sites where they can be seen, with detailed information on some sites and co-ordinates for all sites: UK£10.
20. Cameroon Trip Report, Dec 1994–Jan 1995 by Richard Webb, 72 pp with sections covering travel, health, weather, references, a detailed itinerary, systematic checklist of 481 species and a 29-page site guide including 25 maps: UK£6.
21. Cameroon Trip Report, Mar–Apr 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle, 22 pp, useful update to previous report, following similar route, with logistics, sites, itinerary and systematic list of 551 species seen: UK£4.
22. Cape Verde Trip Report, Mar 1996 by Theo Bakker and Klaas van Dijk, 37 pp, details and locations of all 61 species seen over 4 weeks, with useful information on travel and accommodation, and many detailed maps and photographs: UK£6.50.
23. Ethiopia Trip Report, Dec 1995–Jan 1996 by Richard Webb, sections covering travel, health, weather, references, a detailed itinerary, systematic checklist of 478 species and site guide for 30 locations: UK£7.50.
24. Ethiopia Trip Report, Oct–Nov 1996 by Jon Hornbuckle, 31 pp, complement to previous report, with logistics, sites, itinerary and systematic list of species seen, including 30 endemics: UK£4.
25. *Ethiopia: in search of endemic birds*, Sep–Oct 1997 by Julian Francis and Hadoram Shirihai, 45 pp, 47 excellent colour photographs including endemics, with logistics, travel tips, detailed itinerary and systematic list of species seen, including identification notes for Degodi and Sidamo Larks: UK£10.
26. Ethiopia/Eritrea Trip Report, Mar–May 1998 by David Murdoch, 280 species seen, short but useful update to our other Ethiopia reports, itinerary and systematic list of all birds and mammals seen, also details of sites in Eritrea: UK£3.
26. The Gambia, 10–17 Sep 1999 by Stuart Sharp, 34 pp including sections on travel/holiday tips, itinerary, brief site descriptions and systematic lists of birds and mammals seen: UK£5.
27. The Gambia, 1–8 Nov 1998 by Gruff Dodd, 26 pp cover trip planning, very detailed itinerary and systematic list of 180 species seen: UK£4.
28. *Birds of Senegambia*, checklist: UK£0.50.
29. Birding Ghana, Feb 1996 by Mindy and Sherif El Din, 39 pp contain sections on orientation, itinerary, some site descriptions, a table of species seen each day, plus extra notes on birding hints and etiquette in Ghana with more site suggestions: UK£6.50.
30. Ghana Trip Report, Jan–Feb 1997 by Simon Plat, 35 pp complement Birding Ghana report, especially for travel by public transport; with checklist of 220 species, detailed itinerary, and site guides, including coast between Accra and Takoradi, Kakum National Park, Subri Forest Reserve, Kumasi, Tamale, Bolgatanga, Wa and Mole National Park: UK£4.
31. Côte d'Ivoire by public transport trip report, Jan–Feb 1995 by Eddie Williams, 28 pp with several maps, 412 species plus extensive mammal list, local information, itinerary and site guides: UK£4.
32. Kenya Trip Report, Feb–Mar 1995 by Mike Hunter and Graham Speight, 90 pp with sections covering travel, health, climate, accommodation, references, a detailed itinerary, systematic list of 693 species, and a 50-page site guide covering 48 sites and 28 maps: UK£8.
33. *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Nairobi*, including Nairobi National Park, by Bill Harvey, 32 pp providing a checklist and details of status, frequency, habitat preferences and frequency in Nairobi National Park and Nairobi Arboretum: UK£0.50.

34. Madagascar and the Comores, Oct–Nov 1995 by Jon Hornbuckle, 'How to see all the birds without a hire car', 34 pp list 186 species in Madagascar including 124 endemics, 79 species in the Comores, including 17 endemics, with logistics, itinerary, site notes, one map, systematic list of birds and mammals: UK£4.
35. Madagascar, Nov–Dec 1997 by Chris Bell, Mike Hunter, Dawn Ross and Malcolm Roxby, useful update to previous reports on how to find recently re-/discovered species, with full species list including 123 Malagasy endemics, itinerary, brief site guide: UK£4.
36. Madagascar (with Mauritius and Reunion), winter 1997–98 by Brian Gee, 67 pp, 21 maps, 192 species seen in Madagascar, with logistics (including getting around on public transport) site guides (including Montagne d'Ambre, Tsiribihina River, Kirindy Forest) systematic list, advice on guides etc: UK£9.
37. Madagascar Trip Report, October 1998 by Paul Noakes, 14 pp, three maps, a brief report covering over 90% of the endemics: UK£2.50.
38. Malawi, March 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle, 17 pp, logistics, sites, seven maps, itinerary and systematic list of 306 species seen: UK£3.
39. Malawi and the Luangwa Valley (Zambia), Jul–Aug 1997 by Henk Hendriks, 45 pp, 14 maps, with logistics, site guides, complete systematic list of 370 species, and where to see rare and difficult species: UK£8.
40. Southern Malawi and Luangwa Valley (Zambia), Jan 1999 by Nigel Wheatley, includes maps of major towns and sites, maps of Senga Bay and Zomba, sites visited, other sites, systematic list of birds and mammals: UK£7.50.
41. Namibia and the Cape, Nov 1994 by Jon Hornbuckle, 43 pp, logistics, site notes, one map, detailed itinerary and systematic list of species seen: UK£4.
42. Birding Senegal, 10–29 Nov 1998 by Mindy and Sherif Baha el Din, 26 pp, one map, details of travel, accommodation, detailed itinerary, key habitats and sites, and systematic lists of 282 bird species and mammals: UK£5.
43. KwaZulu-Natal and Transvaal, South Africa, 8–21 Oct 2000 by Mike Hunter, 13 pp covering daily itinerary, brief notes for each site and comprehensive list of 327 species UK£3.
44. Cape Town to The Richtersveld, South Africa, 4–19 May 2001 by Paul Gascoigne and Helen Pooley, 29 pp covering detailed daily itinerary, accommodation information and comprehensive list of 168 species UK£4.
45. Western Cape and Namibia, Nov 1999–Jan 2000 by Brian Gee, 69 pp covering good general information, detailed site guide with maps and comprehensive species list UK£9.
46. Cape Province, South Africa. Feb–Mar 1999 by Gruff Dodd, 42 pp covering trip planning, very detailed itinerary and systematic list of 239 species: UK£6.
47. Eastern South Africa and Zimbabwe, Feb–Mar 1997 by Jon Hornbuckle, 35 pp, logistics, site notes, five maps, detailed itinerary including Wakkerstroom, Mkuzi, Umlalazi, Sani Pass, Hwange and Victoria Falls, with systematic list of 529 species: UK£5.
48. Voyage Naturaliste au Cape Provinces d'Afrique du Sud, Sep–Oct 1997 par Georges et Mireille Oliosio, 50 pp en Français: renseignements pratiques, documentation, itineraire et principaux sites visites. Liste commente des 246 espèces d'oiseaux vus, aussi mammifères et reptiles, plans des plusieurs sites; also includes an 11- page itinerary plus checklist of the 246 birds and 33 mammals in English: UK£6.
49. Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, Jan–Feb 1996 by Eddie Williams, describes how to visit the prime sites using only public transport, 24 pp, with detailed orientation information, site guides, nine maps and a systematic species list: UK£4.50.
50. Uganda Trip Report, Jun–Aug 1995 by Henk Hendriks, 59 pp, sections covering orientation, references, itinerary, systematic checklist of 473 bird and 36 mammal species, and a detailed site guide with ten maps: UK£6.50.
51. *Where to Watch Birds in Uganda*, by Jonathan Rossouw and Marco Sacchi, 110 pp with a section covering general birding in Uganda, 15 main sites are covered with a map and sections on birding, other wildlife, access, facilities and nearby sites; also a systematic checklist covering status at each site: UK£7.50.
52. *Wakkerstroom Bird and Nature Guide* by Warwick and Michele Tarboton, second edn, Mar 1998, detailed description of this fascinating area on border of Mpumalanga (Eastern Transvaal) and KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and what can be seen there, many illustrations: UK£5.
53. Zimbabwe (including parts of Botswana and South Africa), 18 Feb–5 Mar 2000 by Gruff Dodd, detailed account of trip and systematic list covering 382 species: UK£6.
54. *Birdwatch Zimbabwe*, 1991, by Derek Solomon and Jacko Williams, comprehensive guide with detailed descriptions of all main areas with maps, site guides, accommodation directions, checklist and many line drawings: UK£8.50.

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, UK. Enquiries may also be sent to ABC Sales Officer, Moira Hargreaves at the Club's address or e-mail: sales@africanbirdclub.org.

African Bird Club

CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

ABC Conservation Fund

The ABC Conservation Fund supports small conservation projects in Africa. To date, Conservation Awards totalling over UK£10,000 (US\$15,000) have been 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 individuals normally resident in an African country, and the Club welcomes project proposals for funding up to a maximum of UK£750 (US\$1,125). Further information on the Conservation Fund and guidelines on how to write a good project proposal can be found on the ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>), or obtained from the Club address below.

Latest Conservation Fund Awards

A further three Conservation Awards have been made since the last Bulletin. The Nigerian Conservation Foundation received UK£1,000 to survey a new migrant swallow roost within a community-owned swamp forest at Itu, Nigeria. ABC and Wetlands International jointly funded Jerome Mokolo Okonga to undertake waterbird surveys in the Kouilou Basin, Congo. Finally, Sama Zefania received UK£750 to survey waterbirds on Lake Sariaka, Madagascar.

Unfortunately there will be no more ABC/NHBS Book Awards. ABC would like to thank the Natural History Book Service for their support in this initiative over the past three years.

ABC Expedition Award

The ABC Expedition Award is a recent initiative. One award of UK£1,000 (US\$1,500) will be made annually. The closing date for the next award is January 2003. 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 by e-mail to conservation@africanbirdclub.org

Africa Round-up



General

A new initiative in phylogenetic nomenclature

PhyloCode, which will be operational in 'a few years' seeks to develop a formal set of rules governing nomenclatural decisions in phylogeny. It permits freedom of taxonomic opinion with regard to hypotheses concerning relationships and is concerned only with how names are applied within the context of a given phylogenetic hypothesis. The project is profiled at <http://www.ohiou.edu/phylocode/> where the content is highly technical. With strong popular interest in at least some of the available frameworks for conceptualising and categorising 'species' it may be of use to readers interested or intending to publish in systematic biology (including taxonomy). At this juncture the project is concerned with working toward international consensus in the naming only of clades and will perhaps interest those with a strong evolutionary outlook. However, an invitation to interested individuals to participate in provisional discussions toward dealing with names at species level in the future is also included. No doubt the project organisers will seek to develop a format unburdened by the inadequacies of the traditional Linnean system. It will be interesting to see how the problem presented by the category 'subspecies' is resolved.

Source: Kees Hazevoet in litt. April 2001 and <http://www.ohiou.edu/phylocode/>

New White Stork migration route

Satellite tracking, which is increasingly being used to monitor the migration routes of larger non-passerines, has recently been used to follow White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* movements from Europe to Africa. Of 75 individuals that were fitted with satellite transmitters, 26 moved as far south as Sudan, but 15 of these did not make their final destination the east of the country, which according to ringing studies is a major wintering area for the species in Africa, but rather stayed in west Sudan or Chad, and, in one instance, moved



White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*
by Mark Andrews

through Cameroon into Nigeria. Clearly, further studies concerning its African wintering grounds are required.

Source: *Ibis* 143, pp 450–455

New WIWO reports

Among the latest batch of reports produced by the Working Group International Waterbird & Wetland Research (WIWO) are two that will be of interest to readers of this Bulletin. The first, in French and English, is entitled *Spoonbill count on the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, January 2000* and costs Dfl 20, while the second concerns a *Waterbird count of Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, Tanzania, January 1998* and costs Dfl 30. Full details on these and many other reports, and how to order, can be found on the internet at www.wiwo-international.org.

Source: Ekko Smith in litt. June 2001

Separation of Fea's and Zino's Petrels at sea

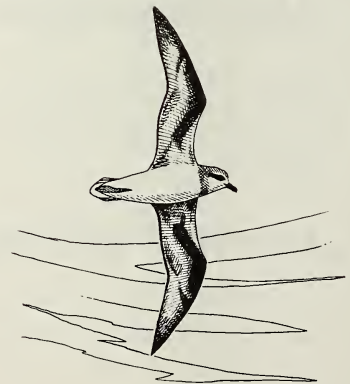
The threatened Fea's *Pterodroma feae* and Zino's Petrels *P. madeira*, both formerly treated as races of Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* (eg in *Birds of Africa*), are notoriously difficult to separate and were, until recently, considered indistinguishable at sea. Michael Tove checked suspected field characters and found that differences in wing shape are species-specific, Zino's wings being consistently shorter, broader and blunter tipped. Other differences include a slightly smaller size, more slender body, slimmer bill, rather paler crown and

facial markings, and more indistinct upperwing pattern. Birds with long, slender pointed wings, as well as a relatively long, robust bill and a well-defined dark M pattern on the upperparts are therefore Fea's Petrels. According to the author, wing-shape differences alone would be sufficient for conclusive identification in the majority of cases.

Source: *Birding World* 14, pp 283–289

Identifying Atlantic Islands Yellow-legged Gulls

In a recent paper, illustrated with 30 photographs, Philippe Dubois discusses the identification of Atlantic Islands Yellow-legged Gull *Larus micabellis atlantis* (*Birds of Africa* considers *L. micabellis* to be a race of Herring Gull *L. argentatus*). This relatively poorly known form is present year-round on the Azores, but as a pelagic feeder it may be prone to vagrancy. Though birds breeding on the Canaries, Madeira and on the Atlantic coast of Morocco are reputedly very similar, they may actually be intermediate between true *atlantis* and Mediterranean Yellow-legged Gull *L. m. michabellis*. The author states that true *atlantis* is quite distinct in some plumages with, for example, third-years having densely streaked heads during post-breeding moult when they appear grey-hooded at a distance. Juveniles and first-winters, however,



Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma (mollis) feae*
by Craig Robson

are variable and can have a mix of characters similar to nominate Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus graellsii/intermedius*, and even some forms of Herring Gull *L. argentatus*.

Source: *Birding World* 14, pp 293–304

Distinguishing races of Southern Grey Shrike

A well-illustrated paper by Tom Conzemius, offering a detailed presentation of all races of the *Lanius [excubitor]* superspecies in the western Palearctic, includes six of the nine subspecies of the Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* occurring in the area covered by the ABC: nominate *meridionalis*, *koenigi* (Canary Islands), *algeriensis*, *elegans*, *aucheri* and *pallidirostris*. These are illustrated with 41 photographs and their field marks are summarised in a table.

Source: *Limicola* 15, pp 185–227

Wood-Hoopoes under scrutiny

Violet Wood-Hoopoe *Phoeniculus damarensis* has traditionally been regarded as two taxa, the nominate in south-west Angola and north-west Namibia (which is thought to be threatened) and *granti* in south Ethiopia and Kenya. It has been noted to form a superspecies with Green *P. purpureus* and Black-billed Wood-Hoopoes *P. somaliensis*, and indeed all three might be best considered as one species. The results of a recent DNA study of these taxa suggests that *damarensis* should be considered a synonym of *purpureus* as the level of differentiation is very low.

Source: *Ibis* 143, pp 572–579

Piratical drongos use mimicry

While studying a group of meerkats in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, southern Africa, Justin O'Riain discovered that Fork-tailed Drongos *Dicrurus adsimilis* closely watched the progress of the foraging mammals. The prevailing drought forced the meerkats to dig in the sun-baked sands in an attempt to unearth prey such as lizards and beetles. If a meerkat was successful, the nearby drongo would utter a very accurate imitation of the high-pitched meerkat alarm call, invariably sending the mammals scurrying for safety, thereby abandoning their hard-won food item. The drongos' mimicry thus permitted them to obtain high-quality food that was previously unavailable to them.

Source: *Africa—Birds & Birding* 6 (5), p 20

Online bird-sound resource

Over the past c20 years, Shaun Peters (recbirds@yahoo.co.uk) has been collecting bird-sound recordings, mainly from published LPs/CDs and tapes. Currently his collection comprises 6,900 species (based on Clements 5th edition, plus updates). He has recently established a website that lists all these recordings. There are two main purposes to this: firstly, to serve as a resource for travelling birders and secondly to spur additions to the collection. The URL is

www.birding.freeseve.co.uk (please note the double r in birding). The systematic list is broken down into four sections. Recordings are a little slow in downloading (2–3 minutes each), but once downloaded the information is then readily accessible.

Source: *Shaun Peters* in litt. September 2001

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean islands

Rarity news from Southern Africa on the web

Monthly rarity news from Southern Africa can be found on the following website <http://www.zestforbirds.co.za>, while photos of the latest rarities can be viewed on the 'recent rarity photos' page.

Zambia Bird Report 1999

The 1999 Zambia Bird Report is now available from the Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS). For further details, please contact Pete Leonard or ZOS on zos@zamnet.zm. Contents of the latest issue include: birds of the Mafinga Mountains, bird ringing in Zambia, review of Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* records in Zambia, Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori* in Zambia, bird surveys of the Barotse floodplains, the first country records of Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*, White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* and (Northern) Carmine Bee-eater *M. nubicus*, status of Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Pacific Golden Plovers *Pluvialis (dominica) fulva* in Lochinvar with a review of Zambian records, an African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* in a Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* nest, and Baglafaecht Weavers *Ploceus baglafaecht* near Mbala.

Source: *Pete Leonard* in litt. to *African Birding* November 2001



Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum*
by Mark Andrews

Damara Terns react positively to conservation efforts

Some 13,500 pairs of Damara Tern *Sterna balaenarum*, the vast majority of the entire population, nest in Namibia. Nesting is unfortunately concentrated on open gravel plains on the central coast—areas where humans also congregate. In December–January, the height of the breeding season, nests are particularly at risk from being trodden upon, driven over or disturbed by tourists, fishermen and quad-bikers. The densest colony lies just south of Swakopmund and supports 120 pairs. In 1995, it was found that 870 vehicles crossed this colony in one month, resulting in low breeding success. Rod Braby of the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and the Wildlife Society, therefore decided to organise a roadside barrier to prevent cars careering across the colony to the beach and placed posters and information boards at new parking areas, informing visitors of the importance of this patch of sand to terns. Quad-bikers were talked to and alternative dune areas were suggested for them to use. As a result, no vehicles passed in the first month of 2001 and the terns' hatching success increased from a mere 56% to 80%. Chick hatching doubled from just over six to 12 chicks per km² per month. Reduced disturbance thus resulted in doubled productivity of the colony.

Source: *Africa—Birds & Birding* 6 (5), p 17

Waterbird counts in Botswana

Counts of waterbirds for the African Waterbird Census of Wetlands International began in Botswana in 1991. Dave Bishop organised the counts for six years until 1997 when Stephanie Tyler took over as the Wetlands Interna-

tional organiser. A special 94-page supplement of *Babbler*, published by BirdLife Botswana, entitled *A review of waterbird counts in Botswana, 1991–2000* summarises information gathered from over 60 sites throughout the country. There is a bias to the south-east where 28 sites, small and large dams and sewage ponds, were regularly counted over the ten years, but several others, notably Shashe Dam, in eastern Botswana were also well covered. Important but less regular counts came from parts of Makgadikgadi Pans, Chobe River and Okavango Delta. Quantitative data are presented for each species, with sites of particular importance being identified. For every site there is a brief description and a table depicting mean and maximum counts for both wet and dry seasons. Those sites meeting Ramsar criteria are highlighted and include Makgadikgadi Pans, with their important breeding populations of Lesser *Phoeniconaias minor* and Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus* and migrant waders, notably Eurasian Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, and the Chobe/Linyanti River and floodplain. Recommendations are made for further work. Already one of these has been acted upon, with BirdLife Botswana's Crane Group undertaking an aerial survey of Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* in the Okavango Delta in August 2001. Contributions by all volunteer counters are noted and the sponsors of the report, the Programme of International Nature Management (PIN) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (LNV) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Development Co-operation (NEDA) of The Netherlands, through Wetlands International, are gratefully acknowledged. Copies of the supplement are available from Stephanie Tyler (Yew Tree Cottage, Lone Lane, Penallt, Monmouthshire NP25 4AJ, UK or e-mail steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com) for UK£5.00, or from BirdLife Botswana, P/Bag 00300, Gaborone or e-mail iucn@iucnbot.bw (marked FAO BirdLife) for 30 pulas (costs to cover post and packing).

Source: Stephanie Tyler in *lit.*
November 2001

Cory's Shearwater of the race *borealis* in South Africa

An exhausted Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* of the race *borealis* was picked up on the beach at Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape, South Africa, on 12 January 2000 and died a few hours later. It had been ringed as a nestling on Madeira, 8,322 km from the recovery site, on 13 October 1984. The race *borealis*, which breeds on the Atlantic Islands, disperses mainly to the western Atlantic and is therefore rare in southern African waters, whereas the nominate race (sometimes considered a separate species, Scopoli's Shearwater), which breeds in the Mediterranean, is a common visitor. Only two specimens of Cory's Shearwater have previously been recovered in southern Africa, one of which consisted of *C. d. borealis*.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 6 (2),
p 22

Helmeted Guineafowl decline in KwaZulu-Natal

A four-year project to study the causes of recent marked declines in Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* in southern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, has been conducted by a team of gamebird biologists led by Professor Tim Crowe of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town. It was found that habitat fragmentation and destruction as a result of massive increases in crop agriculture from the 1970s through to the late 1980s was the main cause of the population crash. The indirect effects of pesticides worsened the situation by reducing the availability of food resources and edge habitats. The study concluded that resuscitating guineafowl populations to viable levels requires farmers to leave patches of land to lie fallow, in order to recreate weedy areas with adjacent open spaces, the species' preferred habitat.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 6 (2),
pp 48–52

Red-billed Leiothrix: a potential threat to Réunion's indigenous plants

The recently established Red-billed Leiothrix (Pekin Robin) *Leiothrix lutea*, introduced on Réunion from the Oriental region, has been proven to be a potential hazard for indigenous plants on the island. By the positive effect of ingestion on germination it favours dispersion of three invasive alien plants that produce fruits in

winter. It therefore appears desirable to control the species' distribution or even to eradicate it from Réunion.

Source: *Alauda* 69, pp 381–385

Seychelles Bird Records Committee news

The recently launched website of Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) contains a checklist of all birds recorded in the archipelago, as well as an historical section, which provides details of all accepted first records of vagrants, a list of the most recent accepted records and record sheets, which should be completed by any observers encountering a 'description species'. The site is located at <http://www.stokecoll.ac.uk/sbrc/index.htm>. Visitors to the islands are recommended to take a look at the site prior to their trip.

Source: *Birdwatch* 38, p 23

SAFRING News to change its name and approach?

The latest issue contains, among the usual array of feature articles, a proposal to change the journal's name to *AFRING News* and become continent wide in its scope and content. A host of interesting ringing recoveries is also presented, including many longest elapsed-time data, which will be of significant interest to those studying longevity in birds and similar issues. Source: *SAFRING News* 29, pp 59–99

Seychelles White-eye recovery continues

The globally threatened Seychelles White-eye *Zosterops modestus*, which is confined to Conception and Mahé, appears to be doing reasonably well on the former where it was only discovered in 1997. Recent surveys, backed by a colour-ringing programme have located 280 birds and gathered a significant amount of information concerning its natural history, especially breeding biology. Most remarkably it appears to adopt a cooperative breeding strategy. The next stages of the Seychelles White-eye Recovery Programme will be the formulation of a Recovery Action Plan for the species, plans to translocate birds to suitable predator-free islands and the implementation of management recommendations for Conception and Mahé.

Source: *World Birdwatch* 23 (2), p 7

East Africa

Ethiopian Bird Club founded

A new organisation, the Ethiopian Bird Club (EBC), held its first meeting in March 2001 in Addis Ababa. The founder members comprise ornithologists, tour guides specializing in birdwatching, and members of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society and Ethiopian Wildlife Organization. The new club's logo is a Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*. Membership is open to all for a fee of cUS\$12 to international members. Institutional membership costs cUS\$180. A bi-annual newsletter in Amharic and English is planned, as is a website. To contact the new organisation e-mail ethiopiabirds@excite.com or write to: EBC, P.O. Box 2560 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. If you are visiting Ethiopia on a bird trip the club would be pleased to hear from you and may be able to assist your visit.

Source: Gebregeorgis Yohannes,
Founder Chairman in litt. July 2001

Mass dying of flamingos at Lakes Nakuru and Bogoria, Kenya

A year or so ago it was noted that the flamingos at Lake Nakuru were dying in vast numbers. This was ascribed to the influx into the lake of effluent from nearby industries or agriculture. However, on a recent visit to Lake Bogoria, Daryl Balfour found that the flamingos there were also dying there in hundreds. The cause remains a mystery. Unlike Lake Nakuru, Lake Bogoria is remote and far from any industrial developments, so toxic waste is unlikely to be involved. And as the rains have been excellent, the water of the lake has risen to normal, pre-drought levels. Apparently no studies have yet been undertaken to determine the cause of this mass dying.

Source: Africa—Birds & Birding 6 (5),
p 16

West Africa

Update on Bijol Islands Conservation Project

As reported in *Bull. ABC* 8: 39–43, Bijol Islands in The Gambia have received protection in the form of a regular boat patrol. With funds supplied by the British High Commission to The Gambia and Wetlands International in Dakar, the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management has obtained a 7 m fibreglass boat and outboard

motor, plus running costs for the first year. The boat is crewed by staff members of Tanji River (Kariiti) Bird Reserve, who have all been trained in boat handling, and is already having a profound affect on the conservation of this unique site in The Gambia. In mid-April 2001, the boat crew apprehended 13 Senegalese fishermen illegally harvesting eggs of Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*. The haul of 310 eggs would probably have been sold as food, though they were very close to hatching and would not have been suitable for eating. The men have been charged and will appear in court. Hopefully they will be fined the highest amount permitted (the equivalent of cUK£250 each) and/or will serve up to two years in prison. They may also have their boat confiscated. The subsequent publicity should hopefully deter others from raiding the islands, as will the continuing presence of the patrol boat, which is also used for regular monitoring of the islands' bird population and has revealed that the size of the Royal Tern *Sterna maxima* colony increased by over 1,000 pairs to 8,500 pairs in 2001.

Source: Linda Barnett and Craig Emms
in litt. July 2001

Common Coot breeding in Senegal

The first breeding of Common Coot *Fulica atra* in West Africa was recorded on 11 January 2001, when a pair with two chicks of c15 days old was observed in Djoudj National Park. A second pair had a chick of c10 days old. All were seen again on 15 January. The nearest previously known breeding sites are in Morocco and Algeria. The species is a regular Palearctic winter visitor to the Senegal delta, with first arrivals in September. Maximum numbers were recorded in 1987–88, when 450 were present.

Source: *Alauda* 69, p 328

Seabirds in the Cape Verdes

Recent reportage in *World Birdwatch* highlights the perilous state of the islands' seabirds. Human pressure, including direct harvesting of several species, is much to blame for the problems, which appear to have reached crisis proportions. Immediate and fast-working conservation action is clearly needed to preserve the very rich seabird populations for which the Cape Verdes are responsible.

Source: *World Birdwatch* 23 (2),
pp 24–26



Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*
by Mark Andrews

North Africa

New threat to the Bald Ibis...

In July 2001, the Groupe D'Ornithologie du Maroc (GOMAC) learnt of a proposal to construct a Club Mediterranean on a 260 ha site at Tifnit, in the immediate vicinity of the nesting and feeding area of the last colony of Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, in the Souss-Massa National Park. GOMAC has been collaborating since 1989 in efforts by Moroccan and foreign scientists to safeguard this prestigious species. In recent years, work undertaken by the administration of the Souss-Massa National Park under the auspices of BirdLife International has produced encouraging results, with numbers of Bald Ibis increasing for the first time since their catastrophic decline. While GOMAC and other conservation organisations support the development of tourism in Morocco, they do not wish to see the loss of one of the most precious jewels of the Moroccan natural heritage. GOMAC, in strongly opposing construction of the Club on the proposed site, particularly given the existence of alternative sites close to the one proposed, which would have less serious consequences for the Bald Ibis feeding grounds, mobilised a petition against the development, of which we await the result. Ecological tourism is developing rapidly in Morocco and among foreign visitors to the country are a very high number of ornithologists who come specifically to see the Bald Ibis. Its disappearance would therefore bring an inevitable loss to the Moroccan tourist economy. To try to reintroduce the species from captive-bred birds, should it become extinct in the wild, would be extremely costly.

Source: GOMAC petition, July 2001

...and new Bald Ibis newsletter

We recently received a copy of the inaugural newsletter of the International Advisory Group for Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*. The electronic pamphlet seeks to provide a regular update on current projects involving wild and captive Bald Ibis, and the first issue includes articles dealing with the conservation of the wild population in south-west Morocco, a behaviour and release methodology project (based in Austria), release trials in Israel, the planned release programme in Morocco, the status of the semi-wild population at Birecik, in Turkey, and recent genetic studies. There is also a review of recent publications on the species.

Source: *Chris Bowden* in litt.
October 2001

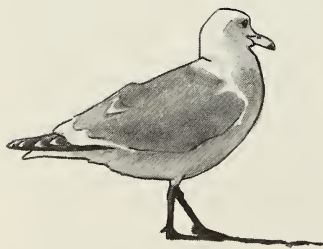
Glaucon-winged Gull in mainland Africa

Details of the first Glaucon-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* for Morocco, discovered on the beach near Essaouira on 31 January 1995, and accepted by the Moroccan rarities committee (see *Bull ABC* 7: 18–28), have now been published. This apparently constitutes the second record for the ABC region, the first being from El Hierro, Canary Islands, on 7–10 February 1992. This species, which breeds and winters around the north Pacific, is a very unexpected vagrant to the African shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 23, pp 271–274

Conservation status of Moroccan wetlands

Previous research in 1978 (see *Biol. Conserv.* 24: 161–182) detailed the nature of 24 major Moroccan wetlands visited, with a total area of 4,529 ha. These were recently revisited: 25% of the wetland area had been destroyed



Glaucon-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* by Mark Andrews

by 1999. Loss was concentrated in wetland types of low salinity, with a 98% loss of seasonal mesohaline sites, 41% loss of mountain lakes and 33% loss of seasonal *Phragmites/Scirpus lacustris* marshes. Surviving mountain lakes showed increased conductivities, suggesting reduced inflow. No loss in area of other wetland types was recorded, though degradation has occurred at all sites due to hydrological impacts, overgrazing or excessive reed-cutting, sedimentation, urban development, pollution, introduction of exotic fish and other causes. Similar threats face another 23 major Moroccan wetlands reviewed in the recent study, also to be published in *Biol. Conserv.*

Of the 47 wetlands studied, only 10 have any protection status. The importance of these wetlands for waterbirds and aquatic submerged or floating plants was assessed. The results demonstrate that the number of plant species recorded is strongly correlated to the number of threatened waterbird species (but not the total number of waterbird species). Natural freshwater wetlands most affected by wetland loss hold more species of aquatic plants and invertebrates, and are of great value for threatened waterbirds such as Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* and especially Crested Coot *Fulica cristata*. Most surviving natural fresh wetlands are unprotected, and measures to conserve them are urgently required. Human-made wetlands such as reservoirs have some value for threatened waterbirds (especially Ruddy Shelduck and Marbled Teal), but hold much lower densities of waterbirds than natural wetlands, and support fewer plant species. Thus, they do not compensate for the continuing loss of natural wetlands.

Source: *Andy Green* in litt. to *MEBirdNet*, June 2001

Saving Zino's Petrel

Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma (mollis) madeira*, listed as Critical (BirdLife International 2000) and confined to the high central massif of Madeira, had an estimated breeding population of only six pairs in 1986. The same year, the Freira Conservation Project was founded with the aim of increasing this population by controlling rats and human interference, the principal perceived threats to the species. This control was extended to cats following



Atlas Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca speculigera* by Mark Andrews

1991, when one or more cats managed to access one of the breeding ledges and kill ten adults. Due to the efforts of the project, the small colony is making a slow, but steady recovery and numbered 29 breeding pairs, with 16 chicks fledged, in 2000. However, the situation is still critical and the current population monitoring and predator control should continue, and steps should be taken to purchase the breeding area, which is still privately owned, limiting the intervention of Madeiran authorities.

Source: *Oryx* 35, pp 128–136

The Atlas Flycatcher

Recent mtDNA-sequence analysis of the black-and-white *Ficedula* flycatchers inhabiting the Western Palearctic has produced one very surprising result: the identification of a potential new species, provisionally termed the Atlas Flycatcher. *Ficedula hypoleuca speculigera*, which is endemic as a breeder to the Atlas Mountains, and was heretofore regarded as a subspecies of Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*, possesses a DNA profile as distinct from other traditional species as that between Pied and Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis*. Its plumage characteristics are rather similar to Collared Flycatcher, but the white wing patch is smaller than the latter, being intermediate between it and Pied Flycatcher and *speculigera* lacks the striking white collar of *albicollis*. Further studies will doubtless follow, but provisionally this dramatic discovery appears well founded. ♀

Source: *Ibis* 143, pp 494–497

Requests for Information

Colour-ringed birds in Tanzania

Tom Romdal is conducting a research project in the Udzungwa Mountains National Park, in central Tanzania, under TANAPA/TAWIRI authority, which involves colour-ringing forest birds. Thus far 464 birds have been colour ringed, but many more will hopefully be ringed in 2001–2002. Anyone observing a colour-ringed bird in this area should contact Tom, as recorded movements of birds could be of great significance to the study. Please mention the colour and position of the rings, as well as the altitude of observation. Birds are being ringed at Mwanihana forest, near the trail leading from Sonjo

village towards Mwanihana Peak. This is not the site of the Sanje Waterfalls, which are above Sanje village, and where birds were ringed 15 years ago. The Mwanihana trail is well kept and can be recommended to birders interested in the local specialities. By camping for one night along the trail it should be possible to record Moreau's Sunbird *Cinnyris moreaui*, Green-throated Greenbul *Andropadus chlorigula* (treated within Mountain Greenbul *A. tephrolaemus* by *BoA*), Rufous-winged Sunbird *Cinnyris rufipennis*, Swynnerton's Robin *Swynnertonia swynnertoni* and Dapple-throated Mountain-Robin *Arcanator orostrutibus*. You are

welcome to contact Tom in advance of your visit by e-mail at TSRomdal@zmuc.ku.dk.

Information on Banco National Park sought

Olivier Lachenaud, ABC representative in Côte d'Ivoire, is working on a paper on the birds of Banco National Park near Abidjan and neighbouring Anguédédou forest. Any information—on birds, but also mammals and flora—would be welcome. Please send any data to Olivier Lachenaud, Délégation du CIRAD, 01 BP 6483, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire or by e-mail to lachenaud@cirad.fr.

Errata to Bull. ABC 8 (2)

In the paper entitled The Lake Chad Bird Migration Project: Malamfatori revisited, the following should be noted. Fig 2 (p. 122) should be credited to NASA (not Ulf Ottosson),

Fig 6 should be credited to Rolf Gustaffsson (not Ulf Ottosson), Fig 7 should be credited to William Velmala (not Ulf Ottosson) and in the Acknowledgements, the Institute for Avian

Research, 'Vogelwarte Helgoland' Wilhelmshaven (Germany) should have been credited for their financial support of the project.

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.

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The current rates are as follows and are based on a print run of 1,500 copies. These rates are guaranteed for the September 2002 *Bull. ABC*.

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

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Copy deadlines

Spring Bulletin	15 December
Autumn Bulletin	05 May



Reading the sand: identifying bird tracks in Madagascar's spiny forest

Joe Tobias and Nat Seddon

La forêt épineuse du sud-ouest malgache est située sur un sol sablonneux sur lequel les espèces terrestres laissent des traces identifiables. Les sept espèces terrestres principales de cette forêt, comprenant les deux endémiques (le Brachyptérolle à longue queue *Uratelornis chimaera* et le Mésite monias *Monias benschi*), peuvent être recensées (et localisées) facilement en suivant ces traces. L'article donne des précisions sur l'identification de ces traces.

Introduction

The dry forest of south-west Madagascar is a strange land of stunted baobabs *Adansonia*, spinescent cactus-like plants *Didierea* and *Alluaudia* and succulent flora (*Aloe* and *Euphorbia*). This area, commonly known as the spiny forest, is a conservation priority due to high rates of endemism and rapid forest loss¹. To ornithologists, the area between the Fiherenana and Mangoky rivers is perhaps the most interesting, as it is home to two of Madagascar's most distinctive and specialised birds: Long-tailed Ground-Roller *Uratelornis chimaera* and Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi*, both members of monotypic genera within endemic families.

One important feature of the spiny forest is that it stands on a substrate of sand. Every terrestrial forest creature thus leaves evidence of its movements in the form of footprints or body prints, from the clumsy clambering of chameleons, to the slithers of snakes and limbless skinks and tiptoeing of tenrecs. It is, unsurprisingly, much easier to find the tracks of terrestrial birds than the species themselves, and tracks provide information which can lead to sightings of their maker. Most pertinently, it is possible to determine roughly how recently tracks were made (within an hour they begin to lose their definition), and in which direction the bird went. Following fresh, correctly identified tracks regularly leads to sightings of mesites or ground-rollers, or the discovery of a nest, as well as many scratches from thorn-bushes.

Birders visiting the area near the villages of Ifaty and Mangily have for many years been taken to see the two sought-after endemics by local guides. After working with them, and three seasons of field work targeting the behavioural ecology of mesites and ground-rollers, we have become familiar with the tracks of a multitude of birds, reptiles and mammals. This knowledge proved immensely useful when searching for our study species, and vital during rapid surveys of remote regions when censusing their population and determining their distribution². As this

information might therefore prove useful to field workers or visiting birders in the future, we offer brief details of track identification for the seven essentially terrestrial bird species in the spiny forest.

For the purposes of this article, the distance across the footprint at its broadest point is termed 'width', this being the distance between the tips of the inner and outer fore toes in all relevant species, except couas. In couas, measurements for the 'instep' (distance between tips of the two toes closest to the opposite foot) and 'outstep' (distance between the two toes furthest from the opposite foot) are given. It should be noted that footprints degrade with age and become harder to measure, and also that they appear larger and deeper in soft dry sand than in firm damp sand.

Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi*

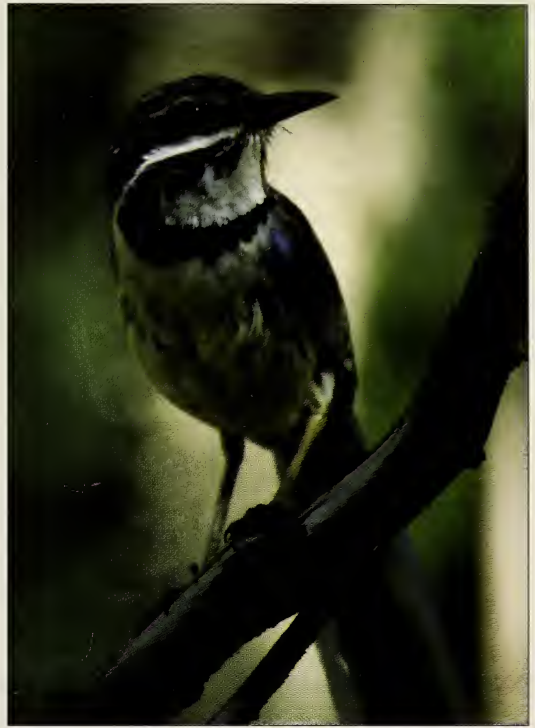
A group-living bird, thus one of the most distinctive features of mesite tracks is that they usually occur in sets of 2–8 in close proximity, often with subsets of 2–4 individuals following each other very closely. The footprint is a symmetrical trident shape, with all toes similar in length and the side toes forming c45° angles to the central toe. The gap between prints (usually 60–70 mm) is often distinctly larger than between the smaller hoopoe prints, or the very similar turtle-dove prints (see below), but note that stride length varies depending on circumstance. The length of the footprint is c55–65 mm and the width is c34–44 mm. The hind toe tends to drag sometimes, leaving an unusually elongated impression. Mesite prints are usually made in straighter lines than dove prints, the latter often proceeding in tight curves, often with the central fore toe pointing into the direction of the curve making the print asymmetrical (see below).

Madagascar Buttonquail *Turnix nigricollis*

This species' feet, in common with all other members of its family, are tiny and lack a hind toe, making the identification of buttonquail tracks in the area straight-



Long-tailed Ground-Roller *Uratelornis chimaera*



Long-tailed Ground-Roller *Uratelornis chimaera*



Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi*



Madagascar Buttonquail *Turnix nigricollis*



Running Coua *Coua cursor*

All photos by Joe Tobias



Green-capped Coua *Coua (ruficeps) olivaceiceps*

forward. The central toe is considerably longer (27–30 mm) than the outer toes (18–23 mm) and are arranged to form a neat shaft-less triplet, 27–30 mm across.

Madagascar Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia picturata*

This species leaves tracks remarkably similar to those of Subdesert Mesite (usually 55–68 mm long and 40–45 mm wide) and the two are easily confused.

Helpfully, dove tracks are normally encountered as lone individuals or pairs (though sometimes 3–4 loosely associated doves forage together, and lone mesites are not particularly rare); in shape they appear slightly stubbier than mesite tracks and are more often asymmetrical, the central fore toe being more mobile. A few further clues indicate that tracks are made by doves, not mesites. Firstly, they tend to be in fairly open areas, the doves often preferring to follow



Figure 1. Diagrams of bird tracks in the spiny forest (82% life size); top row from left to right: Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi*, Madagascar Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata*, Madagascar Hoopoe *Upupa marginata* and Long-tailed Ground-Roller *Uratelornis chimaera*; bottom row from left to right: Running Coua *Coua cursor*, Green-capped Coua *Coua (ruficeps) olivaceiceps* and Madagascar Buttonquail *Turnix nigricollis*. The two most similar are the mesite and dove, and these are most accurately separated by referring to their pattern of placement in the sand.

roads or paths rather than cross them; mesites tend to take the shortest routes between patches of cover. Secondly, doves regularly take to flight, the sudden termination of tracks being a useful pointer differentiating their tracks from those of mesites, which are very rarely interrupted by flight (unless you hire a guide to achieve this result). Thirdly, the gap between prints is shorter, usually 10–30 mm. Lastly, the direction of walking is much more irregular in doves than mesites, the former meandering in many tight curves, while the latter are more often in straight lines (see Fig 1). All of these criteria require some caution in their application as mesites can sometimes walk along roads or paths, forage or sing in apparently aimless convolutions and take flight when disturbed.

Only two other columbids occur in the spiny forest: Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, which has tiny feet, and should not be confused with any of the species treated here, and Madagascar Green-Pigeon *Treron australis*, which very rarely descends to the ground.

Running Coua *Coua cursor* and Green-capped Coua *Coua ruficeps* *olivaceiceps*

Of the three species of coua in the spiny forest, Crested Coua *Coua cristata* is arboreal and rarely, if ever, leaves tracks. The two terrestrial couas, however, are both very common and possess similar foot structures. Both are immediately recognisable because of their zygodactylic feet that create small asymmetric crosses on the sand (see Fig 1). Couas have a shorter instep than outstep; that is the pair of toes closest to the opposite foot are shorter than the pair of toes furthest from the opposite foot. Care should be taken to check several prints as some can appear (through erosion or overlap with other prints) to have a single hind toe, or three forward-pointing toes, and are then potentially mistaken for mesite tracks. Once established as a coua, specific identity is based on size. The smaller of the duo is Running Coua, with an instep of 30–43 mm, an outstep of 42–48 mm and a width of 18–28 mm. Its larger cousin normally has an instep of 44–56 mm, an outstep of 58–78 mm and a width of 31–37 mm. There should thus be no confusion between tracks of the two.

Long-tailed Ground-Roller *Uratelornis chimaera*

This species leaves rather odd tracks, which can be identified with practise on the basis of several criteria. Its footprints are relatively small for its size (35–45 mm in length), but surprisingly far apart due to its long legs. The angle between the fore toes is variable, with some prints having these three toes fairly close together and others being more splayed (23–33 mm in width). For some reason, each fore toe often makes an unusual blob-shaped impression (see Fig 1). Another distinctive feature is the fairly short hind toe (13–17 mm) that is usually characteristically angled to the side.

Long-tailed Ground-Roller is encountered incredibly rarely in daylight; in c10 months of fieldwork at Mangily and PK32 we almost never met an individual that was not either singing or near a nest-burrow. Despite this its tracks and nests are quite easy to find and offer a much better means of determining its presence. That its tracks are often found in the centre of straight sandy roads where it is very rarely seen in daylight suggests that the species is more active nocturnally. This was proven during transects in the Mikea Forest after dark; several times we came across this fabulous ground-roller on forest roads.

Madagascar Hoopoe *Upupa marginata*

Prints left by the hoopoe are similar to mesite tracks, but considerably smaller and of slightly different structure. Their overall length is shorter (usually 48–57 mm), but more noticeably the outer toes are held at a more acute angle from the mid-line, making the foot overall less broad (usually 23–29 mm). The toes leave a slim impression and the long hind toe is in line with the central fore toe. 🦉

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2



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Figure 1 Rodrigues Warbler *Acrocephalus rodericanus*

Figure 2 Rodrigues Warbler *Acrocephalus rodericanus*

Figure 3 Rodrigues Fody *Foudia flavicans*

All photos by Dave A. Showler

Bird observations on the Indian Ocean island of Rodrigues, March–June 1999

Dave A. Showler

Quand l'île de Rodrigues fut colonisée par l'homme, en 1691, elle comptait au moins 17 espèces de vertébrés endémiques, dont 12 oiseaux, quatre reptiles et une roussette. Toutes, sauf trois, sont maintenant éteintes. L'extinction de cette faune est supposée avoir été provoquée par la destruction de la forêt indigène et la prédation par des mammifères introduits. Les trois espèces encore présentes, le Foudi de Rodrigues *Foudia flavicans*, la Rousserolle de Rodrigues *Acrocephalus rodericanus* et la Roussette de Rodrigues *Pteropus rodericensis*, sont considérées comme étant menacées. Les populations du foudi et de la rousserolle ont été recensées du 31 mars au 5 juin 1999; l'habitat occupé a également été étudié. La population du foudi a été estimée à au moins 911 individus et celle de la rousserolle à au moins 150. La végétation ligneuse indigène ayant complètement disparu, les deux espèces survivent dans des zones dominées par des arbres et arbustes introduits. Malgré le fait que leurs effectifs aient augmenté de façon significative depuis la fin des années 1960, principalement à cause de la régénération de la végétation ligneuse, leur expansion est probablement limitée par la prédation des mammifères introduits et les effets négatifs des cyclones. Les oiseaux indigènes et introduits observés pendant les recensements sont brièvement présentés et des détails sont fournis sur deux espèces occasionnelles, le Chevalier de Sibérie *Heteroscelus brevipes* et le Martinet épineux *Hirundapus caudacutus*, observées pour la première fois sur l'île.

Introduction

Rodrigues is one of the world's most ecologically degraded tropical oceanic islands¹⁴. At least 17 species of endemic vertebrate—a fruit bat, 12 birds, two giant tortoises and two day-geckos—have inhabited the island. Now all but three are extinct⁵. The extant species, Rodrigues Fody *Foudia flavicans*, Rodrigues Warbler *Acrocephalus rodericanus* and Rodrigues Fruit-bat *Pteropus rodericensis* are all threatened^{13,24} (see Appendix 1 for list of extinct bird species). The almost total extinction of the vertebrate fauna is considered to have primarily occurred through a combination of destruction of native forest and predation by introduced mammals. A similar fate has befallen the flora and fauna of many other isolated islands. Today there is no remaining native forest and all but two of the 36–38 endemic flowering plant taxa are Endangered²⁷. In 1999, surveys of the two surviving endemic birds were undertaken by Andy Impey (studying the fody) and DAS (the warbler). The survey results are summarised, along with observations of other non-endemic indigenous and naturalised birds, and two vagrants previously unrecorded on the island.

Geography and topography

Rodrigues is the most remote of the Mascarenes (which also comprise Mauritius and Réunion), situated in the Indian Ocean, almost 1,500 km east of Madagascar. It is 18.3 km x 8.5 km, with an area of

110 km². Terrain is mostly hilly, the highest point being 396 m. There is a 7-km central ridge on an east–west axis that averages c300 m in altitude¹⁹, from which numerous steep-sided valleys radiate seaward. Rodrigues is volcanic in origin and geologically the youngest of the Mascarenes at c2.5 million years old¹⁹. It is surrounded by a coral reef, within which lie 18 small islets. Beyond is a shallow 7–20 km-wide submerged shelf and it appears that during the most recent ice age Rodrigues covered a much larger area than at present⁷, perhaps accounting for the high number of endemic species on such a small, young island²⁸. Rodrigues was probably entirely forested prior to human colonisation in 1691²⁷. Today c25% consists of rough grassland, with scrub and occasional trees, grazed by free-ranging domestic cattle and goats; one-third is cultivated; and 7% 'forest reserve' (planted for watershed and soil protection)¹⁷, but this comprises almost entirely introduced species, with only a few scattered native trees and shrubs. Rodrigues is densely populated, with over 35,000 inhabitants (323/km²) in 1999¹⁵ and human dwellings are scattered throughout the island.

Rodrigues Fody and Rodrigues Warbler

Rodrigues Warbler is considered Endangered D1 (population <250 mature individuals) and Rodrigues Fody Vulnerable D1: D2 (population <1,000 mature individuals; area of occupancy <100 km²)²⁴. Historical records suggest that both were formerly common

and probably distributed throughout the island^{16,22}. Both are thought to have reached all-time population lows in the late 1960s due primarily to deforestation, but also to the devastating effects of Cyclone Monica, which struck in March 1968. Immediately following this the fody population was thought to be just 5–6 pairs and the warbler to have been ‘almost wiped out’²⁵, as three observers failed to find any in December 1969. However, some survived and subsequently Alès, based on limited coverage, estimated a population of no more than 30 individuals in 1971–2¹⁰. In 1999, during 31 March to 5 June, ten intensive week-long population censuses and habitat-use surveys, by Andy Impey (of *F. flavicans*) and DAS (*A. rodericanus*), were undertaken. Both species’ ecologies are poorly known and the only previous comprehensive censuses were undertaken by Cheke⁵ in 1974–5, with sporadic surveys of limited coverage since, which nonetheless have indicated a gradual increase in numbers of both species.

Rodrigues Warbler survey results

A census technique was devised using an amalgamation of point counts and playback of warbler song, and tail-feather moult/re-growth characteristics to enable recognition of individuals in the field. At least 103 warblers in nine wooded localities were observed. Extrapolating from this, based on the area of available habitat, a minimum population of 150 birds was estimated, with a maximum population of c200. It occurs in hills and valleys in the central uplands from c150 m, though mostly above 200 m, to the summit of Mont Limon at 396 m. Most individuals (78%) and the highest densities (2.3/ha) were in scrub and woodland dominated by an introduced invasive tree, *Syzygium jambos* (jamrosa), native to south-east Asia. It was formerly extensively planted on the island for watershed protection. Other woody species commonly found in habitat occupied by the warbler include *Litsea glutinosa*, another introduced invasive tree from south-east Asia, and *Psidium cattleianum* (guava), native to South America. Vegetation analysis indicates that a dense structure of small branches is an important habitat feature, and that low-intensity cutting may promote the growth of new shoots thus perpetuating the vegetation structure favoured by Rodrigues Warbler. The species was occasionally found at low densities in plantations dominated by *Swietenia mahogany* (mahogany), *Tabebuia pallida* (tecoma) and *Araucaria cunninghamii* (Norfolk Island Pine)²⁰.

Rodrigues Fody survey results

Territory mapping employing the Common Birds Census technique was used to census the fody. Three hundred and thirty-four territories were mapped, representing a minimum breeding population of 334 pairs. Additionally, 58 unpaired males, 85 juveniles and 100 sub-adult (grey-plumaged) birds were recorded, giving a minimum population estimate of 911 individuals. Over 60% were in tall, mixed exotic forest where densities reached 8/ha; 14% were in more open, patchy forest. Despite not being considered ideal habitat, *Syzygium jambos*-dominated areas supported 13% of the population. Fody densities increased significantly with tree height, canopy cover and tree species diversity¹². Like the warbler, most were observed in the central uplands, but it is more widespread and was occasionally observed at low altitudes near the north coast.

Conservation outlook

Provided existing areas of tall mixed forest are safeguarded, the future for the fody appears bright¹². The warbler’s situation is more problematic. It has obviously benefited from woodland regeneration over the last three decades, but other population-limiting factors, eg predation by introduced predators such as rats *Rattus rattus* and *R. norvegicus* and cats *Felis catus*, low food availability etc, may be suppressing population growth²⁰. In an attempt to bolster their numbers, translocating birds to the ecologically rehabilitated, predator-free islets of Île aux Sables and Île Coco, 3 km off the west coast of the main island, is being considered (C Jones pers comm 1999). In light of the lack of other conservation options it is a strategy worth considering. More research into the ecology of both species is desirable, especially factors constraining distribution, breeding success and survival.

Observations of naturalised birds

Nine or 10 species (including Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*) of bird are generally considered to have become fully naturalised on Rodrigues following introduction^{3,5,9,25}. Of these one, Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis canus* has been eradicated, and Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*, previously more widespread, now appears mostly tied to human habitation. Eight introductions can currently be considered fully naturalised: Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*, Feral Pigeon, Barred Ground Dove *Geopelia striata*, Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*, Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Madagascar Fody *Foudia madagascariensis* and Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*. All are widespread and fairly common to abun-

dant, with the exception of *F. pondicerianus*, which appears scarce and local. A summary of introduction dates derived from early accounts of visitors to the island, taken mostly from Staub²⁵ and Cheke³, and notes on current status based on observations in 1999, is presented below:

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*

The date of the first successful introduction is unknown but was probably 1862⁵, possibly earlier³. Reported by Slater in 1874²², by which time it was well established⁵. It has been hunted to protect maize *Zea mays* crops⁵ and for food⁹. Though not observed by Impey or myself it was reported to occur around St Francois and Point Cotton (east Rodrigues) in *Acacia eburnea* and *Lantana camara* scrub (J Marla pers comm 1999). Droppings, presumably of this species, were observed on Île Frégate on 22 May 1999. This island, situated 750 m off the south-west coast, was formerly stocked with francolin for hunting purposes (A Maljković pers comm 1999).

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Introduced between 1803 and 1832³. In 1857 it was considered plentiful in the north, centre and west of the island²⁵ but by 1916 it was becoming rare, apparently due to nest predation by feral pigs⁵. Like *F. pondicerianus*, it was hunted to protect crops²⁵ and was eradicated shortly before 1964⁵. However, in 1999, a pair of free-ranging guinea fowl with young was observed on Mont Malartic with domestic hens, and a pair was observed at La Source throughout April–May. It is possible that it could again establish a feral population.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Introduced between 1874 and 1916. Nesting has been observed on cliffs at Cascade Victoire, on the east coast, and elsewhere³. Widespread but not common on the island in 1999.

Barred Ground Dove *Geopelia striata*

According to Bertuchi, released in 1862⁵, but Vinson²⁹ suggests that it was introduced as early as 1764²⁵. This small dove is very common, especially in open woodland, at all altitudes. Flocks of 30–33 were observed around La Source, and another of 72 was seen at Mt Cimetière in April–May 1999.

Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis canus*

Tafforet, in 1725, briefly mentioned a third species of Psittacidae that he observed on Rodrigues and some authors, eg Staub²⁵, consider this evidence of an early introduction of *A. canus*. Cheke^{3,5} argues against this,

believing Tafforet was describing a female *Psittacula exsul* and that it was probably introduced in 1862. It was abundant until 1956, becoming scarce following this, apparently due to a cyclone in 1957⁵ and persecution to protect maize crops³ furthered its demise. Local people reported a few persisting on Île Gombrani (1 km off the south coast) in 1970²⁶ and in Cascade St Louis in 1974³. The last record is thought to be of one in September 1974^{3,5}, though Friedmann *et al*⁶ mention it to be 'now very rare', without further details. It was not observed in 1999 and appears to have been eradicated from Rodrigues.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*

According to Vinson, introduced around 1764²⁵, but the precise date is uncertain, with no definite record before 1964^{3,5}. In 1999 it was observed singly and in pairs throughout most of the island. They appeared to favour drier, more exposed areas, eg along the coastal strip in localities planted with *Casuarina equisetifolia*, and inland on open wooded ridges and hillsides, again with *Casuarina* but also other introduced trees such as *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, *Tabebuia pallida* and *Terminalia arjuna*. In April, one was observed, on Mt Cimetière, using the tall flowering spike of an aloe *Furcraea foetida* as a song post.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

According to Vinson introduced around 1764²⁵ but dated as between 1803 and 1864 by Cheke^{3,5}. It is now very common in open woodland and cultivated areas at all altitudes throughout the island. Birds were frequently observed carrying nesting material (blades of grass) in April and early May. Three were also seen on Île Frégate in May 1999.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Apparently first mentioned by Marragon in 1795²⁵, but considered to have been introduced between 1874 and 1916 by Cheke^{3,5}. It is common in open woodland, cultivated areas and around villages and other habitation throughout the island. Also observed on Île Coco.

Madagascar Fody *Foudia madagascariensis*

According to Moreau this fody reached Rodrigues sometime after 1865²⁵, although Cheke³ suggests that it was introduced between 1874 and 1916. It is common in open woodland and cultivated areas throughout the island.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Possibly unsuccessfully introduced between 1795 and 1825, but repeated introduction attempts for

crop-pest control purposes reportedly failed, according to Hoart²⁵. Successful introduction is considered to have occurred between 1864 and 1874^{3,5}. It is now common in woodland, cultivated areas and villages throughout the island. A large communal roost (several hundred) was noted in a large banyan tree *Ficus benghalensis* in the main town of Port Mathurin on the north coast. Five were seen on Île Frégate in May 1999.

Observations of indigenous birds

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

An old nest probably of this species among large boulders on Île Frégate, on 22 May 1999. 'Fouquet' (the Creole name for shearwater) reportedly fly to the island at night, according to a local boatman, but it was unclear if any were breeding in 1999. Feral cats are present on this islet (many scats were observed), but it is possible that a small breeding colony persists. A cat-eradication programme was initiated in 1999. This shearwater previously bred on many islets²⁵ but was probably confined to Frégate as early as 1825³.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

A colony of c10 pairs breeds on inland cliffs at Cascade Victoire where *P. lepturus* also nests (C Jones pers comm 1999). A max. count of 13 was made here in May 1999.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

A colony of c20 pairs breeds at Cascade Victoire (C Jones pers comm 1999). A max. count of eight was made here in May 1999. Three were seen over Île Coco also in May, and singles occasionally over the main island throughout the survey. Reported to probably breed at Anse Baleine and Rivière Bouteille³ but these localities were not visited in 1999.

Green Heron *Butorides striatus*

The race *B. s. javanicus* occurs on Rodrigues¹¹ and is a common resident along streams, rivers, around dams and on the coast. At least ten were observed on Île Coco on 12 May 1999.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

One on the beach at Port Sud Est on 25 April and two at Baix aux Huitres on 27 April 1999.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

One at Anse Mourouk on 18 April and 6 May; two on the beach at Port Sud Est on 25 April; five on a sand bank off Île Coco on 12 May 1999.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

One between Port Sud Est and Point Cotton on 18 April, and two on Île Coco on 12 May 1999.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Three at Anse Mourouk with at least five more between Port Sud Est and Point Cotton on 18 April; 15 along coast in vicinity of Anse Mourouk and Port Sud Est on 25 April; one at Anse Mourouk on 6 May and two on 13 May; and six on a sand bank off Île Coco on 12 May 1999.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Singles at Anse Mourouk on 25 April, 6 May and 13 May, and one at Baix aux Huitres (west of Port Mathurin) on 27 April 1999.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

The most numerous wader: max. 33 at Anse Mourouk on 18 April, with 19 at Port Sud Est on 25 April, and three on a sand bank c250 m south-east off Île Coco on 12 May 1999.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One adult and one immature off Baie Pistache on 12 May 1999 were distinguished from *S. bergii* by the slimmer, orange bill and paler upperparts. This may constitute the first record, though it was listed by Hartlaub, quoting Newton who referred to *Sterna velox*³. Hartlaub uses the synonym *S. velox* in discussion of both crested terns, complicating matters by adding a third 'species' *bernsteini*, but there is no reason to suppose that Newton was using *velox* to denote anything other than *S.bergii/bernsteini*³.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*

Breeding colony on beach at south-west tip of Île Coco, with 200+ adults and juveniles (including some incubating/brooding young) on 12 May 1999.

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*

Breeding colony on beach at southern tip of Île Coco: 200+ adults (some incubating) and juveniles, and 45 fledglings on 12 May 1999. A total of 4,620 nests was counted in August 1991¹.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

Breeding colony on ground and in *Casuarina equisetifolia* on Île Coco numbered 200+ adults and juveniles on 12 May 1999. A total of 288 nests was counted in 1991¹.

Fairy Tern *Gygis alba*

Ten to 20 pairs breed on Île aux Sables (C Jones pers comm 1999). At least five were around nearby Île Coco (1.25 km to the south of Sables) on 12 May 1999.

Vagrants

Two species were recorded for the first time on Rodrigues. These are considered vagrants (having been recorded fewer than 10 times) to the region encompassing Madagascar, the Seychelles, the Comoro and the Mascarenes²¹.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*

One in a silt inlet recently planted with mangrove at Anse Mourouk on 18 April 1999. Presumably the same bird seen again on the beach at Port Sud Est, 500 m to the west of the first sighting, on 25 April. Prolonged views were obtained but only upon hearing the distinctive two-note call was it positively distinguished from *H. incanus*.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

One was observed flying around the vicinity of Mont Malartic on 26 April 1999 and was present at the same locality on the following two days. Easily distinguished from other *Hirundapus* species by the combination of strongly contrasting white throat, pale lores and pale 'saddle'.

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Appendix 1. Extinct endemic birds of Rodrigues. (Sources: Diamond⁵ and Stattersfield & Capper²⁴)

Scientific name	English name	Last recorded
<i>Nycticorax megacephalus</i>	Rodrigues Night-heron	1726
<i>Aphanapteryx leguati</i>	Rodrigues Rail	1726
<i>Pezophaps solitaria</i>	Rodrigues Solitaire	1761
<i>Alectroenas rodericana</i> ¹	Rodrigues Pigeon	1726
<i>Psittacula exsul</i>	Newton's Parakeet	1875
<i>Necropsittacus rodericanus</i>	Rodrigues Parrot	1761
<i>Mascarenotus murivorus</i>	Rodrigues Owl	1726
<i>Hypsipetes</i> sp.	bulbul	Known only from sub-fossil bones
<i>Necrospar rodericanus</i>	Rodrigues Starling	1726
<i>Rodriguities microcarina</i>	unknown affinity	Known only from sub-fossil bones

¹May warrant a monotypic genus, but further work is required.

Appendix 2. Checklist of the birds of Rodrigues.

Compiled by Dave A. Showler and Anthony Cheke

The checklist is intended to be as complete and up to date as possible, and includes introduced species considered fully naturalised (or formerly so). Extinct endemics are listed separately in Appendix 1. Rodrigues is an ornithologically very under-watched island and previously unrecorded species, especially seabirds and waders, are to be expected. Seabirds observed in nearby waters include Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes* and Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*³. Two calidrids, either Red Knot *Calidris canutus* or Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*, at Port Sud Est in 1999, could not be conclusively identified. Details of additional species are welcome. The checklist is compiled from two primary references; Staub²⁵ and Cheke³, with the addition of Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* in 1982 (C Jones pers comm), Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata*, recorded for the first time in 1986¹⁹, Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* in 1997, and Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* and White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*, observed in 1999.

Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire⁶ published the most recent bird checklist for Rodrigues. Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* was omitted from this list, but its presence as a breeding bird on Rodrigues is well known. Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* was also omitted, probably on the basis that while formerly naturalised it had been eradicated by the early 1960s⁵. However, some free-ranging birds were observed in 1999 (see Observations of naturalised birds above) and we therefore include it here. The occurrence/status of four species listed by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire requires clarification.

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche (Diomedea) chlororhynchos*

An immature albatross beached following a cyclone in December 1972 was initially identified as a Yellow-nosed and was listed as such by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire. However, subsequent examination of a photograph of the bird demonstrates this identification to be incorrect. It was thereafter considered to be an immature Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche (=Diomedea) melanophrys*² but the virtually identical Campbell Albatross *T. impavida* (recently raised to species rank) could not be eliminated. Further examination suggests that it is more likely an immature Shy Albatross *T. cauta* (or *eremita/salvini*, which have also recently been accorded species rank), but it cannot be assigned further. It is therefore included as *Thalassarche* sp. below.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Incorrectly listed as a native resident. The species has never been native on any of the Mascarenes and it appears probable that Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire wrongly quoted Staub 1973²⁵, who discussed it for Mauritius, in a section on introduced birds. Colin reported 12 'quails' (species unknown) released on Rodrigues in the 1860s, which were rapidly 'destroyed by wild cats'⁵. This appears to be the only reference to quails on Rodrigues and therefore *C. coturnix* is omitted from the checklist.

Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis canus*

Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire list it as 'record definitely rejected' referencing Diamond⁵ as the source. This is erroneous as Cheke (in Diamond)⁵ discusses its introduction (see above) and given the several references concerning this lovebird on Rodrigues^{9,25} its former presence as a naturalised species is apparent.

Java Sparrow *Pada oryzivora*

Listed by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire as 'occurrence requires proof'. Staub²³ is quoted, but like Common Quail the species is clearly mentioned only for Mauritius. Slater²² reported a few Java Sparrow on Rodrigues, but this is considered a short-lived introduction as the species was not recorded by others⁵. It is therefore omitted here.

The following species, sometimes considered as having occurred in Rodrigues, are rejected on the following rationale.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Indicated as occurring by Sinclair & Landgrand²¹ based on observations in February 1997 by R Charles (I Sinclair pers comm 2001). No further details.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Rejected as there is no confirmed record; Newton¹⁶ thought he saw a curlew (but was uncertain) as did Rountree in 1943³. Whimbrel is regular on Rodrigues, thus it is possible that these records refer to this species. However, Curlew is a regular visitor to Mauritius and can be expected on Rodrigues.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleuca*

Indicated as occurring by Sinclair & Landgrand²¹ based on observations in February 1997 by R Charles (I Sinclair pers comm 2001). Occurrence expected as it is a common visitor to Mauritius²⁶.

Checklist of the Birds of Rodrigues

Scientific name	English	Creole (French)	Status
<i>Thalassarche (Diomedea)</i> albatross sp.		(albatros)	V: an immature found alive on a beach following a cyclone in 1972. Examination of a photo shows it to be a sub-adult <i>T. melanophris</i> ³ (or <i>impavida</i>), or Shy Albatross <i>T. cauta</i> (or <i>eremita/salvini</i>)
<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	Light-mantled Sooty Albatross	(Albatros fuligineux)	V: an emaciated bird on the south coast in July 1986 ¹⁸
<i>Macronectes giganteus/halli</i>	Southern Giant Petrel/ Northern Giant Petrel	(Fulmar géant/ Fulmar de Hall)	V: one collected following a cyclone in 1956; specimen subsequently rotted and species not determined ³
<i>Pterodroma barau</i>	Barau's Petrel	Fuke, 'fouquet' (Pétrel de Barau)	?: one record of confirmed breeding; at Quatre Vents, in 1974 ^{3,5}
<i>Pterodroma aterrima</i>	Mascarene Petrel	Fuke, 'fouquet' (Pétrel de Bourbon)	Only documented evidence is a mandible found in Plaine Corail caves in 19th century ³
<i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	Wedge-tailed Shearwater	Fuke, 'fouquet' (Puffin Fouquet)	?: formerly bred on several offshore islets. Probably confined to Île Frégate by 1825, where it possibly still breeds ^{3,26}
<i>Puffinus tenuirostris</i>	Short-tailed Shearwater	(Puffin à bec grêle)	V: one found alive on a beach in June 1974 ²³
<i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>	Red-tailed Tropicbird	Paille-en-queue [ruz], payañke [ruz] (Phaéton à brins rouges)	Local breeder (c10 pairs)
<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>	White-tailed Tropicbird	Paille-en-queue, payañke (Phaéton à bec jaune)	Local breeder (c20 pairs)
<i>Sula sula</i>	Red-footed Booby	Fu, tratra (Fou à pieds rouges)	Extirpated: formerly bred on Île Frégate (and possibly other islets), but no longer nesting by 1916 ^{3,4}
<i>Papasula abbotti</i>	Abbott's Booby	Bef, 'bœuf' (Fou d'Abbot)	Extirpated: formerly bred. Probably survived until 1857 ^{3,4}
<i>Fregata minor</i>	Greater Frigatebird	Fregat, 'frégate' (Frégate du Pacifique)	Perhaps formerly bred (see <i>F. ariel</i>). Only one definite record; an adult male over the sea near Île Coco in 1942 ³
<i>Fregata ariel</i>	Lesser Frigatebird	Fregat, 'frégate' (Frégate ariel)	<i>F. ariel</i> and/or <i>F. minor</i> formerly bred on Île Frégate, where last reported nesting in 1795. Several observations of unidentified frigatebirds since, but only one specific record; one collected following a cyclone in 1956 ^{3,25}
<i>Butorides striatus</i>	Green Heron	Bégasse, gasse (Héron vert)	Common R
<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>	Lesser Flamingo	(Flamant nain)	V: two at Baie aux Huitres in 1923 ³
<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Garganey	(Sarcelle d'été)	V: two following a cyclone in January 1945 ³
<i>Numida meleagris</i>	Helmeted Guineafowl	Peñtad, 'pintade' (Pintade de Numidie)	R, I: formerly naturalised, now only occasional free-ranging birds
<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	Grey Francolin	Perdzi, perdrix, 'perduit' (Francolin gris)	R, I: uncommon

<i>Porphyrio alleni</i>	Allen's Gallinule	(Talève d'Allen)	V: one in December 1873; specimen in Newton collection, Cambridge ³
<i>Dromas ardeola</i>	Crab Plover	(Drome ardéole)	?M ¹ : uncommon
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Ringed Plover	(Pluvier grand-gravelot)	?V: recorded in February 1997 by R Charles (I Sinclair pers comm)
<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Greater Sand Plover	(Pluvier de Leschenault)	?M: rare/irregular
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover	Zalwet (Pluvier argenté)	M: on coast in small numbers
<i>Calidris alba</i>	Sanderling	alouette de mer (Bécasseau sanderling)	M: small numbers year-round, mostly on offshore islets ²
<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Little Stint	(Bécasseau minute)	?M ¹ : rare/irregular
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Curlew Sandpiper	Zalwet (Bécasseau cocorli)	M: occurs year-round, mostly on offshore islets ^{1,3,25}
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	(Barge rousse)	?M ¹
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel	Korbizo, 'corbiseau' (Courlis corlieu)	M: on coast in small numbers, mostly summer visitor ³ , with a few winter records ¹⁸
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Greenshank	Zalwet (Chevalier aboyeur)	M: on coast in small numbers
<i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	Grey-tailed Tattler	(Chevalier de Sibère)	V: one on south coast, in April 1999
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	(Chevalier guignette)	?V: recorded in February 1997 by R Charles (I Sinclair pers comm)
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	Zalwet, eswifes (Tornepierre à collier)	M: present year-round, considered the commonest wader ³
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roseate Tern	Golân, 'golon' (Sterne de Dougall)	?: probably sporadic breeder on various offshore islets ^{3,25}
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Greater Crested Tern	Golân, malen (Sterne huppée)	?: one record, Slater in 1874 collected two ^{3,25} , but also reported by local fishermen ²
<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Lesser Crested Tern	(Sterne voyageuse)	M?: uncommon
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern	(Sterne pierregarin)	?: one definite record, two on 1 March 1982 (C Jones pers comm)
<i>Sterna fuscata</i>	Sooty Tern	Golet, yéyé, 'goilette' (Sterne fuligineuse)	Local breeder on offshore islets
<i>Sterna albifrons/saundersi</i>	Little Tern/Saunders' Tern	(Sterne naine /Sterne de Saunders)	?V: recorded in 1991 off Île Coco ¹
<i>Anous tenuirostris</i>	Lesser Noddy	Malen, marianne (Noddi marianne)	Local breeder on offshore islets
<i>Anous stolidus</i>	Brown Noddy	Malen, macoua (Noddi brun)	Local breeder on offshore islets
<i>Gygis alba</i>	Fairy Tern	Golet blân, golon, 'goilette' (Gygis blanche)	Uncommon local breeder on offshore islets (10–20 pairs)
<i>Columba livia</i>	Feral Pigeon	Pizoñ (Pigeon biset)	R, I: fairly common, widespread
<i>Geopelia striata</i>	Barred Ground Dove	Tutrel, çettel, 'tourterelle' (Géopélie zébrée)	R, I: common, widespread
<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>	Madagascar Turtle-Dove	(Pigeon de Madagascar)	Extirpated, but recently confirmed as having been a native (see <i>Smithsonian Contrib. Paleobiol.</i> 89: 1–38)
<i>Agapornis canus</i>	Grey-headed Lovebird	Perrîçe, peris (Inséperable à tête grise)	Introduced in 1862, common until 1956, but last reported in 1974 ³
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	White-throated Needletail	(Martinet épineux)	V: one in April 1999
<i>Acrocephalus rodericanus</i>	Rodrigues Warbler	Zwazo loñbek, zoiseau longbec, 'fauvette'	ER: min. population c150 birds in 1999, local
<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Common Mynah	Marteñ, 'martin' (Martin triste)	R, I: common, widespread
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Mwano, 'moineau' (Moineau domestique)	R, I: common, widespread
<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	Madagascan Fody	Kardinal, seriñ ruz (Cardinal Rouge de Madagascar)	R, I: common, widespread
<i>Foudia flavicans</i>	Rodrigues Fody	Zoiseau zaune, seriñ zon (Foude de Rodrigues)	ER: min. population 911 birds in 1999, local
<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	Common Waxbill	Beñgali, bengali (Astrild ondulé)	R, I: common, widespread
<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	Yellow-fronted Canary	Sereñ, serin (Serin du Pays)	R, I: uncommon but widespread

Key: E—Endemic, I—Introduced, M—Passage migrant, R—Resident, V—Vagrant, ?—Status uncertain.

Note on vernacular names: Creole names (somewhat variable and spellings may vary due to transliteration difficulties) taken from Cheke³ and pers comm (2001), Friedmann *et al*⁸ and Staub²⁵.

Large concentrations of White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Lutembe Bay, Lake Victoria

Achilles Byarubanga, Julius Arinaitwe and Charles Williams

Un nombre extrêmement important de Guifettes leucoptères *Chlidonias leucopterus* a été observé ces dernières années à Lutembe Bay, sur la rive ougandaise du Lac Victoria. Des dénombrements faits le soir ont révélé l'importance de ce site pour l'espèce. Les effectifs les plus importants étaient de c2,5 millions d'oiseaux, au début du mois de décembre 1999, et de 2 millions, en février–mars 2000. A cela il faut ajouter un million d'oiseaux dénombrés à Maramba Bay, mi–mars 2000. Récemment, 1,5 million d'oiseaux ont été rapportés du Parc National Reine Elizabeth, en Ouganda occidental. La population mondiale, qui était précédemment estimée à 1,25–1,5 million d'oiseaux, paraît donc avoir été sérieusement sous-estimée. Les méthodes utilisées pour dénombrer les oiseaux au dortoir à Lutembe Bay sont examinées.

Lutembe Bay lies on the Ugandan shore of Lake Victoria, c15 km north-east of Entebbe and on the west side of Murchison Bay. It is a shallow, papyrus-fringed bay of c5 km² with numerous low mud islands and is important for a variety of tern, gull and other waterbird species. In 1999 NatureUganda identified it as one of Uganda's 30 Important Bird Areas (IBAs), on the strength of large concentrations of White-winged Black *Chlidonias leucopterus* and Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* and records of two Near-threatened species, Papyrus Gonolek *Laniarius mufumbiri* and Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex*¹. Large flocks of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* use the bay and there is an unconfirmed report of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris* from the site, which is considered Vulnerable. Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*, a mainly coastal species, has also been increasing in numbers at Lutembe since 1998².

Until October 1999 regular waterbird counts were undertaken in the morning at Lutembe, when up to c200,000 White-winged Black Tern were recorded. Subsequently, evening counts have revealed the true importance of the bay's mud islands as roost sites for the species. Numbers rose from c1 million, in November 1999, to a peak of c2.5 million, in early December 1999, and 2 million in February–March 2000. An additional 1 million were estimated at Mabamba Bay, c15 km away, on one evening in mid-March 2000. These extremely high totals give credence to an earlier record of c1 million White-winged Black Terns at Lutembe (by AB)¹ and a recent report from Queen Elizabeth National Park, western Uganda, of a flock of 1.5 million⁵. These totals also indicate that an estimated world population of 1.25–1.5 million and the Asia/African flyway total of c250,000³ are massive underestimates.

Lutembe Bay is a difficult area to count accurately. There are 20–30 mud islands depending on the water level. Because of the fringing swamp and local topography there is no high vantage point close enough to count from, so one has to count island-by-island from a boat. The low angle of view makes it easy to underestimate numbers of resting birds, while flocks on the wing are so large and fast moving as to be impossible to accurately estimate. Therefore, while



Map of Uganda showing the position of Lutembe Bay, Lake Victoria

satisfied that our counts are of the right order of magnitude, we are seeking to improve their accuracy. Counting birds as they come in to roost at the mouth of the bay is very difficult because flocks frequently fly back out over Lake Victoria before settling for the night. Nonetheless, it was possible to detect birds against the night sky and we estimated their numbers as they flew past according to units of time and then multiplied this by the total period over which birds were observed arriving at the roost site. Apart from aerial photography of the entire roost site, our best chance of obtaining better estimates may be to use a good high-speed SLR camera to photograph flocks on individual islands as they take flight. Counts from the photos could then be compared with estimates of the same flock at rest immediately before.

The overall number and variety of waterbirds at Lutembe offer a dramatic wildlife spectacle close to Kampala making it a potential site for ecotourism. The question of how to provide suitable viewing points without increasing disturbance must be ad-

ressed. The site is unprotected and horticultural and tourist development around the bay pose potential threats. ♀

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Occurrence of Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* at non-forest feeding sites in South Africa: threats to a declining population

Craig T. Symes and Colleen T. Downs

Il est estimé que moins de 500 individus du Perroquet robuste *Poicephalus robustus* survivent dans les forêts montagneuses du sud-est de l'Afrique du Sud. L'espèce est menacée par la destruction de son habitat, la persécution mal intentionnée, la capture pour le commerce illégal et, peut-être, par des maladies. Cette espèce principalement forestière se nourrit également en dehors du milieu forestier; ce comportement a été observé dans toute la zone de distribution et est probablement lié à une pénurie saisonnière de fruits en forêt. Des petits rassemblements à certains sites, dont l'importance est mise en lumière, pourraient être constitués d'oiseaux provenant d'un aire plus vaste. À cette époque, l'espèce est particulièrement vulnérable et menacée par la persécution des braconniers. La disparition d'un petit nombre d'individus pourrait avoir un effet négatif significatif sur les chances de survie à long terme de l'espèce dans la nature.

Introduction

Cape (Brown-necked) Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* occurs in a discontinuous belt through the naturally fragmented indigenous forests of south-eastern South Africa, from Fort Beaufort in Eastern Cape Province to the Karkloof of KwaZulu-Natal Province¹⁷. A relict population is found 600 km north in forests on the eastern escarpment around Tzaneen, Mpumalanga Province^{6,17}. Its distribution was possibly once continuous, as historical records for regions between these two populations exist²². Like many other parrot species, habitat destruction and capture of birds for illegal trade have resulted in population declines¹⁴. Additional threats to wild populations include disease and shooting of birds as pests¹⁴.

Of recent concern has been the report of Cape Parrots being shot or captured at feeding sites away from indigenous forest patches. 'Problem birds' causing significant damage to commercial pecan-nut crops have been shot. Recently, at a site in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands, c20 individuals were reportedly captured at an orchard, but prosecution of the alleged perpetrators was unsuccessful. With c200 birds in the area, this may have significant implications on wild populations.

Skead¹² estimated as few as 600 Cape Parrots remaining in the Eastern Cape and recent estimates of the total wild Cape Parrot population are of no more than 1,000 birds, with possibly fewer than 500^{5,7}. However, misconceptions persist, with overly optimistic impressions of the number of remaining birds being garnered from the occurrence of large flocks at profitable food sources²⁰. These gatherings occur

away from forests and can involve flocks of up to 200 individuals²⁰.

A study in KwaZulu-Natal noted that Cape Parrot is a dietary specialist, feeding mainly on yellowwoods *Podocarpus* spp.²¹. Though Cape Parrot is an Afromontane forest specialist^{10,15}, it has adapted to using exotic and indigenous food sources outside forests¹⁸. In addition, dead yellowwoods, especially Outeniqua Yellowwood *P. falcatus*, are used as socialising points in forests and natural cavities as nesting sites²⁰. Yellowwoods were formerly heavily logged and the effects of this activity are probably evident. Food trees have been reduced in many forests and there are few extant large dead trees capable of providing appropriate nest cavities for this relatively large parrot. Also, South African Afromontane forests have irregular fruit production and occasional periods of low food productivity^{8,16,21}. Cape Parrot is therefore reliant on additional food sources during such periods²¹. Here, we highlight the importance of pecan-nut and alternative food sources in the diet of Cape Parrot, and the consequences of large flocks gathering at these and other feeding sites.

Methods

Flock size of Cape Parrot was recorded at a pecan-nut orchard (c4 trees) in Donnybrook, KwaZulu-Natal since 1998 (P St Pern pers comm). Additional and historical records gathered during our involvement in Cape Parrot research since 1994 were also collated. The implications of these gatherings outside forest were investigated.

Results

Examples of sites where Cape Parrots have been recorded feeding away from indigenous forest are summarised in Table 1. This list is not exhaustive.

Max. daily numbers of Cape Parrots at a pecan-nut orchard (site 1, Table 1) over a three-year period are shown in Fig 1. Here, Cape Parrot was common in June–September, when pecan-nuts were fruiting. In 1998 they were first seen feeding on 11 June and last observed on 3 July. They did not appear in 1999 but in 2000 were seen on 11–25 August (Fig 1).

In April 1998, a flock of 52 was seen feeding on pecan-nuts at Nqadu, Eastern Cape Province (site 10, Table 1), during the annual Cape Parrot Big Birding Day⁵. The following year a total of five was seen at the same site and a larger flock, of c77, was at Misty Mount (site 11, Table 1), 30 km distant. In this region (Umtata) they fed predominantly on pecan-nuts in March–May⁵.

In the 1960s flocks of up to 100 were observed feeding on Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsii* in the Karkloof (L Bouwer pers comm; site 7, Table 1). Today Cape Parrot is scarce in the region and seldom are more than ten seen together in this area. In the early 1980s, flocks of 10–20 were periodically recorded (CTS pers obs) feeding in a pecan-nut orchard at Menin farm (site 3, Table 1). Here it was also recorded unsuccessfully attempting to feed on pears. In certain years flocks flew over between Hlabeni forest adjacent to Menin farm, and Centocow Mission station (site 4, Table 1), in the early morning and late afternoon. In 1994 the species was recorded feeding on *Syringa Melia azadarach*²¹ and in the 1950s often fed in apricot orchards at Centocow (T Symes pers comm). Flocks of up to 200 were not uncommon at this time and were shot because of damage caused to orchard crops (T Symes pers comm). In the Umzimkulu Valley, peach trees in the yards of tribal land residents were used by Cape Parrot. A popular feeding site in the 1970s was at a church near Centocow Mission (T Symes pers comm).

Discussion

Approximately 33% of parrot species face threats in their natural habitat¹⁴. However, in certain areas parrots have achieved pest status^{1,9}, and in urban areas feral populations have become established³. Some instances of human activity have benefited parrots by providing alternative food sources and drinking troughs in dry areas. For example, the range of Rüppell's Parrot *Poicephalus rueppellii* has possibly increased as a result of the presence of drinking sites provided for livestock in dry regions of Namibia¹¹. Grey-headed *P. (robustus) suabelicus*, Meyer's *P.*

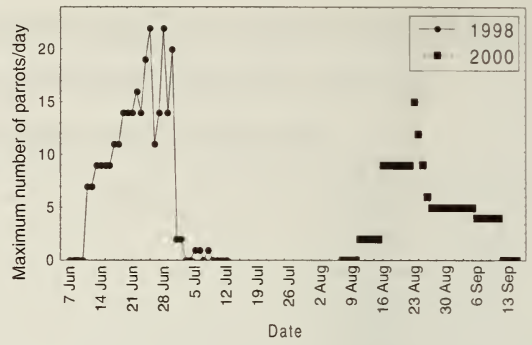


Figure 1. Occurrence of Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* at Splendora Farm (pecan-nut feeding site), Donnybrook, KwaZulu-Natal, showing max. number recorded each day (P St Pern pers comm).

meyeri and Brown-headed Parrots *P. cryptoxanthus*, and Black-cheeked *Agapornis (liliana) nigrigenis*, Rosy-faced *A. roseicollis* and Lillian's Lovebirds *A. liliana* have all been observed at artificial drinking sites and planted crops in various parts of their range (CTS pers obs; S Taylor, L Warburton pers comm).

Frugivores, seedeaters and nectarivores are limited by food resources, and thus restricted to larger, more productive forests^{2,15}. Therefore, in periods of low food production in forests wild birds are forced to forage in neighbouring forests or seek alternative food sources outside forests. In Eastern Cape Province flocks of Cape Parrot occurred closer to the coast in drier years and during periods of possible lower forest fruit production^{19,20}. Overland flights, first described by Skead¹³ and the importance of non-forest food sources were noted nearly 100 years ago. Davies¹ collected specimens near Flagstaff, Eastern Cape Province, where Cape Parrot was present in 'great numbers', their crops filled with Black Wattle seeds.

Cape Parrot is known to travel up to 90 km daily to food sources away from regular forest feeding

Figure 2. Naturally fragmented Afromontane forest patches, habitat of Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus*.

Figure 3. Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* flocking in exotic *Eucalyptus* spp. near pecan-nut orchard.

Figure 4. Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* feeding on unripe pecan-nuts at Nqadu, Umtata.

Figure 5. Overland flights of Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* between a pecan-nut orchard at Nqadu and indigenous forest.

Figure 6. Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* feeding on ripe pecan-nuts at Donnybrook.

Figure 7. Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* feeding on unripe Outeniqua Yellowwood *Podocarpus falcatus* in a farmyard in Boston, KwaZulu-Natal.



2



3



4



5



6



Table 1. Examples of feeding sites of Cape (Brown-necked) Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* outside indigenous forest (Transkei records refer to the former Transkei homeland prior to 1994, now incorporated within Eastern Cape Province)

Site	Locality	Food source	Year	Reference
1	Splendora Farm, Donnybrook (KZN)	Pecan-nuts	1998, 2000	This study, Fig 1
2	Donnybrook (KZN)	Wild Cherry	1997	CTD unpubl. data
3	Menin Farm, Creighton (KZN)	Pecan-nuts, pears, apples	c1983	CTS pers obs
4	Centocow, Creighton (KZN)	Syringa <i>Melia azedarach</i>	1992–1993	Wirminghaus <i>et al</i> ¹
5	Centocow, Creighton (KZN)	Apricot	c1950s	T. Symes pers comm
6	Ngele, Weza (KZN)	Black Wattle <i>Acacia mearnsii</i>	1996–1997, 2001	Wirminghaus <i>et al</i> ¹ , C Forsyth pers comm
7	Clan, Karkloof (KZN)	Black Wattle <i>Acacia mearnsii</i>	1960s	L Bouwer pers comm
8	Bulwer (KZN)	Apples	1995	CTD unpubl. data
9	Boston (KZN)	Outeniqua Yellowwood <i>Podocarpus falcatus</i> (tree in garden)	1998	CTD unpubl. data
10	Nqadu, Umtata (Transkei)	Pecan-nuts	1997–2001	Downs & Symes ⁵
11	Misty Mount, Umtata (Transkei)	Pecan-nuts	1999–2001	Downs & Symes ⁵ , D Kemp pers comm
12	King Williams Town (EC)	Wild Plum <i>Harpephyllum caffrum</i> (indigenous tree planted in town)	1990s	J Sheard pers comm

sites^{12,13}. Pecan-nut plantations are clumped and not abundant. Concentrations of Cape Parrot occur at these sites during periods of low forest fruit production and birds at such gatherings may represent a large proportion of those in a huge area of the species' range²¹.

There has been much speculation as to the reasons for the recent decline in Cape Parrot numbers. The compound effects of trapping for illegal trade, habitat destruction and, in particular, removal of mature yellowwoods, disease and shooting have resulted in a significant decline in the last 50 years^{18,19}. It is, however, at non-forest feeding sites that large flocks are vulnerable to capture and persecution. These sites require documentation and their importance for conservation noted.

Because Cape Parrot occurs in a naturally fragmented habitat it is difficult to conserve¹⁸. Afromontane forests are under the jurisdiction of many landowners and are threatened by over-exploitation¹⁸, ranging from subsistence removal of forest fauna and flora to over-use of products removed for various reasons, eg medicinal purposes. This is difficult to control and, together with the threat to populations at feeding sites, has implications for the conservation of Cape Parrot. Recent efforts, involving certain landowners at non-forest feeding sites (eg Splendora Farm, Donnybrook) have aimed to protect and monitor Cape Parrot numbers. By making available newly planted pecan-nut trees, future feeding sites can be established and the species' conservation assured. ☞

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A systematic list of the birds of Aldabra

Michael Betts

La première liste systématique et documentée des oiseaux de l'Atoll d'Aldabra depuis 1967 est présentée. Elle est précédée d'une courte description du site et des activités scientifiques et de conservation qui y sont menées. Le texte inclut des informations sur la distribution, les périodes de nidification et des estimations de populations. Les dates d'observation des espèces accidentelles sont mentionnées. Un appel est lancé pour signaler toute observation non incluse dans la présente liste.

Introduction

Aldabra is the world's largest raised coral atoll, situated at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel, 850 km south-east of Dar es Salaam on the African mainland and 450 km north-west of Madagascar. It is the south-westernmost outpost of Seychelles, 1,100 km from the administrative capital of Victoria on Mahé. The landmass, c34 km east-west by 15 km north-south, comprises c30% of the total land area of Seychelles²⁶, and encircles a large, tidal lagoon, which contains almost 1,000 islands and islets¹². Astove, Cosmoledo and Assumption are the other islands of the Aldabra group.

The Royal Society initiated a programme of biological research at Aldabra in 1967, leading to the establishment of a permanent Research Station in 1971²⁹. Since 1981 the atoll has been managed by Seychelles Islands Foundation, a government statutory body, as a Nature Reserve and Natural World Heritage Site, with the stated priorities of protection, conservation and appropriate research and monitoring².

All records of species of less than annual occurrence in Seychelles, which require confirmation by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC), are included here (to 31 December 2000) and have been accepted by SBRC unless otherwise stated. Numbers of records of vagrants are presented in brackets, while nomenclature and sequence follow that used by SBRC. A previous systematic list of Aldabra's birds was compiled by Benson³ in 1967, and a more recent overview of the atoll and its birds, including taxonomic status, by Skerrett²⁶. A map showing place names is available in Stoddart & Westoll²⁹.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*

Vagrant (one): two between Aldabra and Assumption on 24 November 1998.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

Vagrant (two): one found ashore at Station in 1976 (R Prŷs-Jones pers comm) and another flew north with Lesser Noddies *Anous tenuirostris* on 19 February 1999. Breeds throughout western Indian Ocean, presumably under-recorded.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

Breeds: population estimated at c250 pairs in 2000⁶, breeding on rat-free lagoon islets. A 1996 claim that Aldabra birds constitute a race distinct from *nicolae*, named *P. l. colstoni*²¹, is disputed (Bretagnolle & Austin unpubl. DNA analysis).

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*

Vagrant (two): one between Assumption and Aldabra on 12 October 1996, another in same area on 6 December 1998.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

Breeds: population estimated at 1,950 pairs in 1999⁴ 2000⁶, seasonally breeding on rat-free lagoon islets, main laying period January–March¹².

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

Breeds: population estimated at 2,000 pairs in 1999/2000⁶, breeding in all months on rat-free lagoon islets¹².

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

Occasional visitor? 'Has been seen at Aldabra'¹⁸. No further records. Breeds in large numbers at Cosmoledo, 70 km away, possibly overlooked.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

Breeds: population estimated at 9,000–11,000 pairs in 1999/2000, an increase of 50% since 1967/68^{6,8}, in mangroves fringing lagoon, most eggs in November–April¹¹. The white form predominates, with fewer than 0.5% of the white-tailed brown phase⁸. One percent or more of African population²².

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Annual visitor. Up to four seen in all months but few overall records. Breeds at Cosmoledo in very small numbers, and on Madagascar.

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Vagrant (17): one on 26 January 1999 was first confirmed record for Seychelles, with further sightings of singles until April, then up to 21 in Bras L'Eglise/Bassin Flamant areas, quite possibly more (29 April 1999). Only occasional sightings of 1–2 subsequently, last on 25 November 1999, with no signs of breeding. Common breeder on Madagascar and Africa.

African Darter *Anbinga rufa*

Unconfirmed vagrant: one at West Channels on 16 July–16 September 1972 is under consideration by SBRC. There are no other Seychelles records.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*

Breeds: census in 2000⁸ indicated no significant changes in numbers/distribution of combined breeding populations of this and *F. ariel* since 1976/77, when 4,000 pairs of *minor* estimated²². Three colonies in mangroves at Camp Fregat, Middle Camp and (fewer) Gionnet. Most eggs laid August–January. One percent or more of African population²³.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

Breeds: census in 2000⁸ indicated no significant changes in numbers/distribution of combined breeding populations of this and previous species since 1976/77, when 6,000 pairs of *ariel* estimated²². Main colony in mangroves at Camp Fregat, with fewer at Middle Camp and Gionnet. Most eggs laid April–October. One percent or more of African population²³.

Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*

Breeds: no population estimate, but number of pairs probably in high hundreds. Breeds throughout atoll, mainly October–March, colonial in some areas (up to 79 nests Île Aux Aigrettes). Race *crawfordi* restricted in Seychelles to Aldabra group and probably Amirantes²⁵.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Breeds: no population estimate, but probably fewer than 100 pairs, nesting October–March, at Île Aux Aigrettes, Squacco Island, Heron Island, north-west of Gros Îlot Cavalier. Roosts near Dune d'Messe, Heron Island, Cinq Cases and Takamaka Grove. Follows goats and tortoises. Nominate race restricted in Seychelles to Aldabra and Farquhar²⁵.

Malagasy Pond-heron *Ardeola idae*

Breeds: an estimated 20–50 pairs²³, chiefly in south-east of atoll, with the main known breeding site being Île Aux Aigrettes, in October–March. All-white breeding plumage. Endemic to Aldabra, Madagascar and Europa (in the southern Mozambique Channel).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Breeds: population estimate 1,000–3,000 pairs²³, race *dimorpha* (Dimorphic Egret), proportion of white form to dark c3:1⁵. Breeds mainly December–March in colonies of up to 50 pairs, mainly in mangrove, at a variety of sites but particularly on lagoon islands eg Île Aux Aigrettes and Île Moustiques.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

Vagrant (three): singles at Cinq Cases/Bassin Flamant on 28–29 August 1986, 14 February 1995, 23 July 1998 and 5 October 1998, the latter two probably same bird. Breeds Madagascar and East Africa.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Breeds: no population estimate, but probably fewer than 200 pairs, breeding throughout atoll mainly in north-west monsoon, but pattern perhaps less seasonal than other herons. Not strongly colonial, up to five pairs on some rat-free islets at La Gigi and Coffee Camp. Legs bright pink in breeding season.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Breeds: population estimated at 100–250 pairs²³. Breeds colonially December–March, up to three eggs laid. Known sites at Bassin Flamant (up to 63 pairs²³), Takamaka Pool, Ibis Pool and near Bras des Cedres in south-west Grande Terre. Communal roost in non-breeding season at Takamaka Grove. Endemic race *T. a. abbotti* confined to Aldabra, considered along with Madagascar population to be distinct from African species, as *T. bernieri* by some authorities^{17,20}. Individual of African form *T. a. aethiopicus*, brown-eyed with black primary tips, at Cinq Cases 17 December 1967–23 February 1968, photographed.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Breeds: population 25–50 individuals, the only atoll and oceanic breeding site known, except Galápagos²³. Breeding not confirmed until 13 April 1995²¹, when a chick one-third to half-grown, three nests and three incomplete nests were found at a freshwater pool in the Takamaka region. A juvenile with 13 adults, on 23 November 1995, suggests a successful outcome. Four juveniles, three nest mounds and eggshells were found in 1996²¹. Sightings largely confined to south-east part of atoll and lagoon. Fifty in February 1968 is the largest count, with 30 several times in the 1990s, apparently resident, though Abbott reported 'hundreds' in the late 19th century. Breeds Madagascar and East Africa.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Vagrant (three): single adults on 21 September 1969 (specific locality unknown), at Cinq Cases on 15–26 April 1973 and 26–27 June 1974. Only Seychelles records apart from one at Assumption. Three other unconfirmed sightings. Common East Africa and Madagascar.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Vagrant (one): eclipse drake/female probably of this species at Settlement Reef on 12 November 1986¹. Annual migrant to Seychelles and East Africa.

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite *Milvus (migrans) aegyptius*

Vagrant (6+): Abbott collected two, on 2 October and 19 December 1892, and also taken by Mortimer on 18 November 1903 and another by Thibault on 6 August 1906. Series of sightings in early 1974 involved 3–6 birds: one at Settlement on 21 January, two from 24 January, 2–3 on 25 January–1 February and one on 9 February. One at Takamaka on 25 January, one at Dune d'Messe on 26 January and 2 February, and one at Cinq Cases on 10 February

1974. Only confirmed Seychelles records. Common at Comoros and Madagascar and an intra-African migrant.

Montagu's/Pallid Harrier *Circus pygargus/C. macrourus*

Vagrant (one): female/immature at Bassin Cabri on 4 March 2000. No other Seychelles records of either species.

Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni*

Breeds: not more than 50 individuals, probably closer to 15-20 pairs³². Up to five eggs laid October, in traditional territories, eggs sometimes infertile. Endemic to Aldabra and Madagascar²³.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*

Vagrant (seven): recorded on six dates in 1972 between 31 October and 27 December, with three on 21 November. Adult on 7-19 November 1999. Eighteen other records, 12 in late September-December and six in March-April, may refer to this species or Sooty Falcon *F. concolor*. Breeds Mediterranean/North Africa, most moving to Madagascar in non-breeding season. Presumably under-recorded, possibly near annual.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

Vagrant (one): single photographed on 12 December 1972 at Settlement. See also Eleonora's Falcon.

Aldabra (White-throated) Rail *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

Breeds: c8,000 individuals estimated in 1974/5⁹ with counts in 1999/2000 indicating no significant change³². Found also on Madagascar, but race *aldabranus* endemic to Aldabra²⁵ and recently considered specifically, *D. aldabranus*¹⁷. Main population on Île Malabar, small numbers on Polymnie, Île Aux Cedres and some other lagoon islets. Cats are thought to have caused local extirpations on Grande Terre and Picard. The Aldabra form has lost power of flight³⁰ (those on Madagascar have not)¹⁷, and is only remaining flightless bird in Indian Ocean. Breeds December-March. Nine pairs reintroduced to Picard in October 1999 from Malabar^{6,31}.

Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*

Vagrant (one): single collected by F R Mortimer at Picard, as a male, on 10 December 1904, and held in American Museum of Natural History (New York), subsequently accepted as female²⁸.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

Vagrant (two): adult photographed at Bassin Flamant on 15 February 1995, and an adult at Station on 10 January 1999. Breeds Madagascar.

Gallinule sp.

Vagrant (one): juvenile at Bassin Flamant on 29 July 1999 may have been *P. alleni* or an American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*.

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

Annual migrant: up to 2,800 September-May, peaking January-April⁶, is 1% or more of African population²⁴. Few hundred usually present May-August. Major roost sites at La Gigi, Settlement Beach, Grand Cavalier, islets west of Île Michel and especially Île Moustiques.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Vagrant (one): single at east end of atoll on 29 October 1976-4 August 1977.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis (dominica) fulva*

Vagrant (two): three males and two females at Cinq Cases on 15 April 1973, one male in full breeding plumage, and an adult entering breeding plumage near Bassin Flamant on 1 April 1999. Annual migrant to Seychelles.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Annual migrant. Up to 50 at Dune Patates high-tide roost. Scarce April-August.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Annual migrant. Present in small numbers September-May, max. count 17.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

Annual migrant. Seldom distinguished from Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*. Up to 60 at Dune Patates roost in December, outnumbering *leschenaultii*. Scarce April-July.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Annual migrant. Seldom distinguished from Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*. Up to 1,000 of both species at Dune Patates high-tide roost October-March, scarce April-July.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Annual migrant. Small parties August-March at Grand Cavalier and Île Moustiques at high tide, up to 350 counted in January 2000.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Annual migrant. Largest counts at high-tide roosts (La Gigi, Île Moustiques, Grand Cavalier) usually in March, max. 170 in 2000, scarce May-August.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Vagrant (six): singles at Grand Cavalier on 30 November and 6 December 1967, five at Île Moustiques on 26 August 1974 and two there on 8 October 1978, with one at Grand Cavalier on 13 January 2000 and two there on 26 January 2000. Annual migrant to Seychelles and East Africa, presumably under-recorded.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Annual migrant. Small numbers, max. count 50 at Île Moustiques in March 2000. Scarce April-July.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Vagrant (two): two near Cinq Cases on 24 December 1967, one to at least 28 January 1968¹⁸, and one at Cinq Cases landing stage on 2 February 1999. Strongly migratory, annual in Seychelles, presumably under-recorded.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleuca*

Annual migrant. Present, usually singly, around lagoon shore and inland pools, scarcer May–June. Occasional parties in March, presumably migrating, max. 23 on 25 March 1999.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Vagrant (c10): small numbers recorded by Penny¹⁸ around lagoon shore, max. 12 on 6 December 1967 at Grand Cavalier, with singles at Passe Dubois on 24 August 1974, and Picard Station on 3 October 1983 and 17 September 1999. Annual visitor to Seychelles, Madagascar and East Africa, presumably under-recorded.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Annual migrant. Estimated 500–1,000 in non-breeding season, is 1% or more of African population²³. Decline in late April, numbers increasing again in August.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*

Vagrant (one); single caught and killed at Settlement, Picard, on 20 November 1973. Breeds Asia.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Annual migrant. Scarce but undoubtedly under-recorded. Generally absent March–August. Usually only 1–3, rarely up to 22, with max. 91 at Anse Mais on 4 December 1967¹⁸.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Vagrant (four): recorded by Penny¹⁸ on 30 November 1967 and 2 December 1967 (44 at Esprit), and by Frith¹⁴ on 3 October 1972 (12) and 5 October 1973 (200). No other double-figure counts in Seychelles, where it is an annual migrant.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Annual migrant. Large numbers feed in lagoon at low tide, scarce late April–late August, counts of up to 2,000 in Dune Patates high-tide roost October–March.

Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*

Vagrant (seven): recorded in November 1971, on 7 May 1976, 21 December 1977, 30 June 1981, all as 'Great Skua', then on 6 December 1998, 15 December 1998 and 18 June 1999, the latter identified as race *lonnbergi*, the most likely to occur. Annual migrant to Seychelles from Antarctic breeding grounds and presumably under-recorded.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Vagrant (one): sub-adult of nominate race, which breeds Baltic and north Norway, at Picard Station, on 19–28

November 1999. Three earlier records unconfirmed, in 1964¹⁹, on 7 December 1976 and 28 December 1984. Vagrant to Seychelles.

Black-/Grey-/Brown-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus/cirrocephalus/brunnicephalus*

Vagrant (one): single at Cinq Cases on 19 December 1994–15 February 1995.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

Breeds: five pairs in 2000⁶. The only breeding site in Seychelles. Twelve pairs in July 1986, and 30 in May 1972 are the largest counts. Île Moustiques is favoured breeding location, though Sylvestre, Champignon des Os, Esprit, La Gigi and possibly Île Michel also used. Lays April–August, with high tides main cause of egg loss, though Ship Rats *Rattus rattus* may contribute¹³. Apparently resident.

Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*

Breeds: 60–100 pairs^{13,23}. Lays December–January and June–August¹⁵, on lagoon islets: Northern Mentor, Pti Mentor, Îles Chalands, Table Ronde, Îlot Deder, Grand Mentor, Îlot Marquoix, Champignon des Os and Sesame. Largest count 150 at Îles Chaland on 25 June 1997. Close observation causes desertion¹⁵. Present year-round.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

Probably near-annual migrant. Recorded regularly January–early April in 1967/68¹⁰. Up to four displaying at Picard in June 1998, followed by occasional sightings of 1–2 in November 1998–May 1999, with up to seven in late December 1999. Breeds in East Africa, common migrant to Madagascar and annual migrant to Seychelles, presumably under-recorded at Aldabra.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Vagrant (seven), but probably annual migrant: adult in breeding plumage in March 1995, first-summer on 22–24 July 1998, adult on 25 September 1998, adult on 11 October 1998, two on 6 January 1999, 1–2 juveniles on four dates in November 1999 and four adults on 27 November 1999. Presumably under-recorded, being an annual migrant to Seychelles and East Africa.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*

Vagrant (one): adult in full breeding plumage photographed with Black-naped Terns *S. sumatrana* at Îles Chaland on 12 December 1976 was previously accepted as Seychelles' first Common Tern *S. hirundo*²⁰ but has been re-identified and accepted by SBRC as first Seychelles *S. repressa*.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*

Breeds: population 1999/2000 thought unchanged since estimate of c70 pairs in 1967–68^{9,10}. Breeds on rat-free lagoon islets in tiny groups of up to three pairs per islet. Eggs February–March and August–September⁹. Fifty

roosting on beach at Cinq Cases in November 1985 is largest count. Present throughout year.

Saunders' Tern *Sterna saundersi*

Annual visitor. Wintering population 800 birds²³. Usually arrives late August, roosting on south coast, especially at Cinq Cases, West Grande Terre (max. 800 in October 1997) and lagoons at Îles Chaland and Champignon des Os¹. By mid-February 90% in breeding plumage, when absence of white supercilium indicative of *saundersi*. Absent April–July, main breeding areas around Red Sea and southern Somalia.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

Vagrant (two): singles near Île Esprit on 25 July 1971 and off Picard on 18 June 2000. Breeds Cosmoledo²⁵, presumably under-recorded.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*

Annual visitor. No record of breeding, huge colony on Cosmoledo²³. Small parties offshore or heard at night during breeding season, May–October, peaking August when parties may number up to 50.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Vagrant (six): breeding-plumage adult and immature in East Lagoon on 5–6 April 1974, first-year at Passe Femme on 17–18 December 1998, immature/non-breeding adult at Cinq Cases landing stage on 1 April 1999, two first-years off West Grande Terre on 22 November 1999, and single there 16 and 21 December 1999. Annual migrant to Seychelles, possibly under-recorded.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

Breeds: estimate of min. 3,500 birds¹³. Breeds on rat-free lagoon islets, particularly Coffee Camp, Table Ronde and Pink Rock, most lay September–March, few outside this period¹⁵. Present throughout year.

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*

Occasional visitor: one landed on a yacht 10 km off north-west coast on 28 October 1976, died, and is now in the Natural History Museum (Tring); one in lagoon on 10 September 1998; and up to 10 feeding with Brown Noddy *A. stolidus* and Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* 1–5 km off Station on 12–13 February 1999, with 5,000+ flying north in dense groups at dusk, probably continuing to pass after dark, on 19 February 1999⁵ (a phenomenon repeated in February 2000⁶). Abundant in Seychelles with strong seasonal movements, easily overlooked among Brown Noddy *A. stolidus* and presumably under-recorded.

Fairy Tern *Gygis alba*

Breeds: 100–400 pairs²⁷ mainly in mangroves fringing lagoon (not southern shore) and on islands within it, eggs September–early April¹⁵. Present throughout year.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Vagrant (one): single shot at Picard Station on 4 December 1972 was first record in Seychelles.

Madagascar Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata*

Resident breeder: 2,000–5,000 pairs²⁵. Nests mainly October–February. Race *coppingeri* confined, in Seychelles, to Aldabra and Cosmoledo²⁵, though recent study may indicate that latter population is distinct subspecies (G Rocamora & A Skerrett pers comm). Birds from Aldabra have apparently reached Îles Glorieuse²⁷.

Comoro Blue Pigeon *Actoenas sganzzini*

Resident breeder: no population estimate, but probably more than 1,000 pairs. Widely distributed, highest density on Malabar⁵, eggs January–March. Race *minor* endemic to Aldabra²⁵.

Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Vagrant (one): a juvenile at Settlement on 29–31 October 1999.

Cuckoo *Cuculus* spp.

Vagrant (two): one on 2–16 November 1972 and one near Settlement on 15 January 2000. At least three additional unconfirmed records. Eurasian *C. canorus*, Asian Lesser *C. poliocephalus*, Oriental *C. saturatus* and Madagascar Lesser *C. rochii* all possible, and first two are vagrants to Seychelles.

Madagascar Coucal *Centropus toulou*

Resident breeder: population of race *insularis*, endemic to Aldabra, estimated at 400–800 pairs²³. Eggs December–early April³³. Widely but sparsely distributed, greatest density at Picard⁷.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Formerly resident, now extinct. 'Common on Aldabra in 1893 when Abbott was there, one collected in 1906, not seen since'¹⁹. Presumed natural colonist. Shortage of rat-, cat- and crab-proof nest-sites (elevated caves preferred in granitic islands) may have contributed to extinction.

Madagascar Nightjar *Caprimulgus madagascariensis*

Resident breeder: race *aldabrensis* endemic to Aldabra²⁵ estimated at 500–1,000 pairs²³. Nests September–January. Widely but thinly distributed.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Vagrant (three), but records listed with qualifier regarding other all-dark swifts²⁵: one collected by Abbott on 1 December 1892, one collected by Benson & Penny⁴ on 8 September 1967 at Settlement and one on 15 March 1968.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*

Vagrant (three): two at Anse Var on 22–23 March 1968, four around Station on 2–5 April 1999 and two at Anse Var on 6 April 1999.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*

Vagrant (six): singles on 19 March 1968, 10 December 1974, 20–21 March 1975, 26 March 1999 and 1–7 April 1999, with two on 16–17 March 1975.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Probably annual migrant: 27 records of up to six birds²⁸. One on 7 November 1999 at Settlement was killed and eaten, presumably by an Eleonora's Falcon present in same area. Main passage mid-October–late December (25 records), particularly November, with singles January and March. Further record on 25 October 2000 under consideration by SBRC. Vagrant in Seychelles.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Vagrant (two): one at Settlement, on 20–22 October 1993, was photographed and demonstrated to be of the African form *U. e. africana*, while a probable juvenile at Station/Old Settlement, on 14–18 October 1999, had white in the primaries, a feature of European and North African races.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Vagrant (two): one collected by Abbott on 2 December 1892 and two at West Channels on 2 January 1968. One on 5 October 2000 is under consideration by SBRC.

Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica*

Vagrant (two): one collected by Abbott on 19 November 1892 and one at Station on 8 October 1973.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Near-annual migrant. Records are incomplete but show almost 30 sightings late September–early April (26 listed by SBRC²⁸), over 50% in late October–November, with smaller peak mid-March–early April. Never more than six, apart from 25 on 16 March 1975 and over 50 on 24 March–7 April 1999⁷. Vagrant in Seychelles.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Vagrant (two): single at Station on 13 October 1974 and two at Cinq Cases on 14 March 1975.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Vagrant (six): *M. f. lutea* collected by Abbott on 20 December 1892, same race at Cinq Cases on 22 February 1968 and Passe Houareau on 15 March 1968, single at Dune Jean-Louis, also on 15 March 1968, single of unspecified race on 25–28 March 1996 and first-year male *lutea* at Station on 24–25 March 1999.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Vagrant (two): one at Dune Jean-Louis on 7 March 1973 and one for four weeks from 21 November 1983.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Probably near-annual migrant: 13 records²⁸. Up to four present simultaneously, mainly October–December, rarely January–March. Series of sightings on 23 November–25 December 2000 under consideration by SBRC. Vagrant in Seychelles.

Madagascar Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

Resident breeder: 4,000–8,000 pairs²³. Race *rostratus* endemic to Aldabra²⁵. Breeds December–February, widespread including larger islets; highest density Picard and south-east Grande Terre⁵.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Vagrant (five): one on 16–17 March 1975, then in 1999, two males at Settlement and another at La Gigi on 24 March, a female at Settlement on 25 March and a further male at Passe Houareau on 26 March⁷.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

Vagrant (one): male in breeding plumage at Picard, collected on 28 March 1968, is only Seychelles record.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Near-annual migrant: 25 records, all between 22 December and 30 March, are as follows December (one), January (11), February (six) and March (seven). Vagrant in Seychelles.

Aldabran Brush Warbler *Nesillas aldabranus*

Probably extinct, former resident breeder. Species endemic to Aldabra, discovered by Penny on Royal Society Expedition of 1967: male, female, nest and three eggs collected, now at Natural History Museum (Tring). Only ever seen within a 50 m x 2 km coastal strip at west end of Malabar. Max. population c25 birds, last sighting September 1983¹⁶. Bred probably October–January. Searches during 1990s unsuccessful^{5,6}.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Vagrant (one): adult around Station and La Gigi on 17 February–14 March 2000.

Willow Warbler/Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus trochilus*/
P. collybita

Vagrant (one): single at an islet in Passe Femme on 10 April 1972.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

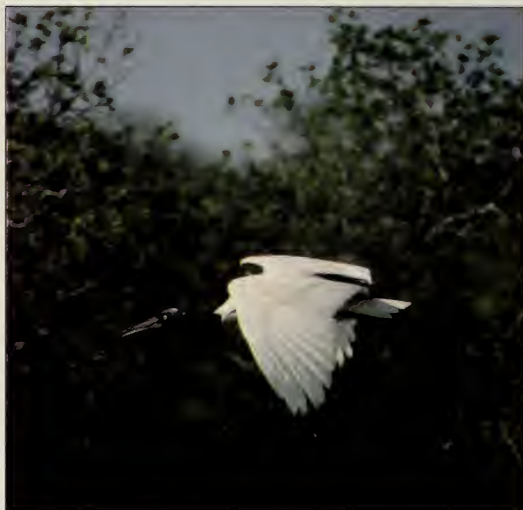
Vagrant (one): single shot on 12 December 1972.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Vagrant (one): single trapped at Anse Var on 30 October 1974 is only Seychelles record.



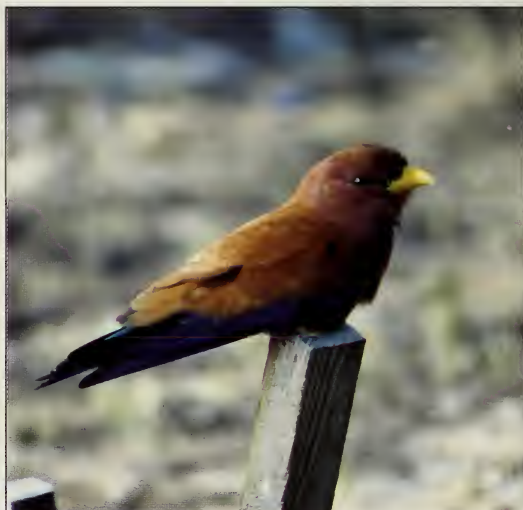
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- Figure 1. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta dimorpha*
- Figure 2. Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*
- Figure 3. Juvenile Malagasy Pond-heron *Ardeola idae* foraging alongside Aldabra Giant Tortoise *Dipsochelys dussumieri*
- Figure 4. Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*
- Figure 5. Aldabra (White-throated) Rail *Dryolimnas cuvieri*
- Figure 6. Old reef, Anse, Aldabra
- Figure 7. Juvenile Aldabra Drongo *Dicrurus aldabranus*
- Figure 8. (Aldabra) Forest Fody *Foudia eminentissima aldabrana*
- Figure 9. Dune d'Messe camp, Grande Terre with lagoon in background, Aldabra
- Figure 10. Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*
- Figure 11. Comoro Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas sganzini*
- Figure 12. Madagascar White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatana*
- Figure 13. Souimanga Sunbird *Nectarinia souimanga*
- Figure 14. Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*
- Figure 15. Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni*
- Figure 16. Madagascar Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata*
- Figure 17. Madagascar Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

All photos by Michael Betts



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Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Near-annual migrant with 21 records: four in November, one in December, 16 in March. Usually singles, occasionally more in March (at least 13 in 1999⁷). Vagrant in Seychelles.

Souimanga Sunbird *Nectarinia souimanga*

Resident breeder: easily most abundant bird on Aldabra, with number of pairs in the high tens of thousands^{5,32}. Nests mainly September–April, throughout atoll including small lagoon islets, highest density south-east Grande Terre⁵. Race *aldabrensis* endemic to Aldabra²⁵, recently considered conspecific only with Madagascar population, with those on other three islands of Aldabra group being considered separate species^{17,26}. Re-trapping of ringed birds has shown they can survive for over ten years¹.

Madagascar White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatana*

Resident breeder: 4,000–10,000 pairs²³ may be a significant underestimate³². Race *aldabrensis* endemic to Aldabra²⁵. Breeds mid-September–March, widespread and abundant, scarcer on Malabar⁵. Feeding and roosting parties number up to 35 individuals.

Aldabra Drongo *Dicrurus aldabranus*

Resident breeder: c500 pairs²³. Endemic to Aldabra. Breeds November–January. Widely but thinly distributed, favouring *Casuarina* woodland and mangrove, the latter an extensive habitat at Aldabra.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

Resident breeder: 60–73 individuals in 2000, no overall increase since 1974⁶. Nests November–February, but success very low and few breeding attempts in some years. Numbers perhaps remain low through combination of low productivity due to occasional food shortages in breeding period, and an unknown level of unauthorised killing of adults⁶. Thought to have colonised naturally and was recorded at Astove, in the Aldabra group, as early as 1836, long before human settlement²⁶.

European Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Vagrant (four): female at Settlement on 11–28 March 1968 (collected), female or first-year at Settlement on 19 November 1972, female at La Gigi on 24 March 1999 and four singing males at Cinq Cases on 1 April 1999⁷.

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*

Vagrant or recent colonist (10+): two on 29 September 1998, two on 2 November 1998 and 14 on 2 September 1999, with up to seven fairly regularly in same area (Bassin Cabri, near Research Station on Picard) throughout 2000, but breeding not confirmed. One other Seychelles record.

(Aldabra) Forest Fody *Foudia eminentissima*

Resident breeder: 1,000–3,000 pairs²³. Race *aldabrana*

endemic to Aldabra²⁵, though recently treated specifically¹⁷. Breeds October–mid-April²⁷, widespread, favouring mixed scrub and *Casuarina* woodland, rather than *Pemphis* thicket⁵ and also mangrove. Many nests predated by Ship Rat *Rattus rattus*¹⁵. Parties of up to 50 at Cinq Cases, but not in recent years. Flavistic birds seen occasionally.

Domestic Fowl *Gallus gallus*

Extinct, formerly a domestic import, which was sporadically present until late 1997.

Records

For long periods (particularly during 1980s and 1990s) systematic bird recording was not maintained at Aldabra and records are sparse. There are unconfirmed records of Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Humblot's Heron *Ardea humbloti*, Pintail *Anas acuta*, White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* and European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*. Anyone with information on these or any other records not included here is requested to send details to Adrian Skerrett, Shipping House, PO Box 336, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles; e-mail adrian@skerrett.fsnet.co.uk.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Seychelles Islands Foundation for providing access to records from Aldabra during my time there as Warden & Scientific Officer, in June 1998–August 2000; Anna Liljevik for providing records for August–December 2000; Ross Wanless for allowing use of unpublished data; Adrian Skerrett, Secretary of SBRC, for advice and comments on the draft; and Susan Barclay for computer work. ♀

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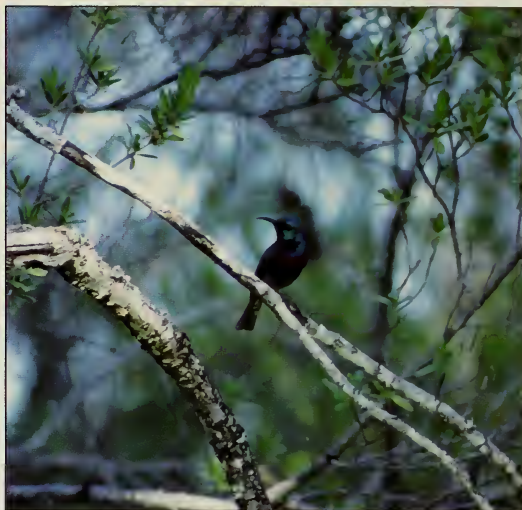
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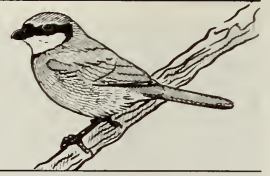


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Figures 1–3. Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita*, at sea off Cape Point, South Africa, 27 May 2001 (Peter Ryan videograbs)



Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita*: new to Africa

Peter Ryan

Un Albatros des Chatham *Thalassarche eremita* a été vu près d'un chalutier au large du Cap, Afrique du Sud, le 27 mai 2001. Ceci constitue la première observation documentée en Afrique, en dehors de l'Océan Pacifique, d'une espèce considérée comme 'Gravement menacée d'extinction' par BirdLife International.

The advent of regular pelagic trips off Cape Town has demonstrated several pelagic seabirds to be more common than previously thought, and has now confirmed a new species for the African list. On 27 May 2001, an adult Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita* was found scavenging behind a trawler c50 km south-west of Cape Point. It was initially located on the water less than 20 m away, squabbling over fish scraps among a group of Shy *T. cauta* and Black-browed *T. melanophrys* albatrosses.

It was easily identified by virtue of its dark, uniform grey head (with a slightly paler fore-crown) and striking yellow bill. From close range, there was an obvious dark spot at the tip of the lower mandible. In flight it showed the largely white underwing and dark 'thumb-print' characteristic of all species within the Shy Albatross (*sensu lato*) complex. Settling again, it was easily located, even at long range, by its very dark grey head. The bird was flushed twice, then disappeared among a huge group of birds and was not relocated, despite spending more than an hour at the trawler. Other albatrosses present included a few Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses *T. [chlororhynchus] bassi* and one Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi*.

The Chatham Albatross record swiftly follows the first well-substantiated reports of Salvin's Albatross *T. salvini* off South Africa¹. Chatham Albatross is the most distinctive of the Shy Albatross complex. Mostert

Kriek reported one near a trawler off the Cape on 8 October 1993, but the record has not been submitted to the national rarities committee. Chatham Albatross breeds on Pyramid Rock, a stack off the Chatham Islands, east of New Zealand, and migrates across the South Pacific to winter off the west coast of South America, between Chile and Peru. This record is the first to be documented outside the Pacific Ocean¹. With a population of 5,333 breeding pairs, it is one of the rarest albatrosses and is listed by BirdLife International as Critical².

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Birds of Africa Vol 1 places all *Thalassarche* species in *Diomedea*. Both Chatham and Salvin's Albatrosses are treated as races (*eremita* and *salvini* respectively) of Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. Eds.

First record of Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* in The Gambia

Anita and Heimo Mikkola

La première observation du Faucon kobez *Falco vespertinus* en Gambie est documentée. Il s'agissait d'un mâle adulte, survolant la côte gambienne en direction du nord à Cape Point, le 1^{er} mars 2001. Les observations antérieures dans les pays limitrophes sont brièvement examinées, ainsi que le statut et les mouvements de l'espèce en Afrique.

On 1 March 2001 at 19.00 hrs we observed an adult male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* migrating north over our house at Cape Point, The Gambia. It followed the coastline at a height of c30 m, in purposeful flight with steady wingbeats. Our first impression was of a small, all-dark falcon about the size of African Hobby *F. cuvierii* and clearly smaller and more slender than Grey Kestrel *F. ardosiaceus*, with a much more buoyant flight. The latter two regularly occur in this area. Through binoculars the bright red feet and reddish lower belly and thighs contrasted conspicuously with the rest of the plumage, which was uniformly dark. There was no white on the underwing, thus excluding Amur Falcon *F. amurensis*. We are both familiar with the species from Hungary. This apparently constitutes the first record for The Gambia¹.

Red-footed Falcon is a widespread Palearctic migrant, which enters Africa principally through the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, and winters mainly in southern Africa, most abundantly in south Angola, north Namibia and Botswana, where it arrives from late October^{3,6,9}. Return migration starts in late February and follows a more westerly course, crossing the Mediterranean further west from mid-April; its migration route thus describes a loop^{3,5}. It breeds from eastern Europe east to central Russia and extreme north-west China^{4,6}.

In West Africa the species is a rare to uncommon passage migrant almost throughout². In the westernmost countries it is invariably rare, with few records from Mauritania and Senegal, mostly along the coast, in September, November–January and March–April^{8,10}. It is slightly more frequent in Mali, mostly in the Sahel, where small groups have been recorded in September/October–April/May⁷.

Acknowledgements

We thank Ron Demey for encouraging us to write this note and improving its draft. We also thank all those who replied to our appeal via the African Birding e-mail discussion group for data on Red-footed Falcon in West Africa.

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Testing the effectiveness of nest-boxes in the conservation of woodland birds: Lake Naivasha nest-box project, Kenya

Michael Maina Macharia

La destruction de la forêt claire autour du Lac Naivasha, Kénya, a réduit le nombre de sites de nidification pour les espèces cavernicoles. Afin d'améliorer le succès de reproduction de ces espèces, le Projet Nichoirs du Lac Naivasha a été mis en œuvre. Une approche similaire a été couronnée de succès ailleurs. En mai 1999, 45 nichoirs en bois—39 petits (1.500 cm³) et six grands (17.340 cm³)—ont été placés, à 6–8 m de hauteur, dans des arbres aux alentours du Elsamere Conservation Centre et du Fisherman's Camp. Une campagne de sensibilisation, soulignant la valeur de la forêt claire, a été lancée en même temps. Trois écoles ont reçu de la documentation sur la protection de la nature et ont été impliquées dans le placement des nichoirs. Des exposés sur la protection des oiseaux ont également été présentés dans les écoles cibles. Des affiches ont été placées à des endroits stratégiques afin de sensibiliser le public. Avec l'aide de guides ornithologiques résidents, les nichoirs sont suivis de façon permanente. À la fin octobre 2000, au moins quatre espèces d'oiseaux avaient inspecté les nichoirs, mais il n'y avait pas encore eu de tentative d'occupation.

Introduction

Lake Naivasha is well known for its rich and diverse birdlife. The lake is c100 km north-west of Nairobi, in Rift Valley Province. It is a Ramsar site and an Important Bird Area (IBA)¹. Several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are situated around or near the lake. Its southern part is largely surrounded by tall woodland (c20 m), dominated by Yellow-barked Acacia *Acacia xanthobloea*, with a narrow papyrus fringe near the lake. The northern part has a broader papyrus fringe, with lower scrub (c2–3 m high) inland. The lake environment is threatened by human activities, chiefly horticulture and deforestation, with substantial ecological changes already reported^{3,4}. Community action and support for nature conservation could prove indispensable in the protection of birds and habitats.

Project aims

Some bird species, eg barbets and hoopoes, use cavities in tree trunks, earth banks or walls for nesting and roosting. These cavities can be natural or artificial. Artificial nest-boxes have proved a valuable conservation and educational tool in many parts of the world², but their use is currently limited in Kenya. The Naivasha area is one of the very few examples where several farms have erected nest-boxes, though the exercise is purely out of casual interest by a handful of people.

Destruction of woodlands around Lake Naivasha has greatly diminished potential breeding sites for

hole-nesting birds such as woodpeckers, barbets and hornbills. This project aimed (i) to use nest-boxes to create extra nest sites for such hole-nesting bird species, and (ii) generate community awareness of, and involvement in, bird conservation. The goals are to improve the breeding success of hole-nesting species and invoke a positive attitude towards the conservation of birds and habitats.

Methods and progress

The project commenced in May 1999 and was designed to last for 18 months. Here I present a summary of the developments thus far and anticipated work still to be undertaken.

Study sites

Forty-five boxes were erected during May 1999 at two sites. Twenty boxes—15 small and five large—were sited at Elsamere Field Study Centre in riparian woodland dominated by *Acacia xanthobloea*. The centre is adjacent to the lake, c20 km from Naivasha town and is a base for environmental research, education and training around Naivasha.

Another 25 boxes (24 small and one large) were erected at Fisherman's Camp. This is a resort, c3 km from Elsamere Study Centre, also by the lake, which is frequented by tourists and birdwatchers. The habitat is reasonably undisturbed, being well grassed and wooded compared to the surroundings. Many bird species, especially insectivores, take advantage of this area.

Box preparation

Two sizes of box were constructed: one small, measuring 10 cm x 10 cm x 15 cm and one large, 17 cm x 17 cm x 60 cm. Both were treated externally with oil to prolong their life and prevent ants, termites, rats, snakes and bees from preying on any occupants². Entry holes were all at least 3.75 cm from the hinged roof, thereby leaving a substantial depth below it. Hole diameter of the smaller boxes was 3.75 cm (targeted at smaller birds, eg woodpeckers and barbets) and 6.25 cm for larger boxes (for hornbills). But hole diameters were also constructed to the smallest size feasible to avoid predation by African Harrier Hawk *Polyboroides typus*, which has long legs and can easily take eggs or nestling from boxes with large holes. Hornbills typically seal their nest-holes to a minimum following egg laying, making this less of a problem. Moreover, the preservative used, being dark, enhanced the boxes camouflage.

Setting up nest boxes

Boxes at Elsamere were 6–8 m above ground, while those at Fisherman's Camp were usually higher (above 8 m) due to the availability of a taller ladder. Boxes were often placed facing away from the lake, in order to shield the entrance from winds that regularly blow from the latter, and to provide some shelter from sun and rain. Based on the growth of green moss, it was possible to determine where rainwater mainly ran down the trunk, making it possible to assess those trees and which side best suited placement of the nest-box.

Monitoring the boxes

I checked each box for breeding activity at least once every two days over the three-month period (June–August 1999) that I was permanently stationed in Naivasha, observations being made at the two sites on consecutive days. I used binoculars to observe any activity around the boxes from a hide c15 m distant from the relevant tree, for at least 15–20 minutes per box. After August 1999, I visited either once or twice a month, checking all boxes on each visit. Since January 2000, boatmen-cum-bird guides at both study sites have unsystematically checked the boxes for any signs of breeding activity.

Results at Elsamere demonstrate that several bird species showed some interest in the boxes, peering into them from outside and occasionally entering. However, none as yet has occupied any of the boxes. Species observed investigating boxes include White-headed Barbet *Lybius leucocephalus*, Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica*, White-bellied Tit

Parus albiventris and White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis fischeri*.

At Fisherman's Camp, Green Wood-Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* appeared to show greater interest in the nest-boxes, carrying nesting materials into them. But, such activity continued only for one week in June and then ceased. Subsequent monitoring did not reveal any occupancy suggesting ongoing breeding, and no active nests or egg-laying activities were observed. As at Elsamere, no box has been occupied.

Information is generally scarce concerning the breeding seasons of these bird species, with most perhaps nesting almost year-round^{5–7}. Most probably the lack of interest in the boxes was related to the birds being unfamiliar with such structures, rather than a lack of interest in breeding. Future monitoring work should clarify this.

Community awareness work

I visited two primary schools, two high schools and the local community, giving talks concerning the project and bird conservation in general. In addition, I issued books and magazines dealing with environmental conservation issues. Wildlife Clubs at the primary schools showed some interest, visiting the study sites with me and freely assisting my work, especially siting the boxes. Furthermore, they informed the local community about the project and its importance in environmental conservation. The children's enthusiasm for the project resulted in a number of adults questioning me as to how they could construct their own nest-box, and what measures they could take to curb (and possibly reverse) woodland destruction. Lastly, I erected ten posters, with relevant information concerning the project, its aims and detailing local conservation problems, at conspicuous places around the study sites and public market places.

Future work and monitoring

Each nest-box has been accorded a number that will make for easy and accurate monitoring in future. Observations are scheduled to continue for at least nine months. All activities by any bird species in or around the boxes will be recorded. If any breeding occurs, detailed observations will be undertaken to ascertain fledging success. I will also continue to survey other areas, educate people about birds and it is hoped enhance awareness of conservation issues affecting birds specifically in Naivasha where cavities or nest-trees are scarce.

Acknowledgements

I thank the African Bird Club for the award to establish the project, and Elsamere Conservation Centre and Fisherman's Camp for their support. Dr Leon Bennun and Colin Jackson offered encouragement and advice. Special thanks to Mwangi Githiru, Paul Kariuki and Anthony Kuria for their help in compiling this report. Bernard Chege and Samuel Njoroge (local bird guides) offered continuing monitoring assistance at Elsamere and Fisherman's Camp, and pupils from Mvuke and DCK Primary Schools, and Naivasha Mixed Boarding Secondary School played various roles. Finally, this work would have been impossible without the special training offered to myself and other upcoming ornithologists by the Department of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya. 🐦

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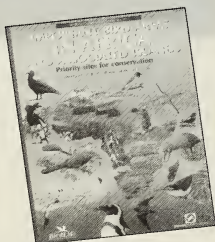
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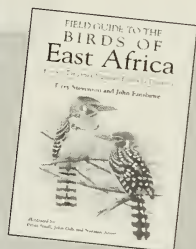
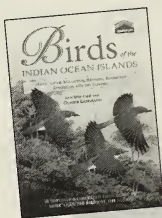
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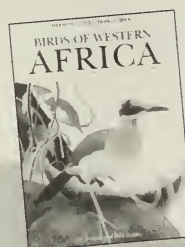
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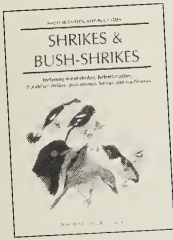


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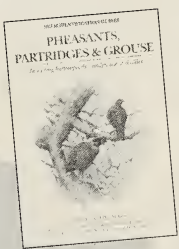
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New birds for Nigeria observed during the Lake Chad Bird Migration Project

Ulf Ottosson^a, Daniel Bengtsson^a, Rolf Gustafsson^a, Philip Hall^b, Christian Hjort^a, A.P. Leventis^c, Roland Neumann^d, Jan Pettersson^a, Patrik Rbönnsstad^a, Stephen Rumsey^e, Jonas Waldenström^a and William Velmala^a

Un projet concernant les oiseaux migrateurs a été mis en œuvre dans le nord-est du Nigéria, sur la rive occidentale du lac Tchad, en 2000, après des visites préliminaires dans la zone à partir de 1997. Pendant l'exécution du projet, six espèces nouvelles pour le Nigéria ont été observées, l'Aigle des steppes *Aquila (rapax) nipalensis*, l'Engoulevent à collier roux *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, l'Engoulevent doré *C. eximius*, la Prinia aquatique *Prinia fluviatilis*, le Cratéope fauve *Turdoides fulvus* et l'Étourneau caronculé *Creatophora cinerea*, ainsi que deux espèces dont la présence restait à confirmer, l'Aigle pomarin *Aquila pomarina* et la Rousserolle verderolle *Acrocephalus palustris*. La Prinia aquatique était assez commune dans son habitat normal, tandis que l'Engoulevent doré et l'Aigle des steppes semblaient être des visiteurs ou hôtes de passage réguliers.

Introduction

The Lake Chad basin, centred within the dry Sahel zone immediately south of the Sahara, is a major topographical feature of the northern savannas of Africa (Fig 1). North-east Nigeria, along the shores of the lake, received considerable ornithological attention in the past. During the 1960s and early 1970s Dr A J Hopson, director of the Lake Chad Research Institute, at Malamfatori, studied the area's avifauna^{4,9,10}, while in the late 1960s, Malamfatori became the base for the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) expeditions working on Palearctic migrants^{2,3,5}. But since the 1970s, the area has been little visited by ornithologists. The observations described in this paper were made in October 1997, October–November 1998, April and November 1999, and February–May and August–November 2000, during reconnaissance for and the ringing programme of the Lake Chad Bird Migration Project, in the vicinity of Malamfatori^{6–8,11}. This intense field work produced observations of six species new to Nigeria, plus observations of two species of previously 'unconfirmed' status⁴.

Study area

The observations presented here were made in an area largely bordered by the roads between Cross Kauwa–Malamfatori–Baga–Cross Kauwa (Fig 1). Other observations were made along the Yobe River from Yo–Abadam–Bosso–Kaniram and at the Yobe River mouth at Doro. Some records also derive from islands in western Lake Chad. Most time was spent within an area c6 km east and south of the Lake Chad Research Institute's old fishery research station at Duguri, 5 km south of Malamfatori town, which was the temporary base of the Lake Chad Bird Observatory. In the late

1960s, when it was the base for the BOU expeditions, the station was by the lakeshore, but it is now surrounded by farmland at the edge of a rather dense savanna, which invaded the former lake bottom when the northern lake basin dried out in the droughts of the 1970s–1980s. Agricultural rather than fishery studies are now undertaken here. Species included in this paper are those not mentioned or considered 'not confirmed' by Elgood⁴.



Figure 1. Map of the study area in north-east Nigeria; note that the shoreline of Lake Chad shown here is not the current one.

Species new to Nigeria

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

Two, one juvenile and one adult, were observed on 8 November 1998, north-west of Baga, along the road to Mitile. They were initially identified by their silhouette: broad rounded wings, short tail and slightly drooping outer wings. The juvenile was dark brown with paler brown wing-coverts, with a narrow wing-band formed by pale tips to the greater coverts on the upper side. The adult was darker, but still had contrasting, paler underwing-coverts and was in moult. A second juvenile was observed on 16 October 2000, between Cross Kauwa and Alagarno. It was in fresh plumage with yellowish-brown wing-coverts and clear white tips to the greater coverts forming a narrow wing-band. There is an earlier record of a bird south of Maiduguri, tentatively identified as *A. pomarina*, but the record lacks substantiation⁴.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila (rapax) nipalensis*

Two first-years, both having a broad white wingbar on the underwing, were observed between Baga and Mitile, on 8 November 1998. Other characters were the pale brown ground colour, pale trailing edge to the wing and silhouette with level and narrow S-curved wings. Direct comparison with other raptors, eg Tawny *A. rapax* and Booted Eagles *Hieraetus pennatus* was made. On 27 November 1999, two more juveniles were observed between Arege and Alagarno, c30 km south of Malamfatori, and on 10 November 2000, c6 were between Mitile and Baga. It appears that the area west of Lake Chad may be a regular passage or wintering site for Steppe Eagle.

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

One found dead on the road close to Cross Kauwa, on 7 November 1998. A second was flushed, on 15 March 2000, at a ringing site in an area of farmland, saltbush *Salvadora persica* and *Acacia* savanna. The observer first thought it was a Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus* (the most common *Caprimulgus* here). Subsequently two were present; their size appeared too large for female Long-tailed (or a male in non-breeding plumage). Both had c1/4 of the outertail feathers white, a distinct reddish hindneck, a large white spot below the cheek and, in flight, a distinct white area on the primaries and reddish-brown underwing-coverts. Distinct bands were obvious on the wing-coverts when at rest, and starting at each 'shoulder' there was a pale band across the back. They were extremely well camouflaged and very difficult to locate on the ground. On at least one occasion we heard a *chokk* call. By dusk we returned to the station and searched the literature; it appeared

that they were Red-necked Nightjars. The sound was similar to the display sound of that species, of which we had a tape. Regular 'display' was heard each morning until we left the area, on 11 May. On 10 May we attempted to tape-lure one into a net. It reacted immediately to playback of Red-necked Nightjar, flying towards the net, but without being trapped. Given our records of regular display, it is possible that the species is resident, rather than just a winter visitor to this area. It is known from neighbouring Chad and Mali.

Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*

One was found dead on the road between Monguno and Cross Kauwa, on 7 November 1998, 2–3 more were found dead there the following day and on 9 November a live bird was seen in the headlights of a car. Two were found dead south of Cross Kauwa, on 26 and 27 November 1999. Another live individual was observed south of Duguri, on 23 October 2000 and up to ten more were found dead on the road between Cross Kauwa and Maiduguri in October–November 2000. All had the characteristic golden-yellow plumage with silvery-grey spots on the mantle and wing-coverts, and white patch on the outer primaries. Feathers from one of these birds were depicted on the cover of *J. Avian Biol.* in 2001 (Fig 2). These records may indicate an extension of



Figure 2. Front cover of *J. Avian Biol.* 32 (2001), showing feathers from Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* found dead on a road at Malamfatori (reproduced with permission of *J. Avian Biol.*).

the species' range from further north, in Chad, Niger and Mali, where it is mainly resident, although it is now known south of 14°N in Burkina Faso¹.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

A first-year was mist-netted and ringed in a reedbed near Malamfatori, on 16 September 2000, as part of regular ringing work at the site during autumn 2000 (see Fig 7 in Ottosson *et al*¹¹). A first-year Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* was mist-netted simultaneously, permitting direct in-hand comparisons. In distinguishing Marsh Warbler from Reed Warbler we followed the protocol described by Svensson¹³. The general jizz differed from that of Reed Warbler in the shorter bill and shorter hind claw. Most striking were the legs, feet and claws, which were straw-yellow, not grey as in Reed Warbler. The Marsh Warbler had paler, slightly more olive-brown (not rufous-brown) upperparts, especially the rump, which lacked all rufous tones. The dark brown tertials were diffusely, but clearly edged yellowish; this feature is not shown by Reed Warbler. The Marsh Warbler had very fresh plumage and the inner six primaries were tipped off-white. The alula was relatively dark and contrasted with the rest of the wing. A second first-year Marsh Warbler was trapped on 4 October 2000. The first individual measured: wing 70 mm, second primary notch 9.5 mm, third primary 51.5 mm, first primary to primary-covert -2 mm, tail 57 mm, bill to skull 17.6 mm, bill to base of feathering 12.7 mm, bill width 3.8 mm, tarsus 22.5 mm and hind claw 6.6 mm; weight 9.9 g. The second measured: wing 68 mm, second primary notch 9.5 mm, third primary 51 mm and tarsus 22.6 mm; weight 9.9 g. A previous record of one mist-netted at Malamfatori, on 7 September 1965, was considered doubtful by Dowsett³ and not mentioned by Urban *et al*¹⁴. One other record in West Africa, a bird reportedly in song in Senegal¹², apparently lacks supporting evidence.

River Prinia *Prinia fluviatilis*

First observed on an island in Lake Chad, close to Baga, in November 1997 and subsequently found at the same location, on 9 November 1998. During the trapping programme at Malamfatori one was ringed in April 1999 and 38 in 2000 (see Fig 6 in Ottosson *et al*¹¹). All were trapped at sites close to or within water, at what we termed the 'wet sites'. River Prinia is very similar to Tawny-flanked Prinia *P. subflava* but is paler and has a different call and song. Tawny-flanked Prinia is not very common around Malamfatori and was always observed in dry habitat, not in 'wet' areas. The underparts of River Prinia lack all brownish tones, with upperparts cold grey (unlike *subflava*,

which has brownish upperparts). Also useful in their separation was the more contrasting head pattern of *fluviatilis*, with clear white supercilium and darker brown lores. Legs darker than *subflava*. Call higher pitched than *subflava* and song different, more pure and less grating than latter. The discovery of River Prinia in this region is relatively unsurprising, given that it is known from areas south of Lake Chad in Cameroon and Chad¹⁴.

Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulvus*

One was observed 1 km south of our field station at Duguri, on 20, 25 and 30 March 2000. It initially flew from a saltbush in front of the car. The shape and flight immediately led thoughts to a babbler, of which the observer (DB) had seen several species in other parts of Africa. Unfortunately the bird disappeared without being specifically identified. Five days later, at exactly the same site, good views were eventually obtained of possibly the same bird, which was easily identified as a Fulvous Babbler. The long tail, brown upperparts, fulvous underparts, white throat, dark bill and dark eyes were all noted. In autumn, on 15 September 2000, a small flock of four was seen at the same place. This species may also be expanding its range southward in response to increasing desertification.

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*

Three on 21 August 2000, 2 km east of the old Fishery Station at Duguri, were observed from 25 m in a treetop with a flock of Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starlings *Lamprolanius chalybaeus* for a couple of minutes before they flew away. They had a very pale overall impression. The body was pale greyish brown with a conspicuous off-white rump. The belly was whitish, and tail and wing feathers blackish. The pointed bill was pale yellowish, with bare yellow and black skin surrounding it, as well as behind the eye and lores. Legs were pale brown. They were approximately the size of the Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starlings and the appearance was that of a typical *Sturnus* starling, short tailed and bulky bodied.

Unconfirmed observations

Three Barbary Falcon *Falco (peregrinus) peregrinoides* and one or two Saker *F. cherrug* sightings were made, but the observations were so brief that proper descriptions could not be made. These species probably occur in the area and future observers should attempt to confirm their presence.

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Conservation importance of the Albertine Rift and the work of the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS)

Dr Laurent Ntabuga

La Société de Conservation du Rift Albertin (Albertine Rift Conservation Society, ARCOS) a été créée en 1995 afin de promouvoir la protection de la nature dans les six pays de la région, le Burundi, la République Démocratique du Congo, le Rwanda, la Tanzanie, l'Uganda et la Zambie, par le biais d'un partenariat régional d'Organisations Non-Gouvernementales (ONGs). Les activités présentes et passées de l'association sont présentées, ainsi que ses projets.

Introduction

The Albertine Rift extends for c1,500 km over six countries in eastern and central Africa, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, from Lake Albert in the north to Lake Tanganyika in the south. The region is characterised by a rich biodiversity and the high variety of ecosystems found there partially results from the range of altitudes, from 770 m (at Lake Tanganyika) to 5,109 m (in the Ruwenzori Mountains).

Conservation importance

Despite the marked and ever-increasing degradation of biodiversity in the region, the Albertine Rift still possesses an impressive variety of animal and plant species both within and outside protected areas. Furthermore, its forests, lakes and wetlands achieve the highest score in Africa in terms of endemism (see Table 1), and rank among the highest biodiversity hotspots for other taxa such as butterflies, primates and plants. Moreover, Albertine Rift montane forests are ecologically important for their role in local and regional climate regulation, anti-erosion control and watershed protection for the two principal hydrologic basins of Africa (the Nile and Congo basins), as well as providing existential resources for local communities.

Table 1. Albertine Rift overall species numbers and endemism

Class	Species numbers	% Endemism
Mammals	224	14
Birds	712	5
Reptiles	116	26
Amphibians	64	42

ARCOS mission and performances

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) was established in 1995 as a regional NGO operating in the six Albertine Rift countries mentioned above with a mission to *enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources of the Albertine Rift region through the promotion of collaborative conservation action, awareness raising and biodiversity information exchange in the region.*

ARCOS's major achievements have been made in the promotion of a regional network consisting of partners, partner organisations (NGOs, government representatives, research institutions, etc) and Focal Points within and outside the rift region. The regional priority-setting workshop *Promoting community-based conservation and regional information exchange in support of Albertine Rift montane forests*, facilitated by ARCOS, was held on 13–15 July 1999 in Kampala (Uganda) and contributed greatly towards consolidating collaboration among local conservation organisations.

Table 2. ARCOS Focal Points in the Albertine Rift countries

Country	Focal point's name	Organisation
1 Burundi	Dr Gaspard Bikwemu	Burundi-Nature
2 DRC	Didier de Failly s.j. (Sud-Kivu) Claude Sikubwabo (Nord-Kivu)	BEST VONA
3 Rwanda	Dr Emmanuel Twarabamenye	ACNR
4 Tanzania	Alice Bukholi	WCST
5 Uganda	Dr Julius Arinaitwe	Nature Uganda
6 Zambia	Mwape Sichilongo	WCSTZ

With funding from various sources, ARCOS has also implemented a number of projects:

- Production of a regional newsletter, which publishes articles from across the region in a bilingual (English and French) format twice a year.

- Visits to national focal organisations in Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda to develop the ARCOS partnership and consolidate the regional network.
- Assessing biological and socio-economic knowledge of Itombwe Forest and its surroundings.
- Production of key materials, fact sheets, a technical report on *Conservation Status of Albertine Rift Montane Forests: Preliminary Review* and other working documents.
- Developing a methodology and guidelines to assess impacts of armed conflicts on Albertine Rift biodiversity conservation.
- Itombwe Forest Project follow-up proposal.
- *Albertine Rift Montane Forest Conservation Status: Challenges and Opportunities* handbook to facilitate decision-making phase 2. This is a policy-targeted handbook and CD-ROM to guide decision-making for the conservation and sustainable use of Albertine Rift montane forests.
- Albertine Rift Regional Expert workshop on species data and information sharing.
- ARCOS Second Biannual Forum.
- Case studies on integrated conservation and development in the Albertine Rift region.
- Framework for biodiversity conservation planning and monitoring of Albertine Rift montane forests.

Future activities

The framework of actions for ARCOS is described in its document entitled *First Steps*, which also provides a review of its 1995–1998 activities and a three-year work plan for 1999–2002. The various events and project proposals for which funding is still being sought are:

- ARCOS core activities for biodiversity conservation in the Albertine Rift, phase 2.

The way forward

Over the next two years, ARCOS will need to deploy considerable efforts on some of these issues, but of paramount importance are the development of a Regional Biodiversity Information Centre, further projects, and fund-raising strategy and techniques. ☛

ARCOS Regional Coordinator, Kampala, Uganda.



Supported by ABC Conservation Fund

List of Bird Recorders and Checklist Compilers

Compiled by Keith Betton

In *Bull. ABC* 1: 39–48, John Fanshawe reviewed the state of the African birding community in 1994, the year of the ABC launch. The present compilation aims to update ABC members on bird recorders and checklist compilers for all of the countries covered within the ABC region (see *Bull. ABC* 1: 12). Updates can be sent to the address at the foot of the article or by e-mail to keithbetton@hotmail.com. We urge all ABC members to submit records or trip reports from any visits, future or past, to the region to the relevant recorders in order that the information can be utilised, and not remain 'buried' in observers' notebooks.

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A new ornithological institute in Nigeria

Juliet Vickery and Peter Jones

Nigeria is ornithologically the richest country in West Africa because its immense size encompasses nearly all of Africa's major vegetation zones (from lowland rainforest to Sahelian semi-desert) and, at 883 recorded species, almost half of the continent's avifauna. It is also the most populous country in Africa, supporting 120 million people within its 924,000 km². Almost in the centre of the country the Jos Plateau rises to 800–1,200 m from the surrounding Guinea savanna. Here intensive agriculture, tin mining and accompanying towns and settlements jostle for space among massive granite inselbergs arising from a wide, open landscape.

The Amurum Forest at Lamina, c5 km outside Jos, the administrative capital of Plateau State, is one of the last remnants of natural woodland on the plateau and still has a rich avifauna. Over 160 bird species have been recorded in an area of little more than 100 ha, among which are two highly restricted endemics, Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta sanguinodorsalis* and its brood parasite Jos Plateau

Indigobird *Vidua maryae*, the former described only in 1998. It could soon be a pivotal area for ornithology in Nigeria and perhaps West Africa as a whole, it being the site of a new research facility, the A P Leventis Ornithological Research Institute. Opened in June 2001 with, as the title suggests, very generous funding by A P Leventis—a name familiar within Nigerian conservation circles—the project involves collaboration between the University of Jos, Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and nearby Lamina community. The centre is dedicated to the study of birds in particular, biodiversity conservation in general and is the only specialist ornithological institute in West Africa.

The Institute building is almost complete and comprises a lecture room, library (already boasting a collection many European institutions would be proud of, due to the generosity and foresight of its founder), a laboratory and several offices. There is on-site living accommodation for four researchers and separate accommodation for a round-the-clock watchman.



View of the A P Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Jos Plateau, Nigeria (Peter Jones)



View of the A P Leventis Ornithological Research Institute, Jos Plateau, Nigeria (Peter Jones)

The site is superb: the bottle-green building nestles between two inselbergs, commanding beautiful views over Amurum Forest. Fox Kestrel *Falco alopec* and Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus* soar above the building and around the tallest granite outcrops, Mocking Cliff-Chat *Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris* flits over the rock faces in flashes of chestnut and white, and early in the morning Rock Hyrax *Procapra capensis* bask in the sun. Amurum is not pristine woodland but its future as a study site appears assured as the focus of a NCF community forest project dedicated to its sustainable use by the Laminga community.

The first Head of the Institute is Dr Augustine (Gus) Ezealor, a charismatic and skilled Nigerian ornithologist seconded from Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. Gus is already well known to many ABC members for his work on Nigerian IBAs for BirdLife International. Field work at the Institute has already begun with the arrival of the first two postgraduate students, Ross McGregor and Jared Wilson, who are undertaking DPhil projects at Oxford University in collaboration with the University of Jos, and are co-supervised by Will Cresswell (University of Oxford) Peter Jones (University of Edinburgh) and Juliet Vickery (British Trust for Ornithology).

One studentship (Jared Wilson) will focus primarily on Palearctic migrants. More than 25% of all European bird species winter in areas of farmed and grazing lands in the seasonal savannas of West Africa, yet very little is known of their winter habitat requirements or how they interact with Afrotropical residents. However, the habitats on which these species rely are subject to increasing human pressure and perhaps also climate change. For many taxa survival on their wintering grounds plays a major role in their popu-

lation dynamics. The research will aim to collect baseline data on the density and distribution of Palearctic migrants wintering in Sahel and Guinea savanna to determine habitat requirements, and the effects of habitat modification.

The second studentship (Ross Macgregor) will focus on Afrotropical residents. Many tropical forest species are threatened by habitat change and in order to better predict or manage future populations of these species an understanding of their demographics is required. However, few detailed studies of the population dynamics of West African species exist. In addition, though it is known that many species undertake long intra-African migrations, the degree of residency or itinerancy of these to breeding and wintering areas is poorly known. This study aims to obtain baseline data on survival rates and residency patterns of a broad range of Riverine and Guinea savanna forest species.

Obviously, the Institute is more than just a good base for 'outside' students—its main role will be to offer training and education for Nigerians (and students from elsewhere in the continent, particularly West Africa). With this in mind it will run a MSc course in Conservation Biology within the Zoology Department of Jos University, with the first students due to enroll in October 2002.

The potential for the Institute is enormous. It provides a scenic and well-equipped base for a diverse range of research and training activities, and a long-overdue opportunity for a fruitful exchange and sharing of African and European expertise. Nigeria does not have an especially positive image abroad, largely based on that of the big cities such as Lagos and Kano. Reaching Jos is straightforward, with regular and reliable flights from Lagos. The higher altitude has a pleasant climate and Jos is a safe and friendly place, despite recent troubles. Enthusiasm for the Institute, within NCF and the University of Jos, is huge. We hope that ABC members and their colleagues will share this enthusiasm and consider how they might collaborate in a unique initiative.

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African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* as a resident in Soutpansberg, Northern Province, South Africa

Craig T. Symes^a and Sarah M. Venter^b

L'Eurylaime du Cap *Smithornis capensis* a récemment été découvert dans le Soutpansberg, Province du Nord, Afrique du Sud, où il pourrait nicher comme hôte d'été. Des observations récentes, faites dans une forêt près de Louis Trichardt, semblent indiquer que l'espèce est résidente dans la région. Le statut taxonomique de cette population isolée mérite d'être examiné.

African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis* was recently found to occur in the Soutpansberg, Northern Province, South Africa, where it was suggested to be seasonal⁶. Subsequently, it has been discovered at a forest near Louis Trichardt (site 3 in Symes & Perrin⁶) in winter. On 21 June 2000 at least two were recorded in Roodewaal forest (23°00'S 30°01'E, where heard at 08.00 hrs; and 23°01'S 30°02'E, where seen and heard at 12.00 hrs). On 10 October 2000 attempts were made to locate these individuals, using playback at various sites. A male was attracted on one occasion (08.45 hrs), but did not call. On 25 May 2001, another was heard on the south side of Roodewaal forest, a site where it had not been previously recorded.

These data suggest that African Broadbill may be resident in the Soutpansberg during winter (May–June), and thus throughout the year. The forest is classified as re-growth forest³ and the canopy seldom exceeds 10 m. During winter the understorey becomes particularly dry. The bird-species community includes those recorded in higher altitude Afromontane forest and lower altitude bushveld and re-growth forest in the region⁷. Further research into the status of African Broadbill here is required¹. In addition, the taxonomic status of those in Soutpansberg, which is separated by 250–300 km from the nearest known population, should be investigated. It is possible that an undescribed form occurs here. Otherwise, contrary to the suggestion that they are of the subspecies *conjunctus*⁶, it is more likely that *cryptoleucus* is involved⁴. Based on biogeographic evidence, this population more likely has affinities with those occurring to the east and south-east in Mozambique, Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal^{1,2,5}.

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Extension of breeding activity for Rodrigues Warbler *Acrocephalus rodericanus*

Dave A. Showler

La Rousserolle de Rodrigues *Acrocephalus rodericanus*, espèce menacée, est endémique à Rodrigues, une des îles formant l'archipel des Mascareignes, située dans le sud de l'Océan Indien. Un juvénile, observé pendant qu'il était nourri par un adulte, le 30 avril 1999, était estimé avoir quitté le nid moins de cinq jours auparavant. Ceci est de 6 à 8 semaines plus tard que les dates d'envol constatées auparavant. Il est possible que la saison de nidification soit plus tardive pendant certaines années ou qu'il y ait plus d'une nidification par an, selon les conditions météorologiques ou l'abondance de nourriture.

The Endangered Rodrigues Warbler *Acrocephalus rodericanus* is endemic to the Indian Ocean island of Rodrigues. A juvenile Rodrigues Warbler observed being fed by an adult in woodland at St Gabriel (central Rodrigues), on 30 April 1999, was estimated to be fewer than five days out of the nest. Its bill length was approximately three-quarters that of the adult feeding it, it had obvious gape flanges, some down on the lower throat and the tail was c25 mm long. This is 6–8 weeks later than any previously observed fledging date. The fledging period of Rodrigues Warbler is unknown, but is probably c14 days¹. The fledging period of its slightly larger congener, Seychelles Warbler *A. sechellensis* is 18–20 days³. Backdating indicates that the bird hatched some time during the second week of April. The incubation period of Rodrigues Warbler is also unknown, but Seychelles Warbler incubates for 18 days³. On this basis, the egg-laying date would have been c25 March, at the start of the Southern Hemisphere winter. It is possible that in some years the breeding season may be extended or breeding may occur more than once per annum, eg a pair of warblers nested twice in the 1974–75 season and two broods is perhaps the norm¹.

Breeding activity is presumably linked to weather conditions and food availability. Examples can be drawn from the findings of extensive research into the breeding biology of Seychelles Warbler. On its native island of Cousin, where food availability varies seasonally, Diamond² found that the species bred twice in most years (once in the wet and once in the dry season), apparently using rainfall frequency to predict peak abundance in insect food. Further, Komdeur³ was able to test the hypothesis that seasonal changes in feeding conditions are an important proximate factor controlling reproduction, following translocation of some pairs (as a conservation measure) to Aride, an island with high year-round food availability. Here, birds prolonged their reproductive season, increased the annual number of broods and

annual production per pair was, on average, far higher than that of the same pair prior to translocation³.

On Rodrigues, in addition to the warbler, winter-breeding of Rodrigues Fody *Foudia flavicans*, the only other extant endemic bird, has also been observed¹. Interestingly, winter breeding is almost unknown for passerines on the two more westerly Mascarene islands, Mauritius and Réunion, where nesting seasons are well known (R Safford pers comm 2001). Cheke (pers comm 2001) suggests that winter breeding is an adaptation to the much less predictable weather/precipitation patterns in Rodrigues, when it would be an advantage to be able to make effective use of unseasonal rainfall, as the main rainy season often does not arrive. Further ecological studies on Rodrigues are required to examine the reproductive strategies and breeding success of both of the endemic passerines.

Acknowledgements

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Melanistic Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* in Morocco

Patrick Bergier

Une Tourterelle turque *Streptopelia decaocto* mélanique, observée à Tan Tan Plage, Maroc, le 26 avril 2001, est décrite. L'oiseau était presque entièrement noir, seules les rémiges secondaires et tertiaires, les couvertures et les scapulaires étant plus pâles, gris foncé. Cette aberration de plumage ne semble pas avoir été rapportée précédemment chez cette espèce.

The Eurasian Collared Dove reached Morocco in the late 1970s and subsequently spread rapidly across the entire country¹, including desert areas. On the Atlantic coast, it reached Dakhla in 1998 and is now resident in most of towns to the north of there.

On the 26 April 2001, the species was found to be common around the port and town of Tan Tan Plage (28°29'N 11°20'W). Among normal-plumaged birds,

colleagues and myself discovered an almost entirely black individual near the Restaurant Equinoxe (Figs 1–3); only the secondaries, tertials, wing-coverts and scapulars appeared paler and greyer. Its behaviour was the same as the other individuals.

Slight colour variations are fairly common in this species², but I have failed to discover any instances of melanism in the literature. ☛

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1



2



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Figures 1–3. Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Tan Tan Plage, Morocco, 26 April 2001 (Patrick Bergier)

Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2001, 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 (see pp. 58–60). It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R.J. Dowsett's (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in: R.J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds*. Tauraco Research Report 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

Azores

In April 2001, four **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* were photographed at Lajes do Pico, Pico, on 8th; probably the same four were at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 22nd (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 160).

In September, at least 10 **Black Ducks** *Anas rubripes* (including hybrids) were at Lagoa Seca, while a male **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* was at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, on 5th. Nearctic waders included an adult **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* and a juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Cabo da Praia quarry, Terceira, on 6–18th at least, single adult and juvenile **Least Sandpipers** *C. minutilla* also there on 6th, a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 5th, two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* at Cabo da Praia quarry, Terceira, on 11–18th at least, and two more at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 11th, a juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Cabo da Praia quarry, Terceira, on 11–12th, and one at Santa Cruz das Flores airfield, Flores, on 16–18th, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Lagoa do Caiado, Pico, on 8th, and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* at Lajes do Pico, Pico, also on 8th. A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was at

Lagoa Verde, São Miguel, on 16–20th. A first-winter **American Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus smithsonianus* was at Ponta Delgada, Flores, on 17th. **The first Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* for the Azores was at Cabo de Praia, Terceira, on 28th (per *Birding World* 14: 369 & 421 and *Dutch Birding* 23: 299).

Botswana

Six **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* were claimed at Mabuasehube Pan, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, on 2 October 2001 (*ZfB*). Other claims, from Maun, yet to be assessed by BirdLife Botswana's rarities and records sub-committee include a **Corn Crane** *Crex crex* in early 2001, a **Common Tern** *Sterna birundo* in July and a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* in October (*ST*). A group of ten **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* was on the Phukhu Flats, Chobe National Park, on 9 October. A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*, a rare migrant in the country, was observed at Bobonong on 25–27 October (*ZfB*). Other unusual waders in September–October included a **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* at Lake Ngami, a **Whimbrel** *Nimienius phaeopus* in the north-west and one at Lake Ngami (possibly the same bird), a **Eurasian Curlew** *N. arquata* in the Nossob Valley, south-west Botswana, and **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* near Maun. Earlier in the year two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were seen near Maun (*ST*). A **Lesser**

Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* was seen on the banks of the Kwai River, northern Botswana, on 25 July; this is a very rare Nearctic vagrant with only two previous records in southern Africa (Harrison *et al* 1997. *The Atlas of Southern African Birds*), in Zimbabwe, December 1979, and South Africa, August 1983 (*RL, CL & LFR*). A **Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus* was at Nata on 14 October. Two **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were reported from Kwanokeng Camp, on the banks of the Limpopo River near the border with South Africa, on 22 August (*ZfB*).

Burkina Faso

Since the discovery of **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* at Nazinga Game Ranch in September 1999, more than 30 sightings have been obtained totalling 63 individuals, with a max. of 11 adults together on 14 May 2001. An **African Swallow-tailed Kite** *Cbclictinia riocorrii* was observed at Banfora on 25 February and again on 12 March. Two adult **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos (Aegyptius) tracheliotos*, seen on 19 February, were the first for Nazinga. Five **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis*, found at Tengrela on 25 February, were still there on 12 March. The first **Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius* for Nazinga was recorded on 4–16 April, and the first **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* on 7 March. Twelve **White-rumped Swifts** *Apus caffer* on 6 June was a remarkable high number for Nazinga; usually only 1–2 are seen. Two **Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* were observed near Bobo-Dioulasso on 24 February (*BP*).

Cameroon

Bob-tailed Weaver *Brachycope anomala* was found breeding in Kika, extreme south-east Cameroon, on 6 October 2001; this is the second record for the country, 50 years after the first in nearby Moloundou. Another interesting record from the same area is the capture of a vagrant **Secretary Bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* in a gap within dense tropical forest (*ML*).

Canary Islands

Records in March–November 2001 include the following. A **Fea's Petrel**



White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus* by Craig Robson

Pterodroma (mollis) feae was spotted off Tenerife on 28 July. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Pbaethon aethereus* and c200 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* were seen from the La Palma–Tenerife ferry on 25 August (TC). Seawatching off Puerto de Santiago, Tenerife, produced over 40 **Little Shearwaters** *P. assimilis* per hour moving north most evenings between 18 and 23 July. At least nine **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii* and four **European Storm-petrels** *Hydrobatas pelagicus* also flew north there on 23 July (per *Birding World* 14: 282). A **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagordroma marina* was seen between Tenerife and El Hierri on 23 September (LB). Ten **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* were at Embalse de Molinas, Fuerteventura, on 26 May (per *Birding World* 14: 246). The two female **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife, stayed from December 2000 until at least 5 March (TC). Two **Booted Eagles** *Hieraetus pennatus* on Lanzarote were the first ever for July in the Canaries (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 298). A **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* was at Los Canarios saltpans, La Palma, on 18–21 September (LB). Six **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* were at Caleta de Fuste, Fuerteventura, on 30 May (per *Birding World* 14: 246). A first-winter **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* stayed at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife, on 5–26 October at least. A **Grey** (Red) **Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was spotted from the Tenerife–Gomera ferry on 2 August and a juvenile **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* on 3 October (TC). A juvenile **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* was at La Restinga, El Hierro, on 23 September (LB).

Two **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* were found at Amarilla golf course, Tenerife, on 5–6 November, with one still present on 8th; the fourth record for the archipelago. A **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* stayed at Barranco de la Torre, Fuerteventura, on 19–30 July at least. On the same island, a **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* was seen at Presa de las Peñitas on 20 July (TC). A **Purple Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis purpureus*, presumably escaped, was discovered in a garden in Los Gigantes, Tenerife, on 2–5 August (TH; see Fig 1, see p.68); the species has been seen on Tenerife before, at Ten Bel, and was then also treated as an escape. The third **Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* for the Canaries was at Alcalá, Tenerife, on 7–8 November at least (TC).

Côte d'Ivoire

In October 2001, **Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri* was added to the Mt Péko National Park list, and **Cameroon Indigobird** *Vidua camerurensis* was found in Mt Sangbé National Park; the latter is new to the country (HR).

Egypt

Records in March–August 2001 include the following. At Abu Simbel, 30 **Pink-backed Pelicans** *Pelecanus rufescens* were present on 6 April (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 156). Breeding of **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*, **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* and **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* was confirmed at Luxor in May. Small numbers of **Green-backed Herons** *Butorides striatus* were noted in the Nile Valley from Edfu to north of Nag Hamadi, with breeding presumed, on 6–10 May (MBD & SBD). Twenty **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were seen at Abu Simbel on 6 April and at least 64 **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* were at Oued Massa on 1 March (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 156–160). An **Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* was at Wadi El Rayan on 26 May (per *Birding World* 14: 246). A **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* was sighted at Wadi Hagul on 27 March. At Abu Simbel, c30 **Kittlitz's Plovers** *Charadrius pecuarius* with young were found on 6 April (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 160–161). Two **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were at Lake Qarun on 27 May (per *Birding World* 14: 246). In June, a **Sooty Gull** *Larus bemprichii* and four **Saunders' Terns** *Sterna saundersi* were at Ras Mohamed on 2nd (per *Birding World* 14: 246). At least four **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* were at Safaga on 5 May (MBD & SBD) and an **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* was at Abu Simbel on 6 April (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 164). At least five pairs of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* were nesting north of Edfu, well south of their previously known range, on 7 May (MBD & SBD).

Four **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* were also at Abu Simbel on 6 April (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 164). A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* was at the resthouse on the Luxor–Qena Road on 5 May (MBD & SBD). A **Streaked Scrub-Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta* apparently showing characters of the race *saliacae* was observed at Santa Catarina on 29 May; the usual race in Egypt is nominate *inquieta* (per *Birding World* 14: 246). An immature **Rose-colored Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was at Safaga on 28

August. At least three colonies of **Red Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* were found in reedbeds between Luxor and Qena, where the species was also presumed to be breeding, on 5–6 May (MBD & SBD).

Equatorial Guinea

On Bioko, three **Scarce Swifts** *Schoubedenapus myoptilus* were flying close to the coast on 10 February 2001 beside the River Ope, c4 km north of Basacato del Oeste, on the west side of the island towards Luba (RAC). The only previous records from Bioko include a possible sighting in December 1996–January 1997 and eight specimens in 1902–1933.

Ethiopia

The following records are from the second half of October 2001. Two adults and a juvenile **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* were seen, and others heard, in a swamp south of Bahar Dar, on 14th, and another adult was at Lake Awassa on 20th; the species is apparently rarely recorded in Ethiopia. A female **Plain Nightjar** *Caprimulgus inornatus* was picked up from the road near Robe, in the Bali Mountains, on 24th; the location and altitude appear somewhat unusual for the species. Two pairs of **White-tailed Swallows** *Hirundo megaensis* appeared to be nesting in a large hole under a 'chimney-stack' termitarium south of Yabello, on 22nd; they frequently entered the hole and one was seen carrying food. According to the literature, the species is presumed to breed in January–February and April–May, but the present records and those from October 2000, when four apparently fresh nests were found in culverts under the main road, suggest that its breeding season is more prolonged. Three **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus* were found near Yabello, on 23rd, and three **Bush Pipit** *Anthus caffer* on 22nd; the status of the latter in Ethiopia is uncertain (NB).

Gabon

Records from August 2001 include the following. A **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca*, a rare species in Gabon, was seen on the Moka River mudflats on 31st. A presumably second-calendar year **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was found at Lékoné on 29th. A **Lesser** (Mongolian) **Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was at the Moka River mouth on 31st; the species appears to have been encountered several times in the last two years and these sightings would constitute the first records for

Western Africa. Also there were nine **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus*. A single **Böhm's Spinetail** *Neafrapasa boehmi* was seen at the edge of Ipassa Reserve just before dusk on 25 August; there are only a few records of this species in Gabon, all from the Makokou area in the north-east, and its status remains unclear. At the same locality, a **Black Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus bartlaubi* had white tips to the wing-coverts typical of the race *granti*, whereas it is the nominate form, which lacks white, that supposedly occurs here. A pair of **Black-backed Barbets** *Lybius minor* was seen at Léconi on 27th; they resembled the supposedly extralimital race *macclouinii*, with white head-sides and a white V on the blackish upperparts, though only nominate *minor*, with head and mantle typically grey-brown, or hybrids supposedly occur in Gabon.

A flock of c50 **South African Cliff Swallows** *Hirundo spilodera* was seen



Figure 1. Purple Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis purpureus*, Los Gigantes, Tenerife, August 2001 (Tommy Holmgren)



Figures 2–3. Barbary Falcons *Falco pelegrinoides*, Morocco, 3 May 2001; first-summer (left), Cap Rhir (Al & Nancy Boggess) and adult (right), Tamri (Pete Morris videograb)

at Léconi on 26 August; this is a rare intra-African migrant to Gabon. A pair of **Red-chested Swallows** *H. lucida* was found breeding in a culvert at Ndjolé on 18 August and a single was seen in the Lopé area; the species has only recently been discovered in the country. A party of four **Fiery-breasted Bush-shrikes** *Malaconotus cruentus*, presumably two pairs, observed in the Réserve de la Lopé on 18th, was apparently involved in territorial display, with much hooting, bill-snapping and upward head-pointing. Two pairs of the little-known **Loango Weaver** *Ploceus subpersonatus* were seen at the Moka River. A pair of **Yellow-capped Weavers** *P. dorsomaculatus* was observed at a nest in Ipassa reserve, Makokou, on 21st; the nest, which has not been previously described, consisted of a ball-shaped structure with a short, loosely woven entrance tunnel below the sphere and was constructed around the fork of a hanging branch of an isolated tree at a height of c33 m (all *NB*).

Ghana

A single **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* was discovered at Accra on 21 July 2001; this constitutes the first record in Western Africa of the species, which is included in IUCN's list of the hundred worst alien invaders (*Af*).

Guinea

A **Grey-winged Robin Chat** *Cossypha polioptera* was found in the Fouta Djalon, near Daralabé, on 13 December 2000; this is the westernmost record of this species to date (*BT*).

Kenya

During a boat trip on Lake Naivasha on 8 October 2001, a dark-morph **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* was watched for c5 minutes in excellent conditions; there are very few certain



Kenyan records of this species (*PRO*).

Much-belated news concerns a male **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca* observed in Tsavo East on 2 December 1994 (*SW*); this was on the same date as the second for Kenya, seen at Lake Baringo. The first was caught and photographed at Athi River near Nairobi, where it stayed on 23 March–5 April 1984 (Zammerman *et al* 1996, *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania*).

Madeira

The following records are from April to September 2001. Twelve **Fea's Petrels** *Pterodroma (mollis) feae* were seen from the Desertas ferry on 11 July. In August, three probable **Zino's Petrels** *Pterodroma (mollis) madeira* (as well as 22 **Fea's Petrels**) were observed, two off Porto do Moniz and one off Ponta da Cruz. No fewer than 1,200 **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii* were seen off Ponta da Cruz in two hours on 14 July. On 1 May, 300 **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis* were noted off Ponta da Cruz and at least 125 off Porto do Moniz in August. An adult **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* was seen between Madeira and the Desertas Islands on 3 September.

Five **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* and six **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* were at Garajau in mid-April; a single **Purple Heron** was also seen off Ponta da Cruz on 20 May. Two **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* were at Ponto de São Lourenço and 10 **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* at Caniçal in mid-April. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* flew past Ponta da Cruz on 1 May and another was seen at Caniçal on 5 May. Four **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were at Funchal harbour in April, and singles in May and July–September. Nine **Rosate Terns** *Sterna dougallii* flew past Ponta da Cruz on 7 May and one was in Caniçal harbour in August (per *Birding World* 14: 191, 282, 322 and 369).

Malawi

In June 2001, a **Malagasy Pond-heron** *Ardeola idae*, a **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* and a **Baillon's Crane** *Porzana pusilla* were seen in Liwonde National Park, on 3rd. Two **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*, seen the next day, may indicate a southern range extension of this species (*SC*).

Morocco

Records in February–September 2001 include the following. At the main colony at Tifnit, 65 pairs of **Bald Ibis** *Geronticus*



Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* by Mark Andrews

eremita bred (per *Birding World* 14: 282). Relatively large gatherings of **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* were observed on the Oualidia and Khemis Zemamra lagoons, with 110 individuals on 21 March and 185 on 12 April. On the same dates, 280 and c60 **Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were at Oualidia. A female **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* was at Lac Sidi Bourhaba on 15 September (VS). Two immature **Eurasian Griffon** *Gyps fulvus* were seen high over Fom Kheneg Gorge, near Timahdite, south of Ifrane, on 26 April (PM). A **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* was observed 34 km east of Taroudant in mid-February. An unseasonal pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was at Midelt, on 24 February (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 160). An immature **Barbary Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* *pelegrinoides* was seen at Cap Rhir and an adult at Tamri, on 3 May; there are few certain records of this species and its distribution in Morocco is poorly known (PM; Figs 2–3).

A **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* was unusually far north at Ben Ahmed, just south of Sidi Bettache, on 20 March. Two **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* were at Oualidia on 21 March, with three there on 12 April, and one at the Souss estuary, Agadir, on 10 April. Also at Oualidia, an adult **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* in breeding plumage on 12 April would be the sixth for the country if accepted (VS). An adult **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* was at the Souss estuary on 2 May and 25+ passed north in a one-hour seawatch at Cap Rhir next day (PM). **Common Gulls** *Larus canus* were also seen at Oued Souss, with a first-winter there on 2 March and an adult on 23 March and 8–10 April (per *Dutch Birding* 23: 161; VS); a first-summer was at Mehdiya Plage, at the north edge of Lac Sidi Bourhaba, on 24 April (PM). An adult **'Baltic' Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus f. fuscus* in breeding plumage was in the same place on 8 April; this would

apparently constitute the first record of this form in the country, if accepted (VS). A **Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* was seen just south of Rabat on 25 April; this species is further expanding its range in Morocco (PM).

Iberian Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita brehmii* were seen in the south of the country, with one at Oukaïmeden on 31 March, two at Ouarzazate on 2 April and one at Oualidia on 12 April. **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis* is expanding north, its range approaching that of Common Raven *Corvus corax*; two were seen 15 km north of Erfoud on 5 April, while Common Raven was frequent in the Ziz Valley, 20–22 km north of Erfoud (VS).

Mozambique

A **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* and a **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* were at Rio Savanne, just north of Beira, on 7 September 2001. An out-of-range **African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* was reported from coastal Vilanculos on 20 October. Three **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata* were observed on nearby Bazaruto Island on 21 October; presumably the same birds were on Margereque Island next day, when there were also five **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* at that locality (ZfB).

Some 15 **Mascarene Martins** *Phedina borbonica* flew south-east over miombo woodland west of Panda, southern Mozambique, on 12 July. This is the first record for the country south of the Save. Both **Moreau's Tailorbird** *Artisornis moreaui* and **African Tailorbird** *A. metopias* were still present in montane forest patches on Serra Jeci (Njesi Plateau), Niassa Province, northern Mozambique, on 4–5 July. A pair of Moreau's Tailorbirds was observed in the forest canopy. Several African Tailorbirds were seen and three were mist-netted. Serra Jeci is the only known locality outside Tanzania for both species, and



African Tailorbird *Artisornis metopias* by Mark Andrews

these are the first records from the site since Jali Makawa, Con Benson's collector, discovered them there in 1945 (PR & CS).

Namibia

The following records relate to April–October 2001. A female **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* was located at Namib Greens Rest Camp, west of Windhoek, on 30 April. Single **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were reported from Sandwich harbour on 2 and 8 May and 25 July, Dolphin Beach, between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund, on 18 May, and Walvis Bay Salt Works, on 8 July–30 October at least, with two there on 17–19 August. A **Lesser Sand** (Mongolian) **Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was at Walvis Bay on 2 September, with a specifically unidentified **'Lesser' Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica/fulva* also there on 1 October. A **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* was discovered at Walvis Bay Salt Works on 26 July; this would constitute the fourth record for the Afrotropics if accepted. The season's first **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* was observed at Sandwich harbour on 26 September, with another sighting there on 10 October. Walvis Bay lagoon and Salt Works produced a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* on 1 October, a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* on 24 September and 17 October, a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* on 22–24 September and 1–2 October, and single **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* on 26 July, 3 and 31 August, 18 September and 25 October, with four there in the first half of August and six on 1 October. An out-of-range **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* was reported near Kalizo Lodge, in the eastern Caprivi Strip, on 20 October. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was found at Walvis Bay harbour on 2 July and a **Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus* at Pelican Point, Walvis Bay, on 25 September. Three **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* were at Bird Paradise, Walvis Bay, on 4–5 June (all ZfB).

Nigeria

Records for the period July–November 2001 include the following. In July, a pair of **Sabine's Puffback** *Dryoscopus sabini* was displaying at IITA, Ibadan, with a **White-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita fusconota* also there; the latter was a new record for the area. In September–October, up to 20 sites were located for **Ibadan Malimbe** *Malimbus ibadensis* in the Ibadan area. In early September, a **Rufous-cheeked Nightjar** *Caprimulgus rufigena* was at the Bulatura Oases; this

is only the fifth record for Nigeria. In October, a single **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* reappeared for the third consecutive year (PH). Singing **Dorst's Cisticolas** *Cisticola dorsti* were found at Shen Hill, a few km east of Bukuru, on 27 September; this constitutes the first record on the Jos Plateau. A cisticola observed at Taboru was probably also this species. In view of these sightings it appears probable that records of Red-pate Cisticola *C. ruficeps* on the Jos Plateau mentioned by Elgood *et al* (1994, *The Birds of Nigeria*) actually refer to Dorst's. Also there was a juvenile **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*; this species is widespread and locally common in the country, but rare on the Jos Plateau (MH). With the establishment of the A P Leventis Ornithological Institute at the University of Jos, there have been several interesting sightings on the Jos Plateau, among which an immature **Striped Crane** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* at Vom in October was a new record for the Plateau. Other October records included a **Brown-backed Woodpecker** *Picoides obsoletus*, a **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* and three **Emin's Shrikes** *Lanius gubernator* and, especially noteworthy, a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* of the nominate race *migrans* flying over the Institute. At Yankari National Park, an adult male **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* was seen on two consecutive days in late October and an immature was recorded south of Malamfatori at Lake Chad earlier in the month. The Lake Chad shore area north of Baga has been the focus of considerable attention and would appear to be an important area for migrant raptors. In November the max. counts on a single day included 80 **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis*, 12 **Booted Eagles** *Hieraetus pennatus*, four **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus*, two **Pallid Harriers** *C. macrourus* and 25 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni*. Also there were **White-headed Vultures** *Trigonoceps (Aegyptius) occipitalis* and **Rüppell's Griffon** *Gyps rueppellii* and, on a previous day, a **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos (Aegyptius) tracheliotos*; large vultures are now extremely scarce throughout Nigeria outside national parks. Three **Long-legged Buzzards** *Buteo rufinus* were seen on another day in the same area. An out-of-range **Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* was also noteworthy. A nest of a **Cricketer Warbler** *Spiloptila clamans* was found north of Maiduguri on the road to the lake, in late October, and one of a **River Prinia** *Prinia fluviatilis* at Malamfatori in early November; these constitute new

breeding records in Nigeria for these species. On 1 November, an amazing total of 41 **Golden Nightjars** *Caprimulgus eximius* was found dead on the road between Maiduguri and Cross Kauwa, over a distance of 160 km. One was seen alive north of Cross Kauwa on 3rd. Also in early November, in Sambisa National Park, five **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were seen and appear to occur now on a regular basis. Fifty pairs of **Horus Swifts** *Apus horus* were found breeding in the park and 100 **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymartia melba* were seen overhead. Just south of Maiduguri, a **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* was discovered at Gombole Forest Reserve, a considerable southward range extension for the species (PH).

Rwanda

In Nyungwe Forest Reserve, the endangered **Grauer's Swamp Warbler** *Bradypterus graueri* and **Kungwe Apalis** *Apalis (rufogularis) argentea* (the latter often treated as a race of the widespread Buff-throated Apalis) were still common and easily found along the tarred road around the campsite, during a short and quite safe visit in June 2001 (GM).

São Tomé & Príncipe

A **Madeira Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma castro* was seen off Príncipe on 3 September 2001; the Gulf of Guinea population of this species, which presumably breeds in September–December, may belong to an undescribed race (NB).

Senegal

Waterbird counts undertaken in Saloum Delta National Park and Niimi during the second half of January 2001 recorded 468 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, 1,960 **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens*, 10 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis*, 13 **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra*, 150 **White Storks** *C. ciconia*, 5 **Saddle-billed Storks** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*, 53 **Sacred Ibis** *Tibreskiornis aethiopicus*, 231 **European Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia*, 26 **African Spoonbills** *P. alba*, 3,283 **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus ruber*, 9,491 **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei*, 972 **Audouin's Gulls** *L. audouinii* and 228 **White-fronted Plovers** *Charadrius marginatus* (Direction des Parcs Nationaux Sénégalais per BP).

A putative female **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* flew past the Île de Léba, Sine-Saloum, on 18 January 2001; unfortunately, no description was made of this potential

bird for the country. Two adult **Barbary Falcons** *Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides* were seen at Poutac, Sine-Saloum, on 23 January; this species is a vagrant to the country. A **Little Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvatica* was observed at Bakadadji, Sine-Saloum, on 20 January (BP). What may have been the first **Swamp Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis* for Senegal, was seen north-east of Saint-Louis on 10 December 1999 (RC & MF); unfortunately, the description does not definitely eliminate other possible nightjar species (RC).

A male **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ocbriuros*, seen at the Senegal River near Saint-Louis on 14 January 2000, appears to be the fourth record for the country (RC). A **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* was at Poutac, Sine-Saloum, on 24 January 2001 (BP).

Seychelles

A **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Bras Cinq Cases, Aldabra, on 21 September 2001 is the first Seychelles record west of Mahé, where the species was first recorded in the archipelago in 1992 and has become established as a breeding species since 1995. The second **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* for Seychelles, reported on 5 April from Police Bay, Mahé (*Bull. ABC* 8: 152), was still present in October. A **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbica* at Bird Island on 12 June is the fifth record for Seychelles. Also of interest is the recent acceptance by Seychelles Bird Records Committee of the first Seychelles record of **White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*, photographed at Aldabra, on 12 December 1976 (AS).

South Africa

The following records are from late April to early November 2001. During pelagic trips out of Cape Town a putative **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche (cauta) salvini* was spotted on 28 April, and other singles on 1 and 8 September. **Wandering Albatrosses** *Diomedea exulans* were regularly seen in June–September (usually 1–3 per trip), whereas one or two **Northern Royal Albatrosses** *D. (epomophora) sanfordi* were occasionally observed in May and late July–November. A **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora*, a very rarely recorded species in southern African waters, with probably fewer than ten definite records, was sighted on 28 July, and a **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca* on 8 June. A pelagic cruise to 180 nautical miles south of Cape Point on 9–11 August produced ten **Wandering Albatrosses**, four **Northern Royal Albatrosses**, four



Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* by Mark Andrews

Southern Royal Albatrosses, two **Sooty Albatrosses**, a **Slender-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri* and 21 **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis* (most of the dark-faced race *elegans*, with at least three pale-faced *tunneyi*). The first **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialisoides* of the season was seen off the Cape on 25 September. Single **Grey Petrels** *Procellaria cinerea*, rare north of 40°S, were sighted on 7 June and 23 September, and single **Spectacled Petrels** *P. (aequinoctialis) conspicillata* on 25 August and 8 September.

Two subantarctic vagrants were discovered exhausted and subsequently died: a **White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessonii*, a very rare species in this region, at Noordhoek beach, Cape Peninsula, on 7 September, and a **Kerguelen Petrel** *P. brevirostris* at Paternoster, on 26 September. The region's third sight record of **Balearic Shearwater** *Puffinus (puffinus) mauretanicus* was made off the Cape on 28 October; the first was claimed on 30 December 2000. The species was previously known from two specimens collected off the Cape in 1979, these being the first records south of the equator. The year's first **Little Shearwater** of the race *tunneyi* was seen just off Cape Point on 24 May; single Little Shearwaters were subsequently seen on different dates in June and on 7 August. A **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* was mist-netted on Dyer Island on 22 October; this constitutes only the fifth southern African record. An unseasonal **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregatta tropica* and a **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were seen on 9 June. An **Australian Gannet** *Sula (Moris) serrator* appeared at Malgas Island, Western Cape, on 12 June and again on 20 September; this species has been a regular visitor to the island in recent years and has even successfully bred there. A **Greater Frigatebird**

Fregata minor was reported from Nahoon beach, East London, Eastern Cape, on 28 October.

A **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea*, found in early February 2001 at Onrus Lagoon near Hermanus, Western Cape, was still present in September; the first individual of this American vagrant was discovered as an immature at the Berg River estuary, Western Cape, in April 1992, and was subsequently seen regularly at the same site until mid-1996. Another (or the same?) was found at Olifants River mouth, more than 300 km to the north, on 10 November. A male **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* in full breeding plumage was found at Strandfontein Sewage Works; this is the third consecutive year that such a bird has appeared in the Western Cape in September; it would be the first for the region if accepted as a genuine vagrant. A **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was at Hluhluwe Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 April and in the Knysna area, Western Cape, on 9 September; the species has been more regularly sighted in recent years. An adult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was reported to have been present around Vanzylsrus, Northern Cape, for at least two months in April–June. The male **Rüppell's Griffon** *Gyps rueppellii* present in the Blouberg Nature Reserve, Northern Province, for a few years bred with a female Cape Vulture *G. coprotheres* at the colony there in 2001. A **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was seen in the Swartvlei area, near Wilderness in the southern Cape, on 8 September.

A **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* was still present at Richard's Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, in early April, and one was seen at Blythedale Beach on 5 October. A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was also still at Richard's Bay on 20 May, with other singles reported from De Hoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 14 July, the mouth of the Gamtoos River, Eastern Cape, from mid-July to at least mid-September, and Blue Horizon Bay, Eastern Cape, on 25 October. Two **Lesser Sand (Mongolian) Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* were at Kromme River estuary near St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, from 11 April to at least September, and two more at Geelbek salt marsh, West Coast National Park, Western Cape, on 30 September. A group of up to 12 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* remained at Kgomo Kgomo, west of Pienaarsrivier, throughout September–October. A putative **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis (dominica) dominica* was at

Kromme River estuary near St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, in April and a **Pacific Golden Plover** *P. (dominica) fulva* was photographed at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 10 November. A juvenile **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* was seen at Geelbek, West Coast National Park, on 26–28 October and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* at Rietvlei, Western Cape, on 13 October. A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, located at Geelbek, West Coast National Park, in March, was still there in early April; another was at Richard's Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 24 September. One of the two **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* first located at Marievale Bird Sanctuary near Johannesburg on 21 January was last seen on 12 April. A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* that had been present for sometime on the Great Fish River estuary, Eastern Cape, was still present on 1 May; another was at Geelbek, West Coast National Park, on 30 October. Two **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were found near Port Elisabeth, Eastern Cape, on 28 October.

A **Greater Sheathbill** *Chionis alba* was discovered at Oudekraal, Cape Peninsula, on 6 September, but could not be relocated thereafter. Pelagic trips out of Cape Town produced five single **South Polar Skuas** *Catharacta maccormicki* from mid-April to early June. A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* in full breeding plumage was at Bird Island in Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, on 15–18 October. In Eastern Cape, **Heuglin's Gulls** *L. (argentatus) heuglini* were reported from Port Alfred on 11 May and from Cape Recife near Port Elisabeth on 26 May, with a possible there on 26 August. A **'Baltic' Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. f. fuscus* was located at the Umgeni River mouth near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 September and remained throughout October; another was found at Bloemhof Dam, on the Free State/North-west Province border, on 3 October. Single adult **Black-headed Gulls** *L. ridibundus* in full breeding plumage were reported from the Berg River near Veldrif, Western Cape, on 7 July, King's Beach car park, Port Elisabeth, on 24–28 September, and Umgeni River mouth, KwaZulu-Natal, on 11–21 October. A **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* was found at a tern roost at Cape Recife near Port Elisabeth, Eastern Cape, on 7 April and (the same?) throughout August. An **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* was still at Roodekoppies Dam near Brits, North-west Province, in July; this bird has now been present in the area for over a year. A **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* was

found at a marsh near Gantshi in Hluhluwe Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 6 April. A **White-headed Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne albiceps*, claimed from Letaba, Kruger National Park, on 23 August, would constitute the first for South Africa if accepted (all per ZJB).

Tanzania

Two additions to the national list are an adult **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus*, observed in the Rufi Delta in December 2000 but only reported recently (OH), and at least two small populations of **Chestnut-mantled Sparrow Weaver** *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus*, discovered east of Mpanda along the road to Inyonga in July 2001 (SN) and found again in September.

The following records are all from 2001, if not otherwise indicated. An unusually large concentration of 10,000–30,000 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* was seen resting at Lake Ndutu, Serengeti National Park, on 14–15 January; this constitutes c9% of the world population (TG). The pair of **Taita Falcon** *Falco fasciinucha* at Naberera was at their nest site from early February to at least mid-July, but absent in mid-September (N&LB). An adult **Baillon's Crane** *Porzana pusilla* at Mungushi, Kilimanjaro, on 20 October, was the second record from this locality (N&LB). A pair of **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* was south-west of Sumbawanga, where the species has not been reported for many years, on 25 June (SN). Sightings of **Stierling's Woodpecker** *Dendropicos stierlingi* from south-west Tanzania in September (SN) confirm those from November 1999 (DP); these represent a hitherto unknown population of this globally threatened species.

The first **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* of the season was ringed on 15 October, two weeks earlier than usual (NM). A **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* was seen at Ndutu Lodge, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, in December 2000; this is a rare species in Tanzania (L&PW). A pair of **Little Rock Thrushes** *Monticola rufocinereus* near the top of the escarpment south of Lake Manyara in July 2000 is well south of other known records (AM & JOK). A loose group of 15–20 **Banded Green Sunbirds** *Anthreptes rubritorques* was observed frequenting fruiting trees at 570 m in Udzungwa Mountains National Park on 25–28 July; this may be the first observation outside the Usambaras since 1991, and is probably the largest assemblage on record (TR). The species,

which is listed as Vulnerable, is known from five areas of forest in eastern Tanzania, but it is only considered common in parts of the Usambaras. A female **Pringle's Puffback** *Dryoscopus pringlii* at 04°20'S on 14 July is the southernmost record to date (N&LB). A small flock of **Sharp-tailed Starlings** *Lamprotornis acuticaudus* in Mlele Game Reserve in July (SN) and several individuals in Ugalla Game Reserve in August (IB) are the first for Tanzania for many years. The race *melanorhynchus* of **White-browed Sparrow Weaver** *Plocepasser mahali* continues its southward expansion into northern Tanzania, with new colonies being established as far south as Tarangire National Park and along the Pangani Valley (N&LB).

Togo

A male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco tinnunculus* was perched on roadside powerlines, about midway between Lome and Atakpame, on 19 June 2001 (GS); this is a rarely observed vagrant in Togo, with only two previously reports, the first of which concerned 300 birds migrating over Kara in 30 minutes, on 3 June 1987 (Cheke, R.A. & Walsh, J.F. 1996, *The Birds of Togo*). Two putative adult **Kelp Gulls** *Larus dominicanus* were seen off Aného in 30–31 December 2000; in West Africa, this species is only known from Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia. An **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* was also observed there on 30th and two the next day; there are very few records of this species from Togo (BP).

An **Ashy Flycatcher** *Muscicapa caerulea* was seen at Pagala, central Togo, on 21 June 2001; this species is rare in the country and only known from a few specimens collected further south. Also there was a pair of **Shrike Flycatchers** *Megabyas flammulatus* (GS).

Tunisia

Five **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea*, one **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* and at least ten singing (African) **Desert Warblers** *Sylvia (nana) nana* were seen in the Douz area on 19 April 2001 (per *Birding World* 14: 191). An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* was found at Zarzis, on the south-east coast, on 9 April 2001 (DR).

Uganda

In October 2001, an immature male **Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus rochii* was mist-netted on the Entebbe



Yellow-footed Flycatcher *Muscicapa sethsmithi* by Mark Andrews

peninsula on 24th, the species is normally recorded in April–September in East Africa (MW). The presence of **Ansoerge's Greenbul** *Andropadus ansorgei* in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, suspected since 1992, was finally confirmed on 2 August, when a bird was well seen and heard; this addition to the Ugandan avifauna will be documented in the next *Bull. ABC* (NB). In July a **Grauer's Swamp Warbler** *Bradypterus graueri* was found in a patch of rushes just outside Bwindi National Park; there are probably only six sites for this Albertine Rift endemic in Uganda, of which only two are protected (MW). Two **Gambaga Flycatchers** *Muscicapa gambaga*, seen in Murchison Falls National Park on 3 July, constitute the first record for the park. What appears to be the first **Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* for Semliki National Park was observed on 7 July (GM).

Zambia

Records from the first half of 2001 include the following. In January, at least two **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were tracked through the country by satellite, fitted while they were still in nest in the Cape, South Africa. A female **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was in the Luangwa Valley on several dates, and an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* was regular at Kasisi Dam near Lusaka. In Chisamba, both **Corn Crane** *Crex crex* and **Striped Crane** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* were found. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco tinnunculus* and **Amur** (Eastern Red-footed) **Falcons** *F. amurensis* were reported in large numbers at several localities and numbers of **Pallid Circus** *macrourus* and **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus* were near Mazabuka on 20th. Nearby, 12 **Common Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* were found feeding in a caterpillar-infested tree and over 100 **Woolly-necked Storks** *Ciconia*

episcopus were loafing around livestock pens. In Lochinvar National Park, waterbird counts undertaken on 10–12th found 1,707 **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca*, 3,930 **Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentotta*, 4,900 **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata*, 3,465 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* and 71,285 **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*. Smaller numbers of interesting species included a **Black-rumped Buttonquail** *Turnix hottentotta*, 87 **African Crakes** *Crex egregia*, three **Corn Crakes**, 12 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* and three **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. In Choma were eight **Dwarf Bitterns** *Ixobrychus sturmi* and two **Corn Crakes**. **Fawn-coloured Larks** *Mirafra africanoides* and **Sousa's Shrikes** *Lanius souzae* near Mulobezi were both on the edge of their ranges. Near Kaoma was a calling **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorvus* and several **Streaky-breasted Flufftails** *Sarothrura boehmi*, whereas in Livingstone a **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was found.

In February, two **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* and at least two **Spotted Crakes** were seen in Livingstone; a **Corn Crake** was in Kitwe on 11th. In Choma, a family of **Sousa's Shrikes** was the first to be recorded for some time; a vagrant **Yellow-crowned Bishop** *Euplectes afer* was also found.

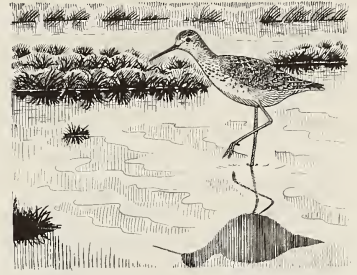
In March, a **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was flushed from trees beside a seasonal stream in Choma, and nearby an active **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* nest was found. The breeding cycle of a pair of **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* was monitored in Livingstone. **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* were reported from a few localities. At least one **European Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was near Lusaka on 25th, along with several **Tambourine Doves** *Turtur tympanistris*, an **Olive Woodpecker** *Mesopicus griseocephalus*, **Eastern Olive Sunbirds** *Cyanomitra olivacea* and **Blue-billed Firefinches** *Lagonosticta rubricata*. A **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was in Choma on 4th. A pair of wandering **White-necked Ravens** *Corvus albicollis* flew over Lusaka.

In April, a fledged juvenile **Brown-backed Honeyguide** *Prodotiscus regulus* was watched being fed by a pair of **Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* in Sesheke District on 6th. The latter is unknown as a host species and although the sighting is not absolute proof of such, it is strongly suggestive. A 'Brown Firefinch Indigobird' *Vidua*

incognita/wilsoni was found at Katombora on 7th and a few late Palearctic migrants in Choma included a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* and regular **Lesser Grey Shrikes** *Lanius minor*. In the Luangwa Valley, two **Great** (White-breasted) **Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus* on the 9th were the first valley records and a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was seen on 16th. An adult male **European Honey Buzzard** was near Mazabuka on 14th. Mid-month a number of interesting species was found near Mpika, including **Chestnut-headed** (Long-toed) **Flufftail** *Sarothrura lugens*, **Anchieta's** *Stactolaema anchietae* and **Whyte's Barbets** *S. whytii*, **Bar-winged Weaver** *Ploceus angolensis* and many **Stripe-breasted Seed-eaters** *Serinus reichardi*. On 22nd some **Madagascar Bee-eaters** *Merops superciliosus* flew over Kitwe and on 30th an albino **Openbill Stork** *Anastomus lamelligeris* was seen on the Upper Zambezi.

In May, three late **Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* were in the Luangwa Valley on 5th and an **African Crake** was there on 12th. A trip to Luapula Province produced some **White-headed Saw-wings** *Psalidoprocne albiceps*, regular **Angola Swallows** *Hirundo angolensis*, several **White-winged Warblers** *Bradypterus carpalis* and some **Red-headed Quelea** *Quelea erythrops* still in breeding plumage. Near Livingstone, an **Acacia Pied Barbet** *Tricholaema leucomelas* was found paired with a **Miombo Pied Barbet** *T. frontata* and in Lochinvar National Park on 18th were a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis (dominica) fulva*, several **Black-tailed Godwits** and **White-throated Swallows** *Hirundo albigularis*.

In June, off-season **White Storks** were reported from several localities and five **Shoebill** *Balaeniceps rex* were found in Bangweulu Swamps on 17th. A very late **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmi* was in Choma on 7th and other late migrants in the Luangwa Valley included a juvenile **Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Oxylophus levaillantii* begging from **Arrow-marked Babblers** *Turdoides jardineii* on 2nd, a **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* on 16th and a **Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* on 26th. Other interesting records here included **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* on at least two occasions, a **Freckled Nightjar** *Caprimulgus tristigma* on 3rd, and a **Scaly-fronted Honeyguide** *Indicator variegatus* on 12th and 22nd. Near Zambezi, a very unseasonal **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbica* was with **Mosque Swallows** *Hirundo*



Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*
by Mark Andrews

senegalensis on 23rd. A single **Gorgeous Bush-shrike** *Telophorus viridis* was seen near Mayau on 24th (all PL).

Also in June, five **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* seen in South Luangwa National Park on 9th and a single **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* on 13th were 8all rather out of season. A **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* was there on 10th. A bird party north-east of Kafue National Park on 23rd included **Bush Pipit** *Anthus caffer*, several **White-winged Black Tits** *Parus leucomelas* and a **Sousa's Shrike** (SC).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Neil & Liz Baker (NE&LB), Ian Batchelor (IB), Zest for Birds (ZfB), Leo Boon (LB), Nik Borrow/Birdquest (NB), Stephen Cameron (SC), Robert A. Cbeke (RAC), Tony Clarke (TC), Richard Cruise (RC), Mark Finn (MF), Thomas Gottschalk (TG), Phil Hall (PH), Olivier Hamerlynck (OH), Tommy Holmgren (TH), Mark Hopkins (MH), Alan Johnston (AJ), Marc Languy (ML), Peter Leonard (PL), C. Lombard (CL), R. Lombard (RL), Njano Mbilinyi (NM), Alison Morgan (AM), Pete Morris/Birdquest (PM), Giles Mulbolland (GM), Stuart Norman (SN), Jenny O'Keefe (JOK), Dave Peterson (DP), Bruno Portier (BP), Hugo Rainey (HR), L.F. Rautenbach (LFR), Tom S. Romdal (TR), Detlef Robel (DR), Peter Roberts (Pro), Pete Ryan (PR), Valéry Schollaert (VS), Gavin Selve (GS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Claire Spottiswoode (CS), Bertrand Trolliet (BT), Stephanie Tyler (ST), Louise & Paul White (L&PW), Malcolm Wilson (MW), Simon Warry (SW) and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World and Dutch Birding.

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Reviews



African Bird Sounds: Birds of North, West and Central Africa

Claude Chappuis, with the collaboration of the British Library National Sound Archive (London). 2000. Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques de France (SEOF), Paris. Available from The British Library, National Sound Archive, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB. E-mail: nsa-wildsound@bl.uk.

Volume 1: North Africa and Atlantic Islands. Four CDs in a boxed set with a 68-page French/English booklet. UK£36.

Volume 2: West & Central Africa. Eleven CDs in a boxed set with a 196-page English booklet. UK£75.

Volumes 1 and 2 (complete publication). Fifteen CDs in a boxed set with a 196-page English booklet. UK£98.

Claude Chappuis' name has long been firmly associated with West African ornithology, and his set of 11 vinyl LPs covering around 450 species, published more than 20 years ago, was a true milestone. With the publication of this attractively packaged 15-CD boxed set, he will be immortalised in the world of bioacoustics. This is a major publishing event in ornithological discography, and an achievement that matches the multi-volume *Birds of Africa* in its scale and depth.

The set is divided geographically into two volumes, which are available separately or together. Volume 1 comprises four CDs and covers North Africa and the Atlantic Islands of the Canaries, Madeira and Cape Verde. It is largely concerned with the Sahara and Mahgreb, up to the eastern border of Tunisia. A total of 423 species is represented on these discs, including both residents and migrants. Volume 2 comprises 11 CDs and covers 1,043 mainly resident species from West and Central Africa, including the Gulf of Guinea islands of Bioko, São Tomé and Príncipe. The region treated extends to the borders of Sudan in the east and Angola in the south. Thus a total of 1,466 species is included in the complete set, which, according to the author, represents some 95% of the 'regular species' in the region. Together with the wonderful set of recordings for southern Africa from Guy Gibbon, we

now have comprehensive coverage of the entire western half of Africa, from the Mediterranean to the Cape. Hopefully, eastern Africa won't be too far behind.

Many species' voices are published here for the first time, and these are listed in the accompanying booklet—about 270 species in total. No fewer than 136 recordists contributed to the project, although the majority of recordings are from Chappuis himself. Inevitably perhaps, some of the recordings were made outside the region, but this is noted in the booklet where relevant. Not surprisingly, the North African set has a larger proportion of extraliminally recorded species than the West and Central volume.

The chunky booklet includes an introduction to the project as well as various lists of species illustrating acoustic and taxonomic points of interest (such as first-ever published recordings, new species discovered by their voices, possible taxonomic splits/lumps, parallelism and divergence in acoustic evolution, acoustic convergences and coincidences, and island species etc). The bulk of the text is devoted to the list of species, which are in taxonomic order (rather than the order they appear on the CDs). Basic details are given for all featured species (date, locality, recordist etc), but in many instances further information is given; sometimes this is quite extensive and helpful. For the sake of completeness, all 1550 'regular species' of the region are listed in the booklet, with brackets around those for which no recordings were available.

So, what of the recordings themselves? Most species are represented by a single recording of the song or call (sometimes both), or by a short series of vocalisations. The recordings are generally of a high standard and are unannounced. I did not find any misidentified species, although the author himself acknowledges that a few errors may remain; this would hardly be surprising when so much of the region is relatively poorly known, with many species whose voices have not been published before. Listening to the recordings in conjunction with the booklet is usually straightforward, but

as the North African species (CDs 1-4) are interspersed throughout, they are not always in sequence. In addition, a few species are out of taxonomic order, but these are only minor irritations.

It is impossible to be anything other than complimentary about this set of CDs. It is a truly magnificent achievement, and birders and ornithologists will be forever be indebted to Chappuis and his collaborators. Whether these recordings are used in the field or for reference at home, they will be of immense value for years to come. Anyone with a serious interest in African birds will need the whole set.

Nigel Redman

Oiseaux d'Afrique (African bird sounds), 2. West and Central Africa

C. Chappuis. 2000. Eleven CDs (1,043 species) with companion booklet of 192 pages. Paris: Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques de France, with the collaboration of the British Library.

This is the second and more important instalment of a series of 15 CDs on the vocalisations of African birds; the first volume (four CDs covering 423 species) dealt with North-West Africa, Canary and Cape Verde islands and is reviewed, within a general introduction to the overall work, above. The geographical coverage of the second volume includes the islands of the Gulf of Guinea and continental Africa from Senegal to Congo-Kinshasa, east to the mountains of the Albertine Rift, and south to northern Angola and the Zambian border. It thus omits most of the Zambezi region (largely, though not entirely, covered by R Sjerstedi^{18,19}) and eastern Africa (soon to be treated by a major new publication), whereas the southern third of Africa is covered by G Gibbon⁹. Virtually all the species presented here are African residents or intra-African migrants, most Palaearctic species visiting the region having already been covered in the first volume, with the exception of a few of more eastern distribution (eg Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*). This is without

doubt the single most important source of Afrotropical bird vocalisations, and it will have an enormous effect on the efficiency of future field investigations and on our understanding of avian relationships.

C Chappuis started recording birds in West Africa in 1968, and although this collection has involved the collaboration of more than 130 recordists, the great majority of recordings were obtained by the author and compiler, a remarkable achievement. Covering 1,043 species, these 11 CDs supersede completely the earlier collection of 11 discs (33-rpm, with 450 species) that was published in collaboration with *Alauda* between 1974 and 1985³. More than 200 species appear commercially for the first time, and the families that had already received much space in the *Alauda* series (eg Pycnonotidae) have been thoroughly revised, updated and augmented with many new recordings.

Individual species are not announced by voice but are given a specific track number: this both facilitates the rapid location of any desired recording and makes confusion impossible. In a few cases, however, two species or subspecies, are presented on the same track but are separated by a long silence (as long as that between tracks), whereas separate recordings of the same species or form follow each other more rapidly. Correctly locating cuts in this way requires a little practice, but generally should not lead to confusion. (I must add that some of my British (male) colleagues (pers comm, unnamed) tell me they regret the disappearance of the human voice to identify species, especially that of the French lady on the *Alauda* series, whose pronunciation of Latin names they found remarkably sexy...). One species, Grauer's Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina graueri*, appears out of sequence at the beginning of CD11 (among the Sylviidae); while this is mentioned in the text under CD9 (Campephagidae), a cross-reference under CD11 would have been useful.

The sound quality is generally good to excellent, when less so it is for obvious reasons and it is always preferable to have a poor recording of a species than none at all. Species appearing in the background are mentioned occasionally but not consistently (no doubt due partly to lack of space). In a very few cases a secondary species is actually more

prominent than the main one, and this could be misleading. Thus the final cut of Cameroon Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus poensis* (CD9, track 72) is somewhat marred by the loud interference of a Pink-footed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis* (a double chukking noise, repeated then followed by a churr), whereas the usual song of the bulbul can be heard in the distance (also with that of Black-faced Rufous Warbler *Bathmocercus rufus* at the beginning). The second cut of Yellow-mantled Whydah *Euplectes macrourus* (CD14, track 92) is, to my ears, largely taken up by a song of Northern Double-collared Sunbird *Nectarinia preussi*. But these problems are exceptional.

The recordings presented and the informative booklet generally succeed well in the two main aims of the work, to provide the means of correctly identifying bird sounds, and to suggest ways in which these have a bearing on avian taxonomy. Most species' vocalisations occupy between 30 seconds and one minute, and although not large this often includes several cuts of different origins illustrating song, calls and dialectal variations; for example in just one minute we get an excellent presentation of the range of dialectal variation in the songs of Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike *Malaconotus sulfureopectus* (CD13, track 65) from West to East Africa. All relevant information concerning location, time, recordist and much else is given in the accompanying booklet (I have the French version, but have not seen the English). Indeed this work is much more than a gigantic compilation of field recordings (3,200 cuts have been retained here from a selection of some 5,500), as the text includes a great deal of information on means of separating difficult species, and in some cases proposes identification keys for whole series of species. One example of this, which I find works particularly well, is the key to the vocalisations of the green turacos *Tauraco* spp.; shame on anyone who still manages to misidentify a calling turaco after this. Attention is drawn to the vocal distinctiveness of the members of the superspecies Guinea Turaco *T. persa* (with Schalow's *T. schalowi* standing apart from all others, cf. Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1988⁶), whereas one needs to listen with care to separate the song of White-crested Turaco *T. leucolophus* from those of the superspecies Bannerman's *T.*

bannermani/Red-crested *T. erythrolophus*. Although in the past *T. leucolophus* was not considered to be particularly closely related to the last, recent DNA investigation by Veron & Winney²¹ has placed *T. leucolophus* immediately next to *T. erythrolophus* on the 'neighbour-joining tree'; this is certainly supported by bioacoustic evidence. To take an example of Chappuis' didactic approach among the passerines, the text accompanying the extensive choice of motifs of the two forest orioles Western Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus brachyrhynchus* and Black-winged *O. nigripennis* is very helpful, as distinction between these is not always straightforward, not least because of their extensive repertoires. Thus two minutes and 30 seconds are devoted to *O. brachyrhynchus* and two minutes and 50 seconds to *O. nigripennis*, probably the two longest individual presentations in this volume.

Overall, the taxonomic treatment follows that of *Birds of Africa* volumes 1-6, although there are a number of divergences, for example among sunbirds, monarch and platysteirine flycatchers. Thus Bates's Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone batesi*, separated by C Erard (in Urban *et al* 1997²⁰) from Rufous-vented *T. rufocinerea*, is still presented as a race of the latter. In my experience and that of C Erard (op. cit.), the song of *T. rufocinerea sensu stricto* is very similar to that of the African Paradise Flycatcher *T. viridis* and unlike that of *T. batesi*; for this reason and others (including geographical contact), C Erard's treatment was probably the wiser. Unfortunately no-one has yet managed to get a tape-recording of the song of *T. rufocinerea*.

The importance of bioacoustics in the field of systematics has been increasingly evident in recent decades, as exemplified by the discovery and description of new species prompted by the study of vocal characters. Examples of relevance here include Eastern Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda notata*, Dorst's Cisticola *Cisticola dorsti*, Pale-crowned Cisticola *C. cinnamomeus* and several indigobirds *Vidua* spp. Many problems remain unresolved and Chappuis offers pointers to more potential splits. There is a great deal of interest here, but some of this is going to be difficult to unravel. The most striking example among non-passerines is that of Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowi*: recordings of the eastern and western song-types were first pub-

lished separately (from Uganda by S Keith in 1971¹³ and from the Nigeria/Cameroon border by C Chappuis in 1974³) but are now presented together, and a sonogram demonstrating that these songs differ not only in their tempi but in their structural form was published in 1997⁷. The eastern song-type is consistent throughout a wide range from Uganda to Congo, Gabon and southern Cameroon (published recordings and pers obs); the geographical separation between the two cuckoo populations is probably around the Sanaga River, as the eastern form is very common in south and south-eastern Cameroon, whereas the western form appears somewhere north of the Sanaga River (from the Bakossi Mountains north, pers. obs.). However, *C. mechowii* from West to East Africa has always been considered a monotypic species; the three presently recognised species of *Cercococcyx* cuckoos (Barred Long-tailed *C. montanus*, Olive Long-tailed *C. olivinus* and *C. mechowii*) are difficult to separate on morphological characters, even for museum specialists, and the paucity of specimen material is not going to help resolve the problem of *C. mechowii* for some time. A similar difficulty arises with Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*, whose high-pitched and low-pitched songs are strikingly different, but cannot easily be attributed to particular morphological races. Even though Chappuis proposes to separate the form with the high-pitched song-type under the name of *B. elgonensis* (from Kenya/Uganda), part of another race, *centralis* (but only part of it) also possesses this distinctive song, reminiscent of insect-like stridulations. Thus *centralis* birds from northern Tanzania (cf. Zimmerman *et al* 1996²²), Rwanda (pers obs and tape-recordings) and eastern Congo-Kinshasa (birds in song collected and well described by Chapin²) all sing like *elgonensis*, but somewhere between eastern Congo and Cameroon birds of (apparently) the same race suddenly change, since in Cameroon all *centralis* I have heard from the Haut Nyong to coastal locations (as is illustrated by a tape of it by C Chappuis) produce the low-pitched song.

Still among the *Bradypterus*, Grimes in Urban *et al*²⁰ treated the form *bangwaensis* (of the mountains of Cameroon and eastern Nigeria) as a race of the more widespread Evergreen Forest Warbler *B. lopezi*, even though

both forms coexist at Mt Manenguba; in 1989 Bob Dowsett and myself presented a case for the specific distinctiveness of Bangwa Forest Warbler *B. bangwaensis*, based on morphological characters (*bangwaensis*' rich coloration is closer to that of Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *B. cinnamomeus* than *lopezi*), partial sympatry with *B. lopezi*, and vocal characters (in respect only of call notes). C Chappuis presents here some of my recordings of songs from eastern Nigeria, but unfortunately not the call notes. As shown by sonograms, song motifs of *lopezi* and *bangwaensis* are similar in all their main characters, but the call notes are very different. Those of *lopezi* are presented on CD10 (tracks 49–50), so it is a pity those of *B. bangwaensis* have been omitted (just one low churr can be heard in the background of the second cut on track 51), although they have been tape-recorded. Further field work in western Cameroon has demonstrated that these vocal characters are consistent throughout the range of *bangwaensis*; where the two species meet (Mt Manenguba) they occupy different niches, with *bangwaensis* at forest edges and *lopezi* within primary forest⁸.

In many cases much more field work will be necessary to investigate, prove or disprove some of the ideas of species separation proposed here. One example is that of Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*: some unusual song-types recorded on the Téké Plateau in Gabon (CD8, track 91) have induced the compiler to suggest that the local race (*malbranti*) may represent an entirely new species. But, we are dealing with a lark of very wide distribution in Africa and presenting a large range of dialectal forms across the continent. Individual birds already show quite an array of different motifs: in the one individual recorded by P Christy at Léconi, the first motif is certainly very unusual for a *M. africana*, but by the time we get to the third motif (by the same individual), we already have something more typical of the species elsewhere. Another suggestion to treat with care concerns the race *leoninus* of Cameroon Sombre Bulbul *Andropadus curvirostris*; I agree that the vocal dialect of this form (CD9, track 53) is distinctive (from that of nominate *curvirostris* recorded in south-west Cameroon, track 52), but dialectal variation in the songs of this bulbul is extensive, with different populations in

various forest blocks in Cameroon and Congo having their own particular motifs (and these all belong to the same race).

Conversely, suggestions for reconsidering some geographical forms (treated as different species in recent volumes of *Birds of Africa*) within the same species are made for a number of superspecies; examples include White-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus ndussumensis*, Black-collared Apalis *Apalis pulchra ruwenzorii* and Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis salvadorii*. Bioacoustic evidence is clearly in favour of lumping here; this is also supported by playback experiments, i.e. positive reactions from one race to the songs of the other. Indeed, before a good tape-recording of *Criniger o. olivaceus* became available, the best way of locating this discreet species in the forests of Côte d'Ivoire was by playing a tape of *C. o. ndussumensis* (C Carter pers comm). The apalises *A. p. pulchra* and *A. p. ruwenzorii* possess a variety of song-types, of varying tempi, but the timbre of voice is identical in both geographical forms and fast or slow motifs in one form can be matched to fast or slow motifs in the other; thus the last (fast) song of *Apalis p. pulchra* (CD11, track 20) is identical to the first song-type of *A. p. ruwenzorii* (CD11, track 21), and their direct juxtaposition through astute editing makes this more convincing than any amount of text.

In a work of this magnitude, inevitably a few errors of transcription have crept in. Thus the song of Papyrus Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta gracilirostris* (CD10, track 56) is correctly identified but cannot come from the Nyika Plateau in north-east Zambia (a high montane area without swamps where the species is quite unknown); the same recording was previously published by R Stjernstedt¹⁹ and was taped at the mouth of the Luapula River. If the call note of *Apalis pulchra ruwenzorii* (CD11, track 21) was indeed taped in Kenya, then it must be referred to that of nominate *pulchra (ruwenzorii)* being endemic to the Albertine Rift. The second cut of Yellow Longbill *Macrosphenus flavicans* (CD11, track 55) from eastern Nigeria sounds like a song of Kemp's Longbill *M. kempii* to me; the recordist (R Demey pers comm) confirms that he did not see the bird and his tape comes from an area of overlap between the two *Macrosphenus*. Of the many *M. flavicans* I have heard in Cameroon,

Equatorial Guinea and Congo, I have never found one that produced anything similar to a song of *M. kempfi*, and observations in the Korup area of western Cameroon (also an area of sympatry) confirm that each species retains its own individual, characteristic song (Rodewald *et al*⁶). This contradicts the suggestion made here that vocal barriers may break down in areas of sympatry. If Many-coloured Bush-shrike *Malaconotus multicolor* must be split from Black-fronted Bush-shrike *M. nigrifrons*, then the fourth cut of *Malaconotus multicolor* (CD13, track 66), from Misaka Forest in Zambia, cannot be attributed to *multicolor* but only to *nigrifrons*. Birds from the Zambian plateau all belong to one race (*manningi*) and their main song-type consists of two whistles (the second longer and higher pitched, as on track 66), reproduced again under *M. nigrifrons* (CD13, track 67, second cut, from Mayau, Zambia).

A similar confusion has arisen with Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* (including *nyassae*). C Chappuis proposes to split the Zambesian race *nyassae* from *similis* (without specifying how many of the other 15 races on the continent should be included in one or the other), on the basis mainly of the number of notes (3–4) per song, even though this character is recognised as being highly variable within individuals and populations. A cut from north of Lilongwe (Malawi) appears correctly under *nyassae* (CD9, cut 2 of track 29), but the first cut presented under *similis* (from west of Lilongwe, track 28) also refers to the race *nyassae*, which occurs throughout miombo woodland in Malawi and neighbouring countries (cf. D J Pearson in Keith *et al*⁴, p. 224). In fact, all populations of *similis sensu lato* give songs of 3–4 notes, and it is unrealistic to try and separate forms based on the number of notes per song. We continue to believe (cf. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire⁴) that the best treatment of this complicated species to date is that of D J Pearson (*op. cit.*).

The recording of Eurasian Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus* (CD7, track 7) from the Transvaal first appeared on Gibbon⁹ under that name, but it is the typical four-note song of Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *C. rochii*, and the error was corrected in 1992 (Hockey *et al*¹¹; see also Becking 1988⁷, who did much to clarify the status of the two small cuckoos *C. poliocephalus* and *C. rochii* in Africa). This bird (one

assumes it was perhaps the same individual) advertised a territory in the Transvaal for two successive seasons from November to February. The omission of this and other records (including a specimen) of *C. rochii* in southern Africa from the *Atlas of Southern African Birds*¹⁰ was due to a printers error (C Spottiswoode *in litt*, Spottiswoode & Allan¹⁷). There have been other reports of *C. rochii* singing in Africa during the local summer (including Zambia and Zimbabwe), thus it appears a few Malagasy birds do not return to Madagascar for the breeding season. Thus far no genuine *C. poliocephalus* (whose song is very different¹) has ever been heard to sing in Africa.

The song and calls of Forest Swallow *Hirundo fuliginosa* are quite different from those of any saw-wings *Psalidoprocne* sp., and it appears that the recording from Mt Cameroon (CD9, track 12) is none other than Mount Cameroon Saw-wing *P. fuliginosa* (listen to track 5, *P. fuliginosa*, and track 12 in succession). *H. fuliginosa* can be very difficult to separate visually from some *Psalidoprocne*, but its voice completely lacks the whining quality of saw-wing calls: its most common call is a light *vit, vit* (reminiscent of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*), excited or alarmed birds also give a double *pritchi*, and the song (given very rarely) is a fast, musical warble of *Hirundo* style (pers obs). Among the bulbuls, I was puzzled by the recording of Toro Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus hypochloris* (CD9, track 70) from western Kenya. I have no experience of the species, but to my ears this sounds like one of the motifs of Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*: extraordinary convergence or confusion? Zimmerman *et al*²² have had similar doubts and conclude that the voice is 'not known with certainty'; L D C Fishpool (pers comm) who recently saw and heard the species in Uganda confirms that the voice is unlike that of *A. virens*. This problem appears worthy of further investigation. Among the sunbirds, the last cut under Collared Sunbird *Anthreptes (Hedydiptna) collaris* (CD12, track 77) is not that species but Yellow-chinned *A. rectirostris*, an editorial slip I believe. This recording first appeared in the *Alauda* series under Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti* (third cut), but was later re-identified as *Anthreptes rectirostris* (pers obs). These loud, down-slurred whistles, often alternating (*pee-peeuw*), are very

characteristic of this sunbird and facilitate identification of the species when it is calling (unseen) from the canopy. Loud call notes in sunbirds are often more useful in species identification than their more subdued songs. The loud, descending series of 4–7 whistles in Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Nectarinia (Cyanomitra) cyanolaema* (well presented here, CD12, track 81) are equally diagnostic, just as the *pit, pit* flight calls of Johanna's *Nectarinia (Cinnyris) johannae* (CD13, track 14) betray the species. To finish with the sunbirds, it seems also that the advertising calls of Cameroon Blue-headed *Nectarinia oritis* (loud, descending *tjee-tjee-tjee-tjee*, very similar to those of *N. cyanolaema*, but usually mixed with series of double notes *te-tjee-te-tjee-te-tjee-te-tjee*, which excludes possible confusion with the latter) have been presented under Ursula's Mouse-coloured Sunbird *N. ursulae* instead (CD13, track 18, first cut).

Of seedeaters, the song of Broad-tailed Whydah *Vidua obtusa* from Francistown in Botswana (CD15, track 64) contains imitations of Melba Finch *Pytilia melba* (whereas *V. obtusa* normally imitates Orange-winged *Pytilia P. afra*) and should be referred instead to Long-tailed Paradise Whydah *V. paradisaea* (as confirmed by R B Payne *in litt*, who also points out that only *V. paradisaea* has a flight display, which the recorded bird was observed to have). Moreover, *V. obtusa* is not known from this far south in Botswana (cf. Penry¹⁵). The song of Pin-tailed Widow *Vidua macroura* is normally non-imitative, and I cannot identify the 'imitations' at the end of the track (as mentioned in the text) nor can R B Payne (*in litt*); perhaps the author meant 'motifs' rather than imitations. Finally, the second cut (song) of Stripe-breasted Seed-eater *Serinus reichardi* from Harare (CD15, track 75) is unlikely to be that species, as it remains completely unknown from Zimbabwe¹²; it compares well to the song of Streaky-headed Seed-eater *S. gularis* recorded in South Africa by G Gibbon⁹.

These few misidentifications or editing errors in no way detract from the enormous value of this work: on the contrary, because this important collection represents a landmark in African bioacoustic publications, one that will (and must) be widely used in the field and which will remain unsurpassed for many years to come, it is important that observers be aware of

any slips. What, indeed, remains to be done after this? Species for which no tape-recordings appear to exist are listed under † in the accompanying booklet and number c70 for this volume. A few, however, have been published elsewhere (for example Oberlaender's Ground Thrush *Zoothera oberlaenderi* was published by Keith & Gunn¹³, Miombo Double-collared Sunbird *Nectarinia manoensis* appears in both Stjernstedt¹⁸ and Gibbon⁹ and Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird *N. johnstoni* in Stjernstedt¹⁹). Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei* has apparently been forgotten from the list of undocumented species. There is a very possible recording of its song made at the type-locality (Itombwe) by T Butynski, matched by others from Congo and Cameroon by myself, and it is a pity that this has been omitted, although confirmation of its identity is still required; a wider distribution of this tape could help solve the problem. Among the 1,040 or so species of volume 2, the tape material can be improved for a number of species or forms: when will the songs of Black-eared Ground Thrush *Zoothera camaronensis* and Grey Ground Thrush *Z. princei* be unravelled at last? The display noise of Green-breasted Pitta *Pitta angolensis reichenowi* (described in the literature as identical to that of African Pitta *P. a. angolensis*) is not yet available for direct comparison with that of the nominate form. One would welcome a longer selection of motifs for some noisy species with a varied repertoire (eg some of the puffbacks *Dryocopus* spp.). The quiet turaco-type song of Violet Turaco *Musophaga violacea* and Lady Ross's *M. rossae* are not presented (though they are less frequent than the characteristic chorus calls illustrated here). These remarks are no criticism, but suggestions of where gaps remain and further research can be directed. Some of this probably exists already in other ornithologists' unpublished recordings. New material also continues to appear: in the months preceding and following the publication of this series, several field workers obtained 'first' recordings of some rare or local species, including Yellow-footed Honeyguide *Melnomon eisentrauti*, Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrebus baumannii*, Emerald Starling *Coccycolius iris* and Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentum*. However, for the time being and many years to come this magnificent publication will be

unequalled and C Chappuis must be warmly congratulated on his own tremendous contribution, as well as the successful and arduous compilation of the work of others.

Acknowledgements

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Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

Bird Recordings from Ethiopia

Steve Smith. 1996. *Single cassette. Privately produced, but available from WildSounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk NR25 7XH. UK£7.50.*

This tape comprises 71 separate recordings covering 66 different species (including those in the background) and in some cases a range of vocalisations such as songs, calls etc. Each is verbally identified on the tape, using English names, at the end of the recording. A reasonable gap exists between recordings, making it easy to identify the tracks. The liner notes present a list of all the recordings, with English name, scientific name, date and location of the recording. In some instances additional species that are obviously audible are also listed—

though others that appear equally obvious are not mentioned. Names follow the *Collins Illustrated Checklist to the Birds of Eastern Africa* by Ber van Perlo; however, that listed as 'Common Scops Owl' is obviously an African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* and should have been listed as such. The tape runs for 45–46 minutes in total and is therefore reasonable value for money. Obviously, it is the endemics that are of particular interest to any visiting birder and this tape includes ten of these, so scores fairly highly in terms of usefulness.

Nine of the recordings are very brief and the quality varies from poor to very good. I assessed seven recording as being 'poor'—these possessed a lot of background noise and it was sometimes quite difficult to establish the sounds made by the subject and what was extraneous noise. Of the 31 'reasonable' recordings, it was always possible to establish the noise of the subject from extraneous noise. I rated only one recording as 'very good' but others came very close to that rating. The remaining 32 were of 'good' quality with little or no interference, but some had low recording levels preventing them from being rated as 'very good'.

On the whole the tape is useful and definitely worth listening to in advance of a trip to Ethiopia. The recordings of the endemics are of particular value and it is a pity that the quality of some of these is not better. Personally, I was really pleased at the quality of the Degodi Lark *Mirafraga degodiensis* call and songs, and would have bought it for these alone, but that's another story.

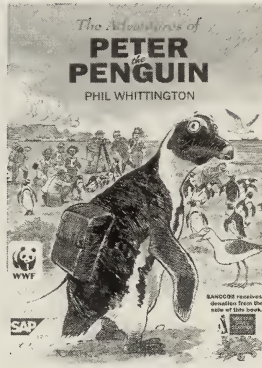
Roy Hargreaves

The Adventures of Peter the Penguin

Phil Whittington, illustrated by Fred Mouton. 2001. *The Avian Demography Unit, University of Cape Town, and available from there at R49.95 plus postage and packing.*

Orders can be placed at: <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/bkorder.htm>

Anyone interested in African birding



issues will have heard of the *Treasure* oil spill in June 2000, which caused the oiling of 19,000 African Penguins *Spheniscus demersus*. This resulted in an incredible effort to not only prevent the oiling of further birds, by transporting and subsequently releasing almost 20,000 birds at Port Elizabeth several thousand km away, but also a massive clean-up operation of those already oiled. Three of the translocated birds, named Peter, Percy and Pamela, were satellite tagged and their journey back to the Cape was avidly followed by the world press who turned them into international celebrities.

Phil Whittington, a PhD student from the Avian Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town, has written a fantastic book of the incident through the eyes of Peter, one of the tagged penguins. The story starts from the egg and covers all of the principal parts of a penguin's life cycle, from coping with being abandoned by the parents as a chick to finding a mate! The main part of the story deals with the oil spill and its consequences. Though aimed at the younger reader, the book is hugely enjoyable for an adult audience and is a mine of information concerning penguin biology. Closing the book is a section, entitled 'The Serious Bit', which details the *Treasure* disaster in photos and words, and discusses the wider issue of marine pollution—SANCCOB (the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds) receives a donation for each book sold. It is an easy read and the cartoon illustrations by Fred

Mouton, of *Die Burger*, one of Cape Town's morning newspapers, are hugely enjoyable. Definitely recommended for the bookshelves of any age group.

Phil Atkinson



Rusty Flies South

Graham Appleton, illustrated by Sally Bell. 2001. Available from the British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU. UK£5.00.

This delightful book written for 3–8 year olds relates the story of the first year in the life of Rusty, a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. Rusty is born on a farm in England and after several escapades successfully completes a first migration through Europe and Africa to wintering areas in South Africa. The book, featuring illustrations by Sally Bell, has been published by the British Trust for Ornithology in aid of their 'Swallow Appeal', which aims to fund migration research and help understand changes in Barn Swallow numbers over the past ten years.

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help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. Fax: +44 171 637 5626. E-mail: kbetton@abta.co.uk.

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Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress. AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1-2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@egroups.com. You will then receive an email instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members e-mail addresses that are useful for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. We have addresses for approximately 33% of members. Please send additions or corrections to the secretary, at secretary@africanbirdclub.org. All addresses will be kept confidential and not used for commercial advertising etc.





Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* Murchison Falls, Uganda, February 1999 (G. Ouweneel)



Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata* (Johan Verbauck)